

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 1 of 91

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Region 1A GBB Brackets Released](#)
- [3- NSU Women's Basketball](#)
- [4- NSU Men's Basketball](#)
- [5- Groton Area qualifies six wrestlers for state](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: It's not hard to figure out why young South Dakotans don't want to be teachers](#)
- [10- Hamlin is double winner in Northeast Conference](#)
- [11- Sunday Extras](#)
- [29- Gov. Rhoden's Weekly Column](#)
- [30- Sen. Thune's Weekly Column](#)
- [31- Rep. Dusty Johnson's Weekly Column](#)
- [32- Weekly Round\[s\] Up](#)
- [34- Rev. Snyder's Column](#)
- [36- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)
- [37- Drought Monitor](#)
- [38- EarthTalk - USAID](#)
- [39- Weather Pages](#)
- [43- Daily Devotional](#)
- [44- Subscription Form](#)
- [45- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [46- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [47- News from the Associated Press](#)

Sunday, Feb. 23

Groton Youth Wrestling Tournament
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.;
at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday
School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
United Methodist: Conde, 8:15 a.m.; Groton, 9:30
a.m.; Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.;
Coffee Hour, 10:30 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.;

Monday, Feb. 24

Senior Menu: Hot pork sandwich, scalloped potato,
corn, fruit cocktail.
Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community
Center
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Tuesday, Feb. 25

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potato with
gravy, Italian blend, peaches, whole wheat bread.
Region 1A Girls B basketball tournament in Groton
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
Groton United Methodist Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 26

Senior Menu: Beef noodle stroganoff, capri blend,
apple sauce, cookie, whole wheat bread.
Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour,
9:30 a.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible
Study, 7 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.




Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 2 of 91

Class A - Region 1

Girls Basketball

#1 - Milbank School District 25-4 Ar...

	4 Milbank	12-8	2/25 7:00 PM CT
	5 Webster Area	10-10	


#2 - Groton Area High School GHS A...

	2 Groton Area	14-6	2/25 6:00 PM CT
	7 Redfield	3-17	

#3 - Groton Area High School GHS A...

	3 Sisseton	13-7	2/25 7:30 PM CT
	6 Britton-Hecla	5-15	

#4 - Aberdeen Catholic Schools

	1 Aberdeen Roncalli	15-5	2/27 7:00 PM CT
#1 WINNER			

#5 -

#2 WINNER			2/27 TBD
#3 WINNER			



SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

Seed Points Averages (calculated Feb. 22)

#1 Aberdeen Roncalli 43.650 - #2 Groton Area 43.550 - #3 Sisseton 42.400 - #4 Milbank 41.400 - #5 Webster Area 40.600 - #6 Britton-Hecla 37.850 - #7 Redfield 36.900

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 3 of 91

NSU Women's Basketball

Wolves Down No. 17 Mustangs in Weekend Thriller

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University women's basketball team wrapped up the regular season with a thrilling 78-75 victory over the #17 Southwest Minnesota State. The night saw six lead changes and four ties, with the Wolves ultimately taking control in the final minutes. Rianna Fillipi led the way for NSU, finishing with 25 points and eight assists.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 78, SMSU 75

Records: NSU 18-10 (NSIC 15-7), SMSU 25-3 (NSIC 19-3)

Attendance: 1845

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State posted 23 points in the first, 18 in the second, 19 in the third, and 18 in the fourth

The Wolves totaled 32 points in the paint, 19 points from free throws, eight points off turnovers, and seven bench points

NSU shot 50.9% from the field, 42.9% from three-point range, and 90.5% from the free-throw line

Rianna Fillipi led the offense with 25 points, five rebounds, eight assists, and two blocks on the night

Madelyn Bragg posted her fifth double-double of the season, contributing 19 points and 11 rebounds while shooting 56.3% from the field

Michaela Jewett added 15 points and five rebounds to round out the top scorers.

NORTHERN STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Rianna Fillipi: 25 points, 5 rebounds, 8 assists, 2 blocks

Madelyn Bragg: 19 points, 11 rebounds, 56.3 FG %

Michaela Jewett: 15 points, 5 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 steals

Izzy Moore: 7 points, 4 rebounds, 100.0 FG %

UP NEXT

Northern State secured the fourth seed and will receive a first-round bye. The Wolves will play on March 2nd at the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 4 of 91

NSU Men's Basketball

Wolves Second Half Rally Comes up Short in Loss to Mustangs

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men's basketball team fell to (RV) Southwest Minnesota State on Saturday from Wachs Arena. The Mustangs started hot in the first half proving to be too much to overcome for the Wolves in the second who out-scored SMSU 48-43.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 71, SMSU 103

Records: NSU 2-26 (1-21 NSIC), SMSU 21-7 (16-6 NSIC)

Attendance: 1377

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern tallied 24 rebounds, 14 assists, nine made 3-pointers, a game high nine steals, and two blocks in the match-up

They shot 42.9% from the floor, 30.0% from the 3-point line, and 57.1% from the foul line

NSU scored 32 points in the paint, 31 points off the bench, and 16 points off ten SMSU turnovers

James Glenn led two Wolves in double figures, scoring 16 points and tying his career high of eight assists

Kaleb Mitchell followed, leading the team off the bench with 11 points, knocking down 5-of-7 from the floor

Connor Libis started for NSU, notching eight points and two rebounds, while Devon Brooke and Tobi Obiora grabbed seven points apiece

Ethan Russell and Braeden Vanbockern added nine points each off the bench, with Vanbockern recording a career high four steals

Glenn, Obiora, and Mitchell led the team in rebounding with four each

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

James Glenn: 16 points, 8 assists, 4 rebounds, 1 steal

Kaleb Mitchell: 11 points, 71.4 field goal%, 4 rebounds, 1 block

UP NEXT

Northern concludes the 2024-25 season with a 2-26 record overall. Seniors Noah Baca and Connor Libis closed out their NSU careers from Wachs Arena Saturday.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 5 of 91

Groton Area qualifies six wrestlers for state

Six Groton Area wrestlers qualified for the state tournament after placing in the top four in region competition held Saturday in Hamlin. The state tournament will be held February 27 - March 1 in Rapid City.

Korbin Kucker took first place in the region, Christian Ehresmann placed second, Keegan Kucker placed third and in fourth place were Donavon Block, Walker Zoellner and Gavin Englund.

Team Standings: 1. Kingsbury County 191.5; 2. Clark/Willow Lake 172.0; 3. Sisseton 166.5; 4. Faulkton Area 160.0; 5. Groton Area 158.5; 6. Redfield 131.5; 7. Deuel/Deubrook Area 97.5; 8. Webster Area 83.5; 9. Britton-Hecla 67.0; 10. Sioux Valley 59.0; 11. Potter County 57.5; 12. Sully Buttes 35.5; 13. Warner/Northwestern 27.5; 14. Hamlin/Castlewood 25.0; 15. Ipswich/Bowdle 13.0; 16. Doland 0.0; 16. Tiospa Zina 0.0

175: Korbin Kucker (36-4) placed 1st and scored 26.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 36-4 won by forfeit.

Quarterfinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 36-4 won by fall over Liam Gunnon (Kingsbury County) 9-19 (Fall 0:37)

Semifinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 36-4 won by decision over Ben Suther (Britton-Hecla) 36-14 (Dec 7-2)

1st Place Match - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 36-4 won in sudden victory - 1 over Korbin Whiteley (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 23-4 (SV-1 6-1)

144: Christian Ehresmann (29-4) placed 2nd and scored 24.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 29-4 won by fall over Ayden Understock (Redfield) 5-11 (Fall 0:34)

Quarterfinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 29-4 won by fall over Rayin Mansfield (Warner/Northwestern) 3-8 (Fall 0:55)

Semifinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 29-4 won by fall over Austin Vig (Clark/Willow Lake) 37-16 (Fall 0:18)

1st Place Match - Bryce Hawkinson (Britton-Hecla) 31-3 won by decision over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 29-4 (Dec 14-10)

113: Keegan Kucker (30-10) placed 3rd and scored 16.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 30-10 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 30-10 won by decision over Chace Odland (Redfield) 30-18 (Dec 13-7)

Semifinal - Kayden Tchida (Sisseton) 34-4 won by tech fall over Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 30-10 (TF-1.5 3:22 (15-0))

Cons. Semi - Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 30-10 won by fall over Gage Landmark (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 14-21 (Fall 2:38)

3rd Place Match - Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 30-10 won by decision over Tayten Kurkowski (Webster Area) 12-6 (Dec 5-2)

132: Donavon Block (29-15) placed 4th and scored 13.5 team points.

Quarterfinal - Donavon Block (Groton Area) 29-15 won by tech fall over Tyson Hagberg (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 25-25 (TF-1.5 3:45 (20-4))

Semifinal - Gannon Gilligan (Kingsbury County) 43-4 won by tech fall over Donavon Block (Groton Area) 29-15 (TF-1.5 3:46 (22-2))

Cons. Semi - Donavon Block (Groton Area) 29-15 won by fall over Matthew Field (Sioux Valley) 11-23 (Fall 2:36)

3rd Place Match - Isaac Johnson (Clark/Willow Lake) 37-18 won by major decision over Donavon Block (Groton Area) 29-15 (MD 13-1)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 6 of 91

157: Walker Zoellner (28-10) placed 4th and scored 18.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 28-10 won by fall over Austin Nash (Warner/Northwestern) 9-29 (Fall 3:40)

Quarterfinal - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 28-10 won by fall over Ely Heuertz (Sully Buttes) 12-21 (Fall 1:49)

Semifinal - Gavin Kloos (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 30-7 won by major decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 28-10 (MD 9-1)

Cons. Semi - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 28-10 won by fall over Trace Genzler (Potter County) 23-19 (Fall 2:29)

3rd Place Match - Donovan Sandven (Kingsbury County) 24-16 won by major decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 28-10 (MD 11-1)

285: Gavin Englund (30-9) placed 4th and scored 13.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 30-9 won by major decision over Dalton Rathjen (Redfield) 25-22 (MD 16-3)

Semifinal - Preston Cavalier (Warner/Northwestern) 40-3 won by fall over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 30-9 (Fall 1:36)

Cons. Semi - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 30-9 won by fall over Tytian Lauseng (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 7-31 (Fall 1:37)

3rd Place Match - Owen Vandeweerd (Sioux Valley) 41-7 won by decision over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 30-9 (Dec 2-1)

106: Wyatt Hagen (27-10) placed 5th and scored 11.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 27-10 won by major decision over Lincoln Kilker (Britton-Hecla) 15-23 (MD 15-2)

Quarterfinal - Gavin Mattson (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 20-15 won by tech fall over Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 27-10 (TF-1.5 5:13 (16-1))

Cons. Round 2 - Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 27-10 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 27-10 won by decision over Easton Rausch (Potter County) 32-20 (Dec 8-4)

Cons. Semi - Chase Henriksen (Kingsbury County) 39-11 won by decision over Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 27-10 (Dec 11-7)

5th Place Match - Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 27-10 won by major decision over Kyson Sundberg (Sioux Valley) 37-22 (MD 20-6)

215: Charlie Frost (25-18) placed 5th and scored 15.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 25-18 won by forfeit.

