

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 1 of 114

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Ten wrestlers place at Arlington](#)
- [5- Wrestling: Groton Area 52, Deuel 26](#)
- [6- NEC Standings](#)
- [7- C Team BB Invitational](#)
- [10- NSU Women's Basketball](#)
- [11- NSU Men's Basketball](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Commandments bill continues the effort to convert schools into churches](#)
- [13- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [14- Sunday Extras](#)
- [32- Gov. Noem's Weekly Column](#)
- [33- Sen. Thune's Weekly Column](#)
- [34- Rep. Dusty Johnson's Weekly Column](#)
- [35- Weekly Round\[s\] Up](#)
- [36- Rev. Snyder's Column](#)
- [38- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)
- [39- Drought Monitor](#)
- [40- EarthTalk - Music](#)
- [41- Weather Pages](#)
- [45- Daily Devotional](#)
- [46- Subscription Form](#)
- [47- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [48- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [49- News from the Associated Press](#)

Sunday, Jan. 26

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; annual meeting; no Sunday School; Choir, 6 p.m.

Groton Robotics Pancake Feed 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Groton Community Center

Carnival of Silver Skates, 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

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

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

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

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

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



Monday, Jan. 27

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, mixed vegetables, vanilla pudding with oranges, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.

School Lunch: Chicken patty, tiny whole potatoes.

Boys JH Wrestling at Ipswich, 6 p.m.

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

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

Tuesday, Jan. 28

Senior Menu: Parmesean chicken, baked potato, peaches, California blend, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Tacos.

Girls Basketball hosts Aberdeen Roncalli (JV at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity)

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
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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

© 2025 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 2 of 114

Ten wrestlers place at Arlington

Ten Groton wrestlers placed at the Kingsbury County Invitational held Saturday in Arlington. Groton Area placed fifth in a field of 14 teams. Christian Ehresmann and Korbin Kucker both placed second, Lincoln Krause and Chris Schwab both placed third, placing fourth were Donavon Block, Walker Zoellner and Gavin Englund, Noah Scepaniak placed fifth and in sixth place were Kyson Kucker and Layne Johnson.

Team Scores: 1. Kingsbury County 238.5, 2. Canby 173.5, 3. Sioux Falls Washington 167.5, 4. Redfield Area 162.5, 5. Groton Area 153.5, 6. Brookings 126.0, 7. Britton-Hecla 118.0, 8. Flandreau 114.5, 9. Sioux Valley 88.0, 10. Lyman 50.5, 11. Hamlin/Castlewood 30.0, 11. Warner/Northwestern 30.0, 13. Ipswich/Leola/Bowdle 19.5, 14. Viborg-Hurley/Irene-Wakonda 0.0.

157: Christian Ehresmann (18-3) placed 2nd and scored 21.5 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 18-3 received a bye () (Bye)
Quarterfinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 18-3 won by tech fall over Kahne Hanson (Kingsbury County) 8-15 (TF-1.5 3:23 (15-0))
Semifinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 18-3 won by fall over Dashed Davidson (Britton-Hecla) 10-13 (Fall 0:43)
1st Place Match - Sam Drietz (Canby) 27-3 won by fall over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 18-3 (Fall 3:41)

175: Korbin Kucker (23-4) placed 2nd and scored 21.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 23-4 won by fall over Aja Middletent (Lyman) 7-14 (Fall 0:57)
Quarterfinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 23-4 won by major decision over Justin Rohrbach (Ipswich/Leola/Bowdle) 14-9 (MD 14-1)
Semifinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 23-4 won by decision over Zander Eidem (Sioux Falls Washington) 23-10 (Dec 7-2)
1st Place Match - Gabriel Stern (Brookings) 22-3 won by major decision over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 23-4 (MD 10-2)

126: Lincoln Krause (12-11) placed 3rd and scored 16.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 12-11 received a bye () (Bye)
Quarterfinal - Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 12-11 won by decision over Haiden Baxter (Brookings) 6-10 (Dec 19-17)
Semifinal - zach pederson (Flandreau) 30-11 won by fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 12-11 (Fall 1:00)
Cons. Semi - Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 12-11 won by fall over emisael bonilla (Flandreau) 7-5 (Fall 1:42)
3rd Place Match - Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 12-11 won by decision over Haiden Baxter (Brookings) 6-10 (Dec 12-7)

144: Chris Schwab (12-16) placed 3rd and scored 18.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 12-16 received a bye () (Bye)
Quarterfinal - Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 12-16 won by decision over Micah Eidem (Sioux Falls Washington) 18-25 (Dec 14-7)
Semifinal - Bryce Hawkinson (Britton-Hecla) 20-2 won by fall over Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 12-16 (Fall 3:05)
Cons. Semi - Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 12-16 won by fall over Lane Olivier (Lyman) 15-20 (Fall 2:23)
3rd Place Match - Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 12-16 won by fall over Micah Eidem (Sioux Falls Washington) 18-25 (Fall 2:45)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 3 of 114

132: Donavon Block (19-11) placed 4th and scored 17.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Donavon Block (Groton Area) 19-11 won by fall over matthew field (Sioux Valley) 5-15 (Fall 2:35)

Quarterfinal - Donavon Block (Groton Area) 19-11 won by major decision over Ty Delbridge (Brookings) 8-4 (MD 14-2)

Semifinal - Gannon Gilligan (Kingsbury County) 31-4 won by tech fall over Donavon Block (Groton Area) 19-11 (TF-1.5 2:52 (18-1))

Cons. Semi - Donavon Block (Groton Area) 19-11 won by fall over gabriel frias (Flandreau) 21-17 (Fall 1:52)

3rd Place Match - Lane Albrecht (Kingsbury County) 14-9 won by fall over Donavon Block (Groton Area) 19-11 (Fall 3:22)

150: Walker Zoellner (16-6) placed 4th and scored 16.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 16-6 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 16-6 won by fall over Skyler Langenbau (Lyman) 9-19 (Fall 0:57)

Semifinal - Tate Everson (Hamlin/Castlewood) 18-11 won by fall over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 16-6 (Fall 3:58)

Cons. Semi - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 16-6 won by fall over Steven Antillon (Sioux Falls Washington) 8-18 (Fall 2:08)

3rd Place Match - Blake Jennings (Kingsbury County) 24-7 won by medical forfeit over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 16-6 (M. For.)

285: Gavin Englund (20-6) placed 4th and scored 16.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 20-6 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 20-6 won by fall over Desmerius McGhee (Lyman) 27-10 (Fall 3:26)

Semifinal - Myles Yitagesu (Sioux Falls Washington) 21-7 won in the ultimate tie breaker over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 20-6 (UTB 3-2)

Cons. Semi - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 20-6 won by fall over Dalton Rathjen (Redfield Area) 21-14 (Fall 4:10)

3rd Place Match - Owen Vandeweerd (Sioux Valley) 28-4 won in tie breaker - 1 over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 20-6 (TB-1 3-1)

126: Noah Scepaniak (11-12) placed 5th.

Champ. Round 1 - Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 11-12 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 11-12 won by fall over emisael bonilla (Flandreau) 7-5 (Fall 2:46)

Semifinal - Cody Zell (Kingsbury County) 23-7 won by fall over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 11-12 (Fall 0:57)

Cons. Semi - Haiden Baxter (Brookings) 6-10 won by major decision over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 11-12 (MD 17-5)

5th Place Match - Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 11-12 won by fall over emisael bonilla (Flandreau) 7-5 (Fall 2:23)

120: Kyson Kucker (20-11) placed 6th and scored 13.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 20-11 won by fall over Callen Gran (Lyman) 6-13 (Fall 0:54)

Quarterfinal - Rogan Albrecht (Kingsbury County) 18-8 won by tech fall over Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 20-11 (TF-1.5 4:00 (21-1))

Cons. Round 2 - Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 20-11 won by medical forfeit over Lane Coleman (Lyman)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 4 of 114

6-10 (M. For.)

Cons. Round 3 - Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 20-11 won by fall over Carter Grobe (Britton-Hecla) 6-13 (Fall 3:16)

Cons. Semi - Micah Stern (Brookings) 14-12 won by fall over Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 20-11 (Fall 1:46)

5th Place Match - Karsten Lerwick (Kingsbury County) 21-17 won by decision over Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 20-11 (Dec 6-0)

190: Layne Johnson (7-18) placed 6th and scored 8.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Bryant Hansen (Canby) 12-10 won by fall over Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 7-18 (Fall 3:02)

Cons. Round 1 - Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 7-18 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 7-18 won by decision over Harvey Hardt (Sioux Valley) 15-16 (Dec 3-2)

Cons. Round 3 - Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 7-18 won by fall over Wyatt Larson (Lyman) 1-2 (Fall 2:14)

Cons. Semi - Bryant Hansen (Canby) 12-10 won by decision over Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 7-18 (Dec 10-3)

5th Place Match - Rhyder Behnke (Flandreau) 6-15 won by major decision over Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 7-18 (MD 12-3)

132: Xavior Ellenbecker (0-5).

Champ. Round 1 - Jacob Milliron (Brookings) 18-12 won by fall over Xavior Ellenbecker (Groton Area) 0-5 (Fall 0:35)

Cons. Round 1 - Xavior Ellenbecker (Groton Area) 0-5 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Michael Nissen (Sioux Falls Washington) 6-8 won by fall over Xavior Ellenbecker (Groton Area) 0-5 (Fall 1:41)

132: Grayson Flores (2-10).

Champ. Round 1 - gabriel frias (Flandreau) 21-17 won by fall over Grayson Flores (Groton Area) 2-10 (Fall 1:36)

Cons. Round 1 - Grayson Flores (Groton Area) 2-10 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Ty Delbridge (Brookings) 8-4 won by tech fall over Grayson Flores (Groton Area) 2-10 (TF-1.5 2:12 (15-0))

138: Kason Oswald (8-14) scored 3.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Sutton Murphy (Kingsbury County) 15-10 won by fall over Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 8-14 (Fall 1:57)

Cons. Round 1 - Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 8-14 won by fall over Morgan Chritiansen (Sioux Valley) 0-11 (Fall 0:58)

Cons. Round 2 - Caden Singrey (Kingsbury County) 13-10 won by fall over Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 8-14 (Fall 2:00)

165: Ben Hoeft (13-16).

Champ. Round 1 - Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 13-16 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Colten Walsh (Brookings) 11-8 won by decision over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 13-16 (Dec 13-7)

Cons. Round 2 - Colton Chapin (Britton-Hecla) 3-4 won by decision over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 13-16 (Dec 9-3)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 5 of 114

190: Isiah Scepaniak (1-7).

Champ. Round 1 - Dylan Murray (Redfield Area) 18-6 won by fall over Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-7 (Fall 1:08)

Cons. Round 1 - Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-7 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Liam Paxton (Britton-Hecla) 3-12 won by fall over Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-7 (Fall 0:19)

215: Charlie Frost (14-14) scored 4.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Tucker Hardy (Britton-Hecla) 19-8 won by fall over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 14-14 (Fall 0:45)

Cons. Round 1 - Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 14-14 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 14-14 won by fall over Rogan Haider (Brookings) 2-7 (Fall 1:27)

Cons. Round 3 - Breyten Johnson (Kingsbury County) 26-8 won by fall over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 14-14 (Fall 4:27)

285: Karter Moody (10-7).

Champ. Round 1 - Titon Peters (Flandreau) 6-7 won by fall over Karter Moody (Groton Area) 10-7 (Fall 5:46)

Cons. Round 1 - Karter Moody (Groton Area) 10-7 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Desmerius McGhee (Lyman) 27-10 won by fall over Karter Moody (Groton Area) 10-7 (Fall 3:54)

Groton Area 52, Deuel 26

A dual wrestling match was held Friday in Groton with Groton Area beating Deuel, 52-26.

106: Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) over Unknown (For.)

113: Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) over Bentley Fokken (Deuel/Deubrook Area) (Fall 2:55)

120: Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) over Aiden Warren (Deuel/Deubrook Area) (MD 12-3)

126: Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) over Erich Fokken (Deuel/Deubrook Area) (Fall 0:45)

132: Donavon Block (Groton Area) over Unknown (For.)

138: Dominic Kluckman (Deuel/Deubrook Area) over Kason Oswald (Groton Area) (Fall 2:00)

144: Chris Schwab (Groton Area) over Unknown (For.)

150: Zane Miller (Deuel/Deubrook Area) over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) (MD 8-0)

157: Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) over Unknown (For.)

165: Hayden Landmark (Deuel/Deubrook Area) over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) (MD 14-6)

175: Korbin Whiteley (Deuel/Deubrook Area) over Unknown (For.)

190: Sam Leen (Deuel/Deubrook Area) over Layne Johnson (Groton Area) (Fall 3:07)

215: Charlie Frost (Groton Area) over Unknown (For.)

285: Gavin Englund (Groton Area) over Tytian Lauseng (Deuel/Deubrook Area) (Fall 2:35)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 6 of 114

Girls NEC Standings

Roncalli	4-0	8-2
Hamlin	4-0	10-2
Groton Area	5-1	9-3
Clark/Willow Lake	3-2	8-4
Milbank	3-2	7-4
Webster Area	3-4	5-6
Britton-Hecla	2-2	2-9
Deuel	2-2	3-8
Sisseton	2-2	7-4
Redfield	1-7	1-10
Tiospa Zina	0-6	4-7

Boys NEC Standings

Hamlin	4-0	10-2
Groton Area	6-1	7-4
Clark/Willow Lake	4-1	9-2
Roncalli	3-1	5-6
Deuel	3-1	8-3
Britton-Hecla	3-2	7-3
Milbank	2-2	4-6
Webster Area	2-6	4-8
Sisseton	1-3	3-7
Redfield	0-5	0-10
Tiospa Zina	0-5	0-10

Not much changed in the girl's division, but something could be shaking on Tuesday as Groton and Roncalli will clash in Groton.

Roncalli lost its first conference game to the hands of Clark/Willow Lake.

Groton 50, Tiospa Zina 21
Hamlin 68, Webster 28
Milbank 57, Redfield 15
Clark-Willow Lake 62, Deuel 19
Tiospa Zina at Roncalli PP to Feb. 3
Groton 42, Milbank 34
Hamlin 61, Redfield 11
Aberdeen Roncalli 49, Clark-Willow Lake 43
Sisseton 70, Webster 45
Deuel 59, Tiospa Zina 39
Sisseton 61, Redfield 25

Aberdeen Roncalli 70, Sisseton 37
Groton 87, Tiospa Zina 32
Hamlin 71, Webster 22
Milbank 63, Redfield 24
Clark-Willow Lake 59, Deuel 34
Tiospa Zina at Roncalli PP to Feb. 17
Groton 58, Milbank 43
Hamlin 87, Redfield 24
Clark-Willow Lake 60, Aberdeen Roncalli 29
Webster 55, Sisseton 49
Deuel 89, Tiospa Zina 30
Sisseton 56, Redfield 45

Jan. 28
Roncalli at Groton Area

Jan. 30
Roncalli at Britton-Hecla
Deuel at Milbank
Sisseton at Hamlin

Jan. 30
Webster Area at Groton Area
Deuel at Milbank
Clark/Willow Lake at Redfield
Sisseton at Hamlin

Jan. 31
Redfield vs. Clark/Willow Lake at Clark

Jan. 31
Britton-Hecla at Roncalli

Feb. 4
Groton Area at Roncalli
Britton-Hecla at Sisseton
Hamlin at Milbank

Feb. 3
Tiospa Zina at Roncalli

Feb. 6
Deuel at Groton Area
Redfield at Webster Area

Feb. 4
Britton-Hecla at Sisseton
Hamlin at Milbank

Feb. 7
Roncalli at Milbank

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 7 of 114

C Team Invitational

Jan 25, 2025

Tiospa Zina
8



Groton Tigers C Team
42



	fg*	3pt	ft	oreb	dreb	foul	stl	to	blk	asst	+/-	min	pts
Kella Tracy	3-4	0-0	3-6	4	2	2	4	3	0	3	27	0	9
Kinsley Rowen	4-6	1-2	0-0	2	4	0	1	4	0	0	9	0	9
Ashlynn Warrington	3-3	0-0	1-4	3	1	0	5	0	0	3	16	0	7
Tevan Hanson	2-5	1-2	0-0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	16	0	5
Sydney Locke	2-7	0-2	0-0	1	1	0	4	0	0	6	25	0	4
Makenna Krause	2-3	0-0	0-0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	23	0	4
Emerlee Jones	1-7	0-1	0-2	2	4	2	3	6	0	1	16	0	2
Addison Hoffman	1-4	0-1	0-0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	7	0	2
Teagan Hanten	0-3	0-0	0-0	1	1	0	2	3	0	0	20	0	0
Avery Crank	0-4	0-1	0-2	0	5	0	5	2	0	1	11	0	0
Groton Tigers C Team	18-46	2-9	4-14	14	18	6	27	22	0	14	-	-	42
Tiospa Zina	4-4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	8

*Fg column includes 2pt & 3pt made-attempts.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 8 of 114

C Team Invitational

Jan 25, 2025

Oakes
11



Groton Tigers C Team
39



	fg*	3pt	ft	oreb	dreb	foul	stl	to	blk	asst	+/-	min	pts
Makenna Krause	4-7	1-1	0-2	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	17	0	9
Kinsley Rowen	3-10	0-4	0-0	1	3	3	4	2	0	0	7	0	6
Tevan Hanson	2-3	2-3	0-0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	12	0	6
Ashlynn Warrington	2-3	0-0	1-2	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	14	0	5
Sydney Locke	2-4	0-1	0-0	0	0	0	3	2	0	2	28	0	4
Kella Tracy	2-3	0-0	0-0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	14	0	4
Avery Crank	nk 0-2	0-2	2-4	2	2	0	3	1	0	0	12	0	2
Emerlee Jones	1-7	0-0	0-0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	19	0	2
Teagan Hanten	0-0	0-0	1-2	2	1	2	1	0	0	1	3	0	1
Brenna Imrie	0-1	0-1	0-0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	13	0	0
Addison Hoffman	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	2	0	0
Groton Tigers C Team	16-40	3-12	4-10	10	7	8	18	9	0	7	-	-	39
Oakes	4-4	0-0	3-4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	11

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 9 of 114

C Team Invitational

Jan 25, 2025

Warner
13



Groton Tigers C Team
36



	fg*	3pt	ft	oreb	dreb	foul	stl	to	blk	asst	+/-	min	pts
Tevan Hanson	3-4	0-1	2-3	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	16	0	8
Teagan Hanten	3-3	0-0	0-0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	9	0	6
Kella Tracy	3-8	0-0	0-0	3	1	3	3	0	0	1	18	0	6
Makenna Krause	2-7	0-0	0-0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	13	0	4
Emerlee Jones	2-5	0-0	0-0	1	1	1	2	1	0	2	14	0	4
Sydney Locke	0-2	0-1	2-3	0	0	1	5	2	0	1	11	0	2
Ashlynn Warrington	0-2	0-0	2-2	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	8	0	2
Avery Crank	1-3	0-0	0-0	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	2
Kinsley Rowen	1-3	0-1	0-0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	7	0	2
Brenna Imrie	0-1	0-1	0-0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Addison Hoffman	0-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	15	0	0
Groton Tigers C Team	15-40	0-4	6-8	8	8	8	14	8	1	9	-	-	36
Warner	6-6	0-0	1-8	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	-	-	13

*Fg column includes 2pt & 3pt made-attempts.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 10 of 114

NSU Women's Basketball

Wolves Complete Weekend Sweep with Win Over Warriors

Aberdeen, S.D. – A series of key plays helped the Northern State University women's basketball team secure an 85-73 victory over Winona State, concluding the I Hate Winter weekend. Five Wolves scored in double digits, with Michaela Jewett and Madelyn Bragg leading the way, contributing 25 and 20 points, respectively.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 85, WSU 73

Records: NSU 13-7 (NSIC 10-4), WSU 8-12 (NSIC 4-10)

Attendance: 2611

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State recorded 18 points in the first quarter, 27 in the second, 20 in the third, and 20 in the fourth

The Wolves scored 26 points in the paint, 12 points off the bench, 10 second-chance points, and 7 points off turnovers

NSU shot 50.0% from the field, 38.5% from beyond the arc, and 83.3% from the free-throw line

Michaela Jewett led the team with 25 points, 12 rebounds, and six assists, shooting 55.6% from the field

Madelyn Bragg added 20 points, 6 rebounds, and 5 blocks, shooting 60.0% from the floor

Alayna Benike contributed 12 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists, and 1 block

Rianna Fillipi and Izzy Moore both scored 10 points and grabbed 6 rebounds. Fillipi also recorded 6 assists

NORTHERN STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Michaela Jewett: 25 points, 12 rebounds, 6 assists, 55.6% FG

Madelyn Bragg: 20 points, 6 rebounds, 5 blocks, 60.0% FG

Alayna Benike: 12 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists

Rianna Fillipi: 10 points, 6 rebounds, 6 assists, 1 steal

Izzy Moore: 10 points, 6 rebounds, 4 assists, 66.7% FG

UP NEXT

Northern State returns home to face MSU Moorhead on Thursday, January 30, at 7:30 p.m. in Wachs Arena before hitting the road to take on Minot State on Saturday, February 1, at 5:30 p.m. in Minot, N.D.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 11 of 114

NSU Men's Basketball

The Wolves Men Fall in Saturday NSIC Action Against the Warriors

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men's basketball team was within reach on Saturday hosting Winona State, down by just a basket with 30 seconds to play. The Warriors rallied when they went to the line, going 4-of-4 and secured the win.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 69, WSU 74

Records: NSU 1-19 (0-14 NSIC), WSU 14-6 (9-5 NSIC)

Attendance: 1886

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern scored 32 points in the first and 37 in the second, while Winona tallied 35 in the first and 39 in the second

The Wolves led the game with 18 assists, 14 made from beyond the arc, and two blocks

They shot 42.4% from the floor, 37.8% from the 3-point line, and 71.4% from the foul line, adding 16 points in the paint, 15 points off turnovers, and eight points off the bench

Kwat Abdelkarim led three in double figures with 19 points, knocking down 7-of-12 from the field including five made 3-pointers

James Glenn and Marcus Burks followed with 16 and 14 points respectively; Glenn led the team with six rebounds and six assists, while Burks added four rebounds and three assists

Kaleb Mitchell matched Glenn's rebound total of six in the game, while Devon Brooke was second on the team with five assists

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

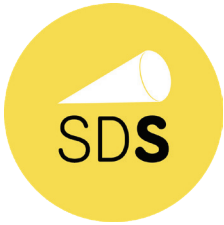
Kwat Abdelkarim: 19 points, 58.3 field goal%, 2 assists, 1 steal

James Glenn: 16 points, 6 rebounds, 6 assists, 2 steals

Marcus Burks: 14 points, 57.1 field goal%, 4 rebounds, 3 assists, 1 steal

UP NEXT

Northern faces off with MSU Moorhead and Minot State next Thursday and Saturday. The Wolves will host the Dragons at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday and travel to face the Beavers at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday.



COMMENTARY

Commandments bill continues the effort to convert schools into churches

by Dana Hess

Churches that can afford the expense and have the ecumenical will can open their own schools. If some people have their way, soon public schools in South Dakota will have a stark resemblance to churches.

During this legislative session, lawmakers will consider Senate Bill 51, an act that will require the display in public school classrooms of the Ten Commandments as well as its inclusion in the school's curriculum. The bill has made some headway, squeaking through the Senate Education Committee on a 4-3 vote. It's on Monday's Senate agenda.

The bill's main sponsor is Sen. John Carley, a Piedmont Republican. Carley lists the commandments in his bill, adding that schools may use a similar wording. It's odd, in the dry language of legislation, to read Carley's version of the Commandments that goes full Old Testament, using "shalt," "thou" and "thee."

According to Carley's bill, the Commandments must be displayed in a readable font on a document that's at least 8 inches by 14 inches. Adjacent to the display there must be posted an explanation of the historic significance of the Ten Commandments in education, from its inclusion in the New England Primer to the McGuffey Reader to textbooks published by Noah Webster.

Not satisfied with creating a religious display in public schools, Carley's bill goes on to enumerate how it will fit into the school curriculum. His bill amends a law calling for schools to give "regular course instruction in the Constitutions of the United States and South Dakota." That law called for instruction "at the opening of the eighth grade and shall continue in the high school to the extent determined by the South Dakota Board of Education Standards."

If Carley's bill becomes law, that board can take the day off. His bill requires study of the governments of the United States and South Dakota as well as the U.S. Constitution, the South Dakota Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Also included in that study are the Ten Commandments "as a historical and legal document," whatever that means. (If the Ten Commandments is a legal document, all of us are in trouble.)

Carley's bill goes on to mess with South Dakota's years-long attempt to figure out its civics curriculum. SB 51 calls on the state Department of Education to have ready materials to support instruction in these areas once between first and fourth grade, once between fifth and eighth grade and once between ninth and 12th grade. It will be interesting to see what sort of take first-graders have on the ramifications of the Bill of Rights. Those essays can be displayed right next to their finger paintings of George Washington crossing the Delaware.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 13 of 114

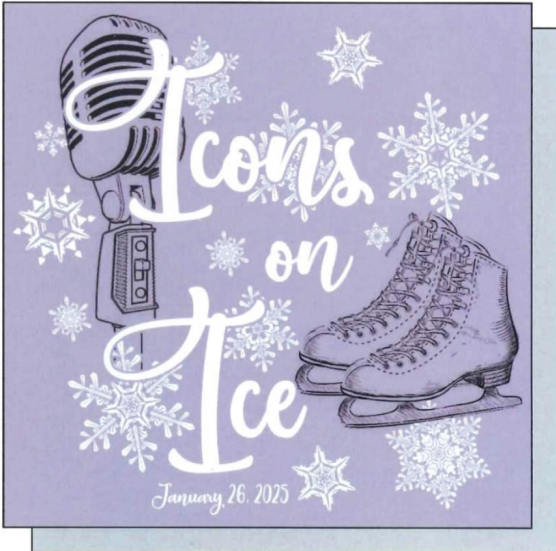
This isn't the first time that the Legislature has mandated displays in schools. A 2019 bill required schools to display the phrase "In God We Trust" in a high traffic area. It cost the Rapid City School District about \$2,800 to stencil the motto in the common areas of its schools. Carley's bill will be a heavier financial lift for schools as it requires a display in every classroom, along with an acknowledgement of the Ten Commandments' historic place in education.

The bill specifies that schools may accept donated displays that meet the requirements of the law. What it doesn't do is provide any funding for the creation of those displays. Pardon school districts for not seeing the legislation as an attempt to put a spotlight on the historic significance of the Ten Commandments but rather for what it is, an unfunded mandate.

Waiting in the wings for the 2026 election is an initiated measure calling for students and teachers in public schools to recite a generic prayer at the start of each school day. If all this comes to pass, imagine what public schools will be like in 2027. In God We Trust displayed in the cafeteria, the Ten Commandments and its background in education on each classroom wall and everyone standing to recite a generic prayer. The next time the school orders desks, perhaps they should have built-in kneelers.

We ask enough of our public schools without requiring them to force-feed religion to students. It would be best if the Legislature adopted its own Eleventh Commandment: Thou shalt nurture religion in the home and the church and thou shalt not inflict thy beliefs on the public schools. Amen.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.



Free Viewing
sponsored by the
Carnival of Silver
Skates.
Free livestream
internet provided by
Midco
Sunday, Jan. 26
2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

GDILIVE.COM

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 14 of 114



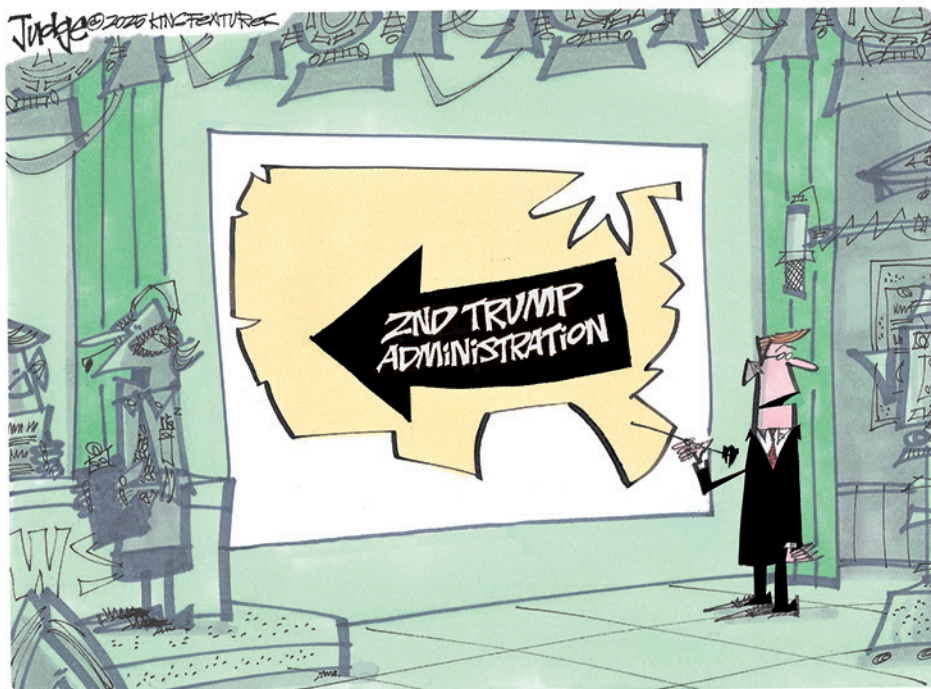
THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

❧ JAMES 1: 9-11 ❧

© 2025 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.



"AND IN OUR FORECAST: AN ARCTIC BLAST IS SWEEPING THE NATION!"

BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. Who led the Israelites over the River Jordan after they set out from Shittim? *Moses, Joshua, Aaron, Elijah*

3. Which Psalm begins, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee"? *60, 63, 74, 117*

4. From Proverbs 22, what is foolishness bound in the heart of? *Wicked, Poor, Child, Foolish*

5. What was the name of Samson's father? *Noah, Manoah, Jesse, Levi*

6. Who wrote the book of Proverbs? *Jude, Moses, Solomon, Isaac*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Joshua, 3) 63, 4) Child, 5) Manoah, 6) Solomon

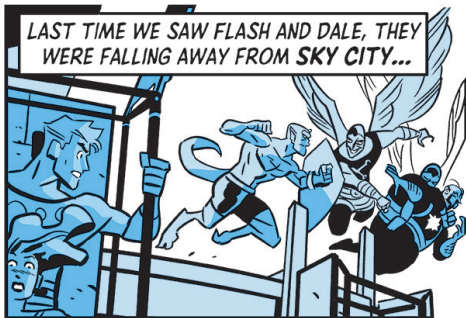
More than 1,200 brand-new trivia questions in Wilson Casey's latest book "Quest for Bible Knowledge" available in bookstores and online.

Groton Daily Independent

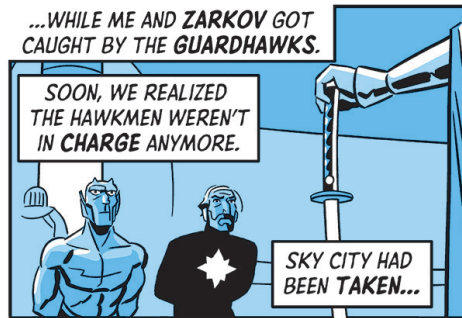
Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 16 of 114



FLASH GORDON



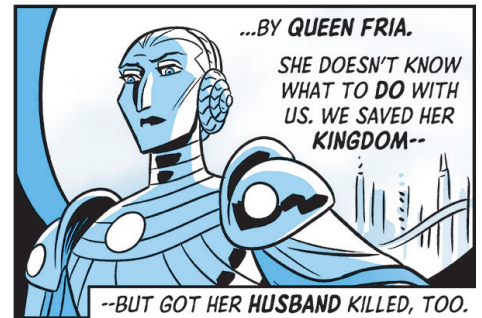
LAST TIME WE SAW FLASH AND DALE, THEY WERE FALLING AWAY FROM SKY CITY...



...WHILE ME AND ZARKOV GOT CAUGHT BY THE GUARDHAWKS.

SOON, WE REALIZED THE HAWKMEN WEREN'T IN CHARGE ANYMORE.

SKY CITY HAD BEEN TAKEN...



...BY QUEEN FRIA.

SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH US. WE SAVED HER KINGDOM--

--BUT GOT HER HUSBAND KILLED, TOO.



VULTAN SULKS. HE WANTED FRIA UNDER HIS THUMB.

NOW HE'S UNDER HER BOOT.



THEY TAKE ZARKOV BACK TO THE LABS TO FINISH THEIR WEAPON, AND STICK ME IN A SKY CELL.

BOK THE DRAGONMAN, BACK BEHIND BARS...



THEN ADRANE FLIES UP. SHE WANTS TO GET AWAY FROM ALL THIS.

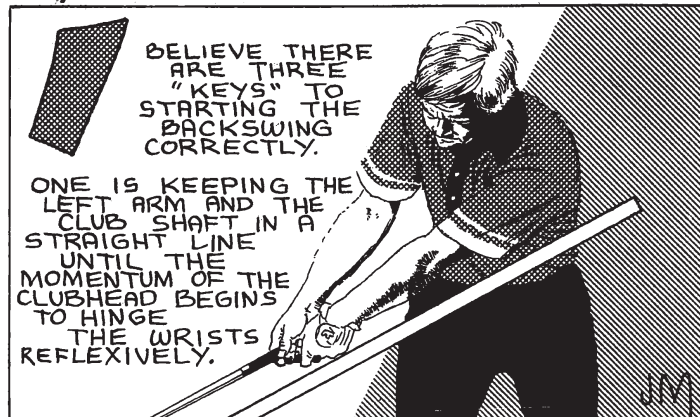
AND SHE WANTS ME TO COME WITH HER.

NEXT: HIDDEN ASSETS

©2025 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.

DAN SCHRADE 1-26-25

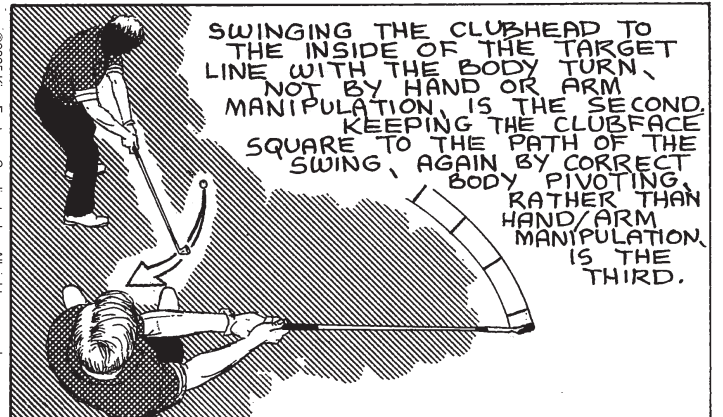
Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



BELIEVE THERE ARE THREE "KEYS" TO STARTING THE BACKSWING CORRECTLY.

ONE IS KEEPING THE LEFT ARM AND THE CLUB SHAFT IN A STRAIGHT LINE UNTIL THE MOMENTUM OF THE CLUBHEAD BEGINS TO HINGE THE WRISTS REFLEXIVELY.

©2025 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.



SWINGING THE CLUBHEAD TO THE INSIDE OF THE TARGET LINE WITH THE BODY TURN, NOT BY HAND OR ARM MANIPULATION, IS THE SECOND KEY. KEEPING THE CLUBFACE SQUARE TO THE PATH OF THE SWING, AGAIN BY CORRECT BODY PIVOTING, RATHER THAN HAND/ARM MANIPULATION, IS THE THIRD.



DMSO Isn't Recommended Based on Potential Harm

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm interested in consuming dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO). I've read that it will destroy the root of cancer and hasten the healing of broken bones, ligaments and strained muscles. My question is whether it is OK to consume the suggested amount of DMSO?

My aortic valve was replaced with a mechanical valve three years ago. After 12 months of follow-up exams, I was informed that the valve had sealed perfectly and was told to enjoy life. -- W.H.

ANSWER: DMSO is indicated by the Food and Drug Administration for the symptomatic relief of interstitial cystitis, a chronic and painful bladder condition. It is instilled directly in the bladder and is sometimes used for other urinary conditions, although there is no evidence of its usefulness.

DMSO is often used topically for musculoskeletal injuries, and some people do note pain relief. Numerous studies on rheumatological conditions (such as rheumatoid arthritis) failed to show a benefit, although a study from Germany in 1995 showed that DMSO gel with a 25% concentration reduced pain when applied to joints. Other studies were unable to confirm this.

For cancer, there are no convincing studies that show benefit, and some studies have shown an increase in breast cancer cell growth with DMSO.

Based on studies showing minimal benefit and potential harm, I don't recommend the use of DMSO. What's more important is that the studies have been done with medical-grade DMSO, which is only available with a prescription. When you buy DMSO at a hardware store, you are getting industrial-grade DMSO, which is potentially contaminated with industrial toxins and isn't intended for human use.

In addition, DMSO is very good at bringing other substances with it into the skin. This is useful as a drug-delivery system but dangerous when the DMSO you use is contaminated with chemicals or if you get those chemicals on your skin. While I can find DMSO for sale that companies purport to be very pure, you are relying on the company that may or may not have purified it, as it isn't independently tested.

However, I do not think that the topical use of DMSO is likely to be a danger to your prosthetic heart valve.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Recently, at an event sponsored by our community, an expert on the gut microbiome gave a lecture on how to keep it in balance. While the lecture was generally informative and useful, at one point, he stated that vaccines were detrimental to the microbiome. Is there any evidence (other than anecdotal) that supports such an opinion? -- W.G.

ANSWER: The huge number of bacteria in our gastrointestinal tract is referred to as the microbiome, and our microbiome can have effects on many aspects of our functioning. How much of an effect it has is debated.

COVID-19 infections were known to have a marked detrimental effect on the microbiome, but the effect of vaccination on the microbiome was not well-studied until quite recently. A 2024 study from the University of Cambridge found that the microbiome was only minimally affected by vaccination.

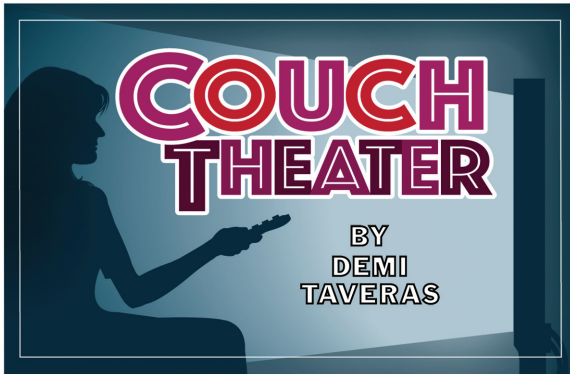
Based on this recent study, I disagree with your community speaker and conclude that if you're concerned about your microbiome, you'd be much better off getting vaccinated and taking other steps to prevent infection.

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

(c) 2025 North America Synd., Inc.
All Rights Reserved

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 18 of 114



Zoe Saldana, left, and Karla Sofia Gascon star in "Emilia Perez." Courtesy of MovieStillsDB

"Nosferatu" (R) -- Director Robert Eggers first made plans to develop a remake of the 1922 silent film "Nosferatu" back in 2015, and it took some time for him to get his passion project off the ground. After being teased for so long, the gothic horror finally came to fruition and landed

Bill Skarsgard ("It"), Nicholas Hoult ("Juror No. 2"), and Lily-Rose Depp ("The Idol") as its leads. Skarsgard's eerie transformation into Count Orlok is his best work yet, with the cast describing the palpable fear of his character while working on set. Willem Dafoe, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, and Emma Corrin co-star as other townspeople whose lives are suddenly connected through a chilling experience with the count. Out now to rent. (Amazon Prime Video)

"Paradise" (TV-MA) -- Premiering Jan. 28, this drama series starring Sterling K. Brown ("Atlas") seems so perfect for network television that it's surprising it was developed for streaming only. Brown plays secret service agent Xavier Collins, the righthand man to President Cal Bradford (James Marsden). A relentless agent who stops at nothing to defend the president, Xavier receives the shock of his life when, one day, he finds the president lifeless in his quarters. As an investigation commences, the president's sudden death is shrouded in secrecy and lies by the White House, leaving Xavier to reveal whether foul play is at work. (Hulu)

"Diddy: The Making of a Bad Boy" (TV-MA) -- It was only a matter of time until the documentaries would start following the arrest of rapper/record executive Sean Combs (aka Diddy) for sexual misconduct. Peacock is the first with a documentary out now that details Combs' childhood, his rise into the music industry, and now the recent sexual abuse allegations. Guest interviews include past bodyguards, childhood friends, accusers, and former employees of Combs' label Bad Boy Records. The allegations started to be taken seriously after footage was released of Combs assaulting his ex-girlfriend Cassie Ventura in 2016, but people in the documentary maintain that his criminal behavior began well before Ventura was subjected to it. (Peacock)

In Case You Missed It

"Emilia Perez" (R) -- This musical-crime film out now has been a controversial subject during the 2025 award season, after bringing home four Golden Globes over films like "Wicked" and "The Substance." Best Supporting Actress winner Zoe Saldana plays Mexican lawyer Rita, who receives a hefty offer from cartel kingpin Juan "Manitas" Del Monte in exchange for help with getting gender-affirming surgery. On a journey to live a more authentic life, Juan leaves his old one behind to become Emilia; however, she quickly realizes that this new life doesn't excuse the sins of her old one. The controversy surrounding this film mostly consists of criticism about its lack of true Mexican representation, with Mexican actor Eugenio Derbez calling out Selena Gomez for her atrocious acting -- I mean -- accent. (Netflix)

(c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 19 of 114



1. "Poor Side of Town" was the only No. 1 hit single penned by which artist?
2. Who are Bunny, James, Bobby, El, Randy and Mark?
3. Name the 1971 Al Green song that was used on the TV show "Nip/Tuck."
4. Who wrote the 1976 song "Tonight's the Night"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Sometimes in the morning when shadows are deep, I lie here beside you just watching you sleep."

Answers

1. Johnny Rivers, in 1966. The song has been covered widely

by artists such as Al Wilson and Lynn Anderson.

2. DeBarge, which is their last name. In 1984 they netted a Grammy nom for Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal. El recently sang his signature "Who's Holding Donna Now" at David Foster's 75th birthday concert.

3. "Tired of Being Alone," in Season 4 of the show.

4. Rod Stewart.

5. "My Cup Runneth Over," by Ed Ames, in 1966. The song was written for the musical "I Do! I Do!" Even though it only went to No. 8 on the Billboard charts, it ended up with a nom for Record of the Year and Song of the Year at the Grammys in 1967.

(c) 2025 King Features Syndicate

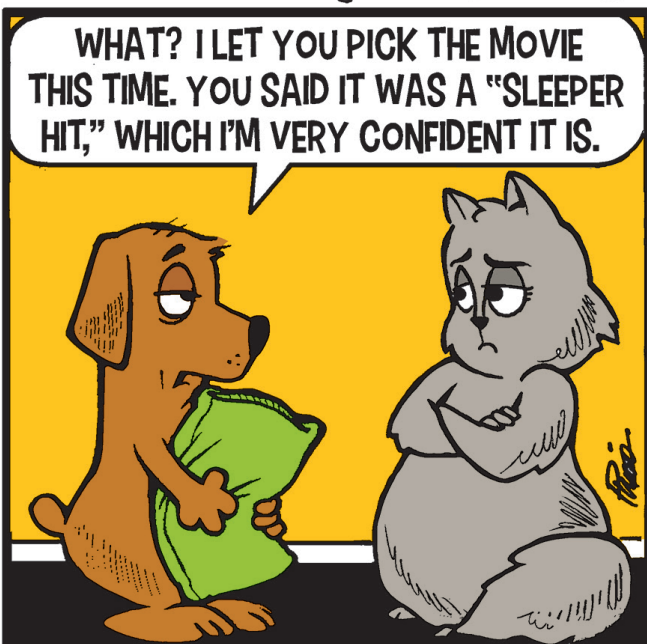
GRIN and BEAR IT Wagner



"We'll have the soup, sandwich and tune-up special."

Just Like Cats & Dogs

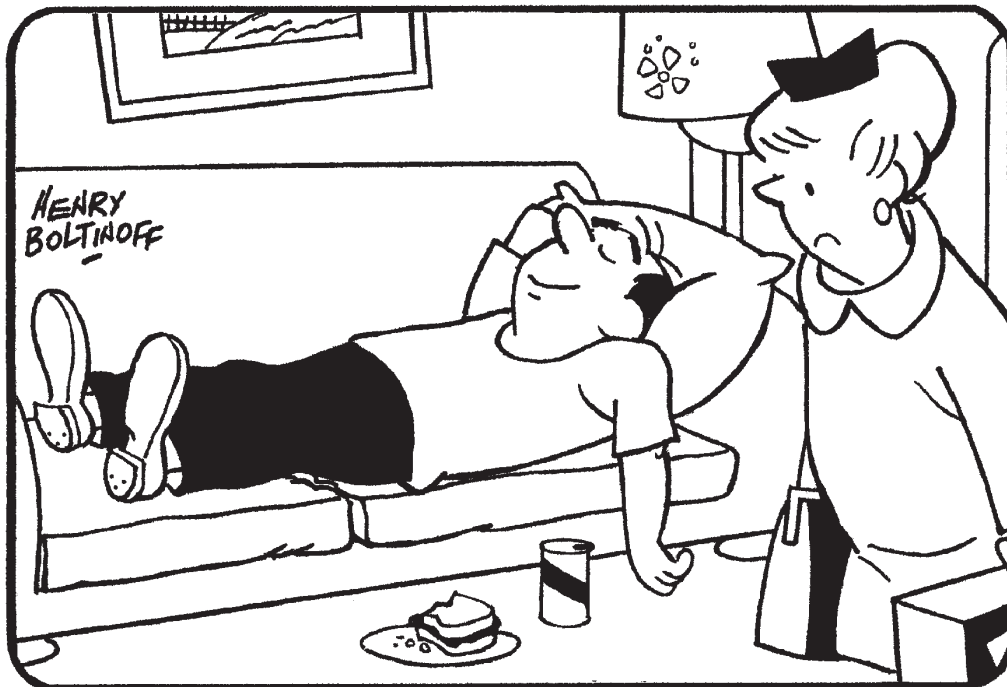
by Dave T. Phipps



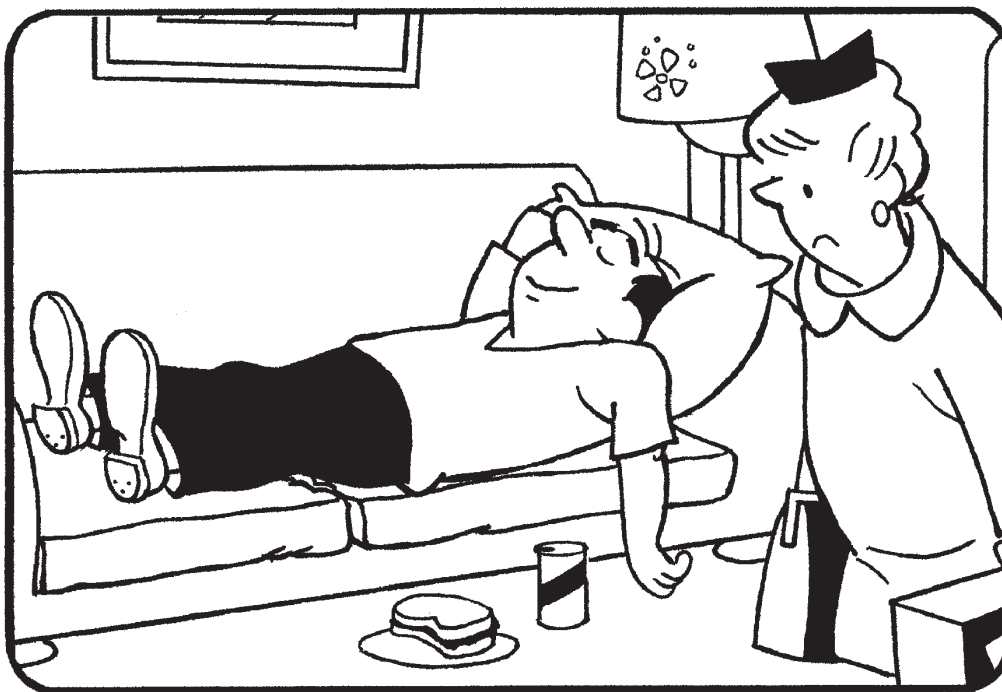
©2025 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

HOCUS - FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.

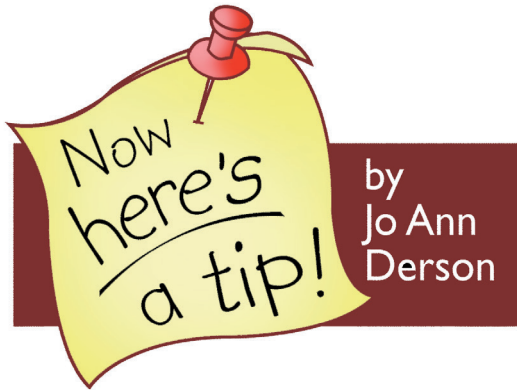


©2025 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

Differences: 1. Foot is moved. 2. Can is reversed. 3. Sandwich is different. 4. Hair is different. 5. Frame is moved. 6. Shirt has a V-neck.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 21 of 114



* To ripen a green tomato, wrap it in a sheet of newspaper or place it in a paper bag. It can then be left on the counter for several days to ripen.

* "To keep those ice crystals from forming on the top of your quart of ice cream, just cut a square of plastic wrap and push it down onto the surface of the ice cream each time you scoop a bowlful out. It peels off easily when you're ready for another helping, but there's no ice! Works for me!" -- T.D. in Nebraska

* White vinegar will clean off fruit or food coloring stains on your hands -- or most other places too!

* F.J. of Texas writes: "Keep a fresh roll of unscented toilet tissue in the kitchen to clean up on the stove and countertop. It cleans up good because of its absorbency, and it saves money

on expensive paper towels."

* "If you add a teaspoon of sugar to your biscuit mix or to the dough for rolls, it will help them brown well and they will come out of the oven with golden tops." -- Jan R. of Michigan

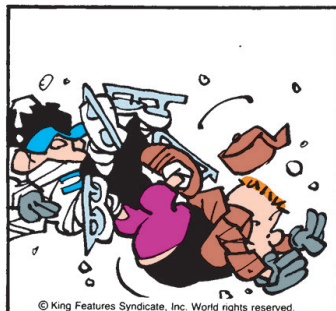
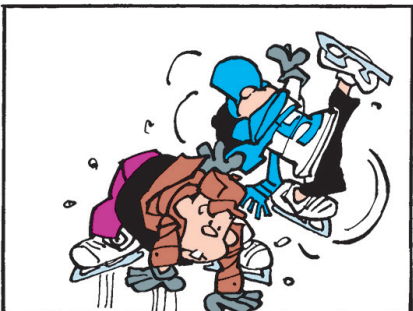
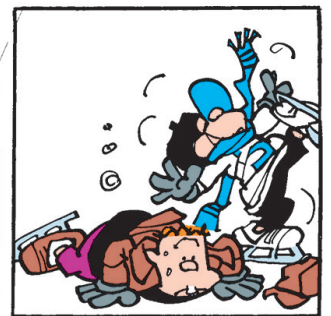
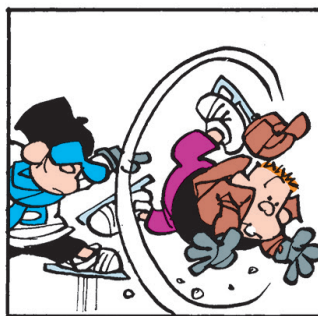
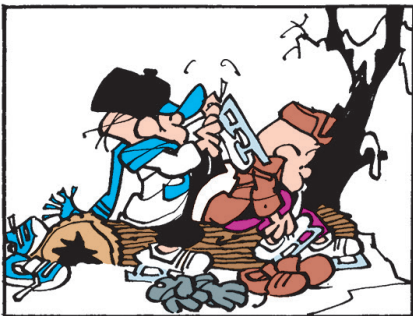
* You can get five or six more uses out of a pump-top lotion bottle if you cut off the top to access the lotion inside that doesn't come out of the pump once the level is too low. You'd be surprised how much is still in there!

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

(c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



© King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 22 of 114

King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Dime portrait
- 4 "Phooey!"
- 8 Chow
- 12 Singer Reed
- 13 Aachen article
- 14 Russo of "The Intern"
- 15 Top floor cooler
- 17 Roman poet
- 18 Farm fraction
- 19 Corrodes
- 20 Monk's home
- 22 Raw minerals
- 24 Paint layer
- 25 Skillet with low sides
- 29 Gearwheel tooth
- 30 Prefix with "logical"

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
		18						19				
20	21					22	23					
24					25					26	27	28
29				30						31		
32			33						34			
			35					36				
37	38	39					40					
41					42	43					44	45
46					47					48		
49					50					51		

- 31 Bathroom, to a Londoner
- 32 Refuse holder
- 34 Lacking slack
- 35 New Mexico resort
- 36 Desert flora
- 37 Passe
- 40 Achy
- 41 Breakfast chain
- 42 Village People classic
- 46 Air-show stunt
- 47 Sneeze syllable
- 48 Latin 101 word
- 49 Singer Lovett
- 50 Tools with teeth
- 51 Label
- 10 One
- 11 Hotel furniture
- 16 "Cold As Ever" rapper
- 19 Seized vehicle
- 20 Bank statement no.
- 21 Rude dude
- 22 Killer whales
- 23 Check
- 25 Designer Chanel
- 26 Table protector
- 27 Summer month in Paris
- 28 Terse denial
- 30 Roe provider
- 33 Treeless tract
- 34 Poi base
- 36 Some Pacific salmon
- 37 Pickling herb
- 38 "Hi, sailor!"
- 39 Implement
- 40 Garbage barge
- 42 Roast VIPs
- 43 "Caught ya!"
- 44 "I — Rock"
- 45 Egggy quaff

DOWN

- 1 Ga. neighbor
- 2 Speck
- 3 Yellow turnip
- 4 Belittle
- 5 Teeming
- 6 Political strategist Navarro
- 7 Hamilton bill
- 8 Complain
- 9 Guns the engine

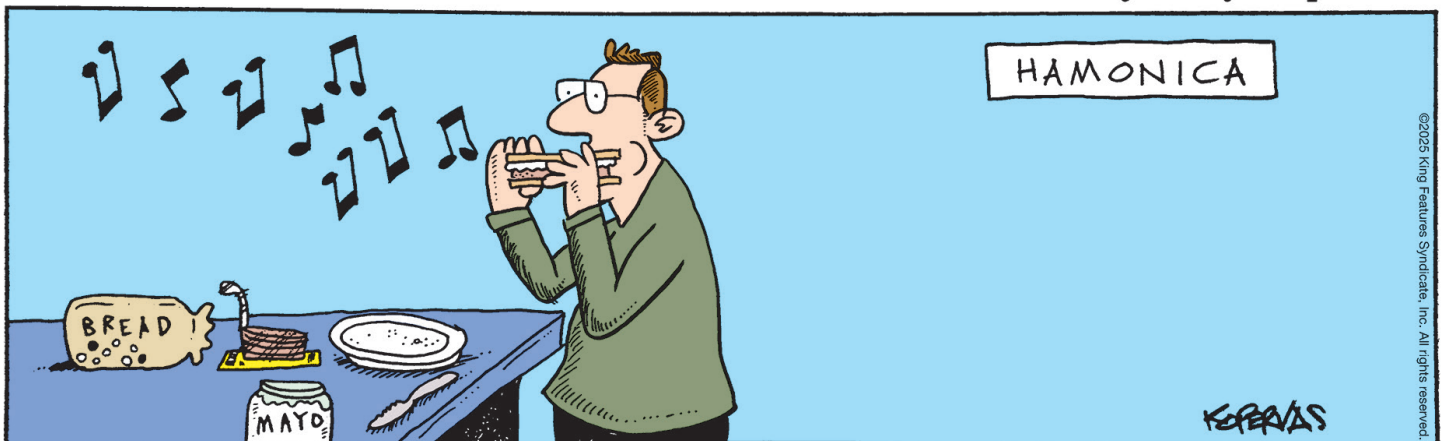
— King Crossword — Answers

Solution time: 26 mins.

F	D	R		D	R	A	T		G	R	U	B	
L	O	U		E	I	N	E		R	E	N	E	
A	T	T	I	C	F	A	N		O	V	I	D	
		A	C	R	E				R	U	S	T	S
A	B	B	E	Y		O	R	E	S				
C	O	A	T		C	R	E	P	E	P	A	N	
C	O	G		S	O	C	I	O		L	O	O	
T	R	A	S	H	C	A	N		T	A	U	T	
			T	A	O	S			C	A	C	T	I
D	A	T	E	D				S	O	R	E		
I	H	O	P		M	A	C	H	O	M	A	N	
L	O	O	P		C	H	O	O		A	M	O	
L	Y	L	E		S	A	W	S		T	A	G	

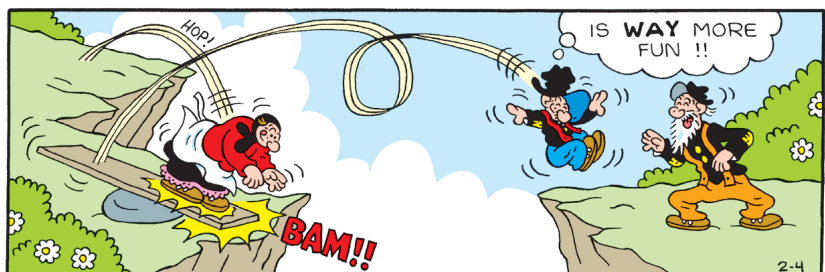
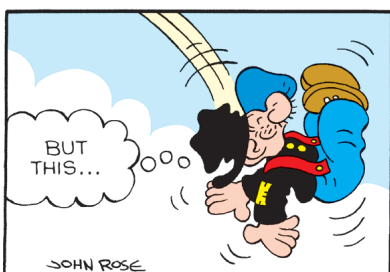
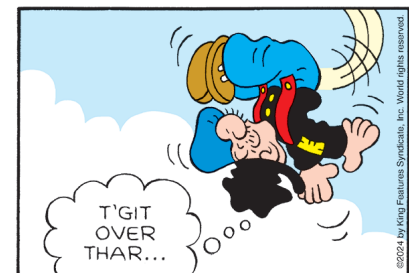
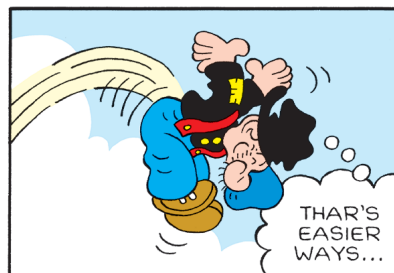
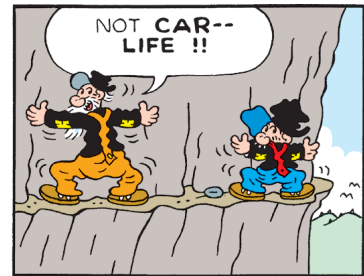
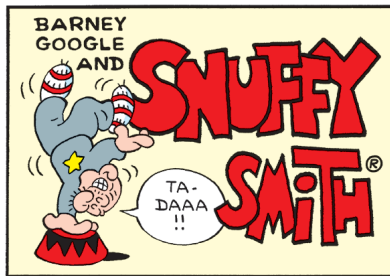
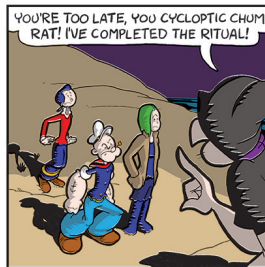
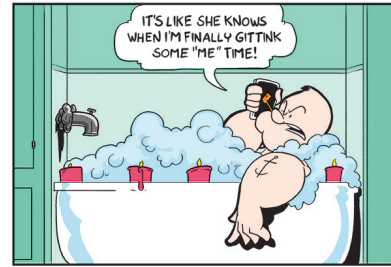
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 24 of 114



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 25 of 114



...BUT THEN THERE IS A GREAT COMMOTION ON THE DECK ABOVE THEM. THE ENTIRE SHIP SEEMS ROUSED FROM SLUMBER - MANY FEET RUSH TOWARD THE BOW...

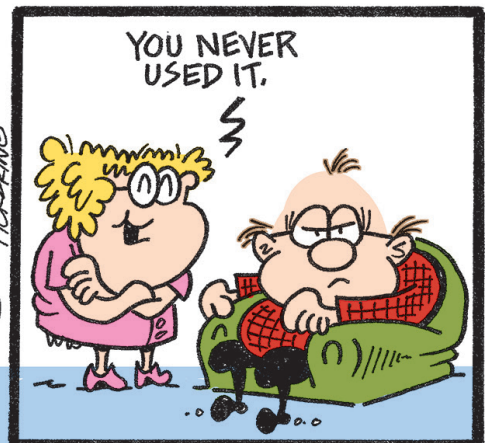
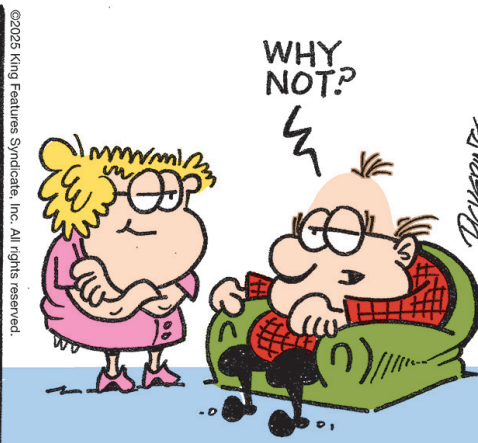
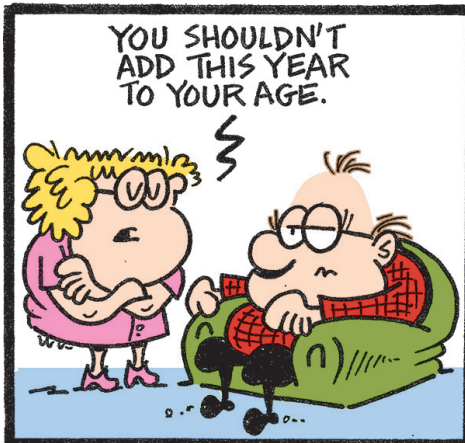


... AND THEN THEY HEAR THE CAUSE: IT IS AN ETHEREAL FEMALE CHOIR; A SONG UNEARTHLY AND BEAUTIFUL BEYOND WORDS - SEEPING IN OVER A WIND THAT HAS SHIFTED TO THE FORE. THEIR COMBAT IS FORGOTTEN BEFORE IT BEGINS...



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



©2025 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

PICKERING

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 26 of 114

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Winter activity: painting

It looks like we're in for a long winter, with extremely cold temperatures in several places. Many of us are already realizing that we just don't want to go out in that. But what shall we do to occupy ourselves while we're at home?

I don't know how it started, but in my neighborhood this winter the favorite activity has become ... painting. Each day new photos of "works of art" are sent around via cellphones as the idea spreads.

I decided to join in. Between the internet and home deliveries, we have access to everything we need without going out!

My first step was to do a YouTube search for painting lessons. Right at the top was "Beginner's Guide to Painting," and I was off and running.

On YouTube it's possible to narrow down the search results to the subjects you're most interested in learning to paint, whether it's sunsets, flowers, mountains, snow scenes, cats, dogs, lakes, vintage cars, beaches -- if it can be painted, there's a tutorial for it. The topics can be further broken down by watercolor and acrylic painting.

There are even videos that outline what supplies you need.

Some suggestions, if you'd like to paint:

Unless you have a store near you that will ship or deliver supplies to you, look online for the big names such as Michaels, Joann and Hobby Lobby as places to start.

You need paint and water, and something to paint on, such as paper or canvas panels, plus a selection of brushes. Add in a small plastic palette for mixing colors.

Look for beginner kits that have a selection of a dozen or so small tubes of acrylic paint colors or a dozen watercolors in a metal tray.

If you fear you have no real talent for painting, I invite you to explore Acrylic Squeegee Painting on YouTube. That technique can make anyone an artist!

(c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

15 N Main St. - Ste. 101
Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460
Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



Open 24/7

Living Heart Fitness Center

Senior Citizens 65+
Physical Therapy. **\$20 a month**

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 27 of 114

1. Name the American skier from Puerto Rico who won a gold medal in moguls at the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics. (Hint: He hosted three seasons of MTV's "Real World/Road Rules Challenge.")

2. What Alabama Crimson Tide linebacker was selected No. 2 overall by the Indianapolis Colts in the 1987 NFL Draft, then was traded to the Buffalo Bills before the start of the '87 season?

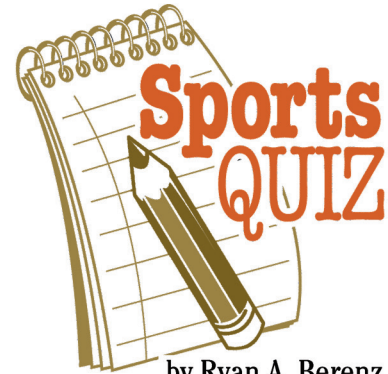
3. Name the women's golf match-play tournament, contested annually from 2005-08, that pitted players from Asia against an international squad.

4. New Zealand's Neroli Fairhall became the first athlete to participate in both the Paralympic Games (Arnhem 1980) and the Olympic Games (Los Angeles 1984). In what sport did she compete?

5. During the San Diego Padres' 1974 home opener, who took the public address microphone and told the crowd, "Fans, I suffer with you. I've never seen such stupid ballplaying in my life"?

6. What Swedish ice hockey great also played for the Swedish national soccer team, played professional golf and founded the first golf course in the Soviet Union?

7. Between brothers William "The Refrigerator" Perry and Michael Dean Perry, who had more sacks in his NFL career?



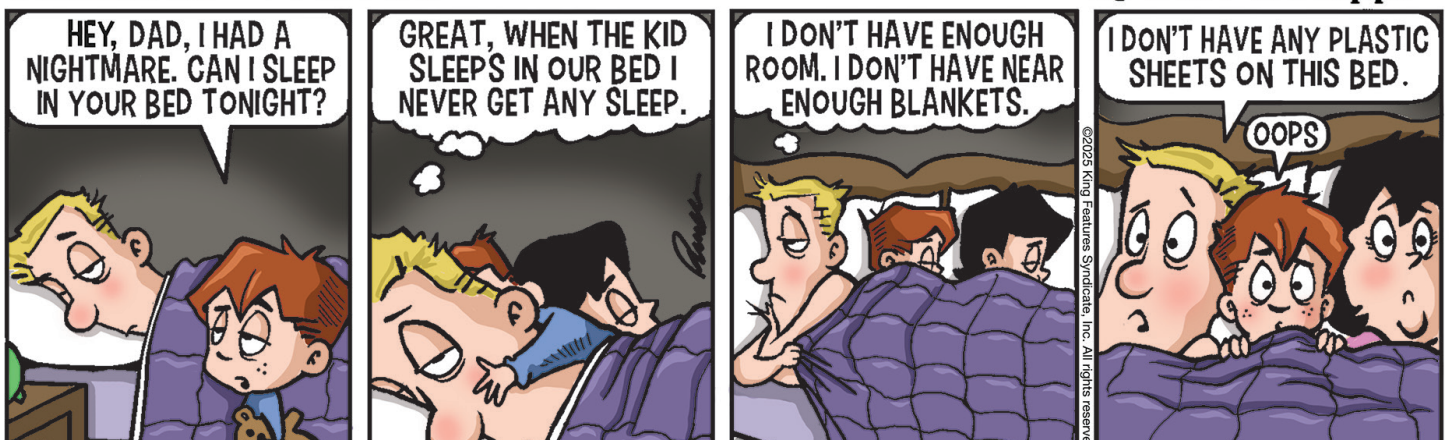
by Ryan A. Berenz

Answers

1. Jonny Moseley.
 2. Cornelius Bennett.
 3. The Lexus Cup.
 4. Archery.
 5. New team owner Ray Kroc.
 6. Sven Tumba.
 7. Michael, with 61 (William had 29.5).
- (c) 2025 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





It's up to you to keep pets safe from cold weather injury

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I hope you will warn your readers to take care of their dogs' paws during the winter. Recently, after a big snowstorm, I took my toy poodle, "Blake," out for his morning walk. Five feet from the door, he let out a yelp and started limping with his right front paw lifted. A big piece of rock salt had embedded itself in one of the pads! I took him back inside to clean the wound. Fortunately, it wasn't too bad, but I had to carry him outside for the rest of the week to do his business until it healed. -- Tired Momma in Buffalo, New York

DEAR TIRED: Many owners are aware that ice and snow can cause frostbite injury to their dogs, but some

don't realize that rock salt and other deicers are also dangerous. In addition to potentially cutting their paws, deicing mixtures that have low or no salt use chemicals that can poison pets.

Before venturing out in cold weather -- even when it's above freezing -- dogs of all sizes should have on booties and a warm vest (one that is water-resistant if it's snowing or raining). I know some owners will scoff and say that dogs survived thousands of years without booties. But they didn't have to contend with salt-strewn sidewalks!

A frostbitten paw is very painful, as well, and could mean your dog is sidelined indoors for several days as the injury heals. Getting too cold while outside -- especially for small dogs -- can cause hypothermia or reduce their resistance to illness. So remember, if it feels cold to you, it feels cold to them. Take heed and protect your dog from cold weather.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

(c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 29 of 114

Strange BUT TRUE

* There is a Guinness World Record for “most matchsticks extinguished with the tongue.”

* Jimi Hendrix served as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army’s elite 101st Airborne division, though an ankle injury allowed him to leave the service with a welcomed honorable discharge after one year of the three he’d signed up for.

* Medical students in 18th-century Scotland could pay their tuition fees in corpses.

* A statement in the end credits of the movie “Frozen”

claims that Disney does not support the consumption of boogers.

* After Playboy founder Hugh Hefner funded some research in the 1980s that identified a subspecies of rabbit living in the Florida Keys, it was named for him: *sylvilagus palustris hefneri*.

* An IKEA in the Netherlands had to cancel its one-euro breakfast special because it attracted too many customers and caused highway traffic jams.

* Thomas Edison invented the tattoo pen.

* Rolex replaced, without charge, all the watches that had been seized by the Germans from shot-down Allied pilots during World War II.

* In its lifetime, the International Space Station will be hit by 100,000 meteoroids.

* During the Columbine High School massacre in 1999, two 20-pound propane bombs that were planted in the cafeteria failed to detonate. If they had, it is estimated that up to 488 students would have been seriously injured or killed.

* Every year, Iceland gets wider by 2 centimeters.

* The U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal, has guidelines on what to do if you should stumble across a yeti (and no, we are not talking about the cup!).

Thought for the Day: “In everyone’s life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.” -- Albert Schweitzer

(c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

The Garden Bug

Midwinter gardening tasks



Even in winter, there are plenty of things you can do to prepare for the busy spring ahead:

- Clean your patio or deck.
- Keep your gutters cleared out.
- Check any coverings, stakes, supports and ties that might have become damaged.
- Start researching and getting quotes for your biggest upcoming projects.
- Inspect and reinforce any fences and boundaries to ensure they are secure.
- Provide bird feeders, both hanging and ground feeders, filled with a variety of seeds, nuts, and suet. – Brenda Weaver

Source: hortlands.co.uk



by Freddy Groves

New presumptives added to the list

In January the Department of Veterans Affairs added several illnesses to its list of presumptives, courtesy of the PACT Act. Done in two batches, the new additions to the list make it easier for veterans to get the care they need without the dragged-out process of proving that where they were stationed was the cause of their current condition. The illnesses are now considered service-connected, which gives veterans free health care for those conditions.

The first batch of conditions (in effect on Jan. 2) included urinary bladder, ureter and related genitourinary cancers. The second batch (Jan. 10) included acute and chronic leukemias, multiple myelomas, and myelodysplastic syndromes and myelofibrosis.

Locations matter, and these presumptives are covered for veterans who served in Somalia, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea or the Red Sea on or after Aug. 2, 1990.

After 9/11, the covered locations are for those who served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen or Uzbekistan.

K2 veterans, you haven't been forgotten. In fact, those serving at Karshi-Khanabad have been recipients of a major push by the VA to get you the health benefits you should have. Too many K2 veterans have undiagnosed illnesses and multi-symptom illnesses, likely from what was in the toxic environment while you were there: jet fuel, asbestos roof tiles, volatile organic compounds, depleted uranium, open burn pits, and more. A recent VA news release says that of the 16,000 K2 veterans, 13,000 are enrolled in VA care. Of those, 11,800 have at least one service connected condition, with the average having 14.6 service-connected conditions.

If you're K2 -- and even if you aren't -- and haven't signed up for health care, call the VA at 1-800-MYVA411 (800-698-2411). Get the benefits you're supposed to have.

(c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 31 of 114

Wishing Well®

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

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

©2025 King Features Syndicate



1. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What year was the first Barbie doll released?
2. MOVIES: What is the name of the island in the "Jurassic Park" film?
3. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What are baby rabbits called?
4. U.S. STATES: Which state is the home of Mount Rushmore?
5. INVENTIONS: When were emojis invented?
6. TELEVISION: In the TV series "The Walking Dead," what was the character Rick Grimes' profession previously?
7. CHEMISTRY: Which element is also known as quicksilver?
8. SCIENCE: What is the name for the pivot on which a lever turns?
9. GEOGRAPHY: Which country is home to the ancient city of Petra?
10. MUSIC: Which of Taylor Swift's songs was first to appear on the Billboard Hot 100?

Answers

1. 1959.
2. Isla Nublar.
3. Kits.
4. South Dakota.
5. 1999.
6. Sheriff's deputy.
7. Mercury.
8. Fulcrum.
9. Jordan.
10. "Tim McGraw."

© 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

South Dakota's Grit and Hospitality

By: Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden

In 1925, a group of leaders had a vision. They wanted to create something in South Dakota so grand it would draw visitors from all over the world. And they were successful! This year, we celebrate 100 years of the establishment of Mount Rushmore National Memorial, an attraction so grand it brings millions of visitors to our state each year.

But people don't just visit South Dakota for our Shrine of Democracy. They come back because of our people. Our South Dakota spirit helps them make a connection with our people, and our natural beauty satisfies their want for adventure and exploration.

South Dakota's tourism industry is a big reason why we have been so successful, and 2024 was a big year for tourism! We once again broke the record for most new visitors to our state: 14.9 million. In fact, we broke this record every year but one since Kristi Noem has been our governor, which is a testament to her leadership and ability to tell South Dakota's story.

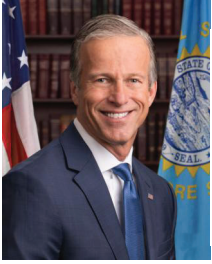
Those visitors spread out to all corners of our great state. 8.7 million people hiked, biked, camped, and enjoyed our great parks system, 11% more than the year before. And 3.8 million travelers explored a National Park.

These visitors help make life just a little bit better for us here in South Dakota. Thanks to tourism, South Dakota households pay \$1,100 less in taxes! When you add it all up, South Dakota's efforts in 2024 resulted in visitor spending of more than five billion dollars. This is also a new record! And one out of every 11 jobs in South Dakota is supported by the tourism industry, which keeps South Dakota families strong.

So how is a state with less than one million people finding such great success? Simple – the South Dakotans who work in the tourism industry are always thinking up new and innovative ways to attract visitors. And when they come, we give travelers a one-of-a-kind experience to keep them coming back.

We appreciate the wonder of our great outdoors and take steps to maintain it. Travel South Dakota created the Forever 605 code to help folks "Explore all points on the map, and not overcrowd just a few of them. To travel far, but shop local. To embrace the moment, but respect the past. To let the wild be wild – and keep nature in nature. To give just as much to the 605 state as this place will give to you."

Our people's grit and South Dakota's hospitality make us an incredible place to visit. We are blessed to live here and fortunate that we get to share our state with others. And to all the South Dakotans working in the tourism industry, keep up the great work!



JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

Defending Dignity and Celebrating Life

It was a privilege to be able to welcome tens of thousands of Americans to the nation's capital this month for the 52nd March for Life. It's an inspiring sight when the streets of Washington are packed with pro-life Americans from every corner of the country – when you look down the broad avenues and see signs held high and the smiles on people's faces as they march to defend and celebrate every human life.

Our country's founding document reads, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The founders recognized that life is a fundamental right, and the pro-life movement continues to carry that truth forward. They continue to be a voice for those who have no voice. They defend those who cannot defend themselves. They work to protect the smallest, weakest, and most vulnerable, and I commend them for their commitment.

It can often feel like an uphill battle defending life, but the annual march is proof that pro-life Americans are not alone. South Dakotans proved that in last year's election. Voters in our state stood for life in November by upholding our state's laws regarding abortion. I'm proud that South Dakota voters had the courage to be leaders in the defense of human life.