Quarterfinal - Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 25-18 won by fall over Riley Popp (Clark/Willow Lake) 18-26 (Fall 5:19)

Semifinal - Camden Murray (Redfield) 43-3 won by tech fall over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 25-18 (TF-1.5 1:59 (17-2))

Cons. Semi - Foster Bode (Faulkton Area) 26-14 won by decision over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 25-18 (Dec 7-2)

5th Place Match - Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 25-18 won by fall over Riley Popp (Clark/Willow Lake) 18-26 (Fall 2:45)

120: Kyson Kucker (25-14) placed 6th and scored 6.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Cash Edgar (Faulkton Area) 43-8 won by fall over Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 25-14 (Fall 0:28)

Cons. Round 1 - Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 25-14 won by fall over Carter Grobe (Britton-Hecla) 14-22 (Fall 3:51)

Cons. Semi - Jack Stuwe (Potter County) 33-18 won by major decision over Kyson Kucker (Groton Area)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 7 of 91

25-14 (MD 15-1)

5th Place Match - Karsten Lerwick (Kingsbury County) 25-19 won by major decision over Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 25-14 (MD 16-4)

126: Lincoln Krause (21-18) placed 6th and scored 7.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 21-18 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Lane Stuwe (Potter County) 35-12 won by fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 21-18 (Fall 1:05)

Cons. Round 2 - Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 21-18 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 21-18 won by fall over Bentley Fokken (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 25-22 (Fall 1:32)

Cons. Semi - Benny Pommer (Clark/Willow Lake) 37-13 won by fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 21-18 (Fall 2:28)

5th Place Match - Logan Smith (Faulkton Area) 34-22 won by fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 21-18 (Fall 0:42)

165: Ben Hoeft (23-21) placed 6th and scored 9.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Colton Chapin (Britton-Hecla) 13-11 won by fall over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 23-21 (Fall 5:30)

Cons. Round 1 - Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 23-21 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 23-21 won by major decision over Hayden Landmark (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 11-16 (MD 9-0)

Cons. Round 3 - Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 23-21 won by fall over AJ Olivier (Sully Buttes) 18-20 (Fall 4:46)

Cons. Semi - Collin Dean (Redfield) 39-16 won by major decision over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 23-21 (MD 16-3)

5th Place Match - Ivan Stuwe (Potter County) 24-16 won by fall over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 23-21 (Fall 2:21)

138: Chris Schwab (21-19).

Champ. Round 1 - Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 21-19 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Sean Roseland (Faulkton Area) 32-8 won by fall over Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 21-19 (Fall 3:11)

Cons. Round 2 - Damian Severson (Clark/Willow Lake) 17-21 won by fall over Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 21-19 (Fall 4:37)

150: Kason Oswald (9-19).

Champ. Round 1 - Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 9-19 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Landon Coyle (Faulkton Area) 25-7 won by fall over Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 9-19 (Fall 1:07)

Cons. Round 2 - Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 9-19 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Malachi Anderson (Sisseton) 12-16 won by fall over Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 9-19 (Fall 2:47)

190: Layne Johnson (11-23).

Champ. Round 1 - Luke Johnson (Sioux Valley) 6-19 won by fall over Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 11-23 (Fall 0:25)

Cons. Round 1 - Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 11-23 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Sam Leen (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 17-18 won by fall over Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 11-23 (Fall 1:36)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

It's not hard to figure out why young South Dakotans don't want to be teachers

Some lawmakers are creating an environment hostile to public education

by Seth Tupper

The leader of South Dakota's public universities gave a telling answer recently when a legislator asked him why the higher education system isn't churning out enough teaching graduates.

"We're seeing a drop-off in interest," said Nathan Lukkes, executive director of the Board of Regents. "If you go back 10, 20 years and you look at the percentage of students that were coming and wanted to be teachers versus today, the interest is going in the wrong direction."

Gee, I wonder why.

Maybe it's because South Dakota raised its state sales tax rate by a half-percentage point nine years ago, ostensibly to increase teacher pay, only to lose focus and let the state's average teacher salary slide back to 49th in the nation.

Maybe it's because in 2019, instead of solving real problems in education, lawmakers passed a bill that requires every public school in the state to display the national motto, "In God We Trust."

Maybe it's because in 2022, then-Gov. Kristi Noem politicized the revision of social studies standards by disbanding the original working group and reappointing her own handpicked, ideologically aligned members.

Maybe it's because last year, legislators passed a law mandating higher teacher pay without providing school districts any more funding than they typically receive.

Maybe it's because this year, the governor is proposing a 1.25% increase in state funding for public schools, which is less than half the current rate of inflation.

Maybe it's because public schools and their lobbyists had to fend off three bills so far this winter that would have diverted millions of dollars from public education and doled it out as various forms of vouchers for private school tuition, homeschooling and other nonpublic alternatives.

Maybe it's because public schools and their lobbyists also had to fend off bills this winter that would have required displays of the Ten Commandments and the state motto, "Under God, the People Rule," in every public school classroom.

Maybe it's because some legislators reacted to the defeat of the voucher bills and the Ten Commandments and state motto bills by trying, unsuccessfully, to punish school boards by barring them from using public funds to hire lobbyists.

Maybe it's because a state representative — Phil Jensen, a Rapid City Republican — tried to defund Huron schools recently after somebody told him a transgender girl was using girls' bathrooms in the district.

And maybe it's because another state representative — Brandei Schaeffbauer, an Aberdeen Republican — is trying to create a law that would turn teachers and school administrators into bathroom police.

Or perhaps it's because of the way some Republican legislators routinely demonize teachers, administrators, school boards and their lobbyists for having the audacity to seek adequate resources for public education.

House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, sponsored one of the voucher bills and cosponsored the legislation to bar school boards from using public funds to hire lobbyists. During a recent Republican leadership press conference, he complained about the education lobby's influence.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 9 of 91

"They come up with one answer to everything, and that's more money," Odenbach said.

In the state Senate, Republican Lauren Nelson of Yankton has been a legislator less than two months but is already aggravated about schools wanting additional funding. And she has teaching experience, although notably in private and homeschool settings in addition to public schools.

"The question I have is, when will the public schools have enough money?" Nelson blurted during a bill hearing recently. She was advocating for legislation that would have provided property tax credits for nonpublic educational costs.

Nelson seemed to be railing against the public education establishment at large with no expectation of an answer, but I've got one for her: Enough money to rise out of 49th place in average teacher pay would be an obvious place to start.

That doesn't appear likely to happen this legislative session. A growing number of Republican legislators are openly hostile to public education and are on a mission to strip away its funding and redistribute it to nonpublic alternatives that operate with no accountability. Some of them are waging a holy war, motivated by an unconstitutional craving for taxpayer support of religious instruction.

Those lawmakers should stop treating public education lobbyists like enemies of the state. School board members, administrators and teachers can't come to Pierre every winter, because they're busy trying to educate South Dakota's children. Public education lobbyists are their voices in the halls of power.

One of those lobbyists is Rob Monson, a former teacher and principal from Parkston, who serves as executive director of School Administrators of South Dakota.

"Public education is absolutely what made this country what it is," Monson told reporters recently. "If we lose public education, we will lose this country."

"And that is my core," he continued. "That is our belief as an association, that we will fight all we can and with every breath we have to protect the sanctity of public education where all students — no matter their color, race, economic status or disability — are welcome in our doors every single day."

What if the governor and every South Dakota legislator felt that way about public education and worked that hard to protect and support it?

Maybe young South Dakotans would once again view teaching as a viable career path.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 10 of 91

Hamlin is double winner in Northeast Conference

Hamlin will be the Northeast Conference champions in both the boys and girls division with an undefeated record of 10-0. Groton Area is the runner-up in the boys division while Roncalli and Groton Area share runner-up honors in the girls division.

It appears that the Tiospa-Zina vs. Clark/Willow Lake game will not be made up on the girls side and I'm not sure about the boys side yet.

Girls NEC Standings

Hamlin	10-0	17-3
Roncalli	8-2	15-5
Groton Area	8-2	14-6
Milbank	7-3	12-8
Sisseton	6-4	13-7
Clark/Willow Lake	5-4	11-8
Webster Area	4-6	10-10
Deuel	3-7	4-16
Britton-Hecla	2-8	5-15
Redfield	1-9	3-17
Tiospa Zina	0-9	6-12

Boys NEC Standings

Hamlin	10-0	18-2
Groton Area	9-1	14-5
Clark/Willow Lake	7-2	14-4
Deuel	7-3	14-6
Roncalli	4-5	8-11
Milbank	5-4	9-9
Sisseton	3-7	7-12
Britton-Hecla	3-7	9-11
Webster Area	3-7	5-14
Redfield	1-9	2-17
Tiospa Zina	0-7	2-15

Feb. 18

Hamlin 79, Britton-Hecla 23
 Sisseton 59, Deuel 35
 Tiospa Zina vs. Clark/Willow Lake at Clark

(PP)

Feb. 20

Aberdeen Roncalli 58, Deuel 24
 Milbank 64, Webster 34
 Hamlin 79, Clark-Willow Lake 59

Feb. 21

Groton 61, Britton-Hecla 21
 Redfield 56, Tiospa Zina 25

Feb. 18

Hamlin 61, Britton-Hecla 16
 Deuel 71, Sisseton 57
 Tiospa Zina vs. Clark/Willow Lake at Clark

(PP)

Feb. 20

Deuel 57, Aberdeen Roncalli 53
 Hamlin 69, Clark-Willow Lake 47








Feb. 21








Groton 63, Britton-Hecla 31
 Milbank 68, Webster 40
 Redfield 74, Tiospa Zina 66

Feb. 22: Webster 71, Redfield 41

Feb. 24: Tiospa Zina at Roncalli

Feb. 28: Milbank at Tiospa Zina

Region 1A		Season		Seed	Pts
#	Name	W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Aberdeen Roncalli	15	5	.750	43.650
2	 Groton Area	14	6	.700	43.550
3	 Sisseton	13	7	.650	42.400
4	 Milbank	12	8	.600	41.400
5	 Webster Area	10	10	.500	40.600
6	 Britton-Hecla	5	15	.250	37.850
7	 Redfield	3	17	.150	36.900

Region 1A		Season		Seed	Pts
#	Name	W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Groton Area	14	5	.737	43.632
2	 Aberdeen Roncalli	8	11	.421	40.316
3	 Milbank	9	9	.500	40.167
4	 Britton-Hecla	9	11	.450	39.150
5	 Sisseton	7	12	.368	38.316
6	 Webster Area	5	14	.263	37.632
7	 Redfield	2	17	.105	34.789

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 11 of 91



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

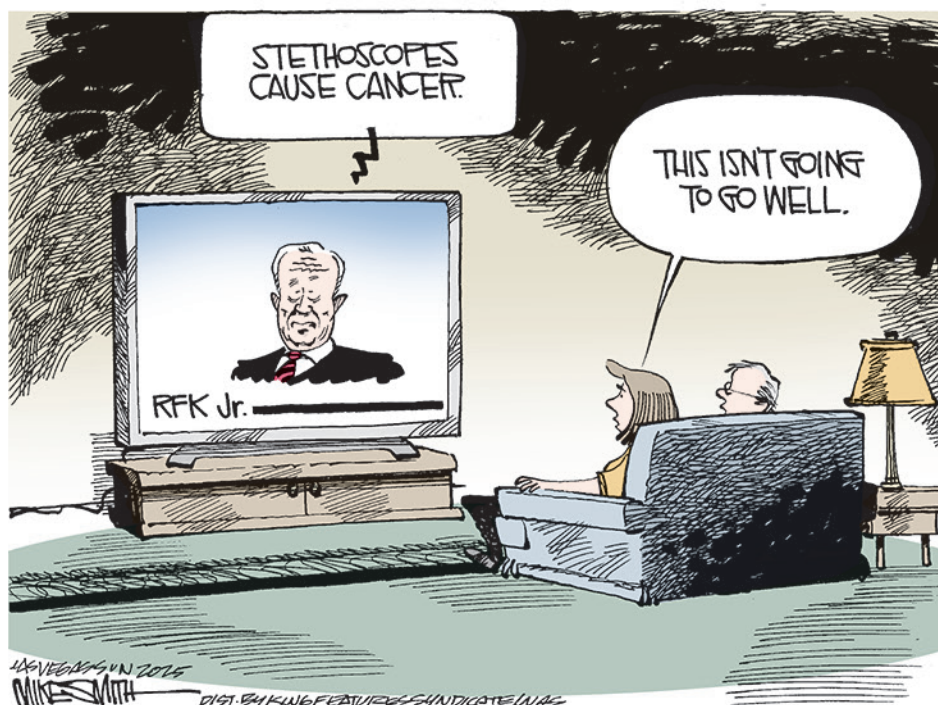
*An evil man seeks only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger
will be sent against him.*

*Let a man meet a bear
robbed of her cubs,
rather than a fool in his folly.*

❧ PROVERBS 17: 11, 12 ❧



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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. In 1 Kings 20, who besieged and made war against Samaria after gathering his forces? *Ben-Hadad, Menahem, Rezin, Omri*

3. What king asked for the help of a woman who was a medium? *Jehu, Amaziah, Saul, Neco*

4. From 1 Samuel 19, whose life was saved when his wife put an image of a man into his bed? *Samson, David, Amon, Cyrus*

5. Who was the father of Elkanah? *Jeremiah, Philip, Esau, Jeroham*

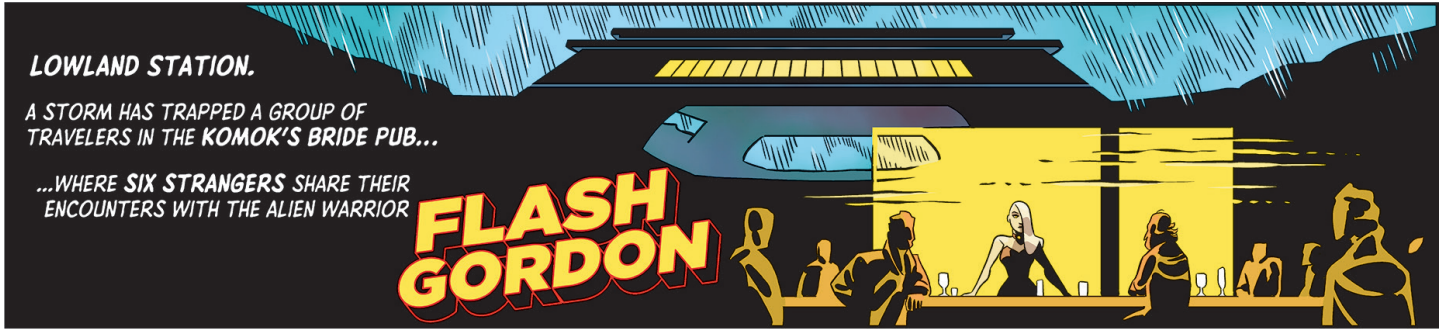
6. From Esther 1, how many days did Ahasuerus' feast last? *2, 4, 7, 10*

ANSWERS: 1) New, 2) Ben-Hadad, 3) Saul, 4) David, 5) Jeroham, 6) Seven

Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscribersite at www.patreon.com/triviaguy.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 13 of 91

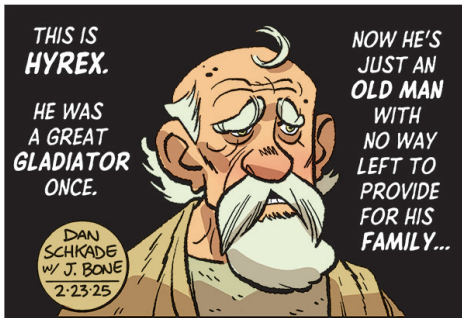


LOWLAND STATION.

A STORM HAS TRAPPED A GROUP OF TRAVELERS IN THE KOMOK'S BRIDE PUB...

...WHERE SIX STRANGERS SHARE THEIR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ALIEN WARRIOR

FLASH GORDON



THIS IS HYREX.

HE WAS A GREAT GLADIATOR ONCE.

DAN SCHKADE
w/ J. BONE
2-23-25

NOW HE'S JUST AN OLD MAN WITH NO WAY LEFT TO PROVIDE FOR HIS FAMILY...



...EXCEPT TO DIE IN THE ARENA FOR THE WIDOW'S PURSE.



BUT FLASH GORDON DOESN'T BELIEVE IN TRADING DEATH FOR COINS.



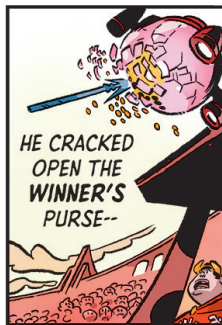
HYREX TRIED TO RETURN THE FAVOR...



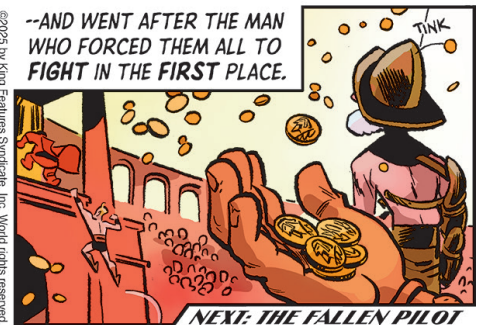
...BUT FLASH DIDN'T USE THE SPEAR AS A WEAPON.



HE USED IT AS A TOOL.



HE CRACKED OPEN THE WINNER'S PURSE--



--AND WENT AFTER THE MAN WHO FORCED THEM ALL TO FIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

NEXT: THE FALLEN PILOT

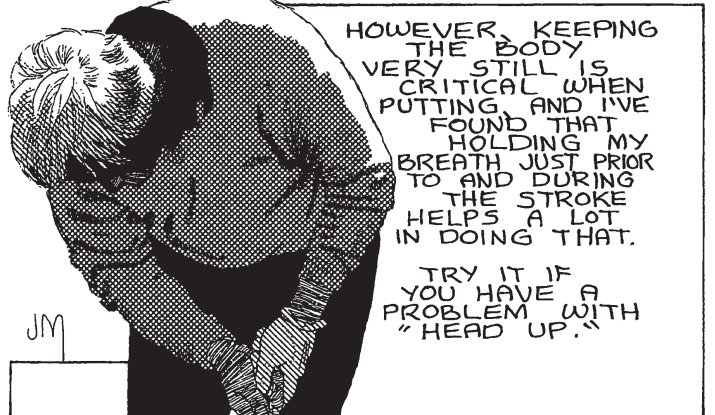
Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



SOMEONE ONCE ASKED ME HOW I BREATHED DURING THE GOLF SWING.

IT ISN'T SOMETHING I'VE EVER CONCERNED MYSELF WITH - OR WANT TO.

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HOWEVER, KEEPING THE BODY VERY STILL IS CRITICAL WHEN PUTTING AND I'VE FOUND THAT HOLDING MY BREATH JUST PRIOR TO AND DURING THE STROKE HELPS A LOT IN DOING THAT.

TRY IT IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH "HEAD UP."

JM



Rapid Heart Rate Persists for a Decade Without Evaluation

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm a 75-year-old woman who, for at least 10 years now, has been experiencing a rapid heart rate. My blood pressure, however, remains normal. In fact, doctors are usually surprised at how good my blood pressure is since I am borderline obese and slightly diabetic.

During this past physical, my doctor did mention my rapid heart rate but didn't recommend treatment or referral to a cardiologist. Should I insist on a referral to a cardiologist, or would this only bring me to more unnecessary testing? -- M.R.

ANSWER: I unfortunately hear about people (more commonly women) having a potentially serious medical condition that gets ignored for many

years, and I fear this is the case with you.

In a person with a persistently fast heart rate (over 100 bpm), an electrocardiogram (EKG) is an essential first step. I suspect you may have had this done, but if you haven't, this clearly needs to be done. Atrial fibrillation and some less-common heart rhythms need to be excluded.

It's likely that you have "sinus tachycardia," meaning that the impulse comes from the sinus node but is persistently too fast. The heart rate is supposed to be fast if you are exercising, and a fast pulse can often come on as a response to an infection or a loss of fluids. But I think that, after 10 years, you most likely have a condition called inappropriate sinus tachycardia (IST).

Since you are writing to me, I assume that this is bothering you. Most people with IST note palpitations, but loss of endurance and decreased exercise tolerance are other common symptoms. Before getting treated, it's important to make sure that there isn't some longstanding cause, such as anemia or thyroid disease.

It's also necessary to exclude the diagnosis of postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, which can overlap with IST and seems to be much more common now, especially after a COVID infection.