This month, the U.S. Senate held a vote on the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, a simple bill that would have required that a baby born alive after an attempted abortion be provided the same protection and medical care as any other newborn baby. It shouldn't be controversial, but Democrats can't seem to agree that a baby born after a failed abortion should be protected.

Democrats blocked this bill, obscuring their votes with vague justifications. But I think what it boils down to is this: Democrats fear that by recognizing the humanity of a newly born child, they may inadvertently point to the humanity of the unborn child. When you do that, it gets a little harder to say that same child wasn't human just a few moments ago because he or she hadn't been born.

There is still work to be done, but we in the pro-life movement have truth on our side. I believe that that truth will ultimately prevail and one day we will recognize the dignity of every human life and protect every human life. Until then, we march on.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 34 of 114



The Sanctity of Life

BIG Update

Every year, thousands of babies are born alive after a failed attempted abortion, however, they don't all receive care they need to survive. It's truly tragic. This week, I voted to pass the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act to require health care practitioners who are present preserve the life and health of the child born. Every child deserves a chance at life.

I recently earned an A+ rating by Susan B. Anthony's Pro-Life Scorecard for my votes and actions last Congress.

BIG Idea

For nearly 150 years, the Supreme Court has consisted of nine justices, but in recent years, the left has pushed for packing the court to add liberal justices under a Democrat president. I reintroduced my bill, "Keep the Nine," which would amend the Constitution to state that only nine justices are to serve on the Supreme Court.

I've introduced this bill every Congress, and I hope that with a GOP trifecta we can get it done to protect the Supreme Court from being used as a tool in political fights. The Supreme Court is an essential part of America's checks and balances. It must not be abused.

BIG News

My bill, the Wounded Knee Massacre Memorial and Sacred Site Act passed the House. This is a big deal. More than 10,000 bills are introduced each Congress, and only a few hundred receive a vote on the House floor. This is an incredible accomplishment. My bill passed with unanimous support.

I'm grateful for the help of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe to craft this legislation. The bill would preserve a section of the land where hundreds of Lakota Indians were massacred by the U.S. Army. America isn't perfect, and I'll admit we've made some mistakes. The Wounded Knee bill seeks to right one of those wrongs by protecting the sanctity of this land to remember the lives lost.

I'm hopeful the Senate will consider this legislation soon.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 35 of 114



January 6-20, 2025

Welcome to the first Weekly Round[s] Up of 2025! We've had a busy first couple weeks of the 119th Congress out here in DC. Preparation for President Trump's second term is in full swing. While I started meeting with his nominees in December, we began hearing from those nominees in public hearings.

Hosting these hearings early tees up the nomination so that we are ready to vote and get them in place now that President Trump is in office. In my committees, we've already voted to approve Pete Hegseth and John Ratcliffe, and they'll now head to the full Senate. We're hitting the ground running and ready for a busy few months as we work day in and day out to get President Trump's chosen team confirmed, as well as accomplishing some of his major policy priorities early in his term. Here's my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota meetings: I met with the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association; and Cammy Lantis and Leah Rinard with Lantis Enterprises. We also had many South Dakotans visiting Washington for the inauguration. I enjoyed getting to visit with them and welcome them to town at events hosted by my office over the weekend.

Met with South Dakotans from: Aberdeen, Box Elder, Brandon, Brookings, Chamberlain, Deadwood, Dimock, Estelline, Forbes Township, Midland, Milbank, New Underwood, Piedmont, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Spearfish, St. Lawrence, Tea, Vermillion, Wagner, Whitewood and Winner.

Cabinet nominee meetings:

John Phelan, nominee to be Secretary of the Navy. His nomination will come before the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), which I serve on.

Dan Driscoll, nominee to be Secretary of the Army. He will also go through SASC.

Stephen Feinberg, nominee for Deputy Secretary of Defense who will come through SASC.

Todd Blanche, nominee for Deputy Attorney General.

Other meetings: Brendan Carr, Commissioner at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC); Kirsten Hillman, Canada's Ambassador to the United States; John Ketchum, CEO of NextEra Energy; Dario Amodei, CEO of Anthropic; Bill Anderson, CEO of Bayer's Worldwide; and Nathan McCauley, CEO of Anchorage Digital.

I hosted a gathering with Senator Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.) honoring our seatmates, Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.) and Senate Majority Whip John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), who are now in leadership positions within our conference. I also attended Senate Bible Study, hosted by Senator Steve Daines (R-Mont.), and Senate Prayer Breakfast, where we heard from Senate Chaplain Barry Black.

Inauguration Ceremonies: I stayed in Washington this past weekend attending the Inauguration of President Trump. This included breakfast with President Trump on Sunday morning and the Inauguration ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda on Monday. It was a great weekend celebrating our 47th (and 45th) President, and we're ready for all the good things to come!

Hearings: We kicked off our nomination hearings with Pete Hegseth, nominee for Secretary of Defense, in the Senate Armed Services Committee. Mr. Hegseth did well in responding to questions from the committee members on his vision for the Department of Defense, including a focus on lethality. You can watch the clip of my questions here.

We also had the nomination hearing for John Ratcliffe, nominee to lead the Central Intelligence Agency, which you can watch a clip of here. In the Banking committee, we heard from Scott Turner, nominee to lead the Department of Housing and Urban Development. You can watch the Banking clip here.

Votes taken: 5 – all of these votes were to move the Laken Riley Act forward. I voted yes on this legislation, which I was an original cosponsor of in both this Congress and the last Congress. This bill will require Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to arrest and detain immigrants who have committed certain crimes until they are deported.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen, Brookings, Pierre, Sioux Falls, Volin, Wall, White River and Yankton.

Steps taken: Week 1: 55,645 steps or 27.7 miles. Week 2: 49,483 steps or 25.09 miles



Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483

1-352-216-3025

For Sale: One Lying Bathroom Mirror

Nobody enjoys privacy more than Yours Truly. I confess I am not a very happy camper when that privacy is compromised in any fashion. Recently, I endured a tremendous trespass on my privacy.

One day last week, I got up as usual and tottered off to the bathroom for my accustomed bathroom routine. It was then I got the shock of my life of which I am not over as of yet. I am sure this experience will be with me many years down the road. I am not sure I need counseling but maybe a day or two at a rehab center just might do the trick.

I do confess that I am not at my best early in the morning prior to my bathroom ritual. As far as I am concerned, the bathroom is a sacred place of refuge before facing the world. It is a place where I can prepare myself to meet the world as well as making preparations for the world to meet me. It would be a great travesty for me to plunge myself out into the unsuspecting world before going into my bathroom and making certain preparations. I owe the world at least this.

Of course, with all the political nonsense the world is imposing upon me lately, I am tempted to thrust myself out into the world without any preparations whatsoever. That would teach the world to mess with me. On second thought, too many innocent bystanders would get hurt in the process.

On this day in question not only was I unprepared to meet the world but I was unprepared to meet my bathroom. Looking back on the situation, I do vaguely remember the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage mentioning something to the fact that she made certain changes in my bathroom. Obviously, I was preoccupied with other things to be concerned about this wee bit of information she laid upon me at the time. I simply assumed she was talking about waxing the floor or changing the shower curtain. Never in my wildest dreams did I think she would do anything as drastic as she did.

This brings me to an important point; never underestimate the damage a wife can do to the sacred places of her husband.

When I walked into my bathroom and switched on the light, I had the shock of my life. I looked in the mirror, as normal and looking back at me was the most frightful thing I have ever seen. I thought for a moment Stephen King had sabotaged my bathroom.

The face looking back at me was old and haggard desperately needing a shave. The bags under his eyes looked like sacks of potatoes and what little hair he had looked like the aftermath of a suicide bomber. I wanted to call the police but I was too paralyzed with fear.

I must have yelled or something because my wife came running into the bathroom and asked, "What's wrong?"

Then she did something that infuriated me even more than I was at the time. She laughed.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 37 of 114

I do not mind people laughing when I tell a joke or a funny story. However, when I have just been frightened out of my mind, I do not appreciate levity. Then she explained to me what had happened. My wife took it upon herself to replace the mirror in my bathroom.

For a fleeting moment, murderous thoughts stomped through my mind. Fortunately for me they were still wearing their bedroom slippers and not their marching boots.

I do not look forward to very much in life but I do look forward to my mirror in my bathroom. I have had that mirror for as long as I can remember, which may not be a very long time when I come to think of it. I vaguely remember hearing my wife mentioned the fact that the mirror in my bathroom needed to be replaced. I thought she was kidding.

When I get up in the morning, I look forward to going into my bathroom mirror. I have a little ritual that I do upon first glance into my mirror. "Mirror, mirror on my wall; who needs a shave the worst of all?" Then we have a good laugh together.

I know that my mirror, my old mirror that is, was rather old and flawed and the reflection back at me was rather blurry. That is what made it so endearing to me. No matter how hard you tried to clean it the reflection was still very cloudy at best. Then, several years ago an accident occurred producing a small crack in my mirror. I must say it was an improvement I gladly accepted. It accommodated my split personality: Sometimes I feel like a nut, and sometimes I don't." One morning I could shave on the left side of the crack and the next morning I could shave on the right side.

The thing I loved about my old mirror was how it clouded the truth. The new mirror, however, is very insistent upon the truth.

A verse of Scripture came to mind as I pondered my old mirror. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Corinthians 13:12 KJV).

If someone would like a mirror that insists on telling the truth, I have one for sale.

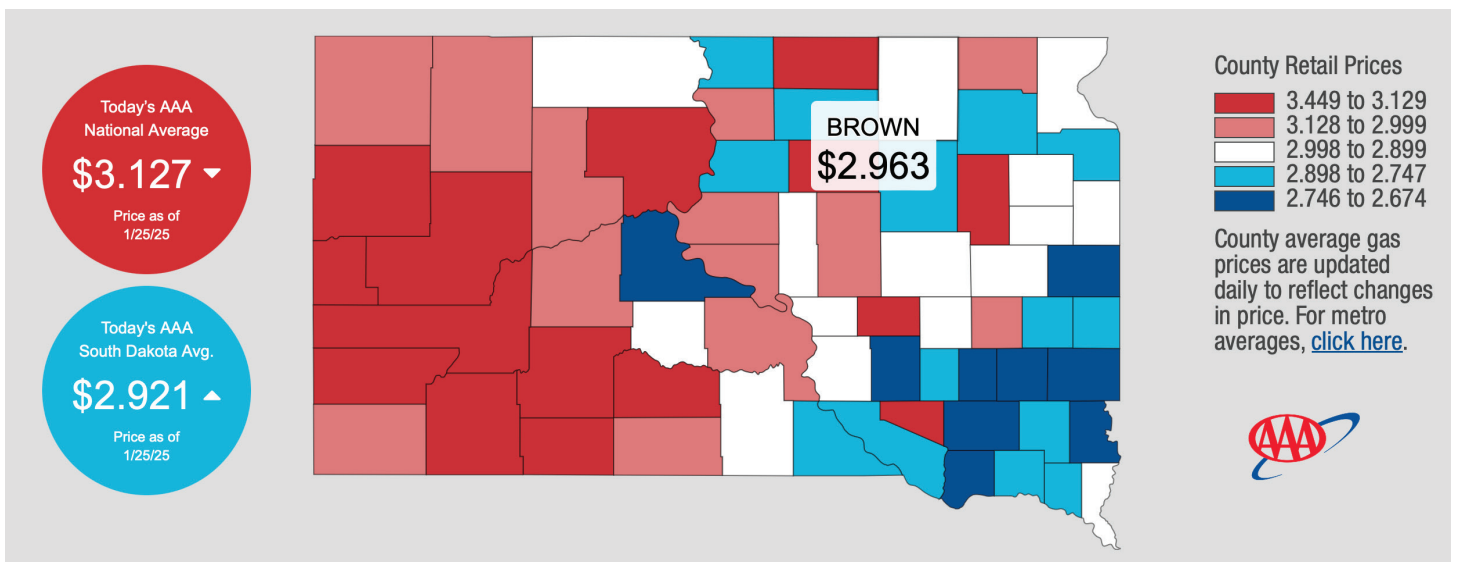
Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 38 of 114

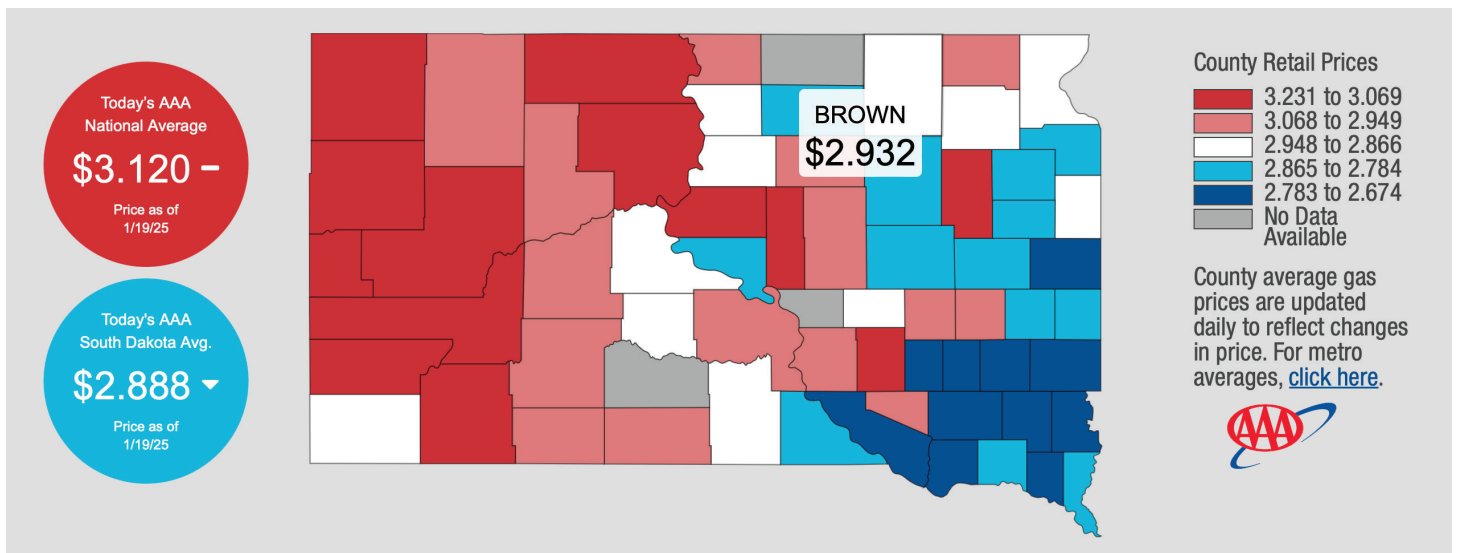
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$2.921	\$3.114	\$3.556	\$3.411
Yesterday Avg.	\$2.912	\$3.131	\$3.554	\$3.443
Week Ago Avg.	\$2.889	\$3.079	\$3.517	\$3.363
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.798	\$3.043	\$3.450	\$3.209
Year Ago Avg.	\$2.841	\$3.006	\$3.464	\$3.637

This Week



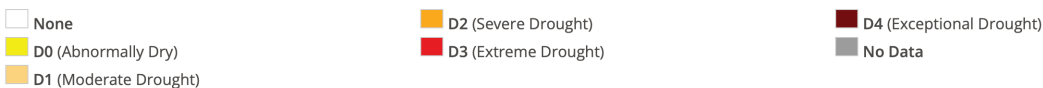
Last Week



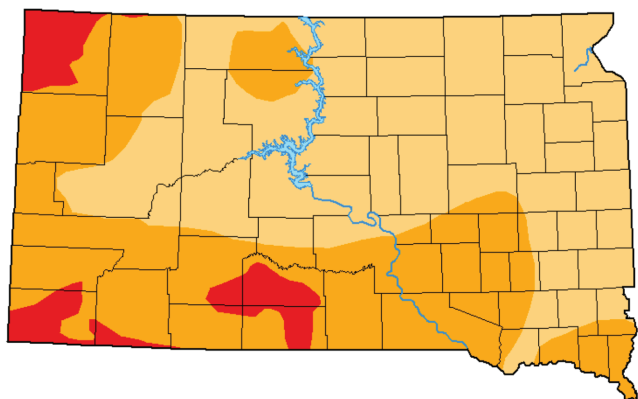
Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 39 of 114

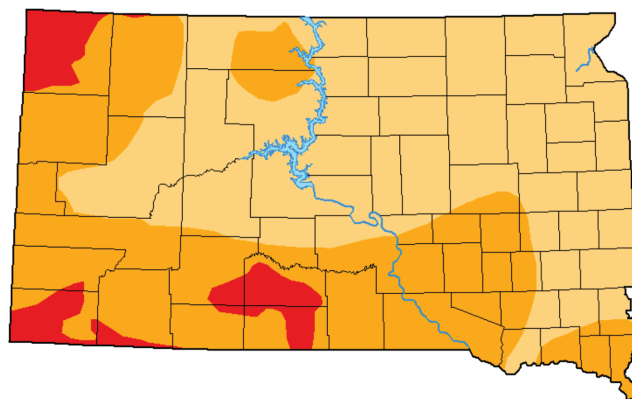
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



January 21



January 14

Some of the coldest air of the year settled into the region over the last week. Departures from normal temperatures were 12-15 degrees below normal in portions of Wyoming, South Dakota, and Colorado, and into Kansas and Nebraska. Dry conditions dominated the region with only portions of southwest Kansas and the Plains of Wyoming and Colorado recording precipitation. December and January are the driest months of the year and deficits are accumulating with little to no precipitation over the last several weeks. Conditions will continue to be monitored for further degradation in the region.

EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: What are some ways music gear makers are going green? – Peter B., Groton, CT

Music gear production, from collecting materials, producing gear and packaging with excessive plastic, has numerous negative environmental effects. Collecting wood has led to overharvesting at an unsustainable rate, an increasingly urgent issue for forests and woodlands. Plastic and metal waste have risen, too. These issues have led many music gear makers to implement sustainable changes.

The good news is that some instrument producers have begun harvesting wood from dead or dying trees to prevent the overharvesting of rich woodlands, while others have shifted toward less-used “alternative tonewoods” like basswood and kaya. To decrease metal waste in sourcing for strings, makers are beginning to purchase strings in the form of rods.

Small changes are also happening in the production area. Manufacturers have replaced traditional materials with eco-friendly options when producing the picks, straps and other accessories. It is now commonplace to find bioplastic or even shell for guitar picks and vegan leather for straps. String company Stringjoy now has a recycling program, encouraging players to mail back old strings to repurpose the material.

When packaging manufactured goods, music gear makers have begun using paper tape, boxes and envelopes over the traditionally used plastic. Unique innovations have also made packaging greener, such as color-coding each guitar string and its packaging to avoid the environmentally harmful practice of purchasing an entirely new set of guitar strings when only one needs a replacement.

Together these changes have led to a plethora of significant positive outcomes. Increased use of alternative wood sources has caused a notable decrease in pressure on certain wood species commonly used for instruments like mahogany, rosewood and spruce. Moreover, changes made in packaging and material collection have reduced the vast amounts of plastic and metal waste from entering landfills or oceans. Exemplified by the color-coded guitar strings, unique innovations have also made an impact, with the director of product management at music instrument company D’Addario, Brian Vance, commenting that color-coding has eliminated total packaging mass by 70 percent.

More can still be done. Companies advocate for government policies cementing environmentally friendly decisions made by manufacturers, or work toward simpler changes by implementing more recycling programs for their customers. Ultimately, strategic efforts have significantly boosted the sustainability of music gear production, proving that these efforts must be continued and expanded.



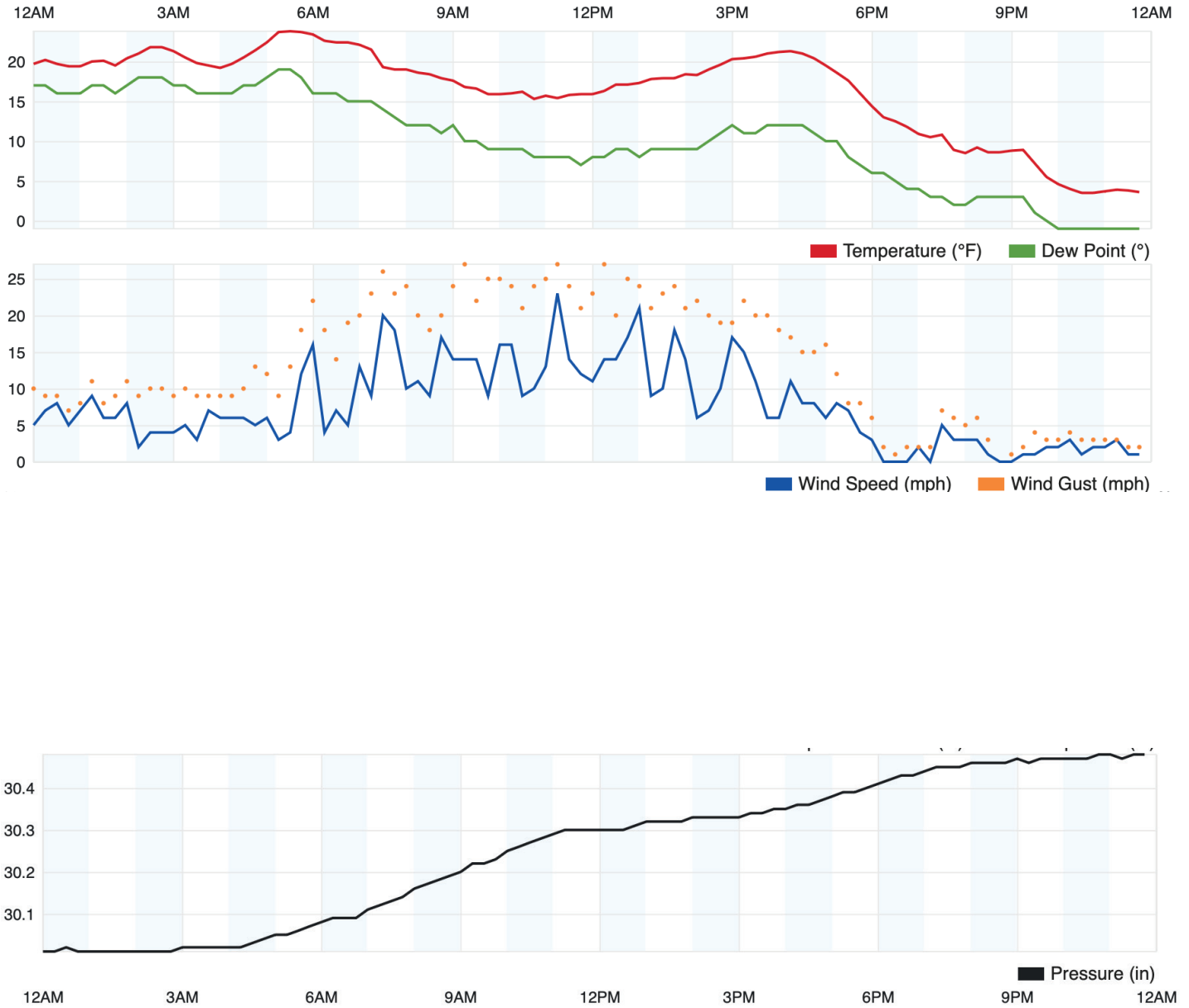
Music gear makers are increasingly incorporating sustainable woods and other green materials into their products these days. Credit:

Ian Mackenzie, FlickrCC.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 41 of 114

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 42 of 114

Today



High: 34 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 20 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Monday



High: 43 °F

Becoming
Sunny

Monday Night



Low: 23 °F

Mostly Clear

Tuesday



High: 46 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Sunny
and Breezy

Through Mid-Week

Sun



Highs:
29 to 35
Lows:
6 to 9

Mon



Highs:
37 to 45
Lows:
16 to 23

Tue



Highs:
41 to 49
Lows:
21 to 25

Wed



Highs:
26 to 38
Lows:
19 to 26

Dry and warmer weather is in store, along with continued breezy days. Highs will be mainly in the 30s today, in the upper 30s to mid 40s Monday, and in the 40s Tuesday. Winds will be breezy each day, around 15 to 30 mph. The strongest winds, with gusts to around 50 mph, can be expected over the eastern slopes of the Sisseton Hills late this evening into Monday morning.



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 43 of 114

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 24 °F at 5:29 AM

Low Temp: 3 °F at 10:34 PM

Wind: 29 mph at 9:48 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 35 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1947

Record Low: -30 in 1950

Average High: 24

Average Low: 1

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.47

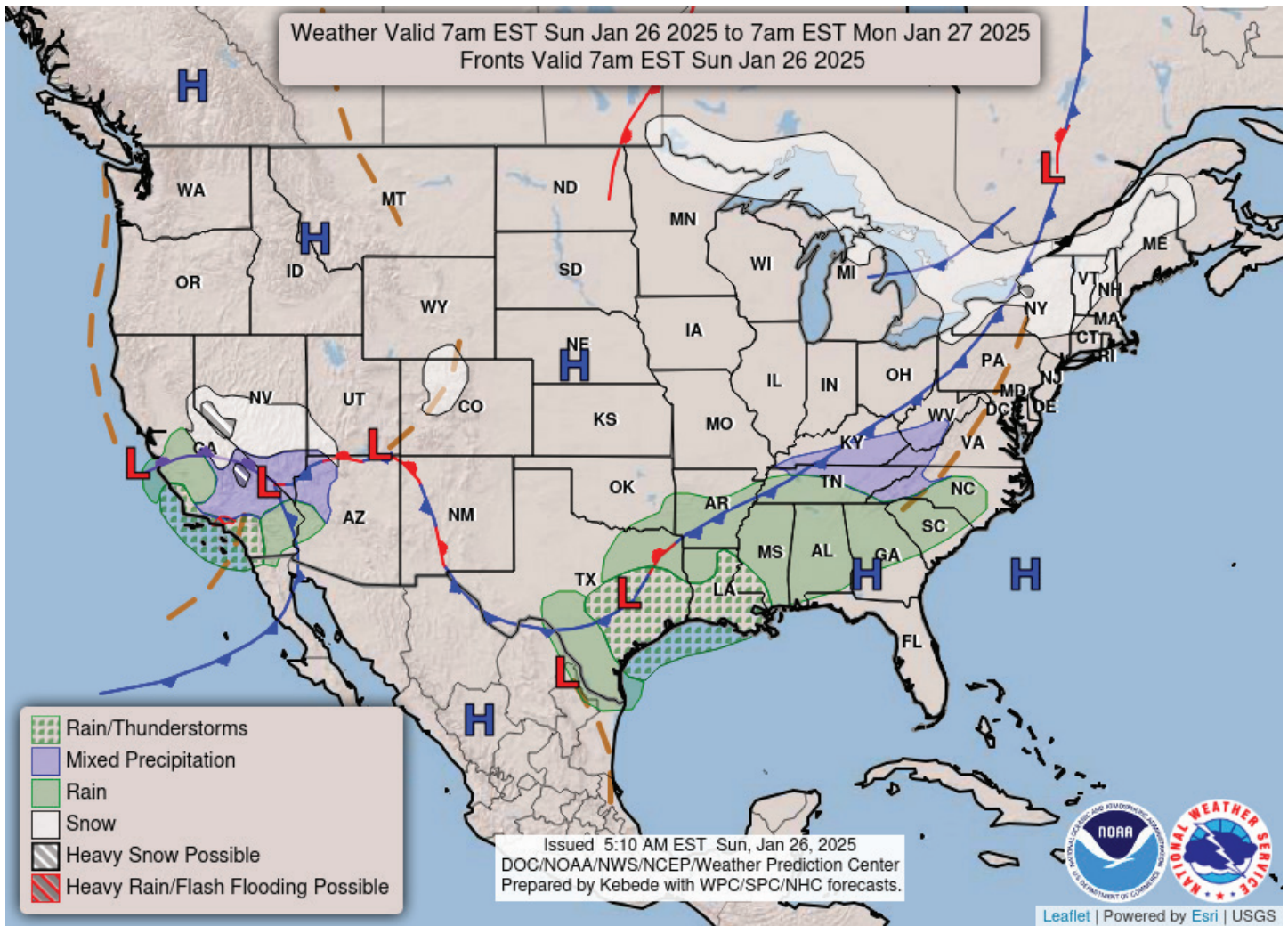
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.47

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 5:32:33 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:56:28 am



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 44 of 114

Today in Weather History

January 26, 1977: Four days of very strong winds occurred from the 26th through the 29th, with a strong low-pressure area over western Ontario. Strong northwest winds of 30 to 45 mph with gusts into the 60s caused widespread blowing and drifting snow, with most roads closed with many traffic accidents. The winds combined with subzero temperatures creating wind chills of 60 to 80 below zero. Many schools were closed for several days.

January 26, 2014: A strong Alberta Clipper system-generated light snow and strong winds across the region resulting in blizzard conditions. On Sunday morning, a band of moderate to heavy snow showers developed over North Dakota and swept down through our region producing cloud to ground lightning and thundersnow at times. Snowfall amounts were generally three inches or less. Wind gusts ranged from 45 to 55 mph at times. Several no travel advisories were issued due to poor visibilities in blizzard conditions, with state officials closing a large portion of Interstate-29 from Brookings to the North Dakota border. Click [HERE](#) for more information. January 2014 will go down as one of the windiest months across the region, along with extreme temperature swings, especially for northeast South Dakota. The constant bombardment from powerful clipper systems from the northwest was responsible for this unusual weather.

1700: A powerful earthquake struck the Pacific Northwest along the Cascadia Subduction zone. The estimated moment magnitude of 8.7-9.2 caused about a 1,000-kilometer rupture from mid-Vancouver Island to northern California. The ocean floor heaved upward approximately 20 feet, and with 10-20 minutes, a giant wave, 30-40 feet high, reached the shore. The earthquake caused a tsunami, which struck the coast of Japan.

1772: Possibly the greatest snowfall ever recorded in the Washington DC area started on this day. When the storm began, Thomas Jefferson was returning home from his honeymoon with his new bride, Martha Wayles Skelton. The newlyweds made it to within eight miles of Monticello before having to abandon their carriage in the deep snow. Both finished the ride on horseback in the blinding snow. The newlyweds arrived home late on the night of January 26th. In Jefferson's "Garden Book," he wrote, "the deepest snow we have ever seen. In Albermarle, it was about 3. F. deep."

1937: The wettest month ever in Cincinnati, Ohio, is January 1937, when 13.68 inches fell. Their average January amount is 3.00 inches of precipitation. The overabundance of precipitation over the Ohio River basin caused near-record to record flooding in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky. On this day, the river gauge reached 80 feet in Cincinnati, the highest level in the city's history. The Ohio River reached 57 feet in Louisville, Kentucky, on the 27th, setting a new record by ten feet. Seventy percent of the city was underwater at that time.

1978 - A paralyzing blizzard struck the Midwest. One to three feet of snow fell in Michigan, and 20 to 40 inches was reported across Indiana. Winds reached 70 mph in Michigan, and gusted above 100 mph in Ohio. The high winds produced snow drifts twenty feet high in Michigan and Indiana stranding thousands on the interstate highways. Temperatures in Ohio dropped from the 40s to near zero during the storm. (David Ludlum)

1983 - The California coast was battered by a storm which produced record high tides, thirty-two foot waves, and mudslides, causing millions of dollars damage. The storm then moved east and dumped four feet of snow on Lake Tahoe. (22nd-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm spread heavy snow across the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast States, with 18 inches reported at Vineland NJ, and wind gusts to 65 mph at Chatham MA. Snow cover in Virginia ranged up to thirty inches following this second major storm in just one week. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A snowstorm in the northeastern U.S. produced 19 inches at Austerlitz NY and Stillwater NY. A storm in the Great Lakes Region left 16.5 inches at Marquette MI, for a total of 43 inches in six days. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Snow and high winds created blizzard-like conditions in northwestern Vermont. Winds at Saint Albans gusted to 88 mph. In Alaska, the town of Cold Foot (located north of Fairbanks) reported a morning low of 75 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



SINCERITY MAY NOT BE ENOUGH

Charlie Brown was standing in front of his baseball team talking about the game they had just lost.

With a look of sadness in his eyes he sighed and said, "Sixty-five to nothing. I don't understand it. We were so sincere."

Sincerity is good but it does not ensure success. We may be as sincere as the day is long, but it will not replace knowledge, skill or the right attitude. If we are going in the wrong direction sincerity will not lead us to the right destination.

One may be sincere about what they believe but it does not guarantee salvation. One may sincerely believe in eternal life and want to go to heaven, but unless they receive Christ as their Savior, they will not be with Him in eternity.

John wrote, "So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have His Son does not have life." This simple statement says it all when it comes to the new birth and the way to eternal life.

Eternal life begins the moment we surrender our lives to the Lordship of Christ as our Savior. It is not something we can work for or hope for or purchase. It is not something that is passed on from one generation to another. And it certainly does not depend on a "feeling."

It is something that God guarantees through His Son. Whoever believes will certainly receive eternal life.

Prayer: Only through You and in You, Heavenly Father, can we have eternal life. We are grateful for Your salvation and the assurance of eternal life with You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:12

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

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 46 of 114

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent www.397news.com Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months \$26.63
- 6 Months \$31.95
- 9 Months \$42.60
- 12 Months \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

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

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 47 of 114



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.24.25

8 12 43 52 62 18

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$44,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.25.25

8 31 35 44 46 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$22,630,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.25.25

8 26 28 38 46 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 23 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.25.25

6 7 14 29 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.25.25

2 5 52 59 60 16

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.25.25

8 15 17 53 66 14

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$56,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 48 of 114

Upcoming Groton Events

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

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 49 of 114

News from the Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Andes Central/Dakota Christian 54, Viborg-Hurley 41

Arlington 55, Minneota, Minn. 49

Beresford 56, Bon Homme 39

Brandon Valley 67, Aberdeen Central 48

Brookings 55, Rapid City Stevens 53

Canby, Minn. 63, Estelline-Hendricks 31

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 58, Stanley County 41

Dakota Valley 68, Bennett County 44

Deubrook 50, Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. 42

Edgerton, Minn. 48, Elkton-Lake Benton 46

Faith 54, McIntosh High School 29

Flandreau 56, Parker 23

Great Plains Lutheran 54, Aberdeen Christian 8

Harding County 43, Lemmon High School 33

Hill City 39, Alliance, Neb. 21

Irene-Wakonda 55, Osmond, Neb. 40

Lakota Tech 60, Florence-Henry 30

Leola-Frederick High School 38, Sunshine Bible Academy 27

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 62, Belle Fourche 37

Miller 54, McLaughlin 37

North Central 52, Langford 38

Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 61, Dupree 50

Rapid City Christian 59, Freeman 55

Sioux Falls Jefferson 53, Huron 42

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 64, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 36

Sisseton 61, Redfield 25

St Thomas More 53, Douglas 17

Todd County 72, Crow Creek Tribal School 65

Vermillion 54, Lyman 51

Wall 52, Custer 45

Watertown 48, Rapid City Central 37

White River 59, New Underwood 46

Wilmot 80, Lower Brule 48

Wolsey-Wessington 63, Potter County 44

Blizzard Classic=

Gayville-Volin High School 64, Platte-Geddes 31

Panhandle Conference Tournament=

Championship=

Morrill, Neb. 43, Edgemont 35

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 50 of 114

BOYS PREP BAS Brandon Valley 69, Aberdeen Central 53
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 61, Stanley County 48
Clark-Willow Lake 58, Lennox 55
Custer 66, Wall 58
Dell Rapids St Mary 68, Parkston 59
Elkton-Lake Benton 80, Canby, Minn. 55
Estelline-Hendricks 73, Dupree 61
Flandreau 80, Parker 39
Garretson 55, Lakota Tech 51
Gregory 69, White River 39
Hamlin 71, Rapid City Christian 59
Hanson 68, Leola-Frederick High School 64
Hot Springs 51, Mitchell Christian 19
Howard 54, Florence-Henry 44
Lemmon High School 66, Timber Lake 53
Lower Brule 60, Wilmot 52
McLaughlin 43, Miller 33
Mobridge-Pollock 55, Sioux Valley 41
North Central 46, Langford 42
Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 68, Sioux Falls Lutheran 54
Omaha Nation, Neb. 82, Flandreau Indian 36
Ortonville, Minn. 59, Arlington 42
Parkston 0, Dell Rapids 0
Pine Ridge 67, Little Wound 40
Rapid City Central 68, Watertown 42
Rapid City Stevens 61, Brookings 46
Red Cloud, Neb. 75, Belle Fourche 52
Sioux Falls Jefferson 71, Huron 61
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 62, Sioux Falls O’Gorman 49
Sisseton 56, Redfield 45
St Thomas More 62, Dakota Valley 54
St. Francis Indian 54, Chester 41
Strasburg, N.D. 51, Herreid-Selby 34
Sully Buttes 56, Deubrook 44
Sunshine Bible Academy 75, Colome 18
Todd County 70, Crow Creek Tribal School 57
Viborg-Hurley 49, Castlewood 44
Panhandle Conference Tournament=
Seventh Place=
Edgemont 48, Sioux County, Neb. 46

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

Garry puts up 19 in South Dakota State's 90-71 victory against South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Kalen Garry had 19 points in South Dakota State's 90-71 victory over South Dakota on Saturday night.

Garry added nine rebounds for the Jackrabbits (14-8, 5-2 Summit League). Owen Larson scored 18 points, going 5 of 9 from the floor, including 4 for 7 from 3-point range, and 4 for 4 from the line. Stoney Hadnot shot 6 of 9 from the field and 2 for 3 from the line to finish with 14 points.

The Coyotes (12-10, 3-4) were led by three players with 11 points. Mayuom Buom posted 11 points and seven rebounds. Isaac Bruns added 11 points and two steals. Chase Forte had 11 points and three steals.

Senate confirms Noem as Trump's homeland security secretary

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate confirmed Kristi Noem as homeland security secretary on Saturday, putting the South Dakota governor in charge of a sprawling agency that is essential to national security and President Donald Trump's plans to clamp down on illegal immigration.

Republicans kept the Senate working Saturday to install the latest member of Trump's national security team on a 59-34 vote.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth was also confirmed in a dramatic tie-breaking vote Friday night, joining Secretary of State Marco Rubio and CIA Director John Ratcliffe. The Senate will next vote Monday evening on Scott Bessent's confirmation as treasury secretary.

Noem, a Trump ally who was in her second term as governor, received seven votes from Democrats. Republicans, who already held the votes necessary to confirm her, have expressed confidence in her determination to lead border security and immigration enforcement.

In a statement afterward, she pledged "to secure our southern border and fix our broken immigration system" while working to "detect and prevent terror threats and will deliver rapid assistance and disaster relief to Americans in crisis."