I have had some success in prescribing exercise for carefully selected patients with IST. The cardiology literature recommends beta blockers or ivabradine to reduce symptoms and improve exercise ability.

Referral to a cardiologist is appropriate given your 10 years of not being evaluated. Even if you decide against therapy, making sure that there isn't a serious problem is very wise.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm a 61-year-old male in excellent physical health. However, out of nowhere, I started having severe anxiety attacks when driving over 60 mph on the highway. I now have to frequently exit the highway in order to calm down, and I'm constantly worried about having additional attacks while driving. Do you have any insight on how to treat this? -- P.R.

ANSWER: According to the reading I did, some people will develop a fear of driving on the highway after an accident, but it also may come out of nowhere. Highway driving does tend to be more problematic as there is greater danger due to faster speeds -- but even more so because of a higher perceived danger that is sometimes blown out of proportion.

From what I have read, cognitive-behavioral therapy is one treatment, while exposure treatment (sometimes using virtual reality) is another. The sooner you begin treatment, the more likely it is to be successful.

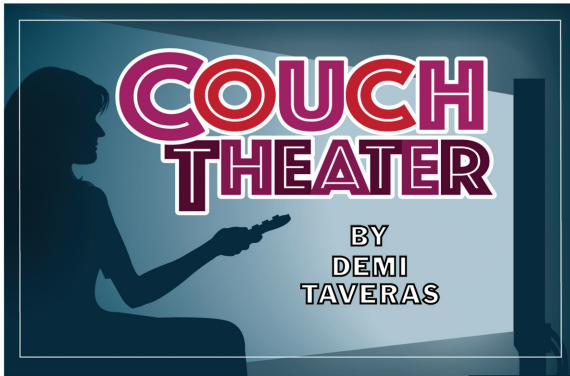
Since it sounds like you are having panic attacks, SSRI medications like sertraline may also be helpful, but some other medicines for panic attacks are inappropriate for people who drive.

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.

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Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 15 of 91



"A Complete Unknown" (R) -- Hollywood's golden boy Timothee Chalamet ("Dune: Part Two") transforms into singer-songwriter Bob Dylan in this biopic, which will be available to rent starting Feb. 25. The film begins in 1961, when an unknown 19-year-old Bob Dylan makes his trek to New York

from Minnesota and becomes part of the emerging folk music scene. On his way to becoming the artist we now know today, Dylan meets a handful of musicians like his idol Woody Guthrie (Scoot McNairy), Pete Seeger (Edward Norton), and Joan Baez (Monica Barbaro), who all play significant roles in his development as an artist. While the film barely made up its budget at the box office despite Chalamet's ingenious marketing tactics, it received eight Academy Award and three Golden Globe nominations. (Amazon Prime Video)

"The Brutalist" (R) -- This A24 film led by Adrien Brody ("Asteroid City") was also a critical darling, snagging 10 Academy Award nominations and giving Brody another shot to land a Best Actor award. The epic period drama follows the heartbreaking story of Hungarian-Jewish Holocaust survivor Laszlo Toth (Brody), who immigrates to the United States after surviving the Buchenwald concentration camp and being separated from his wife and daughter. While he was a respected architect in Europe, Laszlo's first years in the U.S. are anything but respectable, until a wealthy client hires him for a luxurious construction project. Now with the promise of the American Dream and a chance to be reunited with his family, Laszlo assumes that his struggles have finally been rewarded ... but they've only just begun. Out now to rent. (Apple TV+)

"The 31st Screen Actors Guild Awards" (TV-14) -- While the Golden Globes and Oscars are buzzy and glamorous, the SAG Award ceremony gives off a more laidback tone, and they also allow the lesser-known names in the award season space to receive recognition for their work during the past year. For the second time, actress Kristen Bell ("Nobody Wants This") hosted the ceremony, which is out now to stream if you couldn't catch it live. The casts of "Wicked" and "Shogun" received the most nominations for film and television, respectively, and Jane Fonda was this year's Life Achievement Award recipient. (Netflix)

"Matthew Perry: A Hollywood Tragedy" (TV-MA) -- Best known as Chandler Bing from the iconic TV series "Friends," Matthew Perry shocked the world when he was found dead at only 54 inside of his Los Angeles home on Oct. 28, 2023. Since Perry was always open about his struggle with drug addiction, many suspected that an overdose was at play. It was later confirmed to be from a high dose of ketamine that was obtained illegally from two doctors. This documentary, out on Feb. 25, discusses the final days leading up to his tragic death, while also explaining his incredible rise to fame. (Peacock)



Adrien Brody, left, and Felicity Jones star in "The Brutalist." Courtesy of Apple TV+

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 16 of 91



1. Name the artist who had a hit with "Love to Love You Baby."
2. A few artists released "Killing Me Softly with His Song." Name the one who first made it a hit.
3. "Woman, Woman" was the debut single for which group?
4. Who wrote and released "Leaving on a Jet Plane"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "When the world is ready to fall on your little shoulders, And when you're feeling lonely and small, You need somebody there to hold you."

Answers

1. Donna Summer, in 1975. The song ended up on the list

of 500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll.

2. Roberta Flack, in 1973. She won a Grammy for Record of the Year with the song. The previous year she'd won the same award for "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face."

3. Gary Puckett & the Union Gap, in 1967.

4. John Denver, in 1969. His version, however, did not chart. It was the cover by Peter, Paul & Mary that made the song famous.

5. "You're Only Lonely," by J.D. Souther, in 1979. While Souther's song didn't make it to No. 1 on the Hot 100 chart, it did top the Adult Contemporary chart for five weeks.

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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{Wagner}

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"I can't help it! I've been targeted by a marketing campaign!"

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Sign is lower. 2. Log is moved. 3. Elbow patch is longer. 4. Cap is different. 5. Thumb is moved. 6. Jacket is

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 18 of 91



* Groceries and food shopping can be a tremendous portion of your budget if you aren't careful. The best and most serious money-saving tip for home economists is to ALWAYS use a list. It really does make a difference to have a plan. Here are some more tips to save money while feeding your family.

* "One of the most expensive portions of your meal is probably meats. You can look for larger packages that you can break down, but you can also plan a couple meat-free meals each week. Also, meals like stew and casseroles use less meat per person but are still satisfying." -- W.I. in Arkansas

* Most stores list the unit price on the shelf tag. You can use it to compare the cost of different sizes and brands of the same item. Just because a package is bigger doesn't necessarily mean

it has the best price per unit.

* Remember that typically, the higher shelves and the lower shelves house the better deals. Compare the items on the aisle ends to the same items on their regular shelf. Sometimes, what looks like a sale is not a sale price at all, especially when compared to a store brand that's just as good.

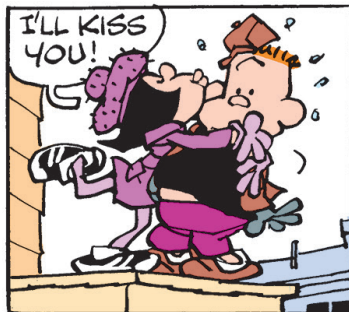
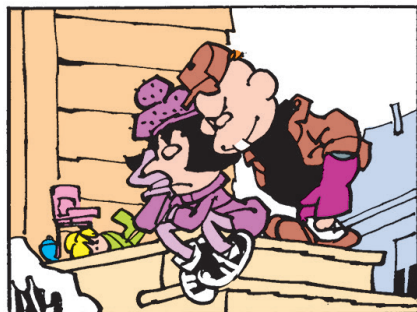
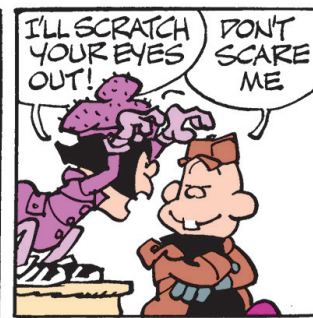
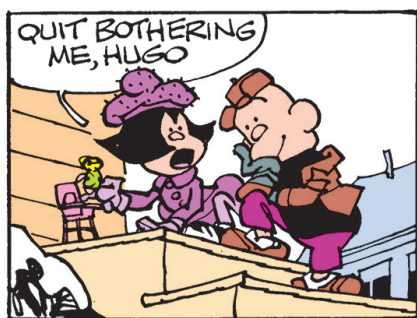
* "A secret of busy moms: Cook once, eat twice (or three times, if you plan well)! When you prepare favorite recipes that will freeze well, or even just elements of those recipes, make a double or triple batch so that a few nights of the month, you can just pop something in the oven easily. I cook taco meat once for the month, and we have tacos every week. I just freeze three portions of the meat, and the rest is easy to assemble." -- K.S. in Florida

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

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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BUD BLAKE

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 19 of 91

King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Doubtfire or Dalloway
- 4 Pesky insect
- 8 Blaze
- 12 "Alley —"
- 13 Verdi heroine
- 14 Booty
- 15 Sugar suffix
- 16 Some online essays
- 18 Doppler device
- 20 "Diamonds" singer
- 21 Brzezinski of MSNBC
- 24 Group character
- 28 Coin that keeps turning up
- 32 Stitched
- 33 Artist Yoko
- 34 "— luck!"
- 36 Actor Stephen
- 37 Euro fraction
- 39 Pub game
- 41 Cognizant
- 43 "No seats" signs
- 44 Olympics chant
- 46 Loan shark's crime
- 50 Ginsberg and Kerouac, for two
- 55 — Maria

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	52				53	54			55		
56					57					58		
59					60					61		

- 56 Eyebrow shape
- 57 Microwave, slangily
- 58 Request
- 59 Citi Field team
- 60 Love god
- 61 "— a Rebel"
- DOWN**
- 1 Heath
- 2 Activist Parks
- 3 Raced
- 4 Angel with a trumpet
- 5 Zero
- 6 Commotion
- 7 Labels
- 8 Parade attractions
- 9 Cyclades island
- 10 Decay
- 11 UFO engineers
- 17 Diner dessert
- 19 Sound booster
- 22 Handle
- 23 Poker payments
- 25 Medal earner
- 26 Actor Clive
- 27 Hitch
- 28 — Raton, Fla.
- 29 From the start
- 30 Lady of Spain
- 31 Belgian river
- 35 Stirs up
- 38 "We hold these — to be ..."
- 40 Letter addenda, for short
- 42 Sixth sense
- 45 Top-notch
- 47 Beehive State
- 48 Get up
- 49 Tibetan herd
- 50 "Kapow!"
- 51 Before
- 52 Play segment
- 53 Where Lux. is
- 54 Ring decision

— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

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

Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 21 of 91

THIMBLE THEATRE PRESENTS
POPEYE
BY RANDY MILHOLLAND

IT'S NOT FAIR! WHY DO I ALWAYS HAVE TO SUFFER?

ALL I SAID WAS CONSIDER OTHER PEOPLE'S FEELINGS. I DO. THAT'S HOW I KNOW WHICH ONES TO HURT.

BRUTO'S GOING THROUGH A LOT, SO TRY TO BE SYMPATHETIC.

UGH! FINE.

WOW, BRUTO. YOU LOOK LIKE CRAP!

YEAH. DIVORCE WILL DO THAT.

HOW'S OUR FAVORITE BIG BROTHER?

OH, FINE. JUST GREAT.

EXCEPT FOR THE "MY HUSBAND OF TEN YEARS LEFT ME" PART.

SAY SOMETHING.

I KNOW YOU'RE HURTING, BUT THERE ARE PLENTY OF FISH IN THE SEA.

BUT THERE ARE ALSO UNSPEAKABLE HORRORS WAITING TO DRAG YOU BENEATH THE WAVES.

I GUESS WHAT I'M SAYING IS, SKIP LOVE AND FILL THE VOID WITH FIGHTING.

I WANNA THANK YOU FOR TRYING... SO PLEASE TRY!

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BARNEY GOOGLE AND **SNUFFY SMITH**®

I'M HERE TO NUSS MY SNUFFY BACK TO HEALTH !!

HOLD ON THAR, LEMME RUN THAT BY HIS DOCTOR !!

SHE SAYS "NO !!"

I BRUNG CHICKEN SOUP TO HALP SNUFFY GIT OVER HIS COLD !!

OH, NO NEED, MAW SMIF, I ALREADY MADE HIM SOME !!

UH-OH !!

JOHN ROSE

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BUT HE REALLY LIKES MY SOUP, LOWEEZY !!

THIS COULD GIT UGLY !!

HE TOLD ME MINE IS TH' BEST HE'S EVER ATE !!

3-3

ONLY ONE THING T'DO IF'N I'M TO KEEP TH' PEACE AN' AVOID ALL TH' DRAMA !!

comickingdom.com/barney-google-and-snuffy-smith

MAW !! 'WEEZY !! IT'S A MIRACLE !!

I'M CURED !! ALL BETTER !!

≡ COFF, COFF ≡

MUST'A BEEN TH' AROMA OF MY BODACIOUS SOUP !!

PURRRTY SHORE IT WUZ MINE !!

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 22 of 91

Prince Valiant
BY HAL FOSTER'S

LURED BY A MYSTIC, BEWITCHING SIREN CALL, VALS ISLAND QUEEN IS CAUGHT IN A TREMENDOUS TIDAL CURRENT THAT CHANNELS BETWEEN MASSIVE ROCKS INTO A GREAT WHIRLPOOL! THE SHIP CAREENS CRAZILY, IS RIPPED APART...

...BEFORE VAL AND GUNDAR, MUSCLING THE TILLERS, MANAGE TO BRING THE DOOMED VESSEL OUT OF THE MAELSTROM...

... AND THROUGH MORE TREACHEROUS FINGERS OF ROCK, BEYOND VEILS OF MIST VAL SPIES A NARROW GLEAM OF SILVER...

... AND PRAYS THAT IT IS INDEED WHAT HE THINKS IT IS.

YEATES 12/29/13

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THEY FIGHT THE CURRENT FOR WHAT LITTLE CONTROL THEY CAN GAIN, AND THEN THERE IS A TREMENDOUS JOLT, A GRATING CRASH, AND THEY ARE BEACHED!

NEXT: *The sirens*

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

DO YOU LIKE DOVE CHOCOLATE?

I SURE DO!!

...IT TASTES WAY BETTER THAN THEIR SOAP.

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PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Don't fall for Medicare scams

Medicare card scams are on the rise. During one calendar year, Medicare had over \$100 billion in fraudulent claims, and the damage cost goes up when identity theft and stolen financial information are added in.

What the Medicare thieves want is your card number, and they'll try any number of tricks to get you to reveal it.

Scammers might contact you to offer you a "cheaper" Medicare but will need your personal information to sign you up. Don't fall for it.

They might impersonate a Medicare employee and say that your card is about to expire and you need a new one. They'll ask for your current card number and your personal information to verify it's really you. (Wrong: Medicare cards don't expire.)

Scammers might call and say that your Medicare benefits have been canceled, but claim they can help you get the benefits reinstated if you give them your personal information or even a fee. (Wrong: Medicare won't communicate with you that way, and if they need to contact you, it will be by mail.)

Thieves might try to claim that your old paper card isn't good now and that you need a new one with a chip in it, like a credit card. (Wrong: Medicare cards are only made of paper.)

They might offer you a refund of some type or something free, or you might be offered genetic testing. All you need to do, they'll say, is give them your Medicare card number ... and your bank information for the refund.

Whether you're contacted by phone, email or text message, don't give out your Medicare card number or any of your personal or financial information.

As usual, if you suspect you have a scammer on the phone, hang up immediately. If you believe it was an attempt at a Medicare scam, call 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227) to report it.

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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, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 24 of 91

1. The Varsity Match, first played in 1872, is an annual rugby union fixture played between what two English universities?

2. What Hockey Hall of Fame defenseman won Stanley Cups with the New Jersey Devils (1995, 2000, 2003) and Anaheim Ducks (2007)?

3. Whose permanent residence was a three-room suite at Salt Lake City's University Park Hotel during his tenure as head coach of the Utah Utes men's basketball team from 1989 to 2004?

4. Who had more NFL regular-season head-to-head victories between the Green Bay Packers' Curly Lambeau and the Chicago Bears' George Halas?

5. Pitcher Gus "Cannonball" Weyhing, who played from 1887-1901, holds what dubious Major League Baseball career record?

6. The mashie-niblick, cleek, jigger and baffing spoon are obsolete types of what sports equipment?

7. First overall NBA Draft picks Victor Wembanyama (2023) and Zaccharie Risacher (2024) both hail from what country?



by Ryan A. Berenz

Answers

1. Oxford and Cambridge.
2. Scott Niedermayer.
3. Rick Majerus.
4. Halas went 32-18-4 vs. Lambeau.
5. Most batters hit, with 277.
6. Golf clubs.
7. France.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



Is my rabbit depressed?



DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I took over the care of a rabbit named "Chucky" a few weeks ago, after the previous owner, my aunt, passed away. Since he got here, Chucky has spent most of his days inside his hutch. When I try to take him out, he huddles tightly against the far wall. I don't see him eat or drink during the day, but he does come out at night after I go to bed. Is he depressed, or is it something else? -- Jim F., Chula Vista, California

DEAR JIM: Chucky does sound pretty stressed out, and depression is definitely on the table here. He also may be having trouble adjusting to his new environment, and is missing your aunt, too. A stressed and unhappy rabbit is tense, staying in a down position with their ears flattened against their body. Their nose doesn't twitch.

They don't hop around the cage freely, and they'll hide away if you reach for them.

The first thing to do is establish care, if you haven't done so already. Take Chucky to a veterinarian specializing in small animals (including rabbits) for a checkup, explain the circumstances, and detail his behaviors. The vet will rule out any underlying health conditions and can give you a wealth of advice on helping him be more comfortable and easing his transition to a new owner.

It's important to be supportive and not force interaction at this time. Keep Chucky's cage clean and fresh, change his water and food daily, and provide him with rabbit toys and chews strewn around the cage that he can explore. Talk to him in a soothing voice while you are near his cage. As he adjusts, he will gradually respond and feel comfortable with you.

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

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Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 26 of 91

Strange BUT TRUE

* The Climbing Gourami is a fish that can climb out of water, breathe oxygen and even walk for short distances.

* India has 454 living languages and 16 official ones.

* During her 1982 restoration, the Statue of Liberty's head was accidentally installed 2 feet off-center.

* General George S. Patton believed he was reincarnated from either a military leader from Napoleon's army or a Roman legionary, claiming to have seen combat multiple times in previous lives, and also believed that after he died

he would return to again lead armies onto the battlefield.

* Only deceased people can appear on American currency.

* When put under a microscope, tears produced by grief, hope or onions were unique in form from each other.

* Viking names included such gems as "desirous of beer," "able to fill a bay with fish by magic," "lust-hostage" and "the man who mixes his drinks."

* North Korea accidentally hit one of its own cities during a 2017 failed missile test.

* In 1916, a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution would have put all acts of war to a national vote. Anyone voting "yes" would have to register as a volunteer for army service.

* Dynamite was originally going to be called "Nobel's Safety Powder."

* Singer James Brown was such a strict bandleader that he had signals arranged with his manager to let him know if a musician made a mistake during concerts. After a performance, band members' errors were deducted from their paychecks.

* Ostriches are the only birds with a bladder.

* In 1872, sitting president Ulysses S. Grant was pulled over and fined \$20 for exceeding the Washington speed limit ... on a horse.

* Aristotle believed that plants had souls.

Thought for the Day: "Life is painting a picture, not doing a sum." -- Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

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The Garden Bug

Herbs for stuffy heads

Bring a few cups of water to a boil, then pour carefully into a large heat-safe bowl. Gather some fresh herbs such as basil, chamomile, eucalyptus, lavender, mullein leaf, oregano, mint, rosemary, sage, thyme, tea tree or yarrow, and place directly into the bowl of steaming water. Cover the bowl and let it steep for 10 minutes; then, being cautious of the hot steam, place your face over the bowl and cover your head with a towel to keep the steam in. Close your eyes and slowly breathe in the herbal steam, then gently breathe out. This helps moisturize the nasal passageways and loosen up any mucus in the chest and sinuses. - Brenda Weaver

Source: www.herbalreality.com

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 27 of 91



by Freddy Groves

New VA Secretary Doug Collins

Changes are coming fast and furious at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Since these impact many of us, we need to pay attention to what's going on -- and who's now in charge.

The VA has a new secretary, Douglas A. Collins, the 12th in the position since the VA was started in 1988. Collins is an Air Force veteran, served as chaplain, has been a Reserve colonel for 23 years and additionally served for two years in the Navy.

He served in Iraq and at his confirmation hearing said that he slept next to burn pits for many months. He's an attorney and was a U.S. representative for a Georgia district from 2013 to 2021.

Quite the resume, and the Senate vote to confirm him was fairly strong: 77 to 23.

He's jumped right in, saying he wants to expand the VA's private sector care and figure out how to get rid of employees who aren't doing their job. He stopped the employee teleworking right away, insisting people come back to work, and put a hiring freeze in place until things shake out and they see if there are any vacancies once people decide if they're staying or going. Further, he vowed to fix the \$16 billion computer system that's been sitting unfinished for two years.