Noem was sworn in by Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas at his home later Saturday. She was to have been sworn in by Vice President JD Vance in the afternoon but that was called off when she was delayed, according to a person familiar with the events who was not authorized to discuss them and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The homeland security secretary oversees U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Citizenship and Immigration Services. Beyond those agencies, the department is also responsible for securing airline transportation, protecting dignitaries, responding to natural disasters and more.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Friday that "fixing this crisis and restoring respect for the rule of law is one of President Trump and Republicans' top priorities. And it's going to require a decisive and committed leader" at the department.

Democrats are split on how to handle border enforcement and immigration under Trump, with some warming to his hard-line stand.

Still, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York, as well as most other Democrats, voted against Noem. He pointed to "bipartisan solutions to fix the mess at our border," adding that Noem "seems headed in the wrong direction."

Trump is planning major changes to how the department functions, including involving the military in immigration enforcement and reshaping the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Those plans will immediately put Noem in the spotlight after the new president visited recent disaster sites in North Carolina and California on Friday.

During her Senate hearing, Noem was repeatedly asked by Democratic senators whether she would

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 52 of 114

administer disaster aid to states even if Trump asked her not to.

Noem avoided saying she would defy the president, but told lawmakers, "I will deliver the programs according to the law and that it will be done with no political bias."

Six people cycled through as homeland security secretary during Trump's first four years in office.

Noem, who held her state's lone U.S. House seat for eight years before becoming governor in 2019, has risen in the GOP by tacking closely with Trump. At one point, she was even under consideration to be his running mate.

Her political stock took a momentary dip, however, when she released a book last year containing an account of her killing her hunting dog, as well as a false claim that she once met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Following her confirmation, she was succeeded as South Dakota governor by Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden, a rancher and former state House member who was elected alongside Noem in 2018.

Noem will be tasked with delivering on Trump's favorite issue, border security. The president's goals of deporting millions of people who entered the country illegally could put Noem, with her experience governing a rural state and growing up on a farm, in a difficult position. In South Dakota, many migrants, some in the country without permanent legal status, power the labor-heavy jobs that produce food and housing.

She has so far pledged to faithfully execute the president's orders and copied his talk of an "invasion" at the U.S. border with Mexico.

Noem joined other Republican governors who sent National Guard troops to Texas to assist Operation Lone Star, which sought to discourage migrants. Her decision was especially criticized because she accepted a \$1 million donation from a Tennessee billionaire to cover some of the deployment cost.

She said she opted to send National Guard troops "because of this invasion," adding that "it is a war zone down there."

Trump wants Jordan and Egypt to accept more Palestinian refugees and floats plan to 'clean out' Gaza

By WILL WEISSERT and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (AP) — President Donald Trump said he would like to see Jordan, Egypt and other Arab nations increase the number of Palestinian refugees they are accepting from the Gaza Strip, potentially moving out enough of the population to "just clean out" the war-torn area to create a virtual clean slate.

During a 20-minute question-and-answer session Saturday with reporters aboard Air Force One, Trump also said he has ended his predecessor's hold on sending 2,000-pound bombs to Israel. That lifts a pressure point meant to reduce civilian casualties during Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza, which is now halted by a tenuous ceasefire.

"We released them today," Trump said of the bombs. "They've been waiting for them for a long time." Asked why he lifted the ban on those bombs, Trump responded, "Because they bought them."

Trump has built his political career around being unapologetically pro-Israel. On his larger vision for Gaza, Trump said he had call earlier in the day with King Abdullah II of Jordan and would speak Sunday with President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi of Egypt.

"I'd like Egypt to take people," Trump said. "You're talking about probably a million and a half people, and we just clean out that whole thing and say, 'You know, it's over.'"

Trump said he complimented Jordan for having successfully accepted Palestinian refugees and that he told the king, "I'd love for you to take on more, cause I'm looking at the whole Gaza Strip right now, and it's a mess. It's a real mess."

Such a drastic displacement of people would openly contradict Palestinian identity and deep connection to Gaza. Still, Trump said the part of the world that encompasses Gaza, has "had many, many conflicts" over centuries. He said resettling "could be temporary or long term."

"Something has to happen," Trump said. "But it's literally a demolition site right now. Almost everything's

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 53 of 114

demolished, and people are dying there." He added: "So, I'd rather get involved with some of the Arab nations, and build housing in a different location, where they can maybe live in peace for a change."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a statement Sunday, thanked Trump for "keeping your promise to give Israel the tools it needs to defend itself." He did not mention Trump's suggestion on Palestinian refugees.

Trump has offered nontraditional views on the future of Gaza in the past. He suggested after he was inaugurated on Monday that Gaza has "really got to be rebuilt in a different way."

The new president added then, "Gaza is interesting. It's a phenomenal location, on the sea. The best weather, you know, everything is good. It's like, some beautiful things could be done with it, but it's very interesting."

Resuming delivery of large bombs, meanwhile, is a break with then-President Joe Biden, who halted their delivery in May as part of an effort to keep Israel from launching an all-out assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah. A month later, Israel did take control of the city, but after the vast majority of the 1 million civilians that had been living or sheltering in Rafah had fled.

"Civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs and other ways in which they go after population centers," Biden told CNN in May when he held up the weapons. "I made it clear that if they go into Rafah ... I'm not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah, to deal with the cities, that deal with that problem."

The Biden pause had also held up 1,700 500-pound bombs that had been packaged in the same shipment to Israel, but weeks later those bombs were delivered.

Trump's action comes as he has celebrated the first phase of a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel that has paused the fighting and seen the release of some hostages held by Hamas in Gaza in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Negotiations have yet to begin in earnest on the more difficult second phase of the deal that would eventually see the release of all hostages held by Hamas and an enduring halt to the fighting.

If the remaining hostages are not released, the Israeli government has threatened to resume its war against Hamas, which launched a massive assault against Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

Jannik Sinner beats Alexander Zverev in 3 sets for his second Australian Open title in a row

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — There's all sorts of ways beyond merely the score to measure just how dominant Jannik Sinner was while outplaying and frustrating Alexander Zverev during the 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-3 victory Sunday that earned the 23-year-old Italian a second consecutive Australian Open championship.

The zero break points Sinner faced. Or the 10 he accumulated. The 27-13 advantage in points that lasted at least nine strokes. Or the way Sinner accumulated more winners, 32 to 25, and fewer unforced errors, 27 to 45. The way Sinner won 10 of the 13 points that ended with him at the net. Or the way he only let Zverev go 14 of 27 in that category, frequently zipping passing shots out of reach.

Well, here's is one more bit of evidence: what Zverev said about Sinner.

"I'm serving better than him, but that's it. He does everything else better than me. He moves better than me. He hits his forehand better than me. He hits his backhand better than me. He returns better than me. He volleys better than me," Zverev said. "At the end of the day, tennis has five or six massive shots — like, massive factors — and he does four or five of them better than me. That's the reason why he won."

High praise from a guy who is, after all, ranked No. 2. Sinner has held the No. 1 spot since last June and is not showing any signs of relinquishing it. This was the first Australian Open final between the men at No. 1 and No. 2 since 2019, when No. 1 Novak Djokovic defeated No. 2 Rafael Nadal — also in straight sets.

"It's amazing," Sinner said, "to achieve these things."

The "things" include being the youngest man to leave Melbourne Park with the trophy two years in a

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 54 of 114

row since Jim Courier in 1992-93, and the first man since Nadal at the French Open in 2005 and 2006 to follow up his first Grand Slam title by repeating as the champion at the same tournament a year later.

Sinner was asked later whether he felt more relief or excitement when he raised his arms after the last point was his.

"This one was joy. We managed to do something incredible this time, because the situation I was in was completely different from a year ago here," he said. "I had more pressure."

Probably true, but's hard to tell.

Go to the start of 2024, and take stock. In that span, Sinner has won three of the five major tournaments, including the U.S. Open in September, meaning he now has claimed three straight hard-court Slams. His record is 80-6 with nine titles. His current unbeaten run covers 21 matches.

"There's always something that can get better," said one of his two coaches, Simone Vagnozzi. "He is playing really well right now and everything comes easily. But there will be tough moments ahead."

The only thing that's clouded the past 12 months for Sinner, it seems, is the doping case in which his exoneration was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency. He tested positive for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid twice last March but blamed it on an accidental exposure involving two members of his team who have since been fired. Sinner initially was cleared in August; a hearing in the WADA appeal is scheduled for April.

"I keep playing like this because I have a clear mind on what happened," Sinner said Sunday. "I know if I would be guilty, I would not play like this."

While he became the eighth man in the Open era (which began in 1968) to start his career 3-0 in Grand Slam finals, Zverev is the seventh to be 0-3, adding this loss to those at the 2020 U.S. Open and last year's French Open.

Those earlier setbacks both came in five sets. This contest was not that close. Not at all.

"I'll keep doing everything I can," Zverev said, "to lift one of those trophies."

Just before Zverev began speaking into a microphone during the trophy ceremony, a voice cried out from the stands, making reference to two of the player's ex-girlfriends who accused him of physical abuse.

During the match, there truly was only one moment that contained a hint of tension. It came when Zverev was two points from owning the second set at 5-4, love-30. But a break point — and a set point — never arrived.

A year ago, Sinner went through a lot more trouble to earn his first major, needing to get past Novak Djokovic — who quit one set into his semifinal against Zverev on Friday because of a torn hamstring — before erasing a two-set deficit in the final against 2021 U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev.

This time, Sinner applied pressure with an all-around style that does not really appear to have holes.

He proved superior in every meaningful way other than aces, leaving Zverev shaking his head or trudging to the sideline with shoulders sagging or cracking his racket against the court or against another racket.

Perfectly understandable, given what Sinner can do to an opponent, especially on a hard court.

"The facts speak for themselves," Zverev said. "He's in a different universe right now."

Congo severs ties with Rwanda as rebels close in on Goma, displacing thousands

By JUSTIN KABUMBA Associated Press

GOMA, Congo (AP) — Congo has severed diplomatic ties with Rwanda as fighting between Rwanda-backed rebels and government forces rages around the key eastern city of Goma, leaving at least 13 peacekeepers and foreign soldiers dead and displacing thousands of civilians.

The M23 rebel group has made significant territorial gains along the border with Rwanda in recent weeks, closing in on Goma, the provincial capital that has a population of around 2 million and is a regional hub for security and humanitarian efforts.

Congo, the United States and U.N. experts accuse Rwanda of backing M23, which is mainly made up of ethnic Tutsis who broke away from the Congolese army more than a decade ago. It's one of about 100

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 55 of 114

armed groups that have been vying for a foothold in the mineral-rich region, where a long-running conflict has created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises.

Rwanda's government denies backing the rebels, but last year acknowledged that it has troops and missile systems in eastern Congo to safeguard its security, pointing to a buildup of Congolese forces near the border. U.N. experts estimate there are up to 4,000 Rwandan forces in Congo.

The Congolese Foreign ministry said late Saturday it was severing diplomatic ties with Rwanda and pulling out all diplomatic staff from the country "with immediate effect."

Rwanda's foreign minister, Olivier Nduhungerehe, told The Associated Press on Sunday that the decision to sever diplomatic ties was a unilateral move by Congo "that was even published on social media before being sent to our embassy."

"For us, we took appropriate measures to evacuate our remaining diplomat in Kinshasa, who was under permanent threat by Congolese officials. And this was achieved on Friday, one day before the publication of this so-called note verbale on social media," he said.

The U.N. Security Council moved up an emergency meeting on the escalating violence in eastern Congo to Sunday. Congo requested the meeting, which had originally been scheduled for Monday.

On Sunday morning, heavy gunfire resonated across Goma, just a few kilometers (miles) from the front line, while scores of displaced children and adults fled the Kanyaruchinya camp, one of the largest in eastern Congo, right near the Rwandan border, and headed south to Goma.

"We are fleeing because we saw soldiers on the border with Rwanda throwing bombs and shooting," said Safi Shangwe, who was heading to Goma.

"We are tired and we are afraid, our children are at risk of starving," she added.

Some of the displaced worried they will not be safe in Goma either.

"We are going to Goma, but I heard that there are bombs in Goma, too, so now we don't know where to go," said Adèle Shimiye.

Hundreds of people attempted to flee to Rwanda through the "Great Barrier" border crossing east of Goma on Sunday. Migration officers carefully checked travel documents.

"I am crossing to the other side to see if we will have a place of refuge because for the moment, security in the city is not guaranteed," Muahadi Amani, a resident of Goma, told the AP.

Earlier in the week, the rebels seized Sake, 27 kilometers (16 miles) from Goma, as concerns mounted that the city could soon fall.

Congo's army said Saturday it fended off an M23 offensive with the help of allied forces, including U.N. troops and soldiers from the Southern African Development Community Mission, also known as SAMIDRC.

Seven South African troops with SAMIDRC, as well as two serving with the U.N. peacekeeping force, have been killed in recent days, South Africa's ministry of defense said in a statement Saturday.

A U.N. official told The Associated Press that a Uruguayan peacekeeper was also killed on Saturday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak on the matter publicly. Meanwhile, the U.N. in Malawi said that three Malawian peacekeepers were killed.

Since 2021, Congo's government and allied forces, including SAMIDRC and U.N. troops, have been keeping M23 away from Goma.

The U.N. peacekeeping force entered Congo more than two decades ago and has around 14,000 peacekeepers on the ground.

Alaskans say Trump can change the name of Denali but can't make people call it Mount McKinley

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — North America's tallest peak is a focal point of Jeff King's life.

The four-time winner of the 1,000-mile (1,609-kilometer) Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race operates his kennel and mushing tourism business just 8 miles (12.87 kilometers) from Denali National Park and Preserve's entrance, and the 20,310-foot (6,190-meter) mountain looms large as he trains his dogs on nearby trails.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 56 of 114

King and many others who live in the mountain's shadow say most Alaskans will never stop calling the peak Denali, its Alaska Native name, despite President Donald Trump's executive order that the name revert to Mount McKinley -- an identifier inspired by President William McKinley, who was from Ohio and never set foot in Alaska.

For many who live near Denali, Trump's suggestion was peculiar.

"I don't know a single person that likes the idea, and we're pretty vocal about it," King said. "Denali respects the Indigenous people that have been here and around Denali for tens of thousands of years."

The mountain was named after McKinley when a prospector walked out of the Alaska wilderness in 1896, and the first news he heard was that the Republican had been nominated for president.

The name was quickly challenged, but maps had already been circulated with the mountain's name in place.

At the time, there was no recognition of the name Denali, or "the high one," bestowed on the mountain in interior Alaska by Athabascan tribal members, who have lived in the region for centuries.

The McKinley name stuck until 2015, when President Barack Obama's administration changed it to Denali as a symbolic gesture to Alaska Natives on the eve of his Alaska visit to highlight climate change.

Trump said he issued the order to "restore the name of a great president, William McKinley, to Mount McKinley, where it should be and where it belongs. President McKinley made our country very rich through tariffs and through talent."

The area lies solely in the United States, and Trump, as president, has the authority to change federal geographical names within the country.

In Ohio, Trump's move drew praise.

"I was really excited to see President Trump do that executive order," former U.S. Rep. Bob Gibbs, R-Ohio, told The Associated Press by telephone Thursday. McKinley "was a great president," Gibbs said. "It was the appropriate thing to do."

That's not how Alaskans see it.

Trump injected "a jarring note" into Alaska affairs, Steve Haycox, professor emeritus of history at the University of Alaska Anchorage, wrote in the Anchorage Daily News.

"Historical analysis confirms that William McKinley is the wrong public figure for Alaskans to commemorate," he said.

McKinley served as president from 1897 until he was assassinated in 1901. He was an imperial colonialist who oversaw the expansion of the American empire with the occupation of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines and Hawaii, pushed by business interests and Christian missionaries wanting to convert Indigenous peoples, Haycox said.

"Trump's push to rescind the name Denali for the colonialist and white elitist McKinley is insulting to all Alaskans, especially to Alaska's Native people, and should be soundly rejected," Haycox said.

John Wayne Howe, who unsuccessfully ran for U.S. House last year representing the Alaskan Independence Party, which holds that Alaskans should be allowed to vote on becoming an independent nation, said he is tired of "people changing the names of stuff, period."

He's also not in favor of naming anything after people because "the persons that we consider absolutely perfect change over time, and it just leads to confusion."

Howe said he prefers Denali because he knows McKinley's history and it's the name most preferred by Alaskans.

This past week, two resolutions were introduced in the Alaska Legislature to keep the name Denali.

Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy, a Trump ally who praised another order by the president aimed at spurring resource development in the state, said he had not had a chance to speak with Trump about the issue but hoped to have a conversation next month in Washington about what Denali means to Alaskans, Americans and "our Native folks."

But Sarah Palin, a former Republican governor who is also a Trump supporter, said the McKinley name should never have been removed.

Palin's Secret Service code name was Denali in 2008 when she was GOP presidential nominee John Mc-

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 57 of 114

Cain's running mate the year they lost to Obama and Joe Biden.

But in an interview with Al Arabiya News this past week, Palin said she didn't see why the mountain's name needed to be changed to begin with.

"It's always been Mount McKinley," said Palin, who didn't respond to a message from The Associated Press. "Nobody was begging for a change in name in that peak. Just put it back the way it was, more common sense."

Alaska's U.S. senators, Republicans Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, have supported the name Denali. U.S. Rep. Nick Begich, a first-term Republican, sidestepped the debate.

"I'm focused on job creation, opportunities in Alaska," Begich told Politico. "And what we call a mountain in Alaska is of little concern to me."

The Alaska Native Heritage Center, the statewide Indigenous cultural center in Anchorage, supports preserving Indigenous place names.

"Restoring and honoring them acknowledges the deep, millennia-old connection Indigenous peoples maintain with these lands and is a step toward respect and reconciliation," the center's president, Emily Edenshaw, said in a statement.

The quirky Alaska community of Talkeetna, about 140 miles (225.3 kilometers) south of the park and where a cat was once mayor, is the jumping off point for climbers before making the ascent of the peak. The historic community long rumored to be the inspiration for the 1990s television series "Northern Exposure" is also a popular tourist stop.

Joe McAneney of Talkeetna worked as a summer raft-guide for two years before moving to Alaska full time in 2012. He's now a pilot for an air taxi company, ferrying climbers and tourists to the mountain in a small airplane outfitted with skis to land at base camp, located on Kahiltna Glacier at 7,200 feet (2,194.6 meters) above sea level.

He knows once tourist season comes around, he will have to answer their questions of what he thinks about Trump changing the name. He knows what his answer will be.

"It's always been Denali, and it always will be," he said.

The executive order can instigate the name change, but compliance is another issue.

"The only people that are going to adhere to that are probably the people that would have been still calling it McKinley anyway," McAneney said

There is a long-standing Alaska trait of ignoring what the rest of the world thinks, and it's usually expressed like this: "We don't care how they do it Outside." Outside, which is always capitalized, refers to every place that is not Alaska.

"I think unofficially and officially in Alaska, it'll always be Denali," McAneney said. "I don't think the president can change that."

For King, the decorated Iditarod musher and fan favorite, Trump's decision had a whiff of arrogance.

"I'm surprised he doesn't want to name it Trump Mountain," he said.

Israel blocks thousands of Palestinians from returning to northern Gaza over ceasefire dispute

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel kept thousands of Palestinians from returning to their homes in the northern Gaza Strip on Sunday as it accused Hamas of violating a fragile ceasefire by changing the order of hostages it has released. Local health officials said Israeli forces fired on the crowds, killing two people and wounding nine.

Israeli forces also opened fire in Lebanon on protesters demanding their withdrawal in line with a separate ceasefire agreement with the Hezbollah militant group, killing at least 15 people and wounding more than 80. Israel refused to withdraw by a Sunday deadline, accusing Lebanese forces of not deploying quickly enough. The Lebanese army says it cannot move into areas until Israeli troops leave.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 58 of 114

U.S. President Donald Trump meanwhile suggested that most of Gaza's population should be at least temporarily resettled elsewhere, including in Egypt and Jordan, in order to "just clean out" the war-ravaged enclave. Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians themselves have previously rejected such a scenario, fearing Israel might never allow the refugees to return.

Bassem Naim, a senior Hamas official, said Palestinians would never accept such a proposal, "even if seemingly well-intentioned under the guise of reconstruction." He said the Palestinians can rebuild Gaza "even better than before" if Israel lifts its blockade.

Under the Israel-Hamas ceasefire, Israel on Saturday was to begin allowing Palestinians to return to their homes in northern Gaza on foot through the so-called Netzarim corridor bisecting Gaza. Israel put the move on hold until Hamas frees a hostage who Israel said was supposed to have been released Saturday. Hamas in turn accused Israel of violating the agreement.

Crowds of people traveling by foot and carrying their belongings filled a main road leading to a closed Israeli checkpoint. "We have been in agony for a year and a half," Nadia Qasem, a woman displaced from the north said as she waited. "Since 1 a.m. we have been waiting to return."

Fadi al-Sinwar, who was also displaced from Gaza City, said, "the fate of more than a million people is linked to one person," referring to the Israeli hostage.

"See how valuable we are? We are worthless," he said.

Dispute and shootings test fragile ceasefire

Israeli forces fired on the crowds on three occasions overnight and into Sunday, killing two people and wounding nine, including a child, according to Al-Awda Hospital, which received the casualties.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Israel has pulled back from several areas of Gaza as part of the ceasefire, which came into force last Sunday, but the military has warned people to stay away from its forces, which are still operating in a buffer zone inside Gaza along the border and in the Netzarim corridor.

Hamas freed four young female Israeli soldiers on Saturday, and Israel released some 200 Palestinian prisoners, most of whom were serving life sentences after being convicted of deadly attacks.

But Israel said another hostage, the female civilian Arbel Yehoud, was supposed to have been released ahead of the soldiers, and that it would not open the Netzarim corridor until she was freed. It also accused Hamas of failing to provide details on the conditions of hostages set to be freed in the coming weeks.

Hamas accused Israel of using the issue as a pretext to delay the return of Palestinians to their homes. In a statement, the militant group said it had informed mediators that Yehoud was alive and provided guarantees that she would be released.

The United States, Egypt and Qatar, which mediated the ceasefire, were working to address the dispute. Ending the war will be difficult

The ceasefire reached earlier this month after more than a year of negotiations is aimed at ending the 15-month war triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack and freeing scores of hostages still held in Gaza in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

Around 90 hostages are still being held in Gaza, and Israeli authorities believe at least a third, and up to half of them, were killed in the initial attack or died in captivity.

The first phase of the ceasefire runs until early March and includes the release of a total of 33 hostages and nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. The second — and far more difficult — phase, has yet to be negotiated. Hamas has said it will not release the remaining hostages without an end to the war, while Israel has threatened to resume its offensive until Hamas is destroyed.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people in the Oct. 7 attack, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250 people. More than 100 were freed during a weeklong ceasefire in November 2023. Israeli forces have rescued eight living hostages and recovered the remains of dozens more, at least three of whom were mistakenly killed by Israeli forces. Seven have been freed since the latest ceasefire began.

Israel's military campaign has killed over 47,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It does not say how many of the dead were combatants. The Israeli military says it has killed over 17,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

Israeli bombardment and ground operations have flattened wide swaths of Gaza and displaced around 90% of its population of 2.3 million people. Many who have returned to their homes since the ceasefire began have found only mounds of rubble where their neighborhoods once stood.

South Korean prosecutors indict impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol over his martial law

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean prosecutors on Sunday indicted impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol on rebellion in connection with his short-lived imposition of martial law, a criminal charge that could incur the death penalty or life imprisonment if convicted.

This is the latest blow to Yoon, who was impeached and arrested over his Dec. 3 martial law decree that plunged the country into political turmoil, shook its financial markets and hurt its international image. Separate from criminal judicial proceedings, the Constitutional Court is now deliberating whether to formally dismiss Yoon as president or reinstate him.

Yoon has become South Korea's first president who has been indicted while in office. He will remain jailed and be escorted from a detention facility to a Seoul court for hearings in the trial, which is expected to last about six months.

Yoon's defense team confirmed his indictment on a rebellion charge, calling it "the worst decision" by prosecutors who they say are trying to curry favor with political forces who want Yoon's exit.

"Today's indictment of the president will remain as a shame in the history of South Korean prosecutors that they cannot erase," Yoon's defense team said in a statement. "We stress once again that a president's declaration of martial law can never be rebellion."

Prosecutors indicted Yoon on charges that he directed a rebellion when he imposed martial law, according to local media. Repeated calls to prosecutors' offices in Seoul went unanswered. Investigative authorities have alleged that Yoon's imposition of martial law amounted to rebellion, because he staged riots with the purpose of undermining the constitution.

Yoon has presidential immunity from most criminal prosecutions, but the privilege doesn't extend to allegations of rebellion or treason. By law in South Korea, the leader of a rebellion can face a life sentence or capital punishment.

Yoon, a conservative, has steadfastly denied any wrongdoing, calling his declaration of martial law a legitimate act of governance meant to raise public awareness of the danger of the liberal-controlled National Assembly, which obstructed his agenda and impeached top officials. During his announcement of martial law, Yoon called the assembly "a den of criminals" and vowed to eliminate "shameless North Korea followers and anti-state forces."

After declaring martial law on Dec. 3, Yoon sent troops and police officers to the assembly, but enough lawmakers still managed to enter an assembly chamber to vote down Yoon's decree unanimously, forcing his Cabinet to lift it.

The martial law imposition, the first of its kind in South Korea in more than four decades, lasted only six hours. However, it evoked painful memories of past dictatorial rules in South Korea in the 1960s-80s when military-backed rulers used martial laws and emergency decrees to suppress opponents.

South Korea's constitution gives the president the power to declare martial law to keep order in wartime and other comparable emergency states, but many experts say the country wasn't under such conditions when Yoon declared martial law.

Yoon insists that he had no intentions of disrupting assembly work, including its floor vote on his decree and that deploying troops and police forces was meant to maintain order. But commanders of military units sent to the assembly have told assembly hearings or investigators that Yoon ordered them to drag out lawmakers to prevent them from overturning his decree.

Investigations on Yoon have intensified the country's already serious internal division, with rival protest-

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 60 of 114

ers regularly staging rallies in downtown Seoul.

After a local court on Jan. 19 approved a formal arrest warrant to extend Yoon's detention, dozens of his supporters stormed the court building, destroying windows, doors and other property. They also attacked police officers with bricks, steel pipes and other objects. The violence left 17 police officers injured, and police said that they detained 46 protesters.

Yoon earlier resisted efforts by investigative authorities to question or detain him. He then was apprehended on Jan. 15 in a huge law enforcement operation at his presidential compound.

Leading Yoon's investigation was the Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, but Yoon has refused to attend CIO questioning sessions since being detained, saying it has no legal authority to investigate rebellion allegations. The CIO has said that it can investigate Yoon's rebellion allegation because it's related to his purported abuse of power and other allegations.

The CIO handed over Yoon's case to the Seoul prosecutors' office on Friday and asked it to indict him on charges of rebellion, abuse of power and obstruction of the National Assembly. Prosecutors reportedly indicted Yoon only on rebellion, considering that Yoon had presidential immunity from other charges.

Yoon's defense minister, police chief and several other military commanders have already been arrested on alleged rebellion, abuse of power and other charges related to the martial law decree.

If the Constitutional Court rules to drive Yoon out of office, a national election to choose his successor must be held within two months. Recent public surveys show that governing and opposition party candidates are running neck-and-neck in a possible presidential by-election race.

Trump says inflation isn't his No. 1 issue. So what will happen to consumer prices?

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two months ago, in his first network television interview after the election, Donald Trump said he owed his victory to Americans' anger over immigration and inflation, specifically the rising cost of groceries.

"When you buy apples, when you buy bacon, when you buy eggs, they would double and triple the price over a short period of time," he told NBC's "Meet the Press." "And I won an election based on that. We're going to bring those prices way down."

But in Trump's first week back in the White House, there was little in his initial blitz of executive orders that directly tackled those prices, besides directing federal agencies to start "pursuing appropriate actions." He is taking steps to lower energy costs, something that Trump hopes will have ripple effects throughout the economy. Otherwise, his focus has been clamping down on immigration, which he described as his "No. 1 issue" shortly after taking the oath of office.

"They all said inflation was the No. 1 issue. I said, 'I disagree,'" Trump said. "I talked about inflation too, but how many times can you say that an apple has doubled in cost?"

Trump is banking on voters giving him a pass and continuing to blame former President Joe Biden for high prices. The Republican's comments reflect the reality that presidents have almost no levers to reduce inflation quickly without causing collateral damage to other parts of the economy.

There is more that Trump can do on energy. He is pushing to reduce regulations and increase the amount of land available for drilling. He is trying to persuade domestic and foreign oil producers to potentially sacrifice their own profits by pumping more.

During a rally Saturday in Las Vegas, Trump went after his Democratic predecessor for allowing prices to rise under his watch, and promised to take care of the problem quickly.

"When I think of Biden, I think of incompetence and inflation," Trump said.

Inflation peaked at a 9.1% annual rate in June 2022 during worldwide supply chain problems after the economic shock of the coronavirus pandemic. Overall consumer prices have fallen since then, but have ticked up in recent months, from 2.4% in September to 2.9% in December, the latest figures available. Economists have warned that Trump's plans for tariffs and tax cuts could create new inflationary pressures

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 61 of 114

and keep interest rates elevated.

Vice President JD Vance, in an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation" airing Sunday, defended the White House's work so far.

"Prices are going to come down, but it's going to take a little bit of time, right?" he said. He added, "Rome wasn't built in a day."

Trump's relative shift away from addressing costs could create an opening for Democrats to say he is not helping working-class voters, hoping that argument could offer the party a path back to power in Washington.

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said Trump preferred to distract people from inflation with talk of adding Greenland to the United States or seizing the Panama Canal.

"It's catnip and it causes everybody to stop paying attention to their actual economic agenda, which has nothing to do with lowering costs and everything to do with rigging the economy to help the Mar-a-Lago crowd," he said.

During an interview on Fox News this past week, host Sean Hannity struggled to get Trump to focus on the economy.

"Let me get to the economy," Hannity said at one point. "I'm running out of time."

"The economy is going to do great," Trump insisted.

When Trump did talk about inflation in the interview, he noted how low it was during his first term and insisted prices would not have jumped up if he had president after the 2020 election, even though higher inflation was a global trend coming out of the pandemic.

It is not clear how Trump would persuade oil companies and foreign countries to quickly increase production, possibly costing them profits.

The Energy Information Administration reported that domestic oil production has grown at an annual rate of roughly 8.4% over the past two years to an average of nearly 13.5 million barrels a day in October. Some Trump aides suggest that could increase by an additional 3 million barrels a day.

It would be difficult to achieve that much additional production in a single year without serious changes to the global market. The International Energy Agency estimates that the oil supplied to the entire world will increase by 1.8 million barrels per day to 104.7 million barrels a day. He also has expressed opposition to climate-friendlier wind and solar energy, putting more pressure on the U.S. economy to rely on fossil fuels.

EJ Antoni, a research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, said the potential increase in energy production under Trump would ultimately flow through the economy in the form of lower prices.

"If you're going to bring down the cost of energy, you're going to bring down the cost of all kinds of goods and services," he said.

But there is a risk that some of Trump's plans taken as a whole could raise — not reduce — prices. Deporting migrants who are in the United States illegally could deprive companies of lower wage workers. The cost of tariffs, which are taxes placed on foreign imports, could be passed on to consumers.

Trump said that his strategy also might ultimately involve publicly pressuring the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates, saying in Davos that he would "demand" lower rates from central banks. The Fed sees its political independence as key for making tough choices to stabilize prices. Biden saw the independence as worth protecting, whereas Trump sees it as problematic.

The Fed raised its benchmark rates starting in 2022 to make it more expensive to borrow and succeeded enough in reducing inflationary pressures that it could trim rates late last year. Trump believes that greater oil production will put him in a position to tell the Fed what to do.

Asked in the Oval Office if he expects the Fed to listen to him, Trump simply said, "Yeah."

As Hegseth takes charge at the Pentagon, here's what changes could be in store

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth steps into his office on the Pentagon's third floor E Ring on Monday morning, he will have a daunting array of issues to tackle — from global conflicts and border security to administrative tasks.

At the top of his list is addressing President Donald Trump's priority to strengthen the U.S. military presence along the southern border and reviewing whether active-duty forces should be used for law enforcement — something done rarely.

Dozens of other issues will compete for his attention, including developing the Pentagon's massive budget, decisions about aid to Ukraine, support for the ceasefire in Gaza, troop deployments in the Middle East. Not to mention Trump directives to rid the federal government of diversity programs and personnel as well as moves to cut waste and remove any lingering Biden administration backers.

In a message to the force shortly after he was sworn in Saturday, Hegseth cited the challenges he sees ahead. Some are ones his predecessors also faced, such as reorienting the military from decades of a Mideast focus and better deterring China. Continued conflict in the region, including the October 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas, has made that shift impossible to execute.

Hegseth also told service members about other priorities, including strengthening the defense industrial base and getting the Pentagon to pass an audit, while ensuring that the U.S. remains "the strongest and most lethal force in the world."

Already, support staff have been meeting with military leaders, including Gen. CQ Brown Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But Hegseth will get to experience what many describe as "drinking from a firehose" as he works to quickly get up to speed on what his 2.1 million service members and 780,000 civilians in the department are doing. Among them are tens of thousands serving overseas, including in combat zones.

Then there are the cultural issues that Hegseth railed on as a media personality that did not make it into Hegseth's message to the military. Many expect they will surface in the coming days.

Here are some key issues that Hegseth, who was confirmed in a tiebreaking vote Friday by Vice President JD Vance, will face right away:

Border deployments

In trying to meet Trump's demand of securing the border, Hegseth will face a barrage of information about what troops are available, what assistance the Border Patrol needs and where, as well as how to house, feed and transport the troops and border personnel and how to ensure none of this affects other national security requirements.

One of his first big decisions is whether he will recommend that active-duty troops deployed to the border get involved in law enforcement, a move that military leaders in recent years have pushed to avoid.

Active-duty forces are prohibited from doing law enforcement duties on U.S. soil under the Posse Comitatus Act. Trump has signed an executive order directing that his defense and homeland security secretaries report back within 90 days on whether they think he should invoke the 1807 law called the Insurrection Act, which allows troops to be used for civilian law enforcement on U.S. soil during emergencies.

During previous deployments, troops have been used for transportation, intelligence, logistics, wall-building and other support tasks, freeing up the Border Patrol to interact with migrants and conduct the law enforcement duties.

Transgender troops

In his first executive order, Trump again stripped protections for transgender troops that Democratic President Joe Biden had restored after Trump banned those members from serving during his first term in office.

The ban previously faced legal challenges, and lawyers who represented transgender forces last time are

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 63 of 114

readying to take it up in the courts again. While Trump has not announced a ban, his decision to revoke protections is seen as a first step toward that.

It is unclear how many troops would be affected. The Defense Department has no exact figure on the number of transgender troops serving because not every transgender person is in the same state of medical transition and not every transgender person identifies as such in military paperwork.

The department has referred queries on how many transgender troops there are to the services; the services have said they have no way to track.

The budget and Ukraine

Hegseth will have to become familiar with the complicated construction of the Pentagon budget, which right now is about \$850 billion. Trump ran on a vow to make the U.S. military more lethal — something Hegseth has echoed. But they also have spoken extensively about cutting waste.

So Hegseth's imprint on the budget will be studied to determine how that's being done.

Woven into those discussions will be security assistance to Ukraine. The State Department has ordered a freeze on new funding for almost all U.S. foreign aid, and there was no indication of a waiver for military assistance for Ukraine like there was for Israel and Egypt.

The Biden administration provided Kyiv with more than \$66 billion in military aid and weapons during the war with Russia. It had left unspent about \$3.85 billion in congressionally authorized funding to send more weapons to Ukraine from existing U.S. stockpiles — a sum that is not affected by the foreign aid freeze. But it is now up to Hegseth and Trump to decide whether or not to spend it, and Trump hasn't said what he will do on Ukraine aid.

Diversity, equity and inclusion rollbacks

Hegseth will take over the Pentagon's push to implement Trump's executive order to get rid of DEI programs, coming as military officers fret over whether they will be fired for being "woke," as Hegseth has pledged to do.

During his Senate hearing, Hegseth affirmed his commitment to focus on lethality and to eliminate wokeness, arguing that DEI policies "divide" troops and do not prioritize "meritocracy."

Officials said the Defense Department doesn't have any full-time workers assigned to DEI so they don't expect to have to fire people, as other federal agencies have.

But senior leaders have been poring over their websites to delete pages that mention diversity. Lacking clear guidance, staffers were pulling websites down in often inconsistent ways. The Army, for example, temporarily removed its sexual assault guidelines before they later came back online.

Hegseth also has railed against women in combat in his books and on podcasts and said standards were lowered for them, which is not true. He has since toned down his criticism after substantial pushback from lawmakers.

He most recently told senators that he's not aware that Trump wants to roll back the decision to allow women to serve in all combat jobs. Instead, he has talked about doing a review of standards.

Reproductive care

After the Supreme Court in 2022 ended constitutional protections for abortion that were set out in *Roe v. Wade*, then-Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin came out with a policy that would allow service members to take leave and be reimbursed for travel expenses to obtain reproductive care — including abortions and in-vitro fertilization — if the military base they were assigned to was in a state that had banned that care.

It's not clear whether Hegseth will seek to further revise that policy to remove the reimbursement provisions. It has been only scarcely used, and the department does not break down what the travel was for due to medical privacy laws.

Takeaways from AP's reporting on the thousands disappeared in Colombia, Peru and Paraguay

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

Thousands of people have disappeared in Latin America during decades-long conflicts. Many have never been found, presumed to be the victims of dictatorships, insurgencies or organized crime.

The most well-known of these mass disappearances occurred in Argentina and Chile during their military dictatorships. There are similarly wrenching but less well-known traumas elsewhere in the region.

In Peru, Colombia and Paraguay, for example, many people are still searching for answers. Loved ones have found comfort in their faith but have faced years of uncertainty and a lack of official justice.

In Peru, out of 20,000 disappeared people, only 3,200 remains have been found. In Colombia, five decades of war left a staggering death toll and more than 124,000 people missing. Paraguay's dictatorship left a smaller number of disappeared (500 people), but only 15 bodies have been recovered.

Some key aspects of AP's reporting from these three countries:

A DIVISIVE PEACE IN COLOMBIA

Fighting among leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, drug lords and government forces left more than 450,000 people killed and 124,000 disappeared. These figures are on par with other conflicts in Latin America, where thousands have vanished under similar circumstances.