Sometimes you just want to see a man and hear his voice before you make up your mind about him. Go online to YouTube and look for "Doug Collins opening remarks in Veterans Affairs secretary confirmation hearing."

Watching that video, I liked things about him that have nothing directly to do with the VA and the position he's been given, but instead tell what kind of a man he is. He's been married 36 years, he still has a bracelet a female Airman made for him when he was a flightline chaplain 15 years ago and he thanked his 88-year-old father. In the end, those things matter.

I wish him well.

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Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 28 of 91

Wishing Well®

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

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

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1. TELEVISION: The show "Happy Days" is a spinoff of which older sitcom?
2. LITERATURE: Which author created the character Hercule Poirot?
3. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Where is Barack Obama's presidential library located?
4. GEOGRAPHY: What river forms part of the border between the United States and Mexico?
5. ASTRONOMY: Which planet in our solar system has the strongest gravitational field?
6. U.S. STATES: Which four states intersect at the Four Corners monument?
7. SCIENCE: What is anemophily?
8. MOVIES: How much does an Oscar award trophy weigh?
9. WEATHER: What is a haboob?
10. MEASUREMENTS: How many millimeters are in a meter?

Answers

1. "Love, American Style."
2. Agatha Christie.
3. Chicago, Illinois.
4. The Rio Grande.
5. Jupiter.
6. Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado.
7. Pollination by the wind.
8. 8.5 pounds.
9. An intense dust storm.
10. 1,000.

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Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 29 of 91

South Dakota Governor



Larry Rhoden



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Crossing Over

Milestones are an important part of any process. They're a good opportunity to reflect on where we've come from, assess where we are, and look ahead to what comes next. Every legislative session, there comes a day called "Crossover" that is a major milestone in the legislative process.

Under our South Dakota system, every bill gets a hearing, and every bill that passes committee gets a vote on the floor of the legislature. Crossover Day is the day that bills must have passed the floor of their chamber of origin, or else they'll be considered "dead." So it's often a long, busy day – and it's a good opportunity to take stock of how the session has gone so far.

Crossover Day this year is on February 25. As I write this, it remains to be seen just how busy a day it'll be for our House Representatives and Senators. But I'll tell you this – it's been a busy few weeks for me since taking office as Governor.

Just four weeks ago, we had our own "crossover," so to speak, here in South Dakota. Former-Governor Kristi Noem took office as the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and she's doing important work to keep our nation safe. And I took office as the 34th Governor of South Dakota. I got my team established, nominated Tony Venhuizen as my Lieutenant Governor, promoted Mackenzie Decker as my new Chief of Staff, and even hired a new Press Secretary to help deliver open and responsive communication with the press.

To have all that happen in the middle of a legislative session was unprecedented in the history of South Dakota, and it has certainly kept us busy. Serving as Lieutenant Governor for six years, I had a good sense of what the workload of the Governor was. I knew what I was getting into when I shortened my title. But there's a difference between knowing something and experiencing it for yourself. We've certainly had a busy past few weeks of session.

We've already been able to deliver some accomplishments to keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free. The first bill I signed as Governor was to ban Sanctuary Cities in our state, which was a strong statement of support for the work that President Trump and Secretary Noem are doing to fix our nation's immigration system.

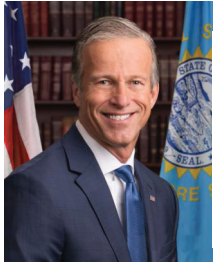
I worked with representatives from both the House and the Senate to hammer out an agreement to address the rising burden of property taxes for South Dakota homeowners, and that bill has started to work through the legislative process.

We announced a major force expansion of the South Dakota Highway Patrol in Sioux Falls. This new squad will support local law enforcement to fight crime and keep our communities safe.

We're continuing to advocate for the construction of a new men's prison near Sioux Falls – this facility will be crucial to rehabilitate offenders and ensure the public safety of South Dakotans.

And we are already working towards returning fireworks to Mount Rushmore for America's 250th birthday! I recently spoke with Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, and he committed to me that we will work together to make this happen.

So as we reach Crossover Day in the legislature, I am confident that our state is heading in the right direction. Our state's "crossover" is in good shape, as well. I appreciate all the prayers and kind words that my family and I have received, and I will continue focusing everyday on keeping South Dakota strong, safe, and free.



JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

It's Time to End the Death Tax

Death should not be a taxable event. Anything you leave to your heirs has already been taxed once, and there should be a limit to how many times the government can tax you. Unfortunately, the estate tax, often called the death tax, is a concern for many American farmers, ranchers, and small business owners whose operations could be devastated by this tax. Eliminating the death tax once and for all has long been a priority of mine, and I recently introduced a bill to permanently repeal this fundamentally flawed tax.

I was proud to help secure a doubling of the death tax exemption in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which has protected a lot of farms, ranches, and small businesses. But the larger exemption limit will expire at the end of this year, and it's my hope that we will not merely extend the exemption, but that we will put an end to the death tax once and for all.

Death tax proponents talk as if it only affects the extremely wealthy, but that couldn't be further from the truth. The death tax can sweep up those who have very little money in the bank. Take for example a family farm or ranch, which are often cash-poor businesses. They might have substantial-looking assets on paper, but the vast majority of that is land and farming equipment, and a small fraction of it is money in the bank.

So what happens when a farmer or rancher dies and his estate is subject to the tax? There's a very good chance that his liquid assets – in other words, the cash that he has available in the bank – won't come close to covering the tax bill from the federal government. The only alternative for his heirs in that case may be to start selling off land or farm equipment to pay the tax. They may be able to keep the farm – just a smaller version of it – or they may have to sell it off entirely. It's the same plight that many ranches and small businesses face as well.

But it's not just those who actually get hit by the death tax who suffer. Many family farms, ranches, and small businesses spend a lot of time and money on estate planning to avoid being hit by this tax. That's time and money that could have gone into building their business, hiring new workers, and investing in their operation. Others set aside capital to prepare for the death tax, which is money that, again, could go into the building up of their operation.

It's time we end the death tax once and for all. And I hope that 2025 will be the year that we permanently bid farewell to this flawed and unfair tax.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 31 of 91



Serving South Dakota

BIG Update

I had a great week visiting seniors young and old – high school seniors and senior citizens – across South Dakota this week. I can tell they're all paying attention to the news because they had great questions about the border, TikTok, and Trump's first few weeks in office, especially about tariffs and government efficiency.

I always love getting out in the state to talk to real people like you. It keeps me focused on the most important part of my job – serving South Dakota.

BIG Idea

River Cities Public Transit helps people get around across South Dakota, for things like a doctor's appointment or a visit to the local Veterans' Affairs (VA) facility. I stopped by River Cities Transit to learn more about their operations. They shared that they are facing a workforce shortage, especially with the challenge of recruiting drivers with a CDL. Even though we have a shortage of 80,000 truck drivers, the Biden Administration implemented rules that made it harder to obtain a CDL. Veterans and senior citizens rely on businesses like River City Transit, and their CDL drivers, to make it to their appointments.

I'm a leader on legislation in the House that would make it easier for CDL applicants to get their license, and to expand coverage for rural veteran transportation. These men and women made sacrifices to keep America free and they deserve the highest quality of care we can provide. Ensuring veterans in rural America continue to have access to transportation is a critical first step.

BIG News

America has an abundance of energy resources, but we've seen a stark contrast between how the Biden and Trump Administrations have stewarded them. Under the Biden Administration, many U.S. energy sources remained untapped as America relied on countries in the Middle East and Russia to meet our energy needs. Relying on these countries poses a risk to the security of our nation, economy, and supply chain. President Trump understands the need to increase energy security and during his first term, America became a net exporter of energy for the first time in nearly 70 years.

To unleash American energy again, President Trump recently established the National Energy Dominance Council, chaired by Secretary of the Interior, Doug Burgum. This council will cut red tape and spur innovation across the energy sector to lower prices for consumers and make America energy secure again.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 32 of 91



FEBRUARY 10-16, 2025

Welcome back to another Weekly Round[s] Up! We're continuing to confirm President Trump's nominees at a record pace here in the Senate. We now have 18 in place, including Tulsi Gabbard as Director of National Intelligence, whose swearing-in ceremony I attended this week at the White House. As

we vote on nominees, we continue with our regular business in the Senate like meetings with South Dakotans, hearings and classified briefings. I also introduced legislation this past week to create more oversight of the bureaucracy. More on all of this in my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakotans I met with: Leaders from the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe; Dr. Troy Meink, nominee to serve as Secretary of the Air Force, who is originally from Lemmon and graduated from South Dakota State University (Go Jacks!); representatives from the South Dakota chapter of the National Federation of Independent Business; physicians from the South Dakota State Medical Association; leaders from Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity; and members of South Dakota Civil Air Patrol.

South Dakota towns represented: Brookings, Eagle Butte, Hermosa, Lemmon, Madison, Mission, Pierre, Pine Ridge, Rapid City and Sioux Falls.

Other meetings: Emil Michael, nominee for Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering; Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Kruse, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency; David McIntyre, President and CEO of TriWest; Bill Pulte, nominee to lead the Federal Housing Finance Agency; King Abdullah II of Jordan; and Gary Cohn, Vice Chairman of IBM. As I mentioned, I attended the swearing-in ceremony for our new Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, whose nomination passed the Senate this week. I supported her through the process and look forward to working with her, particularly through my work on the Select Committee on Intelligence. I also attended our Senate Bible Study and our Senate Prayer Breakfast, where Senator James Lankford of Oklahoma was our speaker.

Hearings: I attended three hearings this week. One was a closed hearing in the Select Committee on Intelligence. One was a hearing in the Senate Armed Services Committee to hear from the leaders of United States Northern Command and United States Southern Command. I also attended a hearing in the Senate Banking Committee where we heard from Jay Powell, Chair of the Federal Reserve. You can watch my questions from that here.

Classified briefings: I attended one classified briefing on Central Command as part of my work on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Votes taken: 7 – we confirmed three additional cabinet nominees this past week: Tulsi Gabbard for Director of National Intelligence, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for Secretary of Health and Human Services and Brooke Rollins for Secretary of Agriculture. We also took two procedural votes on the nominations of Howard Lutnick for Secretary of Commerce and Kelly Loeffler for Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

We're working hard to get to the finish line on cabinet nominees. There are 24 positions within the executive branch that are considered "cabinet level." Of these, two are not confirmed by the Senate: Vice President JD Vance, who was elected by the American people, and White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles, who was hand-selected by the President. This means we have just four nominees left before President Trump has his full cabinet in place, but rest assured we're just getting started on the President's plan to Make America Great Again.