In Colombia, though, a peculiar thing happened. Aiming to heal long-time wounds and build new paths toward reconciliation, dozens of former rebels, officials, forensic anthropologists and religious leaders now work side-by-side in finding their country's disappeared.

A 2016 peace pact with the main rebel group — the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) — earned then-President Juan Manuel Santos a Nobel Peace Prize. But neither he nor his successors have fully addressed endemic violence, displacement and inequality — issues that helped spark Colombia's conflict in the 1960s.

In 2022, Gustavo Petro, a former rebel, was sworn in as the country's first leftist leader. His goal is to demobilize all rebels and drug trafficking gangs, but even as a ceasefire was carried out, negotiations with Colombia's remaining guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), failed and violence re-emerged. Simultaneously, FARC hold-out groups and trafficking mafias continue to affect the country.

The peace pact established three crucial institutions for searching efforts: the Truth Commission; the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which encourages offenders to confess their crimes and make restitution actions in exchange for not serving any jail time; and the Search Unit for Disappeared Persons, which traces disappearances, conducts exhumations and returns loved ones' remains to hurting relatives like Doris Tejada, whose son Óscar Morales disappeared in 2007.

"It's been 17 years and still hurts," said Tejada, who found Morales' remains in 2024. "I asked God for help because it was difficult to see his bones. We still mourn."

Government forces and illegal groups were as responsible for massacres, forced recruitment and disappearances. According to the Truth Commission, paramilitary groups committed 45% of the homicides, while guerrillas — most of them FARC — carried out 27% and the government forces 12%.

IN PARAGUAY, A DICTATOR'S SWAY IS FELT LONG AFTER HIS OUSTER

Despite being ousted in 1989 after a 35-year reign of terror, during which 20,000 people were tortured, executed or disappeared, some Paraguayans feel as if Gen. Alfredo Stroessner never truly left.

"This is probably the only country in which the political party that supported a dictator, once he is gone, remains in power," said Alfredo Boccia, an expert on Paraguay's history. "That's why scrutiny took so long, most disappeared were never found and there were barely trials."

Stroessner served as Paraguay's president, leader of the conservative Colorado Party, commander of the armed forces and chief of police. He was not overthrown by enemies, but by his in-law, and the military members involved were affiliated with his party, which has ruled almost uninterrupted since.

The Colorado Party's dominance makes accountability elusive. Few of those responsible for crimes have faced trial, and public schools avoid mentioning the dictatorship during history lessons.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 65 of 114

"Paraguayans now vote for the party freely," Boccia said. "For those of us who fight for memory, that battle was lost."

Rogelio Goiburu, who has searched for his father for 47 years, was named director of historic memory at the Ministry of Justice, but has no budget. By his own means or raising funds, he has filled in the blanks about the fate of his father and other disappeared people, earning the trust of retired police and military officers who confessed to him how bodies were disposed.

Only one major excavation has been done in Paraguay seeking to solve disappearances. It was led by Goiburu between 2009 and 2013. Of the 15 bodies found, only four were identified.

While 30,000 Argentinians disappeared in a less than a decade-long dictatorship, around 500 people vanished in Paraguay amid the 35-year regime. Regardless, relatives argue that searches must continue.

"Every disappearance attacks the right to mourn," said Carlos Portillo, who interviewed thousands of victims for the Truth Commission. "There's no culture which doesn't have a ritual for mourning. A disappearance is the denying of this ritual, and that's why it's impossible to let go."

GRIM LEGACY OF PERU'S 20-YEAR INSURGENCY

In Peru, an estimated 20,000 people disappeared between 1980 and 2000 during a brutal conflict between the government and the Sendero Luminoso (or Shining Path), a Communist organization that claimed to seek social transformation through an armed revolution.

Founded in the 1970s by Abimael Guzman, the group turned violent a decade later. Older Peruvians still tell tales about donkeys strapped with explosives detonating in crowds, bombs that blew up streetlamps to plunge cities into darkness, and massacres that wiped out entire families.

The terror, though, was not merely unleashed by the insurgents. The armed forces were equally responsible for deaths and human rights violations.

Hundreds of men — many of them innocent — were captured by the military, often to face torture and execution. Others were slain and buried in mass graves by insurgents seeking to control communities by spreading fear.

Although hundreds of people have disappeared for other motives since then, the Truth Commission said this was the most violent period in Peru's history. More than 69,000 people are counted as "fatal victims" — about 20,000 classified as "disappeared" and the rest killed by insurgents or the military.

"In many ways, Peru is still dealing with the repercussions of the political violence from the late 20th century," said Miguel La Serna, a history professor at the University of North Carolina.

"Whole generations of adult men disappeared and that impacted the demographics in these communities. People moved out to escape the violence and some never returned," he added. "And that's to say nothing of the social, collective trauma that people experienced."

Despite the work of forensic doctors, prosecutors and organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross, only about 3,200 remains have been found. Some now fear that President Dina Boluarte might cut the government's support to keep searching.

15 reported killed in Lebanon as Israeli forces remain after a withdrawal deadline

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

MAYS AL-JABAL, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli forces in southern Lebanon on Sunday opened fire on protesters demanding their withdrawal in line with a ceasefire agreement, killing at least 15 and injuring more than 80, Lebanese health officials reported.

The dead included two women and a Lebanese army soldier, the Health Ministry said in a statement. People were reported wounded in more than a dozen villages in the border area.

Demonstrators, some of them carrying Hezbollah flags, attempted to enter several villages to protest Israel's failure to withdraw from southern Lebanon by the 60-day deadline stipulated in a ceasefire agreement that halted the Israel-Hezbollah war in late November.

Israel has said that it needs to stay longer because the Lebanese army has not deployed to all areas of

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 66 of 114

southern Lebanon to ensure that Hezbollah does not reestablish its presence in the area. The Lebanese army has said it cannot deploy until Israeli forces withdraw.

The Israeli army blamed Hezbollah for stirring up Sunday's protests.

It said in a statement that its troops fired warning shots to "remove threats in a number of areas where suspects were identified approaching." It added that a number of suspects in proximity to Israeli troops were apprehended and were being questioned.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said in a statement addressing the people of southern Lebanon on Sunday that "Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity are non-negotiable, and I am following up on this issue at the highest levels to ensure your rights and dignity."

He urged them to "exercise self-restraint and trust in the Lebanese Armed Forces." The Lebanese army, in a separate statement, said it was escorting civilians into some towns in the border area and called on residents to follow military instructions to ensure their safety.

Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, whose Amal Movement party is allied with Hezbollah and who served as an interlocutor between the militant group and the U.S. during ceasefire negotiations, said that Sunday's bloodshed "is a clear and urgent call for the international community to act immediately and compel Israel to withdraw from occupied Lebanese territories."

An Arabic-language spokesperson for the Israeli military, Avichay Adraee, posted on X that Hezbollah had sent "rioters" and is "trying to heat up the situation to cover up its situation and status in Lebanon and the Arab world."

He called Sunday morning for residents of the border area not to attempt to return to their villages.

U.N. Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and the head of mission of the U.N. peacekeeping force known as UNIFIL, Lt. Gen. Aroldo Lázaro, called in a joint statement for both Israel and Lebanon to comply with their obligations under the ceasefire agreement.

"The fact is that the timelines envisaged in the November Understanding have not been met," the statement said. "As seen tragically this morning, conditions are not yet in place for the safe return of citizens to their villages along the Blue Line."

UNIFIL said that further violence risks undermining the fragile security situation in the area and "prospects for stability ushered in by the cessation of hostilities and the formation of a government in Lebanon."

It called for the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops, the removal of unauthorized weapons and assets south of the Litani River, the redeployment of the Lebanese army in all of south Lebanon and ensuring the safe and dignified return of displaced civilians on both sides of the Blue Line.

An AP team was stranded overnight at a UNIFIL base near Mays al-Jabal after the Israeli army erected roadblocks Saturday while they were joining a patrol by peacekeepers. The journalists reported hearing gunshots and booming sounds Sunday morning from the base, and peacekeepers said that dozens of protesters had gathered nearby.

In the village of Aita al Shaab, families wandered over flattened concrete structures looking for remnants of the homes they left behind. No Israeli forces were present.

"These are our houses," said Hussein Bajouk, one of the returning residents. "However much they destroy, we will rebuild."

Bajouk added that he is convinced that former Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli strike in Beirut's southern suburbs in September, is really still alive.

"I don't know how much we're going to wait, another month or two months... but the Sayyed will come out and speak," he said using an honorific for Nasrallah.

On the other side of the border in the kibbutz of Manara, Orna Weinberg surveyed the devastation of the recent conflict on her neighbors and the Lebanese villages on the other side of the frontier. The sound of gunfire sporadically popped in the distance.

"Unfortunately, we have no way of defending our own children without harming their children," Weinberg, 58, said. "It's a tragedy to all sides."

Some 112,000 Lebanese remain displaced, out of over 1 million who fled their homes during the war.

Paraguay's disappeared: A dictator's shadow is a roadblock for justice, but a few keep up the fight

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay (AP) — Despite being ousted in 1989 after a 35-year reign of terror, during which 20,000 people were tortured, executed or disappeared, some Paraguayans feel as if Gen. Alfredo Stroessner never truly left.

"This is probably the only country in which the political party that supported a dictator, once he is gone, remains in power," said Alfredo Boccia, a researcher of Paraguay's history. "That's why scrutiny took so long, most disappeared were never found and there were barely trials."

Disappearances are a known phenomena in Latin America. The numbers in Argentina and Chile might have gained the most visibility, but thousands more have vanished elsewhere under dictatorships and armed conflicts.

Paraguayans with missing loved ones face a unique struggle, though. While Stroessner has been long gone, his legacy remains a roadblock to their searching.

Rogelio Goiburu's hair has turned white while looking for his father. His search has spanned 47 years, and he has no intention of giving up, perhaps thanks to his father's teachings.

"Dad trained us on survival," Goiburu said. "He prepared us to eternally fight Stroessner's regime."

Experts say Stroessner's control was unchallenged by other military strongmen in the region.

He served as Paraguay's president, leader of his conservative Colorado Party, commander of the armed forces and chief of police. Stroessner was not overthrown by enemies, but by his in-law, and the military members involved were affiliated with his party, which has ruled practically uninterrupted since.

Paraguayans' lack of criticism toward the party for its role in the country's dark past were as palpable as ever in 2018, when Mario Abdo was elected president. The Colorado candidate was son of Stroessner's personal secretary and served as a pallbearer at the dictator's funeral in Brazil, where he died in 2006 without being convicted of any crimes.

The Colorado Party's dominance makes accountability elusive. Various streets in Asuncion are named after military leaders. Few of those responsible for crimes have faced trial, and public schools avoid mentioning the dictatorship during history lessons.

Santiago Peña, who won the 2023 presidential elections, was aide to cigarette tycoon and former President Horacio Cartes, leader of the party despite being accused of corruption by the United States. The Colorados got Peña more than 40% of the votes, won 15 of the 17 governorships up for election and Congress' majority.

"Paraguayans now vote for the party freely," Boccia said. "For those of us who fight for memory, that battle was lost."

EACH MISSING PERSON COUNTS

Goiburu was named director of historic memory at the Ministry of Justice, but has no budget at hand. By his own means or raising funds, he has filled in the blanks about the fate of his dad and other disappeared people, earning the trust of retired police officers and military commanders who confessed to him alone how bodies were disposed.

Unlike Argentina, where various efforts to find disappeared people are government-funded, Paraguay doesn't have a genetic data bank, so Goiburu relies on Argentinian forensic anthropologists to analyze and safekeep the DNA samples he gathers.

And as opposed to Mexico, where mothers searching for their children regularly exhume remains, only one major excavation has been done in Paraguay. It was led by Goiburu, between 2009 and 2013, and out of the 15 bodies found, only four were identified.

Paraguyan search efforts have also proved challenging, as some belittle victims' claims for justice. While 30,000 Argentinians disappeared in a less than a decade-long dictatorship, around 500 people vanished in Paraguay amid the 35-year regime. Regardless, relatives argue, does it take more than a missing person to shatter a family?

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 68 of 114

"Every disappearance attacks the right to mourn," said Carlos Portillo, who interviewed thousands of victims for the Truth Commission. "There's no culture which doesn't have a ritual for mourning. A disappearance is the denying of this ritual, and that's why it's impossible to let go."

Before Alzheimer's hit, Goiburu's mother reserved a plate and an empty chair at their Christmas table for her missing husband. And until her death in 2024, she never stopped looking for him.

"Having a disappeared doesn't mean that a loved one simply left," said Celsa Ramírez, a former militant of the Communist Party who was imprisoned between 1975 and 1978, and searches for her husband, Derlis Villagra. "It means he was detained, tortured, killed and disappeared. That should weigh heavily on society."

NO COMMUNISTS ALLOWED

Goiburu's father, Agustín, was a doctor and leftist political leader. Before he fully engaged in politics, he lived with his wife and children in the countryside, often treating patients for free.

"People paid him with eggs, a banana, a couple of hens," said Goiburu, who became a doctor like him but gave up on medicine to search for his remains.

His dad once was among the Colorado Youth. When Stroessner took power in 1954, dozens had hope, guessing a firm hand would stabilize the country after a war against Bolivia. But a brutal repression emerged.

Amid the Cold War, and supported by the U.S., Stroessner made communism into Paraguay's number one enemy. He decreed communist activities as "punishable" and eventually targeted all opponents as leftists.

"They used to call me 'the bishop of the red cassock,' meaning I was a communist," said bishop Melanio Medina, who presided over the Truth Commission. "Only those who didn't speak out were welcomed."

Goiburu's father became a target for refusing to cooperate with the dictatorship. The military often transferred executed or tortured prisoners in hospitals, forcing personnel to issue false death certificates to cover up their crimes. In other cases, doctors oversaw torture sessions at detainment centers and advised torturers on the level of harm they could inflict.

Few like Goiburu's father openly challenged military orders, but other subtle endeavors rose.

Resembling Chile's Vicariate of Solidarity, a handful of religious leaders created a multi-faith group called the Churches Committee in 1976.

"A lot of people disappeared, but we didn't have any details," said Spanish Catholic priest José María Blanch, who headed the committee. "Therefore, religious organizations began visiting prisons."

Aside from food and clothing, the group provided legal advice for prisoners, financial support for those freed and information for families with loved ones detained.

Rosa María Ortiz, who joined the committee in 1977, said that she used to visit Asuncion's main detention center and lie to the chief officer, arguing that the bishop sent her to check on prisoners so she could find out what became of them.

As the repression worsened, under the pretext of providing vaccines or books for inmates, personnel drew lists of the prisoners and updated those registers as possible.

"We didn't even think about providing spiritual accompaniment," Blanch said. "These were matters of life and death."

MORE THAN A FATHER

Federico Tatter is a friend of Goiburu who shares his ails.

Their fathers had opposite backgrounds — Tatter's was a member of the military who rebelled against the dictatorship — but shared a common destiny: Both disappeared after being detained in Argentina, where several opponents of Stroessner fled to protect their families and continue their militance.

According to the Truth Commission, most cases of Paraguayan disappearances during the 1970s happened in Argentina, presumably amid Operation Condor, a coordinated effort among South American dictators to hunt down and eliminate opponents across borders.

In October 1976, Tatter was on his way back home in Buenos Aires when he noticed soldiers raiding his house. He met his father's eyes while soldiers escorted him out. "I'm the last family member who saw him," Tatter said. He's uncertain of what happened next.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 69 of 114

Goiburu learned about his dad's disappearance through a neighbor. He was detained in a street in Parana in February 1977 and transferred to Asuncion. Afterwards, the trail goes cold.

"Most Paraguayans don't realize that many of the things we can do nowadays are thanks of our parents' battles," said Ricardo Flecha, a singer and human rights activist. "Those fights are what allow us to have at least a modest space where we can now speak out."

Paraguay's opposition did hold power once — from 2008 to 2012 — but some old fears remain.

"I found two skeletons that are currently at the morgue under judicial protection," Goiburu said. "I'm certain about their identities, but relatives won't give me a blood sample to verify because they don't want anyone to know they were communists."

Goiburu himself leads a cautious way of life, scarcely keeping written records of his findings, though there's a writing project he would love to undertake: a book about his dad.

"I dream of him every week," he said. "More than my old man, he was my friend. I need him as a friend."

Colombia's disappeared: As a coalition, former enemies now search for loved ones and dream of peace

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

CALI, Colombia (AP) — From time to time, Gustavo Arbeláez faces relatives whose losses were caused by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the powerful guerrilla group he was part of during Colombia's five-decade armed conflict.

Tears in their eyes, victims name their loved ones and reprimand him: They had dreams and now they're gone.

"I have never regretted being a guerrilla member," said Arbeláez, who signed a divisive peace pact with the government alongside 13,600 FARC fighters in 2016. "But I now see that those of us who fought our country's war lost sight of what life means."

The fight among leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, drug lords and government forces left more than 450,000 people killed and 124,000 disappeared. These figures are on par with other conflicts in Latin America, where thousands have vanished under similar circumstances.

In Colombia, though, a peculiar thing happened. Aiming to heal long-time wounds and build new paths toward reconciliation, dozens of former rebels, officials, forensic anthropologists and religious leaders now work side-by-side in finding their country's disappeared.

A DIVISIVE PEACE

The 2016 pact earned then-President Juan Manuel Santos a Nobel Peace Prize, but neither he nor his successors have fully addressed endemic violence, displacement and inequality — issues that helped spark Colombia's conflict in the 1960s.

Since he came into office in 2022, the rebel-turned president who was sworn in as the country's first leftist leader, Gustavo Petro, has pushed for "total peace." His goal is to demobilize all rebels and drug trafficking gangs, but even as a ceasefire was carried out, negotiations with Colombia's remaining guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), are in crisis and violence escalated. Simultaneously, FARC hold-out groups and trafficking mafias continue to affect the country.

"A peace accord is not only a matter of setting down arms," said the Rev. Arturo Arrieta, who oversees human rights initiatives in Palmira, a city in southwestern Colombia where efforts to exhume unidentified remains at a church-administered cemetery are underway.

"There's a delay on the implementation of the accord, it's underfunded and, although certain mechanisms are working, more actions are needed," he added.

The peace pact established three crucial institutions for searching efforts: the Truth Commission; the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which encourages offenders to confess their crimes and make restitution actions in exchange for not serving any jail time; and the Search Unit for Disappeared Persons, which traces disappearances within the conflict, conducts exhumations and returns loved ones' remains to hurting relatives like Doris Tejada, whose son Oscar Morales disappeared in 2007.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 70 of 114

"It's been 17 years and still hurts," said Tejada, who found Morales' remains in 2024. "I asked God for help because it was difficult to see his bones. We still mourn."

Morales vanished near the border with Venezuela, where he had traveled from a city neighboring Bogotá to earn money selling clothes. Tejada later learned that he became a "false positive," one of the 6,402 civilians who were slain by the military and intentionally registered as rebels during the conflict.

Officials have apologized for the killings and some soldiers involved have been sentenced to prison, but many remain reluctant to acknowledge that the military committed war crimes as serious as those carried out by rebels.

"I've been very vocal about this," said Tejada, who tattooed her son's face on her arm to keep him present. "If this will go unpunished, I want everyone to know that what I cared about the most was rescuing my son's body and giving him a Christian burial."

ALL COLOMBIANS DESERVE TO BE FOUND

Arbeláez joined FARC in the 1980s in Valle del Cauca, a highly affected region during the conflict. Accor-
ding to him, as a university leader his life was threatened, so he chose the path of arms.

"None of us decided, from a young age, to become paramilitary leaders, rebels, drug dealers or to run a hitman's organization," he said. "Certain circumstances led us to embrace those decisions and no one owns the truth, so we are still trying to understand what made us become part of a conflict that drove us to kill one another."

Government forces and illegal groups were as responsible for massacres, forced recruitment and disappearances. According to the Truth Commission, paramilitary groups committed 45% of the homicides, while guerrillas — most of them FARC — carried out 27% and the government forces 12%.

Among his commitments toward the peace accord, Arbeláez and fellow former FARC rebels have shared information that benefits searching efforts. He also works with Corporación Reencuentros, an organization led by 140 ex-members of FARC who look for disappeared Colombians all over the territory.

Among those missing are rebels who died in combat and were buried by their comrades in the mountains, so that the military did not show them off as trophies.

"When public forces took our men, our souls were ripped apart," Arbeláez said. "So we disappeared ourselves."

Given the divisiveness that the peace process inflames, some have disavowed the search of former rebels. According to the Truth Commission, FARC members were responsible for 24% of the disappearances during the conflict and victims have blamed rebels for causing widespread pain through attacks and kidnappings that financed their operations.

During a recent ceremony in which Corporación Reencuentros returned a fighter's remains to his family in the Colombian city of Cali, Cristián Pérez's partner said that her search was stigmatized for years, as if relatives of guerilla members had no right to find their loved ones.

"Regardless of the political spectrum, religious preference and ethnicity, we are all human beings and have families that look after us," said Marcela Rodríguez, of the search unit in Valle del Cauca. "That's the view from which the unit was born and what we're constantly trying to make awareness of."

OUR PEACE WILL BE FINDING OUR LOVED ONES

Up until late 2024, the search unit had found 31 disappeared Colombians alive and returned 354 remains. Its personnel has said that bodies may be buried in complex locations: cemeteries, dumps, crematory ovens and strong-current rivers. Given Colombia's geography and the remoteness in which the conflict developed, teams travel up to 8 hours by mule through rambling roads to reach spots of interest.

Nonetheless, said forensic anthropologist Juan Carlos Benavides on a recently released documentary that details how the unit operates, it's all worth it. "Finding a body might mean there's one less person disappeared in Colombia, but it's the peace of a whole family."

For those who have searched for their loved ones for decades — signed accord or not — peace has been a troublesome concept to grasp on.

"Every single day, one wonders what happened to them," said María Fénix Torres, who lives in Bogotá

and has searched for her twin brothers since 2007. "It's terrible."

Alexander and Henry vanished on their way to a business meeting. From a young age they worked in emerald mining, an industry that has historically suffered under rivalries and violence.

Torres holds a monthly Mass to pray for her brothers and renew her strength. Church is currently the sole meeting place for her family, which grew distant after the disappearances.

"People tell me to stop looking because if I speak badly about the mines, I will get killed," said Torres. "Well, let them kill me. I will never hide. I will search for them until God allows me to."

Back in Cali, Melba Bernal also continues her search. Her 34-year-old sister, who was member of a political party founded by rebels, disappeared in 1988.

"I've been searching for my sister for 36 years and I find this inconceivable, painful and unfair," Bernal said. "I ask God to bring her back to me, to bring me justice."

Witness testimonies led her to believe that Olga was captured by intelligence police officers who tortured her, then transferred her to a hospital to treat her wounds and ended up taking her to a police commander who denies any wrongdoing.

Bernal said her mother always searched for her sister alive, and until her death two years ago, she used to look at homeless people's faces, hoping to find her.

It's painful, Bernal said, that her sister's son, now 41, has no memories of Olga. He barely speaks of her, but Bernal believes that if her remains are ever found, he would spread her ashes over water.

"In the ocean, in a river, one can find rest, fluency, peace."

Democrats are splintered on immigration and how to respond to Trump

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Donald Trump took office in 2017 with promises to crack down on immigration, he was met by widespread protests that filled churches, airports and union halls as Democratic lawmaker vowed to fight the new Republican president at every turn.

The second time around, Democrats helped send an immigration bill to his desk during his first week in office.

Stinging from election losses, the Democratic Party has so far been splintered in responding to Trump's push against illegal immigration. Yet the party's soul searching comes as the stakes could hardly be higher. The new president is acting to seal off the U.S.-Mexico border to asylum seekers and deport millions of immigrants who do not have permanent legal status.

"I think Donald Trump has painted the Democratic Party into a corner on immigration, and it's going to take us a while to get out of the corner," said Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo. "I want us acting out of conviction about what we believe about immigration rather than out of fear."

Looking for areas of agreement with Trump

On Capitol Hill, a crucial faction of Democrats are looking for places of agreement with Trump.

Between the House and Senate, 58 Democrats last week voted to pass the Laken Riley Act, which requires federal authorities to detain migrants accused of theft, assaulting a police officer, or other crimes that injure or kill someone.

Meanwhile, other congressional Democrats said they spent the last week addressing the fears and developing resources for those who could be deported. Rep. Juan Vargas, D-Calif., joined a priest at Our Lady of Guadalupe church in San Diego last weekend, carrying the Eucharist from home to home because so many in the congregation feared to go outside.

What the Democratic votes may mean

For Republicans, the votes on the Laken Riley Act were proof that they had found a winning message — amplified and led by Trump — on illegal immigration. They are planning to continue pushing immigration legislation, as well as a roughly \$100 billion package that would enable Trump to carry out his border and deportation plans.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 72 of 114

Democratic senators willing to back tougher enforcement could be crucial. It takes support from 60 senators to advance most legislation, meaning that at least a few Democrats will need to be on board. Republicans hold a 53-47 majority.

"It's a really important moment for the country. And it's always good when the right thing is also the popular thing," said House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., after the Laken Riley Act passed. It was named after a Georgia nursing student who was killed last year by a Venezuelan man who had entered the United States illegally and was allowed to stay and to pursue his immigration case.

When asked about Democratic votes for the legislation, the party's leader in the House, New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, was circumspect.

"House Democrats are going to continue to make decisions based on what's right for the districts that we represent, and the politics will take care of themselves," he said.

Since last year, many Democrats have steadily moved to the right on border security, emphasizing the need for stricter immigration enforcement after historic numbers of migrants arrived at times under Democrat Joe Biden's presidency.

What Americans think

Half of U.S. adults now think increasing security at the border should be a high priority for the federal government, according to a January poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Another 3 in 10 adults say it should be a moderate priority.

While most Democrats oppose deporting all immigrants who are living in the U.S. illegally, about 8 in 10 also favor deporting immigrants in the country illegally who have been convicted of a violent crime. The Biden administration prioritized for deportation those who posed a threat to national security. The Trump administration plans to go further by beginning its deportation operation with immigrants tied to crime.

Sen. Ruben Gallego, a Democrat who last year won in Arizona while Trump also carried the state, was outspoken in his support for legislation such as the Laken Riley Act. He said that he' was just reflecting the will of his constituents, including many Latino voters.

"They want sane border security, commonsense solutions, more Border Patrol, more customs officers," Gallego said. "They want to see bad people get deported. They want to see an opportunity for good people — to find a way for them to stay here."

The search for unity

Immigration advocates are frustrated by Democrats acquiescing to Trump's tough border. They fear Trump can own the narrative around immigration.

Vanessa Cárdenas, the executive director of America's Voice advocacy group, acknowledged that it was a "tough moment" for Democrats. But, Cárdenas added, "They need to find their backbone and put up a fight."

After the Laken Riley Act passed, leaders of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, a Democratic group that has usually played a key role in immigration policy, met with Jeffries as their party tried to formulate a united message.

The group said it would focus on action to keep mixed-status families together, protect farmworkers and advocate for recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Still, the group ranges from progressive members to those who voted for the new legislation.

"We have to show we have the ability to build consensus internally," New York Rep. Adriano Espaillat, chair of the Hispanic caucus, told The Associated Press.

At a news conference the next day, Espaillat laid out the practical concerns of mass deportations, from forcing out immigrants who have contributed to the U.S. for decades to rising food prices if agricultural laborers are targeted.

The event was intended to present a united front, yet as members of the caucus took turns at the microphone, their promises varied.

"We are going to be here to fight back," said Rep. Nydia Velázquez, D-N.Y.

Then Rep. Gabe Vasquez, D-N.M., spoke: "There are opportunities for us to work with Republicans, such

as fighting the cartels and coyotes who traffic women and children, provide an endless supply of drugs and hurt our border communities.”

Peru’s disappeared: Dozens look for relatives lost to violence. A woman who knows their sorrow helps

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

AYACUCHO, Perú (AP) — The easiest thing might have been to let go. To refresh the flowers at her husband’s grave and find comfort in retrieving his bones, a milestone in a country where 20,000 people disappeared between 1980 and 2000.

Lidia Flores chose a different path, though: to search for others who also went missing during Peru’s most violent period.

“I can’t stay calm when others, like I did, are crying,” Flores said from her home in Ayacucho, a Peruvian city whose name translates as “nook of the dead” from the Quechua language. “They are searching and I must be there for them.”

Thousands more have disappeared throughout Latin America under dictatorships, during armed conflicts or due to organized crime. Their wives, mothers and daughters have historically fought for justice, but Flores’ case is distinctive because even after finding her husband’s remains 40 years ago, her loss led her to commit to a greater cause.

For several years, she has presided over the National Association of Relatives of Detained and Disappeared Persons of Peru. Known for its Spanish initials, Anfasep, it was founded in 1983 and has about 140 members who advocate for truth and reparations.

“Sometimes I feel at ease, but then I wonder, why did this happen?” said Flores, who Peruvians rarely address by name. Most call her “mami” or “madrecita,” an affectionate Spanish word derived from “mother,” as if she cared for them all.

“I won’t let go because I made a commitment,” she added. “For as long as I live, I will demand justice for all and find out why my husband was killed.”

WHY DID 20,000 PERUVIANS DISAPPEAR?

Soon after Flores last saw him alive, Felipe Huamán was detained by members of the military dressed as civilians outside his house in July 1984. Flores found his remains a month later, guided by a stranger who saw a corpse matching his description.

Only days had passed since he was thrown down a hill, but stray dogs had gnawed at the remains. Flores took her 2-month-old baby out of her shawl, wrapped what was left of Huamán and climbed uphill, her baby in her arms, her husband’s bones on her back.

She arrived at the prosecutor’s office and requested a death certificate to bury him, but an official told her: “His body is not whole anymore. Throw him into the river or burn what’s left of him and find your peace.” So she wrapped up the bones, went home and bribed a grave digger to bury Huamán at midnight, as she peeked and wept behind a tree.

Stories like hers are part of the aftermath of a brutal fight between the Peruvian government and the insurgency of Sendero Luminoso (or Shining Path), a Communist organization that claimed to seek social transformation through an armed revolution.

Founded in the 1970s by Abimael Guzman, the group turned violent a decade later. Older Peruvians still tell tales about donkeys strapped with explosives detonating in crowds, bombs placed under streetlamps to plunge cities into darkness and massacres that wiped out entire families.

The terror, though, was not merely unleashed by the insurgents. The armed forces were equally responsible for deaths and human rights violations.

Hundreds of men — many of them innocent — were captured by the military, often to face torture and execution. Others were slain and buried in mass graves by insurgents seeking to control communities by spreading fear.

Although hundreds of people have disappeared for other motives since then, the Truth Commission said

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 74 of 114

this was the most violent period in Peru's history. More than 69,000 people are counted as "fatal victims" — about 20,000 classified as "disappeared" and the rest killed by insurgents or the military.

"In many ways, Peru is still dealing with the repercussions of the political violence from the late 20th century," said Miguel La Serna, a history professor at the University of North Carolina.

"Whole generations of adult men disappeared and that impacted the demographics in these communities. People moved out to escape the violence and some never returned," he added. "And that's to say nothing of the social, collective trauma that people experienced."

A LONELY SEARCH

Those unsure of what happened to their relatives wandered the streets asking for clues and listened to radio news reports. Every time a discovery of remains was announced, they headed out to those locations and turned over corpses, hoping to spot a familiar face.

"Pig and dogs ate the bodies, but we got used to that," said Adelina García, whose 27-year-old husband, Zósimo Tenorio, disappeared in 1983. "I felt no disgust or fear."

The couple had just moved from a nearby town to flee the violence from Sendero Luminoso. They thought they would be safe in Ayacucho, where the armed forces patrolled the streets, but soon realized they were wrong.

"It was tough," García said. "Every night I thought: Tomorrow we won't wake up. Which of them will kill us? The insurgents or the military?"

She was sleeping when soldiers stormed into her home. They dragged Tenorio from their bed, called him a "terrorist" and took him away. They wrecked their belongings, stole their savings and hit García until she lay unconscious on the floor, next to her year-old crying child.

"Even presidents have told us that it's been a long time and we should turn the page, but we can't do that," García said. "When a person dies, you hold a wake according to your religion, but for us, there's always a question: What if they're alive?"

After her husband vanished, a military captain told her that he was taken to Cabitos, an army base where a crematory oven was used to dispose of bodies and more than 130 people were executed. She could never corroborate it, though, so the search continues.

"My face might be wrinkled, but my heart is strong," García said. "I'll keep looking for justice and truth."

ONE LAST GOOD-BYE

For relatives with missing loved ones, keeping a spiritual connection brings peace into their lives.

"I have faith in my dad," said Luyeva Yangali, who has prayed to her father, Fortunato, since he disappeared near Ayacucho in 1983. "I spoke to him at night as I did to God."

Her mother looked for him at first, but the family moved to Lima after the military tortured her for allegedly aiding insurgents and Yangali took over the task.

"I was 11 when my family was destroyed and we haven't recovered," Yangali said. "I think we never will."

Despite the work of forensic doctors, prosecutors and organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross, only about 3,200 remains have been found. Some now fear that President Dina Boluarte might cut out the government's support to keep searching, but many others remain hopeful, watching a handful of Peruvians who finally had a chance to say goodbye.

At a recent restitution ceremony in Ayacucho, Pablo Valerio bid his farewells not to one, but to five of his relatives.

Back in 1984, his parents, two sisters and a brother were slain by members of Sendero Luminoso while Valerio and his younger brother were away studying. They learned about the massacre a month after it happened, when they headed home.

"As we got close, we were surprised that no one, not even our dogs, was around," said Valerio, 63. "It was all silence. Then we saw our house completely destroyed, burned."

He found the bodies the next morning, one piled over another inside a pit in which he saw his father's hands. Fearing the insurgents might come back to kill him and his brother, they left and — until now — haven't had the chance to have a wake.

"It wasn't until the Truth Commission came that we could dig them out," Valerio said. "Their bones were

not whole anymore, but we placed them in a little box and brought them here.”

The day before a Mass honoring them at Ayacucho’s cathedral, forensic experts, prosecutors and Quechua language interpreters comforted more than a dozen relatives who, like Valerio, had a last chance to see their loved ones’ remains.

Most of them sobbed. Others held hands and prayed. A few more, like Valerio, who treasures the one and only photo he preserves of his father, whispered to the bones: “You are no longer disappeared, but present.”

“No one can kill a spirit, so you remain alive.”

Trump wants Egypt and Jordan to take in Palestinians from Gaza. Here’s why they are likely to refuse

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — President Donald Trump’s suggestion that Egypt and Jordan take in Palestinians from the war-ravaged Gaza Strip is likely to be met with a hard “no” from the two U.S. allies and the Palestinians themselves who fear Israel would never allow them to return.

Trump floated the idea on Saturday, saying he would urge the leaders of the two Arab countries to take in Gaza’s now largely homeless population, so that “we just clean out that whole thing.” He added that resettling Gaza’s population “could be temporary or long term.”

“It’s literally a demolition site right now,” Trump said, referring to the vast destruction caused by Israel’s 15-month military campaign against Hamas, now paused by a fragile ceasefire.

“I’d rather get involved with some of the Arab nations, and build housing in a different location, where they can maybe live in peace for a change,” Trump said.

There was no immediate comment from Egypt, Jordan, Israel or Palestinian officials.

The idea is likely to be welcomed by Israel, where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s far-right governing partners have long advocated what they describe as the voluntary migration of large numbers of Palestinians and the reestablishment of Jewish settlements in Gaza.

Human rights groups have already accused Israel of ethnic cleansing, which United Nations experts have defined as a policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove the civilian population of another group from certain areas “by violent and terror-inspiring means.”

A History of Displacement

Before and during the 1948 war surrounding Israel’s creation, some 700,000 Palestinians — a majority of the prewar population — fled or were driven from their homes in what is now Israel, an event they commemorate as the Nakba — Arabic for catastrophe.

Israel refused to allow them to return because it would have resulted in a Palestinian majority within its borders. The refugees and their descendants now number around 6 million, with large communities in Gaza, where they make up the majority of the population, as well as the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

In the 1967 Mideast war, when Israel seized the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 300,000 more Palestinians fled, mostly into Jordan.

The decades-old refugee crisis has been a major driver of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and was one of the thorniest issues in peace talks that last broke down in 2009. The Palestinians claim a right of return, while Israel says they should be absorbed by surrounding Arab countries.

Many Palestinians view the latest war in Gaza, in which entire neighborhoods have been shelled to oblivion and 90% of the population of 2.3 million have been forced from their homes, as a new Nakba. They fear that if large numbers of Palestinians leave Gaza, then they too may never return.

Steadfastly remaining on one’s land is central to Palestinian culture, and was on vivid display in Gaza on Sunday, when thousands of people tried to return to the most heavily destroyed part of the territory.

A red line for countries that made peace with Israel decades ago

Egypt and Jordan fiercely rejected the idea of accepting Gaza refugees early in the war, when it was

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 76 of 114

floated by some Israeli officials.

Both countries have made peace with Israel but support the creation of a Palestinian state in the occupied West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, territories Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war. They fear that the permanent displacement of Gaza's population could make that impossible.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi has also warned of the security implications of transferring large numbers of Palestinians to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, bordering Gaza.

Hamas and other militant groups are deeply rooted in Palestinian society and are likely to move with the refugees, which would mean that future wars would be fought on Egyptian soil, something that could unravel the historic Camp David peace treaty, a cornerstone of regional stability.

"The peace which we have achieved would vanish from our hands," el-Sissi said in October 2023, after Hamas' attack on southern Israel triggered the war. "All for the sake of the idea of eliminating the Palestinian cause."

That's what happened in Lebanon in the 1970s, when Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization, the leading militant group of its time, transformed the country's south into a launchpad for attacks on Israel. The refugee crisis and the PLO's actions helped push Lebanon into a 15-year civil war in 1975. Israel invaded twice and occupied southern Lebanon from 1982 until 2000.

Jordan, which clashed with the PLO and expelled it under similar circumstances in 1970, already hosts more than 2 million Palestinian refugees, the majority of whom have been granted citizenship.

Israeli ultranationalists have long suggested that Jordan be considered a Palestinian state so that Israel can keep the West Bank, which they view as the biblical heartland of the Jewish people. Jordan's monarchy has vehemently rejected that scenario.

Can Trump force Egypt and Jordan to accept refugees?

That depends on how serious Trump is about the idea and how far he is prepared to go.

U.S. tariffs — one of Trump's favorite economic tools — or outright sanctions could be devastating for Jordan and Egypt. The two countries receive billions of dollars in American aid each year, and Egypt is already mired in an economic crisis.