Legislation introduced: I introduced two cybersecurity related bills this past week. The Cyber Conspiracy Modernization Act would strengthen penalties for cybercrimes. The Providing Individuals Various Opportunities for Technical Training to Build a Skills-Based Cyber Workforce Act of 2025 (Cyber PIVOTT Act)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 33 of 91

would provide scholarships to students and professionals training in cyber-related fields. You can read more about these bills here.

I also joined Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) in reintroducing the Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act to help put power back in the people's hands instead of the administrative state. Under the REINS Act, once major rules from government agencies are drafted, they must then be affirmatively approved by both chambers of Congress and then signed by the President, satisfying the bicameral and presentment requirements of the Constitution. Currently, regulations ultimately take effect unless Congress specifically disapproves. Read more here.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Pierre and Tea.

Steps taken: 50,659 steps or 25.23 miles.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 34 of 91



Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483

1-352-216-3025

Will There Be Cell Phones in Heaven?

Last Tuesday started out like any other day except for one thing. I overslept.

Isn't it strange that when you have a full schedule you oversleep? Normally, I am up at the crack of dawn. Sometimes I wish the dawn would not crack so loud, but then I would never get awake.

In a strange way, I pride myself with being able to get up early in the morning. At my age, I do not need that much sleep anymore and so it is my motto, "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

I think I have the healthy down, but the other two are nowhere to be seen, at least from my bedroom window. Maybe I am not going to bed early enough and maybe I am not rising early enough. I have to think that through a little bit.

Tuesday I had a very heavy schedule and it started out early in the morning with appointments all throughout the day. I do not complain about a full schedule because it makes the day go faster. As far as I am concerned, the faster a day goes the better it is.

It is not that often that I have a day filled with appointments, but it does happen on occasion. Like, Tuesday.

I would like to blame the alarm clock, but then I did not set it the night before so that is out of the picture.

When I did get up and realized how late I was, I put full steam forward in motion and got to my first appointment. Fortunately, I was on time, but barely.

It was right after the third appointment that something seemed a little strange. I could not put my finger on it, but I knew something was wrong and I did not quite know what it was. I could not give too much thought to it because I had a busy schedule.

It just irked me because I knew something was wrong and I could not figure it out.

By lunchtime I was quite hungry and satisfied that all of the appointments went according to schedule. I was afraid the way my day started that it would affect everything else during the day. As luck would have it, and I do not count too much on luck, but the day was going quite nicely as planned.

I just could not get away from something in the back of my head that was bothering me. I checked to make sure I had the same socks on both feet. I have gone out with a blue sock on my left foot and a brown one on my right foot. If that isn't embarrassing.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 35 of 91

That was not the problem. My tie was okay. I had the right shirt on and my pants were okay. But something was wrong.

As I was eating lunch, I thought it would be nice to call the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. After all, it was a busy day and she had just as busy a day as I did. I thought I would just touch base and tell her hi.

I reached for my shirt pocket to get my phone and discovered, much to my chagrin, that my shirt pocket was empty. That's right. Empty!

I frantically searched my person and did not discover my cell phone anywhere. Then I had one of those "aha" moments. I had left the house that morning in such a hurry that I forgot to pick up my cell phone. How was I going to get through the day without my cell phone?

As I sat there finishing my lunch my fingers began to itch and twitch. They were insisting that I text somebody. Anybody! But I had nothing upon which I could text.

I cannot remember any day that I did not have my cell phone with me. It is just one of those automatic things with me wherever I go. I need to be careful that I do not take it into the shower because that would be a disaster. Wherever I go, I always take my cell phone.

I am old enough to remember back in the day when nobody had a cell phone. Texting was not even invented at that time. If you wanted to make a telephone call, you had to stop at one of those telephone booths and hope Superman was not ahead of you. Making a telephone call at that time was a major business.

Today, cell phones have made our lives so mobile that we can go anywhere, that is as long as there is Internet service, and talk to anybody.

Sitting there munching on my dessert I began to think about cell phones in heaven. The thought came to me quite suddenly, are there cell phones in heaven?

Here on earth we cannot live without these contraptions, but will we need them in heaven?

As I was musing on the subject, I thought of a verse in the Bible. "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalms 50:15).

Long before cell phones were ever thought of, God had a plan for us communicating with Him. All I need is to "call upon" God and His promises that He "will deliver" me. What more does a person need?

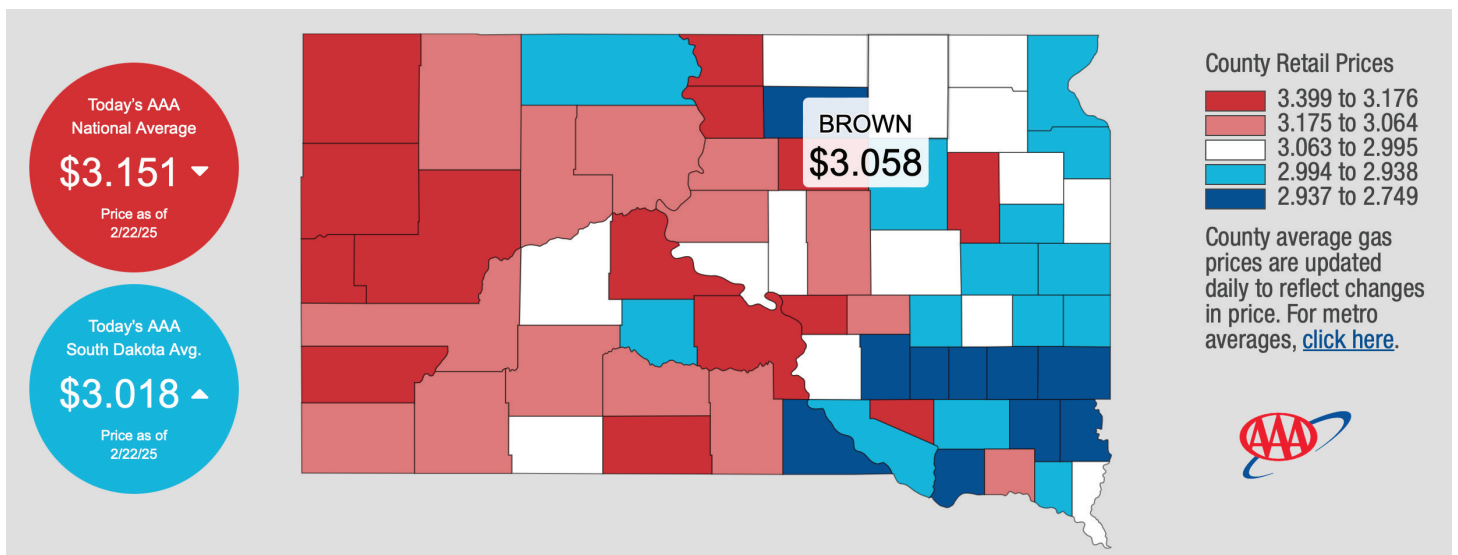
Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 36 of 91

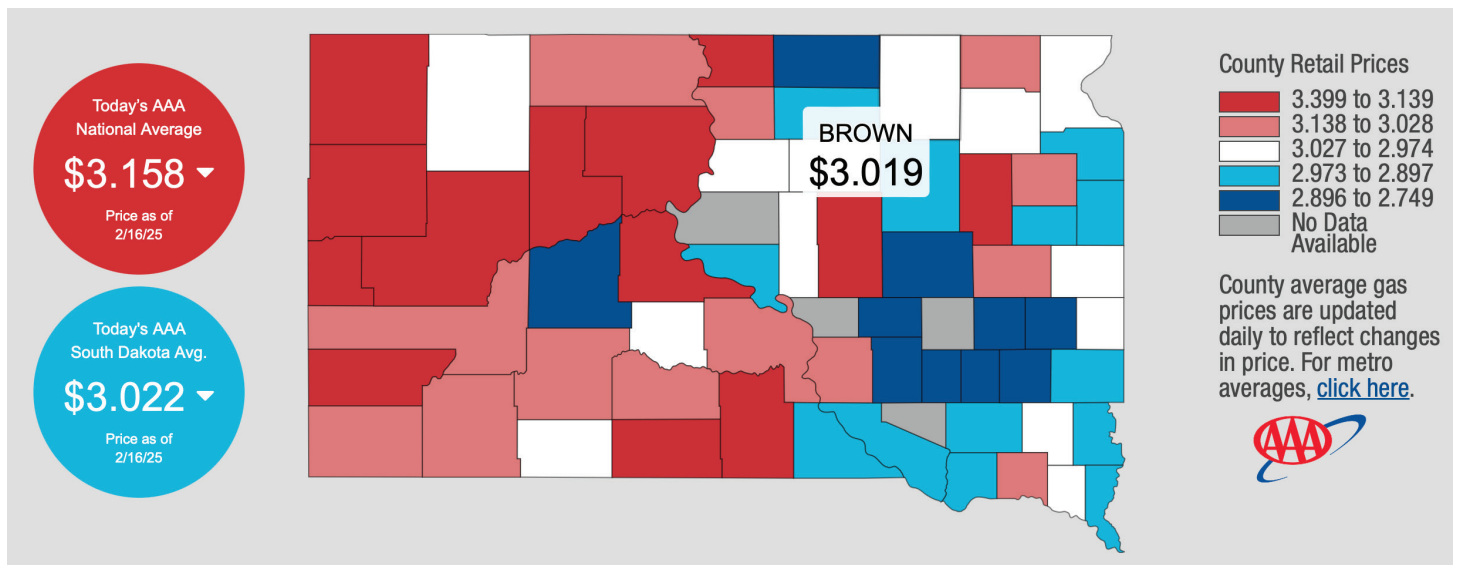
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.018	\$3.185	\$3.617	\$3.392
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.014	\$3.171	\$3.606	\$3.424
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.035	\$3.199	\$3.628	\$3.428
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.893	\$3.121	\$3.561	\$3.426
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.039	\$3.192	\$3.651	\$3.752

This Week



Last Week



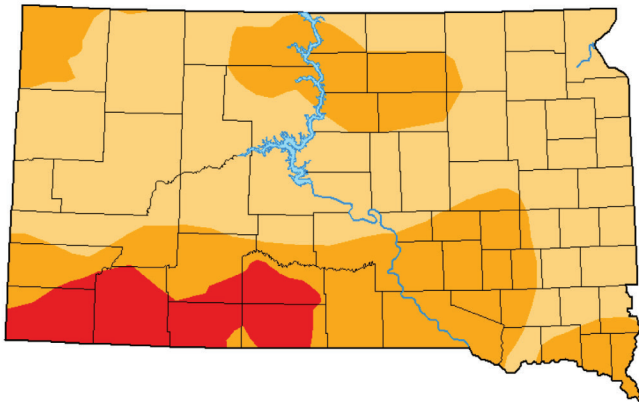
Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 37 of 91