But allowing an influx of refugees could also be destabilizing. Egypt says it is currently hosting some 9 million migrants, including refugees from Sudan's civil war. Jordan, with a population of less than 12 million, is hosting over 700,000 refugees, mainly from Syria.

U.S. pressure would also risk alienating key allies in the region with whom Trump has had good relations — not only el-Sissi and Jordan's King Abdullah II, but the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, all of whom support the Palestinian cause.

That would potentially complicate efforts to broker a historic agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel to normalize relations, something Trump tried to do during his previous term and expects to complete in his current one.

Belarus strongman set to win a 7th term in an election the opposition calls a farce

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

The smiling face of President Alexander Lukashenko gazed out from campaign posters across Belarus on Sunday as the country held an orchestrated election virtually guaranteed to give the 70-year-old autocrat yet another term on top of his three decades in power.

"Needed!" the posters proclaim beneath a photo of Lukashenko, his hands clasped together. The phrase is what groups of voters responded in campaign videos after supposedly being asked if they wanted him to serve again.

But his opponents, many of whom are imprisoned or exiled abroad by his unrelenting crackdown on dissent and free speech, would disagree. They call the election a sham — much like the last one in 2020 that triggered months of protests that were unprecedented in the history of the country of 9 million people.

The crackdown saw more than 65,000 arrests, with thousands beaten, bringing condemnation and

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 77 of 114

sanctions from the West.

His iron-fisted rule since 1994 — Lukashenko took office two years after the demise of the Soviet Union — earned him the nickname of “Europe’s Last Dictator,” relying on subsidies and political support from close ally Russia.

He let Moscow use his territory to invade Ukraine in 2022, and even hosts some of Russia’s tactical nuclear weapons, but he still campaigned with the slogan “Peace and security,” arguing he has saved Belarus from being drawn into war.

“It’s better to have a dictatorship like in Belarus than a democracy like Ukraine,” Lukashenko said in his characteristic bluntness.

Fearing a repeat of election unrest

His reliance on support from Russian President Vladimir Putin — himself in office for a quarter-century — helped him survive the 2020 protests.

Observers believe Lukashenko feared a repeat of those mass demonstrations amid economic troubles and the fighting in Ukraine, and so scheduled the vote in January, when few would want to fill the streets again, rather than in August. He faces only token opposition.

“The trauma of the 2020 protests was so deep that Lukashenko this time decided not to take risks and opted for the most reliable option when balloting looks more like a special operation to retain power than an election,” Belarusian political analyst Valery Karbalevich said.

Lukashenko repeatedly declared that he wasn’t clinging to power and would “quietly and calmly hand it over to the new generation.”

His 20-year-old son, Nikolai, traveled the country, giving interviews, signing autographs and playing piano at campaign events. His father hasn’t mentioned his own health, even though he was seen having difficulty walking and occasionally spoke in a hoarse voice.

“The successor issue only becomes relevant when a leader prepares to step down. But Lukashenko isn’t going to leave,” Karbalevich said.

Top political opponents imprisoned or exiled

Leading opponents have fled abroad or were thrown in prison. The country holds nearly 1,300 political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski, founder of the Viasna Human Rights Center.

Since July, Lukashenko has pardoned more than 250 people. At the same time, authorities have sought to uproot dissent by arresting hundreds more in raids targeting relatives and friends of political prisoners.

Authorities detained 188 people last month alone, Viasna said. Activists and those who donated money to opposition groups have been summoned by police and forced to sign papers saying they were warned against participating in unsanctioned demonstrations, rights advocates said.

Lukashenko’s four challengers on the ballot are all loyal to him.

“I’m entering the race not against, but together with Lukashenko, and I’m ready to serve as his vanguard,” said Communist Party candidate Sergei Syrankov, who favors criminalizing LGBTQ+ activities and rebuilding monuments to Soviet leader Josef Stalin.

Candidate Alexander Khizhnyak, head of the Republican Party of Labor and Justice, led a voting precinct in Minsk in 2020 and vowed to prevent a “repeat of disturbances.”

Oleg Gaidukevich, head of the Liberal Democratic Party, supported Lukashenko in 2020 and urged fellow candidates to “make Lukashenko’s enemies nauseous.”

The fourth challenger, Hanna Kanapatskaya, managed 1.7% of the vote in 2020 and says she’s the “only democratic alternative to Lukashenko,” promising to lobby for freeing political prisoners but warning supporters against “excessive initiative.”

Opposition leader calls election ‘a senseless farce’

Opposition leader-in-exile Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who fled Belarus under government pressure after challenging the president in 2020, told The Associated Press that Sunday’s election was “a senseless farce, a Lukashenko ritual.”

Voters should cross off everyone on the ballot, she said, and world leaders shouldn’t recognize the result

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 78 of 114

from a country “where all independent media and opposition parties have been destroyed and prisons are filled by political prisoners.”

“The repressions have become even more brutal as this vote without choice has approached, but Lukashenko acts as though hundreds of thousands of people are still standing outside his palace,” she said.

The European Parliament urged the European Union to reject the election outcome. EU’s top diplomat Kaja Kallas called the vote “a blatant affront to democracy.”

Shortly after voting in Minsk on Sunday, Lukashenko told journalists that he did not seek recognition or approval from the EU.

“The main thing for me is that Belarusians recognize these elections and that they end peacefully, as they began,” he said.

Media freedom watchdog Reporters Without Borders filed a complaint against Lukashenko with the International Criminal Court over his crackdown on free speech that saw 397 journalists arrested since 2020. It said that 43 are in prison.

Fears of vote-rigging

According to the Central Election Commission, there are 6.8 million eligible voters. However, about 500,000 people have left Belarus and aren’t able to vote.

At home, early voting that began Tuesday has created fertile ground for irregularities with ballot boxes unguarded until election day, the opposition said. A record 41.81% of voters cast ballots in five days of early voting. Meanwhile, Viasna activists reported internet issues across the country, and alleged Lukashenko’s government was blocking access to VPN services commonly used to evade censorship.

Polling stations have removed the curtains covering ballot boxes, and voters are forbidden from photographing their ballots — a response to the opposition’s call in 2020 for voters to take pictures to make it more difficult for authorities to rig the vote.

Police conducted large-scale drills before the election. An Interior Ministry video showed helmeted riot police beating their shields with truncheons as a way to prepare for protest dispersals. Another featured an officer arresting a man posing as a voter, twisting his arm next to a ballot box.

Belarus initially refused to allow observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which monitored previous elections. It changed course this month and invited the OSCE — when it was already too late to organize a monitoring mission.

Increasing dependence on Russia

Lukashenko’s support for the war in Ukraine has led to the rupture of Belarus’ ties with the U.S. and the EU, ending his gamesmanship of using the West to try to win more subsidies from the Kremlin.

“Until 2020, Lukashenko could maneuver and play Russia against the West, but now when Belarus’ status is close to that of Russia’s satellite, this North Korea-style election ties the Belarusian leader to the Kremlin even stronger, shortening the leash,” said Artyom Shraybman, a Belarus expert with the Carnegie Russia and Eurasia Center.

After the election, Lukashenko could try to ease his total dependence on Russia by again seeking to reach out to the West, he predicted.

“Lukashenko’s interim goal is to use the election to confirm his legitimacy and try to overcome his isolation in order to at least start a conversation with the West about easing sanctions,” Shraybman said.

India celebrates Republic Day with Indonesian president as chief guest

NEW DELHI (AP) — India celebrated its 76th Republic Day on Sunday with a colorful parade displaying its military might and cultural diversity on a boulevard in the heart of country’s capital. Indonesian president was the guest of honor.

Tens of thousands of people lined the road on a cold Sunday morning to watch the long parade to mark the anniversary of the official adoption of India’s Constitution on Jan. 26, 1950, nearly three years after independence from British colonial rule.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 79 of 114

Soldiers from India's military and paramilitary, along with their bands, marched as the country's leaders and other guests watched. Various floats displayed India's cultural diversity with one showcasing the Maha Kumbh festival, the ongoing massive Hindu festival touted as the world's largest religious gathering.

The parade took place on Rajpath Avenue, built by India's former British rulers and lined by huge lawns, canals and rows of trees. The avenue was redeveloped as part of the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of Indian independence and renamed Kartavayapath, or the Boulevard of Duty, in 2022.

Visiting Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto attended the event as the chief guest and was flanked by India's president and prime minister. A 342-member band and marching contingent from the Indonesian National Armed Forces joined the parade, the first time the ASEAN country's troops have joined any foreign parade.

India traditionally invites foreign leaders to witness the spectacle. French President Emmanuel Macron was the guest of honor last year and former U.S. President Barack Obama in 2015. Ten Southeast Asian leaders watched the parade in 2018.

Sukarno, Indonesia's first president and the leader of the country's independence struggle, was the chief guest at India's first Republic Day celebration in 1950.

Thousands of men and women in colorful costumes played marches, performed traditional dances and pulled motorbike stunts during the 90-minute parade. It also showcased India's domestically built defense equipment and military systems, including tanks, infantry combat vehicles, radar systems and missile systems.

Some 5,000 artists, carrying traditional props like spears, swords and drums, performed over 40 dance forms from different parts of India in a cultural performance that lasted about 10 minutes. The parade ended with a fly-past by air force fighters, including Rafale jets, transport planes and helicopters.

The parade was broadcast live by television networks. Republic Day parades also took place in state capitals and other cities across India amid massive security arrangements.

In Srinagar, the main city of disputed Kashmir, armed police and soldiers patrolled as regional officials celebrated Republic Day. Hundreds of people braved winter chills to witness the parade amid additional security, with police and soldiers checking vehicles and frisking pedestrians.

India and Pakistan each administer a part of Kashmir, but both claim the territory in its entirety. Militants in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir have been fighting New Delhi's rule since 1989.

International peacekeepers killed as fighting rages around eastern Congo's key city

By JUSTIN KABUMBA and MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

GOMA, Congo (AP) — Fighting with M23 rebels in eastern Congo has left at least 13 peacekeepers and foreign soldiers dead, United Nations and army officials said Saturday.

M23 has made significant territorial gains in recent weeks, encircling the eastern city of Goma, which has around 2 million people and is a regional hub for security and humanitarian efforts.

The U.N. Security Council moved up an emergency meeting on the escalating violence to Sunday morning (10 am EST). Congo requested the meeting, which had originally been scheduled for Monday.

On Saturday, Congo's army said it fended off an M23 offensive towards Goma with the help of its allied forces, including U.N. troops and soldiers from the Southern African Development Community Mission, also known as SAMIDRC.

"The Rwandan-backed M23 is clearly exploiting the presidential transition in the U.S. to advance on Goma — putting thousands more civilians at risk," Kate Hixon, advocacy director for Africa at Amnesty International US, told the Associated Press.

Congo, the United States and U.N. experts accuse Rwanda of backing M23, which is mainly made up of ethnic Tutsis who broke away from the Congolese army more than a decade ago.

Rwanda's government denies the claim, but last year acknowledged that it has troops and missile systems in eastern Congo to safeguard its security, pointing to a buildup of Congolese forces near the border. U.N.

experts estimate there are up to 4,000 Rwandan forces in Congo.

The burning wreckage of a white armored fighting vehicle carrying UN markings could be seen on a road between Goma and Sake on Saturday, where much of the fighting was concentrated in recent days.

Two South African peacekeepers were killed Friday, while a Uruguayan Blue Helmet was killed Saturday, a U.N. official told The Associated Press. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak on the matter publicly.

Additionally, three Malawian peacekeepers were killed in eastern Congo, the United Nations in Malawi said Saturday.

Seven South African soldiers from the SAMIDRC were also killed during clashes with M23 over the last two days, South Africa's department of defense said in a statement.

Uruguay's military in a statement issued Saturday identified its member killed in Congo as Rodolfo Álvarez, who was part of the Uruguay IV Battalion. The unit, according to the statement, is working "uninterruptedly to comply with the United Nations mandate, as well as to guarantee the evacuation of non-essential civilian and military personnel from the city of Goma."

"Various measures have been taken to improve the security of our troops, who are operating in adverse conditions," the military said. It added that four Uruguayan peacekeepers were also injured. Three of them remained in Goma while a fourth one was evacuated to Uganda for treatment.

Since 2021, Congo's government and allied forces, including SAMIDRC and U.N. troops, have been keeping M23 away from Goma.

The U.N. peacekeeping force, also known as MONUSCO, entered Congo more than two decades ago and has around 14,000 peacekeepers on the ground.

South Africa's defense minister, Angie Motshekga, was visiting the country's troops stationed in Congo as part of the U.N. peacekeeping mission the day the soldiers were killed.

Southern California rain helps firefighters but creates risk of toxic ash runoff

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After weeks of windy and dry weather, rain has fallen in parched Southern California and is expected to aid firefighters who are mopping up multiple wildfires. But potentially heavy downpours on charred hillsides could bring new troubles such as toxic ash runoff.

Los Angeles County crews spent much of the past week removing vegetation, shoring up slopes and reinforcing roads in devastated areas of the Palisades and Eaton fires, which reduced entire neighborhoods to rubble and ash after breaking out during powerful winds Jan. 7.

Most of the region was forecast to get around an inch (about 2.5 centimeters) of precipitation over several days, but "the threat is high enough to prepare for the worst-case scenario" of localized cloudbursts causing mud and debris to flow down hills, the National Weather Service said on social media.

"So the problem would be if one of those showers happens to park itself over a burn area," weather service meteorologist Carol Smith said. "That could be enough to create debris flows."

Rainfall that began late Saturday was expected to increase Sunday and possibly last into early Tuesday, forecasters said. Flood watches were issued for some burn areas, while snow was likely in the mountains.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass issued an executive order last week to expedite cleanup efforts and mitigate the environmental impacts of fire-related pollutants. LA County supervisors also approved an emergency motion to install flood-control infrastructure and expedite and remove sediment in fire-impacted areas.

Fire crews filled sandbags for communities, while county workers installed barriers and cleared drainage pipes and basins.

Officials cautioned that ash in recent burn zones was a toxic mix of incinerated cars, electronics, batteries, building materials, paints, furniture and other household items. It contains pesticides, asbestos, plastics and lead. Residents were urged to wear protective gear while cleaning up.

Concerns about post-fire debris flows have been especially high since 2018, when the town of Montecito,

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 81 of 114

up the coast from LA, was ravaged by mudslides after a downpour hit mountain slopes burned bare by a huge blaze. Hundreds of homes were damaged and 23 people died.

While the impending wet weather ended weeks of dangerous gusts and reduced humidity, several wild-fires were still burning Saturday across Southern California. Those included the Palisades and Eaton fires, which killed at least 28 people and destroyed more than 14,000 structures. Containment of the Palisades Fire reached 81% on Saturday and the Eaton Fire was 95% contained.

In northern Los Angeles County, firefighters made significant progress against the Hughes Fire, which prompted evacuations for tens of thousands of people when it erupted on Wednesday in mountains near Lake Castaic.

In San Diego County, there was still little containment of the Border 2 Fire as it burned through a remote area of the Otay Mountain Wilderness near the U.S.-Mexico border.

The rain was expected to snap a near-record streak of dry weather for Southern California. Much of the region has received less than 5% of the average rainfall for this point in the water year, which began Oct. 1, the Los Angeles Times reported Saturday.

Most of Southern California is currently in "extreme drought" or "severe drought," according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

He fought in a separatist rebel group that burned schools. Now he's a teacher emphasizing peace

By ROBERT BOCIAGA Associated Press

DSCHANG, Cameroon (AP) — In a classroom nestled in Cameroon's lush highlands, a former rebel fighter teaches logic and philosophy. His students know him as calm and thoughtful, but his past tells a more turbulent story.

For a year and a half, Ateasong Belts Tajoah fought with the Red Dragons, a separatist militia in the country's conflict-ridden southwest. He joined the movement in 2017 at age 23 after local fighters came to his village and offered a chance to turn his frustrations with the government into action.

Like many in the English-speaking parts of Cameroon, he felt marginalized by the government dominated by the French-speaking population. Those tensions, beginning with peaceful protests organized by lawyers and teachers, turned deadly almost a decade ago following a government crackdown.

The fight for independence for English-speaking areas, which the emerging rebel groups called Ambazonia, has killed over 6,500 people and displaced over 1.1 million.

As a rebel, Tajoah lived under plastic sheets in the rain, cooked for leaders and carried out attacks on military and civilian targets. "You could never sleep with both eyes closed," he said, pointing to scars on his neck and stomach left by bullets.

Drugs and alcohol were rampant in the camps, often used as coping mechanisms for the constant threat of ambushes or betrayal. The psychological toll was immense, Tajoah said, recalling the trauma of carrying the bodies of more than 20 fallen comrades.

The rebel group believed that destroying schools would weaken the government's control over the region, a strategy that left a deep scar on the educational landscape.

Armed groups enforced boycotts, burned classrooms and killed teachers who defied their orders. Nearly 488,000 children in the affected regions were out of school in 2024, according to UNICEF.

Tajoah admitted to playing a role in the destruction, not sharing details but acknowledging the strategy's profound harm to countless lives.

The breaking point for him came with the loss of his 11-year-old child during an attack by government forces on his camp. Already disillusioned with the separatist leadership and overwhelmed by grief, he surrendered in early 2019.

He entered a government-run rehabilitation center for former fighters in Buea, the capital of Cameroon's Southwest region, where he spent 18 months reflecting on his past. Like many ex-combatants, Tajoah

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 82 of 114

has faced a long and lonely road, with widespread stigma marking his path to reintegration into society. While the rehabilitation center promised skills training, the country's demobilization program has faced widespread criticism for its slow implementation and lack of resources.

Tajoah witnessed the prevalence of drugs, reportedly brought in by the same officials tasked with guiding ex-combatants. There were concerns that some fighters were allegedly coerced into military operations after surrendering. The government did not respond to a request for comment.

Many ex-combatants have returned to armed groups, citing frustration with the rehabilitation program. In 2021, former fighters blocked streets in Buea to protest, accusing the government of not fulfilling its promise of support.

Lack of oversight and transparency exacerbates the issues, according to Syndie Rhianne Makeutche, a peace researcher with the United Nations. "Without these measures, the program risks losing credibility and pushing more ex-combatants back into violence," she said.

Despite the challenges, Tajoah carved out a new path. He earned a master's degree in philosophy in July.

Teaching is more than a job, he said. "It is a way to confront my past and inspire others to avoid my mistakes."

His presence in the classroom initially raised some fears. "Many assumed former combatants were uneducated and dangerous," he said.

With dedication and openness about his past, Tajoah gradually earned the trust of his students, their parents and the broader community.

His decision to teach logic and philosophy stemmed from a long-standing interest in critical thinking and human behavior.

"I was fond of these subjects before becoming a fighter," he said. Today, he uses them to challenge students to think differently and to guide them toward a more constructive path.

Beyond the classroom, Tajoah has become an outspoken advocate for peace. He employs a social media strategy to educate people about the dangers of rebellion, sharing images of fallen fighters to highlight the realities of armed conflict.

He also risks his life traveling to villages, urging young people to put down their weapons. Some residents said his outreach has been instrumental in fostering peace, resulting in the surrender of some fighters.

While some are skeptical about Tajoah's work, others see him as a beacon of change. "More people understand now he's here to bring peace and encourage others to drop their guns," said Ajiawung Columbus Fortulah, a traditional chief of Atulah village, where Tajoah grew up.

Some fighters have put down their weapons, and the local primary school has reopened for studies, Fortulah said.

Yet Tajoah's activism has come at personal cost. His mother has been kidnapped twice by separatists, and he has received numerous death threats from separatists seeking to silence his efforts.

Another ex-combatant, Okha Naseri Clovis, shares Tajoah's determination. Now studying logistics in Cameroon's capital, Yaoundé, Clovis has been outspoken about his experiences, frequently criticizing separatist leaders. He addresses ex-combatants at rehabilitation centers, urging them to embrace reintegration and peace, and travels to remote villages to counter the narrative of separatists.

Cameroonian officials have welcomed community efforts that support the rehabilitation program but have been accused by critics of not addressing the root causes of the crisis.

The conflict, meanwhile, shows no signs of resolution. Peace talks with international mediators have stalled, with both sides accusing each other of bad faith.

"There's a difference between the Anglophone crisis and Ambazonian terrorism," Tajoah said. "Anglophones are marginalized, but guns and kidnappings won't solve it. Dialogue and action are the only way forward."

He hopes his students will embrace that message.

"I fought to close schools, but now I teach to open minds," he said. "The scars will always be there, but they don't have to define you."

Trump's Q&A on Air Force One goes from the plane's color scheme to the fate of TikTok and Canada

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (AP) — President Donald Trump hasn't been shy about sharing his thoughts since taking office, and he added a 20-minute Q&A with reporters aboard Air Force One to the mix Saturday night. He held forth on everything from the color of the presidential plane to the fate of TikTok, Greenland and Canada.

Trump popped in to the plane's press cabin while flying from Las Vegas to Florida, where he was staying at his Doral golf club through Monday evening, though he insisted he'd be too busy to hit the links.

The new president scoffed at reporters getting "a bit more access" than under his predecessor, Joe Biden, and joked it was "like 5,000%" different — meaning he was willing to answer a lot more questions. Trump called Air Force One a "special plane" but observed that it hasn't changed much from his last term. And, yes, he still wants to change the plane's exterior colors.

"We want power blue, not baby blue," Trump said. "Everything has its time and place. We'll be changing the colors."

Here are some highlights from the conversation:

Trump says he's talking with potential investors about the future of TikTok

Trump said he's considering several possible investors who are looking to purchase TikTok, which faces the prospect of a U.S. ban if it isn't sold by its Chinese parent company.

"Numerous people are talking to me," he said. "Very substantial people." He said he expects to decide what happens next "probably over the next 30 days."

The president said he'd not been in contact with Oracle about buying TikTok, despite reports that he had, and that he'd not spoken to Oracle's billionaire co-founder Larry Ellison, whom he called a friend. He noted Ellison lives "right down the road" from his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

But he said there are many other potential buyers.

"We have a lot of interest in it, and the United States will be a big beneficiary," Trump said of a potential sale. "I'd only do it if the United States benefits."

He added that, "I have a warm spot in my heart for TikTok" because he felt like it improved his standing with young voters in November's presidential election.

Trump really wants federal workers back in the office

Asked about the series of executive orders he's signed since taking office that have placed new rules on the federal workforce, Trump said he was opposed to work-from-home concessions that became more common during the coronavirus pandemic.

"You have to go to your office and you have to work," he said. "Otherwise, you're not going to have a job."

Trump also said he's not worried about existing federal employees leaving and the talent pool to find replacements being diminished: "We have very deep talent. We also have a lot of excess people."

"This was a gimmick for Democrats, to a certain extent," he said of existing federal worker rolls, which he suggested were too large.

Trump says he still wants Greenland, and Canada 'should be a state'

Trump reiterated his desire to somehow purchase Greenland from Denmark, despite that country insisting it's not for sale.

"I do believe Greenland, we'll get because it really has to do with freedom of the world," he said. "It has nothing to do with the United States, other than we're the one that can provide the freedom."

The president also made some of his most extensive comments about his recent suggestions that Canada could become part of the U.S.

"I love Canada," he said. "I have so many friends up in Canada. And they like us, and they like me. But Canada's been taking advantage of the United States for years, and we're not going to let that happen."

He suggested that the U.S. is losing hundreds of millions annually to Canada in trade deficits while Canada does "almost 90% of their business with the United States."

"I don't want to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on supporting the country unless that country is a state. And, if it's a state, the people of Canada will pay a much lower tax."

He said Canadians would also "have no military problems, they'd be much more secure in every way, and I think it's a great thing for Canada."

"I view it as, honestly, a country that should be a state," he said. "Then, they'll get much better treatment, much better care and much lower taxes and they'll be much more secure."

Trump uses mass firing to remove independent inspectors general at a series of agencies

By ZEKE MILLER, ERIC TUCKER and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has fired about 17 independent inspectors general at government agencies, a sweeping action to remove oversight of his new administration that some members of Congress are suggesting violated federal oversight laws.

The dismissals began Friday night and were effective immediately, according to two people familiar with the actions. They spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details that have not been made public. Neither confirmed the exact number of firings, but an email sent by one of the fired inspectors general said "roughly 17" inspectors general had been removed.

Trump confirmed the move in a conversation with reporters aboard Air Force One on Saturday, claiming, "it's a very common thing to do." He said he would "put good people in there that will be very good."

Congress was not given the legally required 30-day notices about the removals — something that even a top Republican is decrying.

"There may be good reason the IGs were fired. We need to know that if so," Sen. Chuck Grassley, chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said in a statement. "I'd like further explanation from President Trump. Regardless, the 30 day detailed notice of removal that the law demands was not provided to Congress," said Grassley, R-Iowa.

The role of the modern-day inspector general dates to post-Watergate Washington, when Congress installed offices inside agencies as an independent check against mismanagement and abuse of power. Though inspectors general are presidential appointees, some serve presidents of both parties. All are expected to be nonpartisan.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., acknowledged that the firings violated statutes but shrugged it off: "Just tell them you need to follow the law next time," he said.

Democrats and watchdog groups, however, used the dismissals to raise alarm that Trump was making it easier to take advantage of the government.

"Inspectors General are the cops on the beat preventing bad things from happening," Max Stier, president and CEO of the nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service, said in a statement. "Their work saves the taxpayer tens of billions of dollars every year."

The White House did not comment on Saturday. President Donald Trump was in Las Vegas for a speech focused on his campaign promise to end federal taxation on tips.

But the moves were consistent with the president's first week back in the White House, which has featured a series of steps to remake the federal government. Trump has done everything from using executive orders to impose hiring freezes and crack down on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, to suggesting that he wants to shutter the Federal Emergency Management Agency and leave disaster recovery up to individual states affected by major emergencies.

"Yesterday, in the dark of night, President Trump fired at least 12 independent inspector generals at important federal agencies across the administration," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Saturday on the chamber's floor. "This is a chilling purge and it's a preview of the lawless approach Donald Trump and his administration are taking far too often as he's becoming president."

Schumer said the dismissals are "possibly in violation of federal law" and help demonstrate that the move "is a glaring sign that it's a golden age for abuse in government and even corruption."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 85 of 114

The Washington Post, which first reported the firings, said that many were appointees from Trump's first term. Among those inspectors general reportedly removed included those for the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense and Education.

In a lengthy statement Saturday, Hannibal Ware, the chairman of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, an independent entity that represents the interests of government watchdogs, noted that inspectors general conduct their "oversight in a strictly non-partisan manner. They are appointed, by law, without regard to their political affiliation and, during their tenures, they work effectively across Administrations and with Congress, without regard to political party."

He suggested that the firings violated the legal requirements that presidents notify Congress 30 days before firing an inspector general and provide a detailed rationale for the decision."

"IGs are not immune from removal. However, the law must be followed to protect independent government oversight for America," the statement said.

Spared in this round of dismissals, however, was Michael Horowitz, the longtime Justice Department inspector general who has issued reports on assorted politically explosive criminal investigations over the past decade.

In December 2019, for instance, Horowitz released a report faulting the FBI for surveillance warrant applications in the investigation into ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. But the report also found that the investigation had been opened for a legitimate purpose and did not find evidence that partisan bias had guided investigative decisions.

"Michael Horowitz we're keeping," Trump said Saturday, calling his 2019 findings "such an accurate, well done report."

Horowitz's status aside, the move against the watchdogs drew criticism from congressional Democrats.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., noted that inspectors general are "critical to rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse throughout the federal government." The mass firings were "alarming," she said.

Rep. Gerald Connolly of Virginia, a Democrat who is the ranking member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, called it a "coup to overthrow legally protected independent inspectors general."

He also suggested that the move — coming on just the fourth full day of Trump's second term — could potentially free up a series of positions that can subsequently be filled with loyalists who are strongly sympathetic to the Trump administration.

"Replacing independent inspectors general with political hacks will harm every American who relies on social security, veterans benefits, and a fair hearing at IRS on refunds and audits," Connolly said.

Still, Trump has aggressively challenged the authority of independent agency watchdog groups in the past.

In 2020, he replaced multiple key inspectors general, including those leading the Defense Department and intelligence community, as well as the inspector general tapped to chair a special oversight board for the \$2.2 trillion economic relief package on the coronavirus.

Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts called Trump's actions "a purge of independent watchdogs in the middle of the night."

"Inspectors general are charged with rooting out government waste, fraud, abuse, and preventing misconduct," Warren posted on X. "President Trump is dismantling checks on his power and paving the way for widespread corruption."

Middle East latest: Israel says it won't complete its withdrawal from Lebanon by Sunday

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel's military says it won't complete its withdrawal from southern Lebanon by Sunday as outlined in its ceasefire agreement with Hezbollah militants.

The confirmation came Saturday while another fragile ceasefire — between Israel and the Hamas militant group — saw a second release of hostages from Gaza and Palestinian prisoners from Israeli custody.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 86 of 114

The ceasefire deal for Lebanon gave both sides 60 days to remove their forces from southern Lebanon and for the Lebanese army to move in and secure the area. Israel says Hezbollah and the Lebanese army haven't met their obligations, while Lebanon accuses the Israeli army of hindering the Lebanese military from taking over.

The truce for Gaza continued as Hamas released four female Israeli soldiers held captive during the 15-month-long war in Gaza in return for 200 Palestinian prisoners in Israel. The next exchange is expected on Feb. 1. The truce also halted the fighting in Gaza for at least six weeks.

But Israel says it won't allow displaced Palestinians to begin returning to northern Gaza as expected by Sunday, because a civilian hostage who was supposed to be released by Hamas hadn't been freed on Saturday. Mediators are trying to resolve the dispute.

The war was sparked by Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023 that killed around 1,200 people. The Israel-Hamas war has killed more than 47,000 people in Gaza, according to local health authorities, which don't distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Here's the latest:

Trump wants Jordan and Egypt to accept more Palestinian refugees from Gaza

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE -- President Donald Trump said he'd like to see Jordan, Egypt and other Arab nations increase the number of Palestinian refugees they are accepting from the Gaza Strip — potentially moving out enough of the population to "just clean out" the war-torn area to create virtual clean slate.

During a 20-minute question-and-answer session with reporters aboard Air Force One on Saturday, Trump said he discussed his vision on a call earlier in the day with King Abdullah II of Jordan and would speak Sunday with President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi of Egypt.

"I'd like him to take people. I'd like Egypt to take people," said Trump. "You're talking about, probably a million and a half people, and we just clean out that whole thing and say, 'You know it's, over.'"

Speaking about the effects of Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza, Trump said he complimented Jordan for having successfully accepted Palestinian refugees.

He said of such a mass movement of Palestinians, "it could be temporary or long term," adding that the area of the world that encompasses Gaza, "over centuries" has "had many, many conflicts."

2-year-old shot dead by Israeli forces in West Bank, Palestinian officials say

NEW YORK — A 2-year-old Palestinian girl was shot and killed by Israeli forces Saturday in the West Bank, Palestinian health officials said, the latest death to rock the territory as Israel stages an offensive there.

The Palestinian health ministry said Laila Al-Khatib, was shot in the head by Israeli forces in the area of Jenin, a city in the northern West Bank where Israeli forces have been operating in recent days.

Israel's military said it was reviewing the incident. It said its forces had fired at militants who had barricaded themselves behind a structure, and it was aware of reports that an uninvolved civilian had been hurt.

The death comes as Israel has launched a major military operation in the occupied West Bank and suspected Jewish settlers have rampaged through two Palestinian towns. At least 11 Palestinians were killed in Jenin in the latest raid.

Palestinian health officials said another Palestinian man was killed Saturday in Balata, a refugee camp in the Central West Bank.

Released prisoners enter Gaza to joyous crowds

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — Some of the Palestinian prisoners released as part of the ceasefire in Gaza returned to the territory on Saturday to joyous crowds. They were taken to a hospital for assessment and treatment.

Rana Raef al-Farra, the daughter of one released prisoner, said she was 7 when her father was sentenced 21 years ago. "I am afraid that I will not know him when he gets out, or that he will not know me," she said.

Some of the released prisoners praised the "resistance" and urged it to continue.

Hamas sending delegation to Cairo to receive released Hamas-affiliated prisoners

BEIRUT — Hamas said in a statement Saturday that a delegation of the group's officials, led by Mohamad Darwish, the head of its Shura Council, would head to Cairo.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 87 of 114

They plan to meet with Egyptian officials and receive Hamas-affiliated Palestinian prisoners who were released in exchange for Israelis held in the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine also announced they were sending delegations to Cairo for the same purpose.

Families of hostages appeal to Trump to pressure Netanyahu to end war, bring home loved ones

TEL AVIV, Israel — Families of hostages who remain in captivity in Gaza are appealing to President Donald Trump to pressure Israel's prime minister into ending the war and bringing their loved-ones home.

Under the deal, about one third of the hostages are to be released during the six-week first phase. The release of the remaining hostages, along with an end to the war, are to be negotiated during a second phase.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has signaled readiness to return to the war after the first phase is complete, and hard-liners in his coalition have threatened to bring down the government if he does not resume the war.

Israel says it won't complete withdrawal from Lebanon by Sunday

JERUSALEM — Israel's military has confirmed that it won't complete its withdrawal from southern Lebanon by Sunday as outlined in its ceasefire agreement with Hezbollah.

The deal gave both sides 60 days to remove their forces from southern Lebanon and for the Lebanese army to move in and secure the area. Israel says the Hezbollah militant group and the Lebanese army haven't met their obligations, while Lebanon accuses the Israeli army of hindering the Lebanese military from taking over.

In a statement Saturday, the Israeli military said the agreement is progressing but in some sectors, "it has been delayed and will take slightly longer."

It said the withdrawal process will continue "in the near future," but said that displaced residents from towns in southern Lebanon should not return.

White House welcomes the release of 4 more Israeli hostages

WASHINGTON — The White House welcomed the release of four Israeli captives on Saturday, saying their freedom was secured by President Donald Trump and promising to work with Israel for the release of all remaining hostages.

"Today the world celebrates as President Trump secured the release of four more Israeli hostages who were, for far too long, held against their will by Hamas in horrific conditions," the White House said in a statement.

"The United States will continue with its great partner Israel to push for the release of all remaining hostages and the pursuit of peace throughout the region," it added.

Palestinians get ready and wait for Israel to allow their return to northern Gaza

WADI GAZA, Gaza Strip -- Hundreds of Palestinian families have crowded on the upper edge of southern Gaza, waiting for the Israeli military to allow their return to their homes in the northern half of the coastal enclave.

"I'm waiting, and I'm staying until the morning until they open the road and I return," said Khalil Abd, from Gaza City. "Open the way for us to return, that's enough."

According to the ceasefire deal, the Israeli military had been expected to allow hundreds of thousands of Palestinian to return to northern Gaza through a road that bisects the territory starting Sunday.

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the pullback was on hold because of delays in the release of an Israeli civilian woman from captivity in Gaza.

Crowds welcome Palestinians freed from Israeli prisons

RAMALLAH, West Bank — "The people want Hamas," the crowd chanted as buses carrying dozens of released Palestinian prisoners arrived in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Israel released a total of 200 Palestinian prisoners and detainees on Saturday in exchange for four young female Israeli soldiers captured in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack, as part of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire. Around 70 of the prisoners were released into Egypt.

In Ramallah, a crowd of thousands cheered and flashed victory signs as the buses arrived. Gaunt-looking

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 88 of 114

prisoners in gray jumpsuits were hoisted onto people's shoulders.

Israel releases 200 Palestinian prisoners in a Gaza ceasefire deal after Hamas freed 4 soldiers
RAMALLAH, West Bank — Thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank city of Ramallah celebrated the arrival of buses carrying dozens of prisoners released as part of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire.

Israel said it released a total of 200 prisoners after Hamas freed four young, female Israeli soldiers. The prisoners include 120 who were serving life sentences after being convicted of deadly attacks on Israelis. Around 70 were released into Egypt.

Israel warns Palestinians not to return to northern Gaza
JERUSALEM — The Israeli military is warning Palestinians in Gaza not to return to northern Gaza. The army's Arabic spokesman, Avichay Adraee, published a post on social media telling Palestinians not to approach the east-west Netzarim route, which bisects Gaza.

Israel had been expected to open the route by Sunday as part of the latest stage of the ceasefire. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the pullback was on hold because of delays in the release of an Israeli civilian woman from captivity in Gaza.

Mediators say they are trying to resolve the dispute.
Some Palestinian prisoners being released will be sent to other Arab countries
RAMALLAH, West Bank — The head of a Palestinian prisoner advocacy group says that some of the 70 convicted militants being transferred to Egypt after their release from Israeli prison will ultimately be sent to other Arab countries.

Abdullah al-Zaghari, the head of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, told The Associated Press that Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey have all expressed willingness to receive some of those required to live in exile according to the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas.

Video shows freed hostages in an Israeli army base
JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office has released a video showing the freed hostages being welcomed at an army base in southern Israel.

Some of the hostages hugged the female soldiers who greeted them. One of them, Liri Albag, 19, smiled, gave two thumbs-up and made a heart shape with her hands before boarding a van.

Israel's president welcomes hostages home
JERUSALEM — Israel's president has welcomed home the four female soldiers released from captivity. "You are heroes," President Isaac Herzog said in a post on X.

Herzog wished them healthy recoveries, but says the nation "will not rest" until all hostages return. Israel releases 70 Palestinian prisoners into Egypt in Gaza ceasefire deal

CAIRO — Egypt's state-run Qahera TV says Israel has released 70 Palestinian prisoners into Egypt under the Gaza ceasefire deal.

The network says they arrived at the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing with the Gaza Strip. Hamas had earlier released four female Israeli soldiers. Israel is expected to release a total of 200 Palestinian prisoners or detainees, many of whom will be sent into exile.

Israel says it won't allow Palestinians to return to northern Gaza until hostage Arbel Yehoud is released
JERUSALEM — Israel says it will not allow Palestinians to return to northern Gaza until Arbel Yehoud, one of the dozens of hostages held by Hamas, is released.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Yehoud was supposed to have been released Saturday as part of the Gaza ceasefire agreement.

Hamas had earlier released four female Israeli soldiers.
Israeli army spokesman criticizes Hamas' display of hostages
TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel's army spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari says the released hostages are "in our hands" and on their way home.

In a televised statement Saturday, Hagari criticized what he called the "cynical" public display of the young women by Hamas before their release.

He also said that Israel is concerned about the fate of the two youngest hostages — Kfir and Ariel Bibas — and their mother Shiri. Kfir Bibas marked his second birthday in captivity earlier this month.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 89 of 114

Hagari says the army is committed to bringing all hostages home.

Palestinians release a list of 200 prisoners to be released from Israel

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinian authorities have released a list of 200 Palestinian prisoners and detainees expected to be released from Israel in exchange for four female Israeli soldiers held by Hamas in Gaza.

The list includes 120 militants serving life sentences after being convicted of deadly attacks against Israelis. The rest are serving lengthy sentences.

The list shows that 70 of the prisoners will not be allowed to return to their homes in the occupied West Bank or Jerusalem and will be required to live in exile. It's unclear exactly where they will go.

The more notorious militants being released include Mohammad Odeh, 52, and Wael Qassim, 54, both from east Jerusalem. They were accused of carrying out a series of deadly Hamas attacks against Israelis, including a bombing at a cafeteria at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2002 that killed nine people, including five U.S. citizens.

4 female soldiers freed by Hamas as part of Gaza ceasefire are with Israeli forces

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Four female soldiers freed from captivity in the Gaza Strip are with Israeli forces, the second such release as part of a ceasefire agreement with Hamas.

Israel confirmed it had received the freed hostages on Saturday. The truce, which began Sunday, is aimed at winding down the deadliest and most destructive war ever fought between Israel and the Hamas militant group.

The four Israeli soldiers, Karina Arieiv, 20, Daniella Gilboa, 20, Naama Levy, 20, and Liri Albag, 19, were captured in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that ignited the war.

Rain in Southern California will aid firefighters but create a risk of toxic ash runoff

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Rain began falling in parched Southern California on Saturday in a boon for firefighters who were mopping up multiple wildfires. But heavy downpours on charred hillsides could bring the threat of new troubles like toxic ash runoff.

Los Angeles County crews spent much of the week removing vegetation, shoring up slopes and reinforcing roads in devastated areas of the Palisades and Eaton fires, which reduced entire neighborhoods to rubble and ash after breaking out during powerful winds Jan. 7.

Most of the region was expected to get around an inch (about 2.5 centimeters) of precipitation over several days, but "the threat is high enough to prepare for the worst-case scenario" of localized cloudbursts causing mud and debris to flow down hills, the National Weather Service said on social media.

"So the problem would be if one of those showers happens to park itself over a burn area," weather service meteorologist Carol Smith said. "That could be enough to create debris flows."

The rain started along the Central Coast before moving into Ventura and LA counties in the evening. It was forecast to increase throughout the weekend and possibly last into early Tuesday, Smith said. Flood watches were issued for some burn areas, and snow was likely in the mountains.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass issued an executive order this week to expedite cleanup efforts and mitigate the environmental impacts of fire-related pollutants. LA County supervisors also approved an emergency motion to install flood-control infrastructure and expedite and remove sediment in fire-impacted areas.

Fire crews filled sandbags for communities while county workers installed barriers and cleared drainage pipes and basins.

Officials cautioned that ash in recent burn zones was a toxic mix of incinerated cars, electronics, batteries, building materials, paints, furniture and other household items. It contains pesticides, asbestos, plastics and lead. Residents were urged to wear protective gear while cleaning up.

Concerns about post-fire debris flows have been especially high since 2018, when the town of Montecito up the coast from LA was ravaged by mudslides after a downpour hit mountain slopes burned bare by a huge blaze. Twenty-three people died, and hundreds of homes were damaged.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 90 of 114

While the impending wet weather ended weeks of dangerous gusts and reduced humidity, several wildfires were still burning across Southern California. Those included the Palisades and Eaton fires, which killed at least 28 people and destroyed more than 14,000 structures. Containment of the Palisades Fire reached 81%, and the Eaton Fire was at 95% containment.

In northern Los Angeles County, firefighters made significant progress against the Hughes Fire, which prompted evacuations for tens of thousands of people when it erupted Wednesday in mountains near Lake Castaic.

And in San Diego County, there was still little containment of the Border 2 Fire churning through a remote area of the Otay Mountain Wilderness near the U.S.-Mexico border.

The rain was expected to snap a near-record streak of dry weather for Southern California. Much of the region has received less than 5% of the average rainfall for this point in the water year, which began Oct. 1, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Most of Southern California is now either in "extreme drought" or "severe drought," according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

North Korea says it tested cruise missile system and vows 'toughest' response to US

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea said Sunday it tested a cruise missile system, its third known weapons display this year, and vowed "the toughest" response to what it called the escalation of U.S.-South Korean military drills that target the North.

The moves suggested North Korea will likely maintain its run of weapons tests and its confrontational stance against the U.S. for now, even though President Donald Trump said he intends to reach out to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The official Korean Central News Agency said Kim observed the test of sea-to-surface strategic cruise guided weapons on Saturday.

The term "strategic" implies the missiles are nuclear-capable. KCNA said the missiles hit their targets after traveling 1,500-kilometer (932-mile) -long elliptical and figure-eight-shaped flight patterns, but that couldn't be independently verified.

KCNA cited Kim as saying that North Korea's war deterrence capabilities "are being perfected more thoroughly" and affirming that his country will make "strenuous efforts" to defend stability "on the basis of more powerfully developed military muscle."

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea had launched "several" cruise missiles toward its western waters from an inland area at around 4 p.m. on Saturday. It said South Korea maintains a readiness to "overwhelmingly" repel any provocations by North Korea in conjunction with its military alliance with the U.S.

In a separate statement carried by KCNA on Sunday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry criticized the U.S. for committing "serious military provocations aiming at" North Korea with a series of military exercises with South Korea this month.

"The reality stresses that the DPRK should counter the U.S. with the toughest counteraction from A to Z as long as it refuses the sovereignty and security interests of the DPRK and this is the best option for dealing with the U.S.," the Foreign Ministry statement said.

DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the abbreviation of its formal name. The Foreign Ministry warning was in line with Kim's vows to implement the "toughest" anti-U.S. policy during a year-end political meeting.

North Korea views U.S. military training with South Korea as invasion rehearsals though Washington and Seoul have repeatedly said their drills are defensive in nature. In recent years, the U.S. and South Korea have expanded their military exercises in response to North Korea's advancing nuclear program.

The start of Trump's second term raises prospects for the revival of diplomacy between the U.S. and

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 91 of 114

North Korea, as Trump met Kim three times during his first term. The Trump-Kim diplomacy in 2018-19 fell apart due to wrangling over U.S.-led economic sanctions on North Korea.

During a Fox News interview broadcast Thursday, Trump called Kim "a smart guy" and "not a religious zealot." Asked whether he will reach out to Kim again, Trump replied, "I will, yeah."

Many experts say Kim likely thinks he has greater bargaining power than in his earlier round of diplomacy with Trump because of his country's enlarged nuclear arsenal and deepening military ties with Russia.

In South Korea, many worry that Trump might scale back military drills with the Asian U.S. ally and abandon the goal of the complete denuclearization of North Korea and focus on eliminating its long-range missile program, which poses a direct threat to the U.S., while leaving its nuclear attack capabilities against South Korea intact.

On Monday, Trump called North Korea "a nuclear power" as he spoke of his personal ties with Kim during a news conference at the Oval Office after his inauguration. Washington, Seoul and their partners have long shunned describing North Korea as a nuclear state because that could be seen as accepting its pursuit of nuclear weapons in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

After his first summit with Kim in 2018, Trump baffled many in South Korea by unilaterally announcing the suspension of major summertime military drills, calling them "very provocative" and "tremendously expensive."

North Korea hasn't commented on Trump's latest overture. Sunday's cruise missile tests were the North's first known weapons launches since Trump's inauguration.

Trump leans into his pledge to eliminate taxes on tips at a Las Vegas rally

By WILL WEISSERT and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — President Donald Trump came to Las Vegas on Saturday to crow about his campaign promise to eliminate taxes on tips, signaling to allies in Congress the importance of the policy but stopping well short of offering details for making the slogan a reality.

Instead, Trump spent most of his 40 minutes speaking to roughly 1,000 supporters in a casino ballroom lauding his November election victory, mocking former President Joe Biden's administration and touting his torrent of executive actions since taking office Monday.

"But I have to be honest with you, I'm really here for a different reason, I'm here to say thank you," Trump told the crowd at Circa Resort & Casino.

The victory lap, Trump's first swing-state rally since taking office, came after he won Nevada's six electoral votes in November, becoming the first Republican since George W. Bush in 2004 to carry the state. It was part of Trump's sweep of all seven of the most competitive states that gave him a healthy electoral majority and a second, non-consecutive term.

Aides said Trump's stop in Nevada was to deliver an "economic-focused message" built around his familiar promise to hospitality industry workers to remove the tax on gratuity income.

"We're going to get it for you — 'no tax on tips,'" Trump said, standing behind a podium emblazoned with the same slogan he used throughout the 2024 campaign.

After the rally, Trump strode through the Circa casino floor past its purple-hewed velvet tables, to cheers from visitors of "USA, USA." At a roulette table, a player yelled, "Give me \$47 on 47," for Trump, now the 47th president. "Ohh," Trump lamented at the losing throw but he signed autographs as supporters hooted.

If light on detail, Trump's comments on tips were a signal to Republicans in Congress that the proposal is a priority for the massive tax package they intend to pass this year. Trump is set to meet House Republicans on Monday as they gather in Florida to chart the strategy ahead.

Speaker Mike Johnson, who is laboring to get the package moving forward, invited Trump to address a joint session of Congress on March 4, a tradition for new presidents, who don't deliver a State of the Union address until their second year in office. Johnson said lawmakers working with Trump hope to make the next four years "some of the most consequential in our nation's history."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 92 of 114

Nevada is a familiar backdrop to talk tips and taxation. As a candidate, Trump first announced the idea of ending gratuity taxes during a rally in June in Las Vegas — a proposal later copied by his Democratic opponent, Kamala Harris.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates there are 2.24 million restaurant servers across the country, with tips making up a large percentage of their income.

In Las Vegas, the 24-hour economy is fueled by everyone from wait staff and valet parkers to hotel maids and casino dealers, all of whom collect tips. Nevada has the nation's highest concentration of tipped workers, with about 25.8 waiters and waitresses alone per 1,000 jobs, followed by Hawaii and Florida.

Ted Pappageorge, secretary-treasurer for the Culinary Union, which represents about 60,000 hospitality workers across Nevada, said Trump's plans "must not end" with scrapping taxation on tips.

"Eliminating taxes on tips and ending the \$2.13 sub-minimum wage — that is the reality in too many states across the country — will uplift millions of hospitality workers," Pappageorge said. He said many employers set hourly pay well below the federal minimum wage and expect gratuities to make up the difference.

Despite the stated focus on taxes, the Nevada rally served mostly as a capstone of sorts to Trump's first week in office, as he recounted for the crowd the executive orders he'd signed and what they'll do.

"We've accomplished more in one week than most administrations have experienced in four years and we're just getting started," Trump said, adding that his executive orders "reverse the horrible failures and betrayals that we inherited from a group of people that didn't know what the hell they were doing."

Trump cited a sweeping freeze on new money for all U.S. foreign assistance, his notice of a U.S. withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement and his order ceasing diversity, equity and inclusion programs across the federal government, among other things.

"We feel a light over our country," Trump said. "Everyone does."

Devastating toll for Gaza's children: Over 13,000 killed and an estimated 25,000 injured, UN says

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The war in Gaza has been devastating for children: More than 13,000 have been killed, an estimated 25,000 injured, and at least 25,000 hospitalized for malnutrition, according to U.N. agencies.

As Britain's deputy U.N. ambassador, James Kariuki, recently told the Security Council, "Gaza has become the deadliest place in the world to be a child."

"The children of Gaza did not choose this war," he said, "yet they have paid the ultimate price."

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported Thursday that of the 40,717 Palestinian bodies identified so far in Gaza, one-third — 13,319 — were children. The office said Friday the figures came from Gaza's Ministry of Health.

The U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, said the estimate of 25,000 children injured came from its analysis based on information collected together with Gaza's Health Ministry.

U.N. deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said nearly 19,000 children had been hospitalized for acute malnutrition in the four months before December.

That figure also came from UNICEF, which said it was from data collected by U.N. staff in Gaza focusing on nutrition, in coordination with all pertinent U.N. agencies.

The U.N. says thousands of children have also been orphaned or separated from their parents during the 15-month war.

Yasmine Sherif, executive director of the U.N. global fund Education Cannot Wait, told a press conference that 650,000 school-age children haven't been attending classes and the entire education system has to be rebuilt because of the widespread destruction in Gaza.

Diplomats from Britain, France and other countries also cited the toll on Israeli children who were killed, injured and abducted during Hamas' attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023 — with some still being

held hostage.

Israel's U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon asked the Security Council whether it ever paused to consider the plight of Israeli children "mutilated, tortured and murdered" on Oct. 7, the 30 who were kidnapped and the tens of thousands who have been displaced, their homes destroyed.

"The trauma they have endured is beyond imagination," he said.

Danon called Thursday's council meeting on children in Gaza "an affront to common sense," accusing Hamas of turning Gaza into "the world's largest terror base" and using children as human shields.

"The children of Gaza could have had a future filled with opportunity," he said. "Instead, they are trapped in a cycle of violence and despair, all because of Hamas, not because of Israel."

Haitian leader says the Trump administration's plans will be 'catastrophic' for his country

By TRISHA THOMAS Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The president of Haiti's transitional presidential council said the Trump administration's decisions to freeze aid programs, deport migrants and block refugees will be "catastrophic" for Haiti.

Leslie Voltaire made the comment in an interview with The Associated Press in Rome on Saturday following a meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican. He visited the pope to ask for help for Haiti.

"I'm knocking on the doors of people who love Haiti. The pope loves Haiti, and he is eager to help," Haiti's interim president said.

The pontiff and Voltaire discussed the dire situation in Haiti where gangs have killed civilians and operate across the Caribbean nation with impunity. Half of Haiti's 11.4 million people are already hungry, according to Voltaire, and losing humanitarian assistance will make the situation dramatically worse.

"Trump said that Haiti is a 'shithole,' so I don't think he will care about Haiti," Voltaire said, noting that thousands of people are already being repatriated from the Dominican Republic every week and gangs are terrorizing the populace. With the new U.S. policies, "the situation will be catastrophic."

During his first administration, President Donald Trump used bluntly vulgar language to question why the U.S. would accept immigrants from Haiti and "shithole countries" in Africa. At the time, the White House did not deny his remark but issued a statement saying Trump supports immigration policies that welcome "those who can contribute to our society."

Voltaire said there are roughly 1.5 million Haitians in the United States and roughly 150,000 who were accepted under a program called the "Temporary Protection System."

"Trump says that he will expel all of them," Voltaire said, adding that Haiti, which is already struggling with hunger and internally displaced people, cannot handle the influx.

In a report released this month, the U.N. migration agency said internal displacement within Haiti has tripled over the last year and now surpasses 1 million people. The situation has been largely caused by gang violence in the Caribbean country. The new figure provided by the International Organization for Migration represents a record for Haiti.

IOM said that "relentless gang violence" in Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince has fueled a near-doubling of displacement in the city and a collapse of health care and other services and worsening food insecurity. About 200,000 people have been forcibly returned to Haiti over the last year mostly from Dominican Republic.

Voltaire and his transitional government have been tasked with leading the country to general elections, an elusive goal but he is convinced they can make it happen by next November despite powerful gangs that rule 85% of the capital and are gaining ground in surrounding areas.

Nevertheless, Voltaire is positive that if Haiti's multinational police force is boosted with several thousand additional officers they can go ahead with elections this year.

Kenya is leading the multinational police force with a total deployment of more than 600, below the 1,000 officers the country's president pledged. An additional 150 Guatemalans and an advance team of eight Salvadorean troops have also arrived, but the force remains far below its anticipated strength of 2,500

officers. Voltaire said Benin has pledged an additional 2,000 soldiers.

"We have to do a referendum on a new constitution and also the election at the end of November. I say that we can do the elections because we have like eight departments, like 80% of the country. We can do the election."

The power of gangs in Haiti has grown since the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. Some gangs have even indicated they want to be part of the political process. Voltaire excluded that possibility, "I don't think they should be around the table. I think they are criminals."

More than 5,600 people were reported killed across Haiti last year, according to the United Nations. The number of killings increased by more than 20% compared with all of 2023, according to the U.N. Human Rights Office.

Last week U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned that gangs could soon overrun the capital, Port-au-Prince, leading to a complete breakdown of government authority without additional international support for the beleaguered national police.

Voltaire said he asked the pontiff to organize an international conference of solidarity for Haiti. The Pope wrote "international conference" on a sheet of paper, Voltaire said, and later the Vatican Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, told him the Vatican would try to convince Mexico and Canada to participate in funding a conference on Haiti.

Hamas frees 4 female Israeli soldiers in exchange for 200 Palestinian prisoners as ceasefire holds

By ISABEL DEBRE, SAM MEDNICK, WAFAA SHURAFI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Four female Israeli soldiers who were taken in the attack that sparked the war in Gaza returned to Israel on Saturday after Hamas militants paraded them before a crowd of thousands in Gaza City and handed them over to the Red Cross. Israel later released 200 Palestinian prisoners in the second exchange of a fragile ceasefire.

The four Israelis smiled, waved and gave the thumbs-up from a stage in Palestine Square, with armed, masked militants on either side as Hamas sought to show it remained in control in Gaza after 15 months of war. The hostages likely acted under duress. Previously released ones said they were held in brutal conditions and forced to record propaganda videos.

Israel's Prison Service said it released 200 Palestinians, including 121 people serving life sentences after being convicted of deadly attacks against Israelis, while others were held without charge.

Thousands of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank city of Ramallah celebrated their arrival. Wan-looking and wearing gray prison sweatsuits, some donned Hamas headbands given to them by the crowd and rode on supporters' shoulders.

In the deal's first major crisis, Israel said it would not allow displaced Palestinians to return to northern Gaza by Sunday as anticipated, because civilian hostage Arbel Yehoud was not released as expected.

As mediators addressed that, hundreds of Palestinians gathered near the east-west Netzarim corridor dividing Gaza.

"Why are they treating us like this?" asked one man, Khalil Abd. Families huddled around bonfires against the winter cold.

Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian man close to the Netzarim corridor, Palestinian medical officials said. Israel's military said it fired warning shots in response to "gatherings of dozens of suspects." It said it was unaware of anyone harmed.

Israel insists on release of civilian hostage Arbel Yehoud

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Israel would not allow Palestinians into northern Gaza until Yehoud, taken from a kibbutz in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that ignited the war, was freed.

Hamas said it held Israel responsible for "any delay in implementing the agreement and its repercussions."

A senior Hamas official said the group informed mediators that Yehoud will be released next week. An

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 95 of 114

Egyptian official involved in negotiations called the matter a "minor issue" that mediators were working to resolve. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The U.S. National Security Council continues to push for Yehoud's release, a spokesperson said.

The ceasefire began last weekend with the release of three hostages and 90 prisoners. It is aimed at winding down the deadliest and most destructive war ever fought between Israel and Hamas. The deal has allowed for a surge of aid into tiny, devastated Gaza.

Who are the soldiers and prisoners released?

The four Israeli soldiers, Karina Arie, 20, Daniella Gilboa, 20, Naama Levy, 20, and Liri Albag, 19, were taken from Nahal Oz base near the border with Gaza when Palestinian militants overran it, killing more than 60 soldiers.

The four squealed as they hurried to embrace loved ones. Thousands of people danced and celebrated as the soldiers arrived by helicopter near a Tel Aviv hospital, which said they were in stable condition.

"I had goosebumps watching them," said Aviv Bercovich in Tel Aviv's Hostages Square. "I just want the war to end."

Thousands of Israelis gathered there again Saturday night to call for all hostages to be freed, amid fears the war will resume.

A fifth female soldier in the unit, Agam Berger, 20, also was abducted. "Now she's there alone," said family friend Yoni Collins.

In Gaza City, resident Radwan Abu Rawiya also watched the handover. "This is huge," he said. "People forgot about the war, destruction and are celebrating."

A video released by Hamas' armed wing showed the hostages thanking the militants in Arabic for the "good treatment," again likely under duress.

Israel's army spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari criticized Hamas' "cynical" display. He also said Israel is concerned about the two youngest hostages — Kfir and Ariel Bibas — and their mother, Shiri. Kfir Bibas marked his second birthday in captivity this month.

Among the Palestinian prisoners released were Mohammad Odeh, 52, and Wael Qassim, 54, accused of carrying out Hamas attacks against Israelis, including a bombing at a cafeteria at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2002 that killed nine people, including five U.S. citizens.

"I am afraid that I will not know him when he gets out, or that he will not know me," said Rana Raef al-Farra in Gaza, who said she was 7 when her father was sentenced 21 years ago.

Seventy released prisoners were expelled to Egypt, with Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey expressing willingness to take them in, according to Abdullah al-Zaghari, head of a Palestinian prisoner advocacy group.

What's next in the ceasefire

Twenty-six other hostages should be released in the ceasefire's six-week first phase, along with hundreds more Palestinian prisoners. The next exchange is next Saturday.

Many hope the next phase will end the war that has displaced the vast majority of Gaza's population and left hundreds of thousands at risk of famine. Talks start Feb. 3

The Oct. 7 attack killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 others hostage. Over 100 were freed in a weeklong truce the following month. Israel believes at least a third of the over 90 captives still in Gaza are dead.

The war has killed over 47,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not say how many were militants but say women and children make up over half the dead.

Auschwitz was liberated 80 years ago.

The spotlight is on survivors as their numbers dwindle

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — The world's focus will be on the remaining survivors of Nazi Germany's atrocities on Monday as world leaders and royalty join them for commemorations on the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

The main observances take place at the site in southern Poland where Nazi Germany murdered over a million people, most of them Jews, but also Poles, Roma and Sinti, Soviet prisoners of war, gay people and others targeted for elimination in Adolf Hitler's racial ideology.

The anniversary has taken on added poignancy due to the advanced age of the survivors, and an awareness that they will soon be gone, even as new wars makes their warnings as relevant as ever.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum says it expects about 50 survivors of Auschwitz and other camps to attend the events on Monday afternoon, joined by political leaders and royalty.

On this occasion, the powerful will sit and listen to the voices of the former prisoners, while there is still time to hear them.

Auschwitz the labor and death camp

The German authorities founded the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1940 in the Polish town of Oswiecim after their invasion of Poland in 1939. Early on it was a camp for Polish prisoners, including Catholic priests and members of the Polish underground resistance. The Germans later established some 40 camps in the area, but the most infamous is Birkenau, a vast site used for mass killings in gas chambers.

Those arriving at Birkenau were brought in cramped, windowless cattle trains. At the infamous ramp, the Nazis selected those they could use as forced laborers. The others — the elderly, women, children and babies — were gassed to death soon after their arrival.

Altogether the Germans murdered 6 million Jews, or two-thirds of all of Europe's Jews, in the Holocaust at Auschwitz and other camps, in ghettos and in mass executions close to people's homes.

Liberated by the Red Army

On Jan. 27, 1945, Soviet troops arrived at the gates of the Auschwitz and found some 7,000 weak and emaciated prisoners.

Boris Polevoy, a correspondent for the Soviet newspaper Pravda who was a first eyewitness, described a scene of unbelievable suffering: "I saw thousands of tortured people whom the Red Army had saved — people so thin that they swayed like branches in the wind, people whose ages one could not possibly guess."

At the time Allied troops were moving across Europe in a series of offensives against Germany. Soviet troops first liberated the Majdanek camp near Lublin in July 1944, and would go on to liberate Auschwitz, Stutthof and others.

American and British forces, meanwhile, liberated camps to the west, including Buchenwald, Dachau, Mauthausen, Bergen-Belsen.

After liberation day, some prisoners died of disease. Many confronted the grief of murdered parents and children, spouses and siblings. Entire families were wiped out.

"For Jewish survivors, the liberation day is a very, very sad day," Havi Dreifuss, a historian of the Holocaust at Tel Aviv University said in a recent online discussion about the anniversary.

Auschwitz the memorial site

Today the site is a museum and memorial managed by the Polish state, and is one of the most visited sites in Poland. Its mission is to preserve the objects there and the memory of what happened there; it organizes guided tours and its historians carry out research. In 2024, over 1.83 million people visited the site.

The museum's challenges are huge, and include efforts to conserve barracks and other objects that were never intended to endure for long. One especially emotional project involves the conservation of shoes of murdered children.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 97 of 114

Auschwitz as a symbol for all the Nazi terror

Auschwitz is not only the place where 1.1 million people, 90% of them Jews, were massacred. It also looms large in the world's collective memory as the embodiment of all the Nazis crimes, and an example of what hatred, racism and antisemitism can lead to.

One reason that Auschwitz has emerged as the leading symbol of the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes is that it was also a labor camp and thousands survived, eyewitnesses who could tell the world what happened there.

"Relatively many people survived, which for example barely happened in sites which didn't have such a forced labor component," said Thomas Van de Putte, a scholar specialized in cultural and collective Holocaust memory at King's College London.

Up to 900,000 people, mostly Jews, were murdered in Treblinka from 1942-43, and mass killings also took place at Belzec and other camps, but the Germans sought to cover up the evidence of their crimes, and there were almost no survivors.

At Auschwitz, the Germans left behind barracks and watchtowers, the remains of gas chambers and the hair and personal belongings of people killed there. The "Arbeit macht frei" (work will set you free) gate is recognized the world over.

At Birkenau, what remains has also left its mark on the collective conscience. As Van der Putte notes: "You have the gate, you have the wagon. You have the incredibly long railway platform which leads to the former crematoria and gas chambers."

Who is going

Presidents, royalty, ambassadors, rabbis and priests will be joining the survivors in a heated tent set up at Birkenau on Monday afternoon.

Germany, a country that for decades has been expressing remorse for the nation's crimes under Hitler, will be represented by both Chancellor Olaf Scholz and President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Also attending will be the president of Austria, which was annexed by Germany in 1938, and Italy, whose dictator Benito Mussolini formed an alliance with Hitler.

Others attending include Poland's President Andrzej Duda, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and French President Emmanuel Macron.

Britain's King Charles III, who has long worked to promote Holocaust remembrance, will also attend along with other European royalty, including Spain's King Felipe VI.

Who won't be there

Russian President Vladimir Putin was an honored guest at the 60th anniversary in 2005, a testament to the Soviet role in liberating Auschwitz and the heavy price paid by Soviet troops in defeating Germany.

But he is not welcome anymore due to Russian aggression in Ukraine. It will be the third year in a row — following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 — with no Russia representative.

"This is the anniversary of liberation. We remember the victims, but we also celebrate freedom. It is hard to imagine the presence of Russia, which clearly does not understand the value of freedom," museum director Piotr Cywiński said.

The war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza also created a stir about whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu should attend or not. The International Criminal Court, the world's top war crimes court, issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu in November, accusing him of crimes against humanity for Israeli actions in Gaza. That meant that Poland, as a signatory, would have faced an obligation to arrest him.

In the end, the Polish government adopted a resolution vowing to ensure the safe participation of the highest representatives of Israel. Israel, however, is sticking by plans to send its education minister, Yoav Kisch.

Manfred Goldberg wants you to know how the Nazis took his brother's life. And how an angel saved his

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Manfred Goldberg was just 13 years old when — stripped to his skin and shuffling toward an SS guard at a Nazi labor camp in Latvia — a man leaned over his shoulder and whispered the secret that saved the young Jew's life.

"If he happens to ask you your age, say you are 17," the man told him.

Goldberg followed the advice and the guard directed him to the group selected for slave labor. It was only later that he realized that the younger prisoners were sent to die because the guards believed anyone under 17 was too young to work profitably for the Nazi war machine.

"I sometimes think of that man as an angel who was sent to save me," Goldberg said. "I never saw him again."

Monday's ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz is more than a moment to remember some 6 million Jews who died in the Holocaust. It is a reminder that the number of survivors is dwindling, leaving fewer and fewer people to bear witness to the Nazi genocide at a time when Holocaust denial and antisemitism are on the rise.

"I'm only a drop in the ocean," he said in an interview at the Jewish Care Holocaust Survivors' Centre in London. "But I've made up my mind that as long as God gives me the strength, physical and mental, to continue doing it, I have committed myself to keep on doing it. So that's why I'm here at age 94, speaking to you."

This is his story.

Nazi rise

Manfred was born in Kassel, a city of about 220,000 in central Germany. Just 3 years old when the Nazis came to power in 1933, he didn't realize how the country was changing until he enrolled in the Jewish primary school nearby.

By then, the Hitler Youth, an organization that was outwardly similar to the Boy Scouts but was used to indoctrinate children in Nazi ideology, had begun to spread hatred of the Jews.

"They lay in wait of us sometimes, to ambush us and assault us or curse us," Goldberg said.

The children had been warned: Run or face more trouble.

As the Nazis systematically excluded Jews from public life, they first tried to deport Goldberg's father, then threatened to send him to a concentration camp. Manfred's mother, Rosa, pleaded for time to get him a visa to emigrate.

She heard diplomats at the British Embassy in Berlin might help, so she traveled 200 miles to see them. There she found Frank Foley, a British secret agent whose embassy job was cover for his spying activities and who ultimately authorized visas for more than 10,000 Jews to escape Germany.

"I believe he was a man with a heart," Goldberg said.

Foley gave Goldberg's father an emergency visa and told his mother that the rest of the family could follow in the coming weeks. But 10 days later, on Sept. 1, 1939, the Nazis invaded Poland. The family was split apart.

Wearing the star

As war raged, Germany stepped up anti-Jewish laws.

Jews were required to wear a yellow six-pointed star outdoors, and could only buy food in certain shops. When the shops ran out, Jews were out of luck.

One day, Goldberg's mother told him to put on his bookbag, which covered the star on his jacket, and go with her to a non-Jewish bakery. Standing across the street, she gave him a handful of coins and told him to run into the shop, ask for a loaf of bread, put the money on the counter and grab the bread before anyone could stop him.

"I was 7 or 8 years old. I just did as she asked me to," he said. "But in retrospect, I realize how serious the situation must have been. She probably would have been going hungry, but she couldn't bear to see

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 99 of 114

her children suffer hunger.”

Then in 1942, the Nazi regime embarked on what it called “The Final Solution,” the systematic execution of European Jews.

When the SS pounded on the door of the Goldbergs’ modest flat, they gave his mother just 10 minutes to pack a suitcase. After three days and three nights on a train without food or water, Manfred, his younger brother, Herman and their mother found themselves in Riga, the capital of Latvia, beginning a nightmare that would take him to five camps over the next three years.

Becoming a number

Manfred lost his name. He became No. 56478.

Soon they arrived at a sub-camp known as Precu, where Goldberg and his mother were put to work. But Herman was too young and stayed behind in the camp when Manfred and Rosa went out to work. The SS came and took the children away. Manfred never saw his brother again.

“The next morning, both my mother and I had to line up and go to work as though nothing untoward had happened,” he said. “The mourning took place internally, but if we had refused to go to work, we would have lost our lives.”

Only months later, Goldberg faced the same fate as his brother when the unknown benefactor whispered in his ear.

As the Nazis began to lose ground on the Eastern Front, they moved their prisoners west to keep them out of Russian hands and continue the killing.

Goldberg was moved to Stutthof, a camp near the Polish city of Gdansk whose front gate became known as the Gateway of Death because so few inmates left alive. More than 60,000 people died at the camp due to typhus, lethal injections and, beginning in June 1944, after they were gassed with Zyklon B, the same compound used in the gas chambers at Auschwitz.

But there was one last horror to come.

With the war in Europe drawing to a close, the Nazis continued to drive the inmates west toward central Germany.

Goldberg and his mother were marched to 25 miles northwest, where hundreds of prisoners were herded onto barges and held offshore for days without food or water. When the SS guards disappeared, the stronger prisoners ripped up planks and used them as oars to paddle the massive boats back to shore.

But just as the inmates landed, the guards returned. First they shot those too weak to escape, and then rounded up those who had made it to shore, including Goldberg and his mother, and started marching them back to Germany.

Then a British tank column arrived.

“Suddenly our armed guards, who moments earlier had still been killing people for not keeping up to speed, turned and ran away in the opposite direction, away from us,” Goldberg recalled. “People were jubilant. We’re not under guard. We’re free! We’re free! ... You cannot imagine the joy we felt.”

After being reunited with his father in England, Goldberg forged a career as an engineer, married and had four children.

For more than 50 years, he refused to tell his story.

He wanted his children to have normal parents, unburdened by the weight of the Holocaust. But about 20 years ago, when he was in his 70s, his synagogue asked him to take part in a remembrance service. His wife, Shary, encouraged him to remember: Who will tell your story when you are gone?

He never looked back.

“Silence never helps the oppressed,” Goldberg said. “It always helps the oppressors.”

The best revenge

The living room of Goldberg’s home in London is a testament to all that matters to him, a gallery filled with pictures of children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and a lifetime of family gatherings. To stand in the room is to see a man who is celebrating the miracle that he was allowed to live.

But there’s also another picture.

It's a painting of a chubby-cheeked boy with a checkered bowtie and the hint of a smile on his lips. Hung beside the front door, just where it can be seen every time Goldberg steps out into the world, it's the picture of another boy who didn't get that chance.

Herman.

Hegseth is quickly sworn in as defense secretary after dramatic Senate vote

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

Pete Hegseth was sworn in Saturday as the nation's 29th secretary of defense, quickly joining President Trump's Cabinet after a dramatic late-night vote in the Senate installed him as the Pentagon's leader.

Hegseth took the oath from Vice President JD Vance in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building with Hegseth's wife, Jennifer Rauchet, at his side and Republican senators looking on. The ceremony came less than 12 hours after Vance broke a 50-50 tie in the Senate to narrowly seal Hegseth's confirmation.

In brief remarks, Hegseth outlined what he said were his guiding principles: "Restore the warrior ethos in everything that we do, rebuild our military and reestablish deterrence."

"We don't want to fight wars," he added. "We want to deter them ... and we want to end them responsibly. But if we need to fight them, we're going to bring overwhelming and decisive force to close with and destroy the enemy and bring our boys home."

He thanked Vance for his tiebreaking vote and joked that his children were happy their father "won in overtime."

"It is the honor of a lifetime, sir, to serve under you," Hegseth said, in thanking Trump, who was in Las Vegas on Saturday.

Later, in an emailed message to the American military, he said "we will remain the strongest and most lethal force in the world" and he singled out the needs "to deter aggression in the Indo-Pacific by Communist China ... and reorient to key threats. We will stand by our allies — and our enemies are on notice."

The unusually narrow confirmation for a defense secretary came after questions from members in both parties over Hegseth's qualifications to lead the military, especially amid allegations of heavy alcohol use and aggressive behavior toward women.

For Hegseth, the challenges ahead are steep, as he takes charge of a sprawling bureaucracy at a time of severe challenges around the globe.

He enters office with far less experience than modern defense secretaries before him, acknowledging during his confirmation hearing that he'll need to build an experienced team as he settles into the job. "I want smarter and more capable people around me than me, and you will get that at the department," he said in his testimony.

Hegseth also lacks the broad bipartisan support that most have brought to the role. Every Senate Democrat voted against Hegseth's confirmation, as did three Republicans deeply skeptical of his qualifications for the job.

Adding to the acrimony, Hegseth refused to meet with any Democrats before confirmation, breaking from tradition.

Rarely has a Cabinet nominee faced such wide-ranging concerns about his experience — having been a combat veteran, veterans advocate and Fox News host — as well as behavior as Hegseth, particularly for such a high-profile role atop the U.S. military.

But the Republican-led Senate was determined to confirm Hegseth and round out Trump's top national security team.

Democrats, the minority in the Senate, had helped confirm Secretary of State Marco Rubio and CIA Director John Ratcliffe in bipartisan votes. But they fiercely opposed Hegseth, with even the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee refusing to support him.

Reacting to the vote, Senate Democratic leader Charles Schumer of New York said Republicans have "entrusted the most powerful military in the world to someone with no experience, terrible judgment and

serious flaws of character.”

“I hope for the sake of our troops and the good of our country that he can eventually grow into the job,” Schumer said on the Senate floor.

Three Republicans — Sens. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska — also voted against Hegseth, questioning his qualifications for the job.

Hegseth faced allegations that he sexually assaulted a woman at a Republican conference in California, though he has denied the claims and said the encounter was consensual. He later paid \$50,000 to the woman.

Hegseth also had promised during his confirmation hearings that he would not drink while on the job, were he to be confirmed.

Meanwhile, his opposition to women in combat became an issue after Trump announced his choice in November. But, in the face of questions from Congress, Hegseth appeared to shifted.

Asked about the issue on the “Megyn Kelly Show” in early December, Hegseth said he cares only that military standards are maintained. Women serve in combat, he said, and, “if we have the right standard and women meet that standard, roger. Let’s go.”

Hegseth told senators that he supports women in the military but wants to review standards to make sure they are not lowered to accommodate women.

At the swearing-in ceremony, a question directed to Hegseth about why women in the armed services should trust him was answered by Vance.

“All people in our armed services should trust him because he looks out for them and he is going to fight for them,” Vance said.

Loyalty tests and MAGA checks: Inside the Trump White House’s intense screening of job-seekers

By MATTHEW LEE, AAMER MADHANI and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Job-seekers hoping to join the new Trump administration are facing a series of intense loyalty tests, with White House screening teams fanning out to government agencies to check for “Make America Great Again” bona fides and carefully parsing applicants’ politics and social media posts.

President Donald Trump has long said he believes the biggest mistake he made during his first term was hiring what he considered to be the wrong kinds of people. Now, aides are working aggressively to ensure the government is filled only with loyalists.

Negative social media posts have been enough to derail applications. Those seeking jobs have been told they will have to prove their “enthusiasm” to enact Trump’s agenda and have been asked when their moment of “MAGA revelation” occurred. One federal employee said they briefly considered buying Trump’s crypto meme coin in case the president’s team asked about their voting record.

The intense screening has led some federal workers to question whether Trump’s team cares more about loyalty than competence. There is concern that his team is ousting foreign policy and national security diplomats and others who could offer the administration expertise and institutional knowledge at a time of conflict worldwide.

Trump officials have made no secret of their intention to fill the administration with hires sharing the president’s vision. They began checking potential staffers shortly after Trump launched his campaign and have continued since he won.

An application form on the Trump transition website, for instance, asks candidates, “What part of President Trump’s campaign message is most appealing to you and why?” according to a link obtained by The Associated Press.

It also asks how they had supported Trump in the 2024 election — with choices including volunteering, fundraising, door-knocking and making phone calls — and to submit a list of their social media handles.

“We are interviewing every single one of these individuals. If you are working in the federal government in a political appointee position, that comes through the White House now,” White House personnel direc-

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 102 of 114

tor Sergio Gor said Thursday on Fox News.

Trump, he said, "has been very clear of who he doesn't want to include in this administration. And so those are clear guidelines that we adhere to. And we bring the best people possible into the White House and into every department across this land."

Screening teams deploy across federal agencies

Some officials have referred to the newcomers sent by the White House to federal agencies disparagingly as "MAGA commissars," a reference to Communist Party officials from the former Soviet Union.

They are generally young and many do not appear to have particular expertise or background in the portfolios of the agencies in which they are working, according to three U.S. officials, who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

They said the screeners seem to be looking for even the slightest divergence between candidates and Trump's MAGA movement and "America First" policies. A negative social media post or a photograph with a Trump opponent has been enough for some applications to be rejected or put on hold for further review.

One official said he and several colleagues from various agencies had been told that even if they passed the initial vetting process to be admitted into the applicant pool, they would still need to prove their bona fides and convince interviewers of their "enthusiasm" to put in place Trump's policies, including by providing references from people whose loyalty had already been established.

This official said one colleague who made it to the interview stage was asked when that person's moment of "MAGA revelation" had occurred.

At the State Department, which has been a particular Trump target since his first term, current officials have described the atmosphere as "tense" and "glum," with career civil and foreign service officers leery of voicing opinions on policy or personnel matters, let alone politics, fearing retribution from their new political bosses.

Two longtime department officials noted that there is always a period of uncertainty with any change of administration but that the current transition to a group intent on making sweeping changes to the management and work of the department was unlike what they have experienced in the past.

Checking for MAGA alignment

Trump administration officials had made clear plans for a robust screening process that would ensure all officials inside the administration — and especially those who could help shape policy — were aligned with Trump's agenda, according to U.S. government officials and people familiar with their planning.

One longtime government employee said he ran into a senior Trump administration official in December who told him that Trump's team would look to be more thoughtful about how they were vetting appointees and even detailees. Those are nonpolitical, career experts on topics that range from counterterrorism to global climate policy who are loaned to the White House from other agencies for extended assignments.

All appointees, the person said, would be issued questionnaires to ensure they were fully committed to Trump's agenda.

The AP has reported that career civil servants who work on the White House National Security Council have been questioned by senior Trump administration officials about which candidate they voted for in the election, their political contributions and whether they have made social media posts that could be considered incriminating by Trump's team.

On Wednesday, roughly 160 NSC detailees who worked in the Biden administration were told that they were being sent home so Trump's team could conduct a review to ensure its personnel aligned with Trump's agenda.

"Every president is entitled to have a staff and the advisers that they need to implement the goals that the American people elected him to pursue," Brian McCormack, chief of staff to national security adviser Mike Waltz, said in a two-minute phone call, according to a recording obtained by the AP.

One NSC director learned that every detailee would need to be screened and that they would be queried about whom they voted for, political contributions and social media postings, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 103 of 114

White House officials defend their approach

"No one should be surprised that those being hired should align with the mission of the Administration. Nobody in private industry would ever hire someone who isn't mission focused, and the government should be no different," White House spokesperson Steven Cheung said.

"Over 1,300 individuals have been hired, while maintaining the highest standards of competency," he added.

Every new president looks to fill the thousands of government jobs they control with political appointees — rewarding campaign aides, allies, supporters and donors with plum positions. The White House presidential personnel office exists to recruit, screen and manage those employees.

Asking applicants their political affiliations is common. In some cases it is required, such as when filling jobs on agencies or commissions that require partisan balance.

Trump's White House is going deeper into potential appointees' political histories in part because he has carved out an ideological space that is often distinct from traditional Republican orthodoxy, making straight partisanship an unreliable indicator of commitment to his agenda.

"The Trump administration's conduct and imposition of a political litmus or loyalty test, it betrays the oath that the president took on Monday to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution," said Donald K. Sherman, executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, a government watchdog group. "What this suggests to me is that demonstrating loyalty is as important or more important than merit."

Gor, in his Fox interview, said that in addition to hiring, the White House personnel office is also working to root out workers disloyal to Trump.

"We're also cleaning house. And so we started the process of terminating a lot of positions," he said. "It's time for a fresh start."

He's emboldened, he's organized and he's still Trump: Takeaways from the president's opening days

By ZEKE MILLER and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's first week in office isn't over yet, but already it offers signals about how his next four years in the White House may unfold.

Some takeaways from the earliest days of his second term:

He's emboldened like never before

Within hours of being sworn in, Trump pardoned more than 1,500 people who were convicted or charged in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol by his supporters. Those pardoned include people who attacked, bloodied and beat police officers that day. The Republican president's decision was at odds with earlier comments by his incoming vice president, JD Vance, and other senior aides that Trump would only let off those who weren't violent.

The pardons were the first of many moves he made in his first week to reward allies and punish critics, in both significant and subtle ways. It signaled that without the need to worry about reelection — the Constitution bars a third term — or legal consequences after the Supreme Court granted presidents expansive immunity, the new president, backed by a Republican Congress, has little to restrain him.

Trump ended protective security details for Dr. Anthony Fauci, his former COVID-19 adviser, along with former national security adviser John Bolton, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his onetime deputy. The security protections had been regularly extended by the Biden administration over credible threats to the men's lives.

Trump also revoked the security clearances of dozens of former government officials who had criticized him, including Bolton, and directed that the portrait of a former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, retired Gen. Mark Milley be removed from the Pentagon walls.

He's way more organized this time

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 104 of 114

In his first days in office, Trump demonstrated just how much he and his team had learned from four often-chaotic years in the White House and four more in political exile.

A president's most valuable resource is time and Trump set out in his first hours to make his mark on the nation with executive orders, policy memoranda and government staffing shake-ups. It reflected a level of sophistication that eluded him in his first term and surpassed his Democratic predecessors in its scale and scope for their opening days in the Oval Office.

Feeling burned by the holdover of Obama administration appointees during his first go-around, Trump swiftly exiled Biden holdovers and moved to test new hires for their fealty to his agenda.

In a matter of days he uprooted four years of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives across the federal government, sent federal troops to the U.S.-Mexico border and erased Biden's guardrails on artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency development.

In his first term, Trump's early executive orders were more showpieces than substance and frequently were blocked by federal courts. This time, Trump is still confronting the limits of his constitutional authorities, but is also far more adept at controlling what is within them.

But Trump is still Trump

An hour after concluding a relatively sedate inaugural address in the Capitol Rotunda, Trump decided to let loose.

Speaking to an overflow crowd of governors, political supports and dignitaries in the Capitol Visitor Center's Emancipation Hall, Trump ripped in to Biden, the Justice Department and other perceived rivals. He followed it up with an even longer speech to supporters at a downtown arena and in more than 50 minutes of remarks and questions and answers with reporters in the Oval Office.

For all of Trump's experience and organization, he is still very much the same Donald Trump, and just as intent as before on dominating the center of the national conversation. If not more.

Courts may rein Trump in or give him expansive new powers

He has acted to try to end civil service protections for many federal workers and overturn more than a century of law on birthright citizenship. Such moves have been a magnet for legal challenges. In the case of the birthright citizenship order, it met swift criticism from U.S. District Judge John Coughenour, who put a temporary stay on Trump's plans.

"I've been on the bench for over four decades. I can't remember another case where the question presented was as clear as this one is," Coughenour, who was nominated by Republican President Ronald Reagan, told a Justice Department attorney. "This is a blatantly unconstitutional order."

How those court cases play out will determine not only the fate of some of Trump's most controversial actions, but just how far any president can go in pushing an agenda.

Trump is betting that oil can grease the economy's wheels and fix everything

The president likes to call it "liquid gold."

His main economic assumption is that more oil production by the United States, the Saudis and the rest of OPEC would bring down prices. That would reduce overall inflation and cut down on the oil revenues that Russia is using to fund its war in Ukraine.

For Trump, oil is the answer.

He's betting that fossil fuels are the future, despite the climate change risks.

"The United States has the largest amount of oil and gas of any country on Earth, and we're going to use it," Trump said in a Thursday speech. "Not only will this reduce the cost of virtually all goods and services, it'll make the United States a manufacturing superpower and the world capital of artificial intelligence and crypto"

The problem with billionaires is they're rivals, not super friends

Trump had the world's wealthiest men behind him on the dais when he took the oath of office on Monday.

Tesla's Elon Musk, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Meta's Mark Zuckerberg and LVMH's Bernard Arnault were all there. SoftBank billionaire Masayoshi Son was in the audience. Later in the week, Oracle's Larry Ellison and OpenAI's Sam Altman appeared with Son at the White House to announce an artificial intelligence

investment of up to \$500 billion.

Musk, the Trump backer who is leading the president's Department of Government Efficiency effort, posted on X that SoftBank didn't have the money. Altman, a rival to Musk on AI, responded over X that the funding was there.

By surrounding himself with the wealthiest people in tech, Trump is also stuck in their drama.

"The people in the deal are very, very smart people," Trump said Thursday. "But Elon, one of the people, he happens to hate. But I have certain hatreds of people, too."

Trump has a thing for William McKinley

America's 25th president has a big fan in Trump. Trump likes the tariffs that were imposed during Republican William McKinley's presidency and helped to fund the government. Trump has claimed the country was its wealthiest in the 1890s when McKinley was in office.

But McKinley might not be a great economic role model for the 21st century.

For starters, the Tax Foundation found that federal receipts were equal to just 3% of the overall economy in 1900, McKinley's reelection year. Tax revenues are now equal to about 17% of the U.S. economy and that's still not enough to fund the government without running massive deficits. So it would be hard to go full McKinley without some chaos.

As Dartmouth College economist Douglas Irwin noted on X, the economic era defined by McKinley was not that great for many people.

"There was a little something called the Panic of 1893 and the unemployment rate was in double digits from 1894-98!!" Irwin wrote. "Not a great decade!"

Ukrainian winemaker and US veterans team up to show the best of Ukraine, a glass at a time

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

MONTCLAIR, Va. (AP) — In a wine shop an hour outside of Washington, owner Arthur Lampros sampled a wine from a part of the world that was totally new to him, racking his brain to pin down the tastes on his tongue.

Was there a body of water near the vineyards, he wondered, that would moderate any storms or heat waves buffeting the grapes?

"Absolutely, absolutely" — Ukraine's Black Sea coast, near Odesa, said Giorgi Iukuridze, a Ukrainian winery owner introducing Ukraine's modernized wines to a broad U.S. audience for the first time,

Sam Lerman, a U.S. Air Force vet and one of a number of American veterans and ex-diplomats in Ukraine backing him in the endeavor, nodded, beaming at the words of praise that followed for many of the wines.

Ukraine is in the eyes of the world as it battles the Russian invasion with the aid of the United States and dozens of other countries. But Lerman said he and the others who teamed up with Iukuridze for the U.S. launch want Americans to see "that Ukraine is more than an ally at war, suffering tremendous tragedy."

Bringing the wines to the U.S. will help show "what Ukraine was really about, and has always been about," he said.

For Kurt Volker, a former U.S. ambassador to NATO who served as President Donald Trump's special representative to Ukraine during a stormy time in his first term, what Ukraine is about is determination, dedication and hope.

"Right now, because of Russia's invasion and the military assistance the U.S. has given to Ukraine, when people hear and talk about Ukraine, it is all about the war. And it's a little bit groaning ... like, 'Oh, geez, you know, how much more we're going to spend on this?'" Volker told The Associated Press.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasions of neighboring countries have served to introduce a whole community of American military people and diplomats to the burgeoning wine regions of the former Soviet Union.

Volker met his winemaker wife, and bought a small winery in Georgia, owing to Russia's 2008 invasion.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 106 of 114

He traveled often to Iukridze's SHABO winery in Ukraine for production tips.

It was Russia's invasions of Ukraine, especially in February 2022, that made more American military into fans of the wines of Ukraine's Black Sea coast, and of the country's best vodkas.

Lerman, a former technical sergeant decorated for valor in combat in Afghanistan, first went to Ukraine in a team of volunteer military advisers in the first weeks after Russia's 2022 invasion, and now represents a U.S. defense company there.

Militaries have a venerable history of revering alcohol. U.S. sailors treasure rationed beer at rare "steel beach picnics" on deck. Officers off-duty in Iraq sipped hoarded zero-alcohol beer and pretended it was more. Militias fighting brutal civil wars in West Africa spared the beer factories, if nothing else.

Lerman sampled Ukraine's alcohol for the first time in a safehouse with other U.S. vet volunteers and Ukrainian allies in the first weeks of the war. Someone had placed a bottle of Ukrainian vodka on the table where they worked, amid the laptops and firearms.

"I was blown away," Lerman recounted. "I thought I didn't even like vodka."

Soon, Lerman was toting out bottles of vodka and SHABO wines for his family and friends back home. Searches of U.S. stores for more struck out, since much of what little Ukrainian wine was shipped to the U.S. was of an older, sweeter variety aimed at the Ukrainian diaspora.

That led to him teaming up with Iukuridze and partners to set up Spyrnt Worldwide, a U.S. import company to bring in Iukuridze's wines and two Ukrainian vodkas. A share of the profits is designated for Invictus Global Response, a mine-removal nonprofit run by veterans.

Ukraine's Black Sea coast claims a 2,500-year history of growing wine thanks to settlements founded by ancient Greeks, and some of the vines at SHABO winery date back to the subsequent Ottoman era. Swiss settlers in the 1800s made the area a proper wine-growing region, prizing its soil and climate.

Wine under Soviet rule, on the other hand, was "barely drinkable muck," said Volker. He sees the region's best wines today as a model for private companies shaking off the Soviet mindset.

Soviet state-run wineries wanted cheap wines in big quantities, especially sweeter ones. SHABO's vines survived a Soviet crackdown on alcohol under Mikhail Gorbachev in the final years before the Soviet collapse thanks only to a winery worker who falsified forms, claiming the vineyards produced only table grapes, Iukirdze said.

After the Soviet Union crumbled in 1991, Iukuridze and his father, who have roots in wine production in Georgia, were among the largest producers in an independent Ukraine bringing production up to modern standards. SHABO's wines have won international awards and are featured in Michelin-starred restaurants.

The winery is far from the front lines of the war, but Russian rockets on rare occasions have fallen within sight of workers in the vineyards. Its traveling wine salesmen have faced checkpoints and immediate induction into Ukraine's military. The most reliable route for shipping the wines to the United States lies through neighboring Moldova.

"The grape does not wait for any diplomatic solutions," Iukuridze said. "We continue working without stopping any single day."

Over the winter holidays, members of Congress, a former defense secretary, defense industry executives and others, including Lerman and Volker, turned out in Washington for the launch of the import company.

All were attuned to the joint mission of wine and war. Unspoken was the worry about Russia's larger military grinding down Ukraine, and uncertainty over whether Trump would withdraw vital U.S. military support to Ukraine once back in office.

But Iukuridze told a story: In 2014, when the Russian military first invaded eastern Ukraine and seized Crimea on the Black Sea, a family that lived nearby drove by his vineyards as they fled toward the border with Moldova.

But the family spotted the head winemaker out in the field, planting new vines that would take three years to produce wine. They stopped the car.

"What is happening?" they asked the winemaker.

"We're planting new wines, for Ukrainian, independent, glorious country," Iukuridze recounted the winemaker answering.

Seeing the commitment to “the bright future of Ukraine,” the family “turned around the car and went back,” he told those at the Washington launch.

He raised a glass of his winery’s white in a toast.

“For the bright future,” Iukuridze said. “For being an example.”

How key Republican senators are responding to Trump allies’ primary threats

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — From activists on the far right to Elon Musk, allies of President Donald Trump have been quick to threaten primary challengers for Republican senators who don’t back his Cabinet picks and legislative priorities.

In the case of Iowa’s Joni Ernst, conservatives threatened to run against her if she didn’t back Trump’s pick for defense secretary, Pete Hegseth — before she announced she would.

Louisiana’s Bill Cassidy, a doctor before entering politics, is being closely watched for how he will question Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Trump’s nominee for health secretary

South Carolina’s Lindsey Graham, a Trump confidant, has long been targeted by the far right in his state and was booed at a home-state rally during the 2024 presidential campaign.

The Associated Press talked to people connected to five senators who have been targeted online or by rivals in their states.

Here’s a look at each of their potential races and what they face:

Joni Ernst, Iowa

Ernst prompted criticism from the right after she initially stopped short of endorsing Hegseth, who was confirmed by the Senate on Friday. Ernst voted “yes.”

A retired Iowa National Guard lieutenant colonel and Iraq War veteran, Ernst is also a sexual assault survivor. After Trump announced Hegseth’s nomination, she said she hoped to discuss with him comments that he had made opposing women serving in combat roles, and about an allegation, which he denied and was not charged for, that he sexually assaulted a woman he met at a 2017 conference.

Hegseth, at Ernst’s suggestion, affirmed that that “every man and woman has opportunity to serve their country in uniform and to do so at any level as long as they are meeting the standards that are set forward.” Hegseth also said that if confirmed, he would appoint a senior-level official dedicated to sexual assault prevention and response.

Potential challengers to Ernst: Conservative media figure Steve Deace, who posted on Facebook in December that “I don’t want to be a Senator, but I am willing to primary her for the good of the cause.” Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird wrote in a December opinion piece in Breitbart that some unnamed “D.C. politicians” thought “they can ignore the voices of their constituents and entertain smears” from news media outlets. That prompted speculation that Bird, who endorsed Trump before the 2024 Iowa caucuses, might challenge Ernst, who stayed neutral beforehand. Charlie Kirk of the conservative group Turning Point also called for Ernst to face a primary. An effort to boost Hegseth’s nomination led to Ernst’s office receiving thousands of calls.

Cause for concern: Neither Deace nor Bird has taken any public steps toward running. Some prominent social conservatives are bothered by Ernst’s joining with a dozen Republicans and the Senate’s Democratic majority in 2022 to support repealing the Defense of Marriage Act to recognize the validity of same-sex marriages. But she remains popular with Iowa’s power players.

“Anyone who says with a straight face that they are going to beat Joni Ernst in a primary today is kidding themselves,” said Luke Martz, an Iowa Republican consultant. “It would be a fool’s errand.”

Thom Tillis, North Carolina

Tillis angered some on the right for not immediately supporting Trump’s first pick for attorney general, former Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz. Though Gaetz withdrew from consideration, Tillis remains a frustration to some among North Carolina’s right wing, in part for voting to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 108 of 114

Potential challengers: Andy Nilsson, a onetime candidate for lieutenant governor, has filed paperwork to challenge Tillis. The retired businessman has called for a return to the Reagan-Bush Republican ethos, hardly an attack from the right. Tillis faced three Republican challengers in 2020, all posing as more conservative than him.

Cause for concern: Tillis has reason to expect a right-wing challenge. That faction helped lift former Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson to the 2024 nomination for governor last year. But North Carolina is expected to be among the most competitive states for Senate Republicans to hold in 2026. Roy Cooper, a Democrat who just finished two terms as governor, has not ruled out running for the seat. National Republicans are aware of the risks of nominating someone too far to the right. Cooper's Democratic successor, Gov. Josh Stein, beat Robinson by nearly 15 percentage points in a state that Trump won by 3 points.

To that end, Trump's team and Tillis have been working together behind the scenes, said former Gov. Pat McCrory, a fellow Republican.

"I anticipate there will be threats of challenging him from the right. But I also think he'll deal with it as he has, with hard work and a record of accomplishment," McCrory said. "I think the incoming administration sees that."

"They also see he's the best chance of keeping North Carolina red," he added.

Bill Cassidy, Louisiana

Cassidy remains vulnerable in large part due to his vote to convict Trump after his second impeachment over the siege of the U.S. Capitol. "Our Constitution and our country is more important than any one person. I voted to convict President Trump because he is guilty," Cassidy said in a statement after the February 2021 vote.

Cassidy, in his second term, has not yet announced whether he will seek a third. A gastroenterologist before he entered politics, Cassidy will be closely watched for how he votes on Kennedy, a longtime vaccine skeptic who has questioned medical consensus on several issues.

Potential challengers: Cassidy has already drawn a Republican challenger, state Treasurer John Fleming. Fleming, a former U.S. House member from northern Louisiana, has said Cassidy's impeachment vote "failed" Louisiana. Former U.S. Rep. Garrett Graves of Baton Rouge is also a potential challenger, as is Blake Miguez, a state senator from New Iberia.

Louisiana last year did away with its 50-year tradition of "jungle primaries," where candidates from all parties ran in the same contest in November. Cassidy would now run in a closed Republican primary that might be more difficult if he faces one strong Trump-aligned challenger.

Cause for concern: Cassidy's vote to convict Trump remains a sticking point for Republicans in a state the president won with 60% last year. But Cassidy is viewed as having strong constituent relations and visibility in the state, political observers say.

"Aside from that vote, I think he's considered a good senator, and good at constituent work," said Ellen Carmichael, a Louisiana Republican consultant and president of Washington-based Lafayette Company. "The base is unhappy with the vote he cast. But I wouldn't count him out."

John Cornyn, Texas

Cornyn in the past has been criticized within his own party for being too willing to work with Democrats and has drawn boos at GOP conventions in Texas. Commentator Tucker Carlson and others have urged a primary challenge against him.

Last year, Cornyn told the Dallas Morning News that, "God willing," he would seek reelection in 2026. According to federal filings, Cornyn had more than \$3.5 million on hand in toward the end of 2024.

Potential challengers: Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton is one of the state's most powerful Republicans and also suggested Cornyn should be primaried. Paxton was acquitted in a 2023 impeachment effort and fraud charges against him were dropped last year. Cornyn and Paxton have sniped at each other on X, with Paxton calling Cornyn "anti-Trump" and "anti-gun" and the senator firing back, "Hard to run from prison, Ken."

Cause for concern: Brendan Steinhauser, a Republican strategist who has worked on Cornyn's previous campaigns, noted that the senator remains undefeated in elections.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 109 of 114

"He's never taken a race for granted. I would expect him to work extremely hard and crisscross the state of Texas to earn every vote possible in this upcoming election, assuming he has a primary challenger," Steinhauser said. "I think it's important for him to show the ways that he has worked with President Trump to enact the conservative America First agenda, and I would expect that would be a big part of his campaign message in a potential upcoming primary."

Lindsey Graham, South Carolina

Seeking his fifth term, Graham will likely face primary challenges — he always has. County-level Republican parties have censured him a number of times for his willingness to work on bipartisan deals. One such measure derided Graham's "condescending attitude" to the party's grassroots organizers.

He has even drawn boos at some events of the party faithful in his home state. That includes a July 2023 Trump rally in Pickens — in the county where Graham grew up — where objections from the crowd drowned out more than five minutes of his remarks. When he took the stage, Trump also elicited boos when he mentioned Graham's name.

Graham has named a campaign leadership team, which says he has more than \$15 million on hand, including nearly \$1 million raised in the final quarter of 2024.

Potential challengers: Rep. Ralph Norman represents South Carolina's 5th Congressional District south of Charlotte, North Carolina, and is a member of the House Freedom Caucus. Another possible opponent could be Adam Morgan, a former South Carolina legislator who lost a primary bid last year against another congressman, Rep. William Timmons.

Cause for concern: While he was highly critical of Trump in 2016 when they competed for the Republican nomination, Graham has backed Trump ever since his first administration, frequently serving as his golf partner and Capitol Hill surrogate. Trump has backed him in turn. When the crowd in Pickens booed Graham's name, Trump said he was "going to have to work on these people" and added that Graham is "there when you need him."

As schools in LA reopen, parents worry about harmful ash from wildfires

By DORANY PINEDA and BRITTANY PETERSON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kelli Ferrone wiped blinds and window sills inside her daughters' elementary school, just a half mile from the devastating Palisades Fire that scorched the coastal enclave in Los Angeles. The cotton swabs and wipes came up black.

There is scattered ash and soot at her feet. Outside, it's on the ground next to a playground.

Ferrone, who recorded videos and shared them with The Associated Press, wanted to see for herself this week if Canyon Charter Elementary School had been adequately cleaned before the school reopens. She wasn't impressed.

Weeks after the most intense days of fire across the Los Angeles area, parents are grappling with the reality that toxic ash from burned homes and cars could be harmful to their children. It's a risk that is becoming more common as wildfires burn in cities.

In the Pacific Palisades, Canyon Charter could reopen as soon as Monday. School officials say staff are working hard to make sure schools are clean and safe and they're confident in their decision. But some parents feel the school is rushing to open. They're urging officials to temporarily relocate, while others try to transfer their students elsewhere.

"The (Los Angeles Unified School District) has never experienced a disaster like this in their history," said Ferrone, who has two daughters at the school, one with asthma. "And I do think people are trying really hard, but our school needs a new temporary home with classrooms and teachers teaching in-person. That is the only thing that is going to make people feel comfortable."

In a statement, LAUSD said staff "has worked diligently to prepare schools for a return to in-person instruction." That includes inspecting ventilation systems, replacing filters and installing air purifiers in

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 110 of 114

classrooms and offices, and cleaning inside and outdoors. An environmental consultant is inspecting campuses. Staff monitors air quality. The district has an Office of Environmental Health and Safety and is following its protocols.

Some schools are within a "do not drink water" advisory, including Canyon Charter. That means fountains are turned off and bottled water is provided, the district said.

Dr. Lisa Patel, a pediatrician and executive director of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, said the school is taking all the right steps. Yet, she said, "there's no zero risk."

The ash is a toxic soup of incinerated cars, electronics, batteries, building materials, paints, furniture and every other kind of personal belonging. It contains pesticides, asbestos, plastics and lead, all of which children are more vulnerable to.

"Children often have more hand-to-mouth behavior and their bodies are rapidly growing in these first few years, and so they can be more sensitive to this type of pollution," said Patel. "There will be a risk for a while to come in terms of exposure."

Some materials form reactive chemical compounds when they burn.

Scientists still don't know the long-term health impacts of exposure to massive urban fire like this year's in California or the one in Maui, Hawaii in 2023. Three schools in Lahaina didn't reopen for two months after that. But some chemicals have been linked to heart disease and lung issues, while exposure to minerals like magnetite, which can form when fire burns iron, has been associated with Alzheimer's disease.

In Pasadena, Emily Stough is trying to minimize the risks for her 11- and 14-year-old who returned to Blair High School, which includes a middle school, this week. She made sure they took masks. In an email to parents last week, the Pasadena Unified School District said some 38 tons of outdoor debris have been hauled away from campuses, and they will only open "after rigorous cleaning and sanitizing and environmental tests."

Stough said she trusts the district to do its due diligence, but she wants more information.

"Did they test air quality? Did they test ash samples? Were the ash samples from inside the school, in the hallways, from outside the schools?" she wonders. "Air quality both inside and outside the schools? I'd like to see that. I'd like to know what cleaning was done."

The PUSD did not respond to questions from the AP.

It's hard to know how long these fire toxins will stay in the environment, said Patel, but it could be a few months. Strong winds like the Santa Anas could also blow them distances where they could enter soil and groundwater.

Plastics in particular could last a long time, said Dr. Ilan Shapiro, medical affairs officer for AltaMed and a fellow with the American Academy of Pediatrics. "And we need to remember that the fires are still going. That we still have burn materials coming out." As communities recover and clean up, that ash will be moved again, he said.

Longfellow Elementary School in Pasadena is set to reopen next week, but Tanya Reyes doesn't plan to send her kids back just yet. The school is about two miles from where the Eaton Fire burned down the home they rented. Even with the school's safety measures, "my gut is saying 'no,'" she said. "They shouldn't be around that area. It's too soon."

Her family is staying in West Hollywood, and she's looking for schools there, somewhere the kids can attend for a little while. She's considering home schooling, too, but still figuring it all out.

It's hard for parents because they understand all the ways kids need school.

"We've been through this in so many different ways, whether it's been wildfire smoke or the pandemic," Patel said. "When kids miss school, that is also a detriment to their health. It impacts their learning, it impacts their socioemotional development, their sense of connection and community during a time of crisis."

The only person in the world with a functioning pig organ is thriving after a record 2 months

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

An Alabama woman passed a major milestone Saturday to become the longest living recipient of a pig organ transplant – healthy and full of energy with her new kidney for 61 days and counting.

“I’m superwoman,” Towana Looney told The Associated Press, laughing about outpacing family members on long walks around New York City as she continues her recovery. “It’s a new take on life.”

Looney’s vibrant recovery is a morale boost in the quest to make animal-to-human transplants a reality. Only four other Americans have received hugely experimental transplants of gene-edited pig organs – two hearts and two kidneys – and none lived more than two months.

“If you saw her on the street, you would have no idea that she’s the only person in the world walking around with a pig organ inside them that’s functioning,” said Dr. Robert Montgomery of NYU Langone Health, who led Looney’s transplant.

Montgomery called Looney’s kidney function “absolutely normal.” Doctors hope she can leave New York – where she’s temporarily living for post-transplant checkups – for her Gadsden, Alabama, home in about another month.

“We’re quite optimistic that this is going to continue to work and work well for, you know, a significant period of time,” he said.

Scientists are genetically altering pigs so their organs are more humanlike to address a severe shortage of transplantable human organs. More than 100,000 people are on the U.S. transplant list, most who need a kidney, and thousands die waiting.

Pig organ transplants so far have been “compassionate use” cases, experiments the Food and Drug Administration allows only in special circumstances for people out of other options.

And the handful of hospitals trying them are sharing information of what worked and what didn’t, in preparation for the world’s first formal studies of xenotransplantation, expected to begin sometime this year. United Therapeutics, which supplied Looney’s kidney, recently asked the Food and Drug Administration for permission to begin a trial.

How Looney fares is “very precious experience,” said Dr. Tatsuo Kawai of Massachusetts General Hospital, who led the world’s first pig kidney transplant last year and works with another pig developer, eGenesis.

Looney was far healthier than the prior patients, Kawai noted, so her progress will help inform next attempts. “We have to learn from each other,” he said.

Looney donated a kidney to her mother in 1999. Later pregnancy complications caused high blood pressure that damaged her remaining kidney, which eventually failed, something incredibly rare among living donors. She spent eight years on dialysis before doctors concluded she’d likely never get a donated organ – she’d developed super-high levels of antibodies abnormally primed to attack another human kidney.

So Looney, 53, sought out the pig experiment. No one knew how it would work in someone “highly sensitized” with those overactive antibodies.

Discharged just 11 days after the Nov. 25 surgery, Montgomery’s team has closely tracked her recovery through blood tests and other measurements. About three weeks after the transplant, they caught subtle signs that rejection was beginning – signs they’d learned to look for thanks to a 2023 experiment when a pig kidney worked for 61 days inside a deceased man whose body was donated for research.

Montgomery said they successfully treated Looney and there’s been no sign of rejection since – and a few weeks ago she met the family behind that deceased-body research.

“It feels really good to know that the decision I made for NYU to use my brother was the right decision and it’s helping people,” said Mary Miller-Duffy, of Newburgh, New York.

Looney in turn is trying to help others, serving as what Montgomery calls an ambassador for people who’ve been reaching out to her through social media, sharing their distress at the long wait for transplants and wondering about pig kidneys.

One, she said, was being considered for a xenotransplant at another hospital but was scared, wondering

whether to proceed.

"I didn't want to persuade him whether to do or not to do it," Looney said. Instead she asked if he was religious and urged him to prayer, to "go off your faith, what your heart tells you."

"I love talking to people, I love helping people," she added. "I want to be, like, some educational piece" for scientists to help others.

There's no way to predict how long Looney's new kidney will work but if it were to fail she could receive dialysis again.

"The truth is we don't really know what the next hurdles are because this is the first time we've gotten this far," Montgomery said. "We'll have to continue to really keep a close eye on her."

Fast food is a staple of American culture, but some of its workers struggle to survive

By CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press

FRESNO, Texas (AP) — The only moment TiAnna Yeldell has to herself is when she's sleeping, and that doesn't happen much.

The 44-year-old single mom of three works 80-hour weeks to provide for her children, ages 8, 14, and 18. During the day, she is a driver for Pizza Hut, where she earns \$9.50 an hour before tips. At night, she cleans trains for Houston's Metro system, where she earns about \$17 an hour.

The times that she pulls both shifts, Yeldell sleeps for just two to three hours before getting her kids up and ready for school. Then she does it all over again.

Yeldell is among the millions of fast food workers across the U.S. scraping to get by. About two-thirds of them are women, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and many are supporting their families on minimum wages set at the federal government's floor of \$7.25 an hour. Fast food workers are disproportionately Hispanic, making up 24.6% of the industry's workforce compared with 18.8% of the overall workforce. And more than half of all U.S. fast food workers are 20 or older.

President Donald Trump, who manned the fry station at a McDonald's in Pennsylvania while on the campaign trail last year, has acknowledged that the federal minimum wage is "very low" and he would consider raising it, but that doing so would be "complicated."

Meanwhile, a growing number of states have pushed to increase their minimum wage in the face of record-high inflation in recent years. For example, California — which has one of the highest costs of living in the country — in April raised wages for fast food workers specifically, to \$20 an hour from \$16 an hour. By the end of this year, 23 states and 65 cities and counties will raise their minimum wage floors, according to a December 2024 National Employment Law Project report that combed through legislation across the country.

But not Texas, where Yeldell and her family live. It is one of 20 states at the \$7.25 federal minimum wage floor and that rate hasn't budged since 2009. Democratic lawmakers in Texas have repeatedly proposed legislation to raise the minimum wage in the state to no avail. Preemption laws, which exist in Texas and many other states, block cities and counties from adopting their own minimum wage laws, presenting another barrier.

Today, a living wage for one adult raising three children in the Houston metro area is \$57.65 an hour, according to MIT's Living Wage Calculator. For Yeldell, it's not possible to get by on her fast food job alone, which is why she must work a second job.

Still wearing her visor and gray "No One Out Pizzas The Hut" shirt, she slumps sideways after a recent work shift. She only takes a moment to rest before changing into Looney Tunes sweatpants and a yellow T-shirt, scooping fajitas onto plates for the kids' dinner, and packing up the leftovers.

"I don't want to work two jobs -- I'm really tired. But I have to, because the jobs don't pay enough," Yeldell said. "I would not be able to provide a roof over my kids' head."

The Associated Press reached out to Pizza Hut, as well as its parent company, Yum Brands, for comment

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 113 of 114

on wages for fast food workers but did not hear back.

Wages are just one of many issues fast food workers face. Unpredictable hours, limited access to paid sick leave, and challenging customer interactions all shape their experiences, said Daniel Schneider, co-director and co-founder of the Shift Project, a joint Harvard and University of California, San Francisco project researching the conditions of service sector work.

Wage theft and other law violations are also common in the industry, added labor scholar David Madland, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress.

"The fast food industry is notorious for low pay and poor working conditions," Madland said. "It's seen as the almost the sort of typical throwaway job that policy has cared very little about."

Yeldell's Pizza Hut deliveries sometimes go until 11 p.m. She carries a knife in her pocket, as well as a flashlight, to keep her safe.

Despite the challenges, Yeldell maintains a positive outlook about her job, which she started about a year and a half ago as a delivery driver and has since learned to do "pretty much everything" at her Fresno, Texas store.

"Pizza Hut is a really easy job and the job is only hard if you make it hard," she said. "And I'm a fast learner, so it doesn't bother me."

Contrast Texas to California, which now has the highest fast food minimum wage of any state since lawmakers passed a minimum \$20 hourly wage for those workers.

Angelica Hernandez, 51, who has worked at various McDonald's restaurants for 20 years, and now works for a Monterey Park location in Los Angeles County, said the raise helped her pay rent and bills on time, avoid late fees, and buy "a bit more" at the grocery store. But much of the increase was swallowed by a recent \$200 rent hike.

"We need a little more to be able to save money and buy clothes without being tight every two weeks or have to use credit," she said.

Critics of the new law say continuing to increase minimum wage is not the answer, arguing that it has raised prices and reduced job opportunities for young people, pinching franchisees in an industry with already-slim margins.

"When you see a spike in operating costs pretty dramatically in a short period of time, it creates challenges," said Jot Condie, president and CEO of the California Restaurant Association, which opposed the law. He added that franchisees, who are essentially small business owners, are most harmed.

But a September report from University of California, Berkeley's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment called the effects of the higher wages "benign," and found that the policy did not affect employment adversely and increased prices about 3.7%, or about 15 cents on a \$4 hamburger.

For Yeldell, increasing the minimum wage in Texas "would be more fair."

"If other states could change, y'all can change too," she said.

On a chilly Friday morning at 7 a.m., Yeldell walks her youngest to the bus stop, then drives her daughter across town to have her senior pictures done before her Pizza Hut shift starts. At the photography studio, she and her daughter pose for a selfie against a backdrop that reads "Class of '25." Yeldell wears a sleek, royal blue dress that reads "Faith" in white cursive text, her daughter in a black cap and gown.

"Being a mother, I do what I'm supposed to do for my kids," she said.

But for all her hard work, Yeldell says the family has little to no savings. On good months, she says she has about \$100 left over. Often, she has nothing.

"At the end of the day, I've worked all these hours and I really have nothing to show for it, but just paying some bills," she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 215 ~ 114 of 114

Today in History: January 26

Kobe Bryant, daughter Gianna and 7 others die in helicopter crash

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, Jan. 26, the 26th day of 2025. There are 339 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 26, 2020, NBA legend Kobe Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven others were killed when their helicopter plunged into a steep hillside in dense morning fog in Southern California; the former Lakers star was 41.

Also on this date:

In 1887, groundbreaking began for the construction of the Eiffel Tower; the tower would be completed just over two years later.

In 1905, the Cullinan Diamond, at 3,106 carats (621.2 g) the largest diamond ever found, was discovered in South Africa.

In 1915, President Woodrow Wilson signed the act establishing Rocky Mountain National Park.

In 1950, the Constitution of India took effect, making the country the world's largest democratic republic.

In 1993, Václav Havel (VAHTS'-lahv HAH'-vel) was elected president of the newly formed Czech Republic.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton forcefully denied having an affair with a former White House intern, telling reporters, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky."

In 2023, Israeli forces killed at least nine Palestinians and wounded several others in a large-scale raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, the deadliest single operation in the territory in two decades.

Today's birthdays: Activist Angela Davis is 81. Actor David Strathairn (streh-THEHRN') is 76. Football Hall of Famer Jack Youngblood is 75. Singer-songwriter Lucinda Williams is 72. Singer Anita Baker is 67. Actor-comedian Ellen DeGeneres is 67. Hockey Hall of Famer Wayne Gretzky is 64. Musician Andrew Ridgeley (Wham!) is 62. Gospel singer Kirk Franklin is 55. Basketball Hall of Famer Vince Carter is 48. Actor Joseph Quinn is 31.