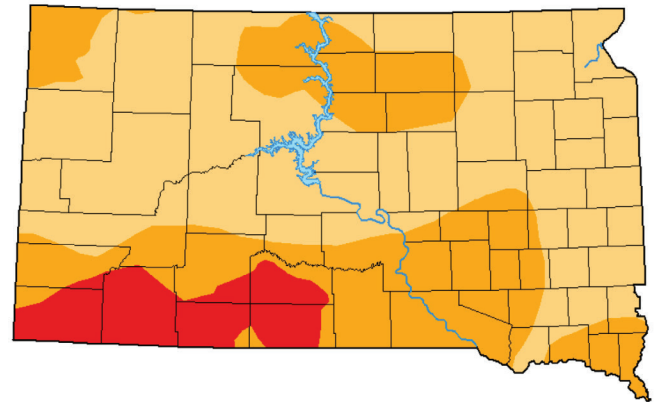
Drought Classification

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

Drought Monitor



February 18



February 11

The wettest areas were from eastern Colorado into western Kansas and most of Nebraska where over 200% of normal precipitation was measured. The driest areas were in North Dakota and South Dakota as well as in southern Kansas. It was a cold week for the region with areas of western North Dakota recording departures from normal of 25 degrees or more. Almost all of the High Plains were at least 15 degrees below normal for the week. Only a few slight changes occurred in the region this week, with far southeast Nebraska and far northeast improvements to Kansas' abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions and abnormally dry conditions removed from northeast Colorado along the Kansas and Nebraska borders.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 38 of 91

EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: What does USAID do for climate and environment and how will that change now if President Trump is allowed to dismantle the agency?
-- James C., via email

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has been a leader in global environmental efforts, supporting initiatives that promote sustainability, cut emissions and build resilience in vulnerable regions. Proposed efforts by President Trump to dismantle the agency have raised concerns about the broader impact on global climate action, of which USAID has played a crucial role.



If the Trump administration is able to gut USAID as intended, global climate mitigation efforts could be in jeopardy. Credit: Staff Sgt. Keith James / U.S. Air Force, FlickrCC.

USAID's Climate Strategy (2022-2030) outlines a plan for reducing emissions, enhancing resilience and promoting sustainable development across multiple sectors and regions. The agency has set ambitious goals, like helping partner countries avoid six billion metric tons of carbon emissions by 2030. Through targeted programs, USAID has helped countries transition toward renewable energy by funding solar and wind projects. Their efforts to prevent deforestation and promote reforestation have protected critical ecosystems, while climate-smart agriculture programs improve food security and help farmers adapt to changing weather. USAID has played key roles in advancing water security via sustainable resource management and providing disaster preparedness support to communities facing climate-related crises—all supported through partnerships with local governments, nonprofits and international organizations.

If Trump succeeds in shutting USAID, the impact will be severe, slowing progress on emissions reduction and resilience-building, especially in developing countries. Vulnerable communities already facing extreme weather, rising sea levels and food insecurities will lose vital support. Eliminating USAID will harm U.S. foreign relations, as climate aid is a key factor in global diplomacy.

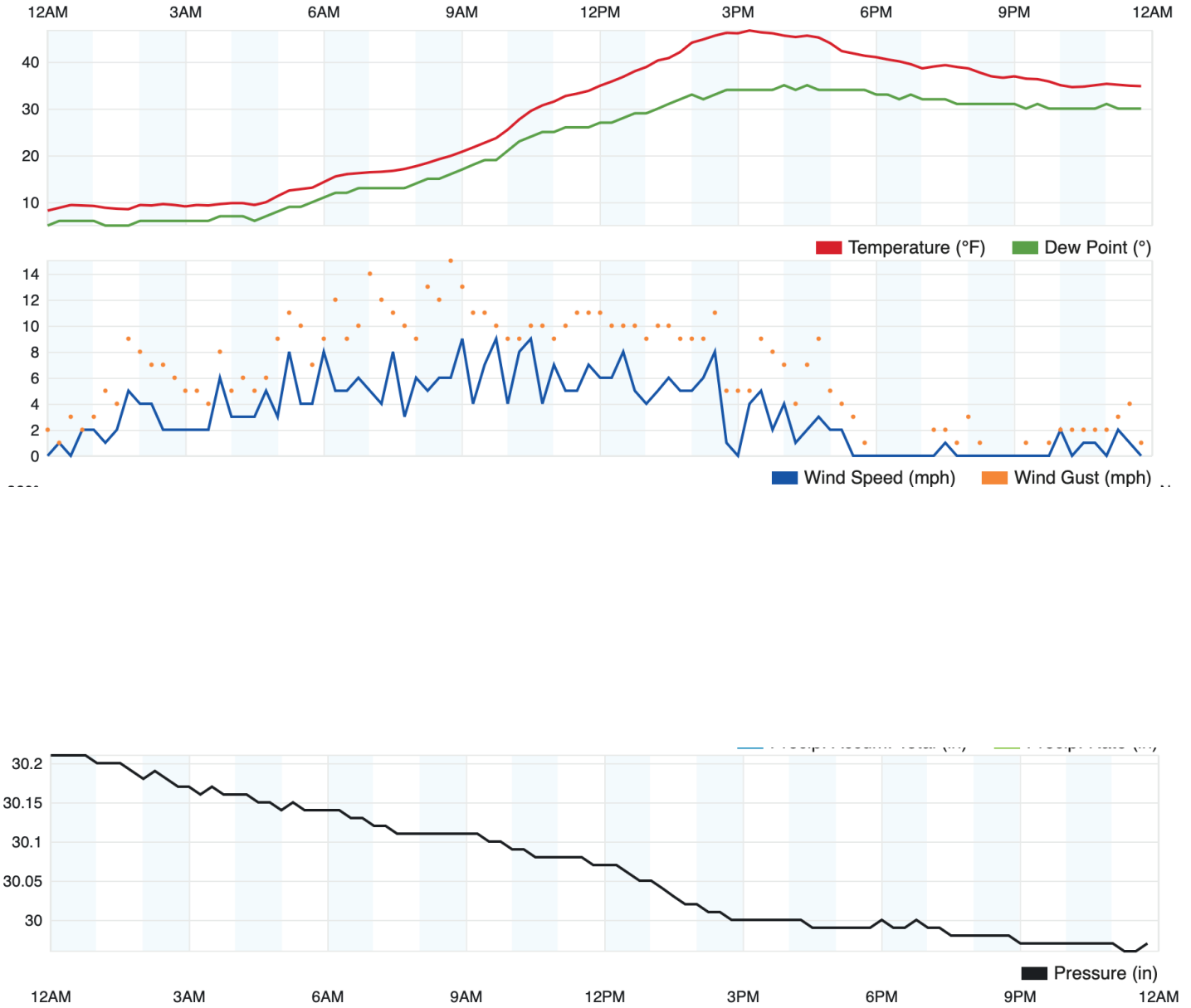
Long-term, dismantling USAID will weaken global climate action, of which the U.S. has historically been a leader. Other nations might reduce their own climate fund, creating ripple effects that undermine worldwide efforts to tackle climate change. The most vulnerable populations would be hardest hit, as climate aid is essential for achieving sustainability goals and ensures climate justice.

The potential elimination of USAID raises serious concern about U.S. leaderships in global climate efforts. As climate change intensifies, international collaborations and sustain investments in mitigations and adaptation are more critical. Maintaining USAID's role in environmental projects isn't just policy decisions—it's necessary for ensuring a sustainable future for communities worldwide.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 39 of 91

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 40 of 91

Today



High: 57 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Tonight



Low: 32 °F

Mostly Cloudy

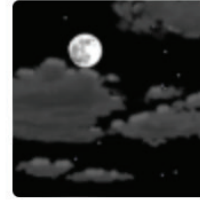
Monday



High: 56 °F

Chance
Rain/Snow
then Chance
Rain

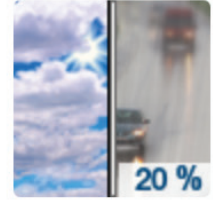
Monday Night



Low: 26 °F

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday



High: 53 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Rain



Sunday/Monday Weather Timelines

February 23, 2025
3:10 AM

Key Messages:

- Mild Today - Highs near 60
Hwy 12 south & Hwy 281 west
- Mild again Monday - Highs near 60
(near 50 far northeast SD/western MN)
- Increased wind for Monday
 - Afternoon gusts 30-45mph
 - **Very High Fire Danger** across central South Dakota
- Up to a 50% chance for moisture far North Central & across Northeast SD/western MN (0.10" or less)
 - May be a light mix early Monday North Central SD

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	2/23 Sun					2/24 Mon					2/25 Tue					
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am
Aberdeen	17	20	21	17	20	20	17	20	23	28	29	23	17	13	9	10
Britton	21	23	23	21	20	20	17	17	21	24	24	18	15	12	9	10
Chamberlain	15	20	20	12	12	13	10	10	24	33	36	25	20	15	10	8
Clark	17	21	21	18	18	17	15	16	20	26	28	23	20	15	10	12
Eagle Butte	23	25	25	24	23	24	23	26	36	44	44	37	28	20	14	15
Eureka	21	25	25	23	24	23	21	24	26	33	33	26	20	14	9	10
Gettysburg	21	23	23	21	21	21	20	21	28	35	36	30	23	17	12	13
McIntosh	25	30	31	29	26	26	25	30	39	46	45	35	23	15	13	14
Milbank	16	20	21	21	21	21	21	21	24	24	23	20	18	15	12	9
Miller	21	23	22	20	20	21	20	21	25	31	32	29	23	17	13	12
Mobridge	16	21	21	21	18	17	16	20	26	32	33	28	20	13	9	10
Murdo	23	24	23	18	16	17	18	21	25	33	36	30	23	17	13	16
Pierre	15	18	20	15	13	13	13	14	23	33	35	29	21	14	8	8
Redfield	17	21	21	17	17	18	17	18	23	31	32	26	21	15	10	12
Sisseton	20	22	23	23	25	26	26	25	24	24	24	21	20	16	13	9
Watertown	17	21	21	20	20	18	17	18	23	28	28	23	20	16	10	9
Webster	18	21	22	21	21	21	20	21	23	26	28	24	20	16	13	12
Wheaton	10	15	15	17	20	21	18	20	21	21	21	17	16	14	12	8



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Sunday and Monday will feature above normal temperatures by some 15 to 25 degrees. A system that could bring some light moisture to the area Monday will also increase winds, leading to elevated fire danger across mainly central South Dakota

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 41 of 91

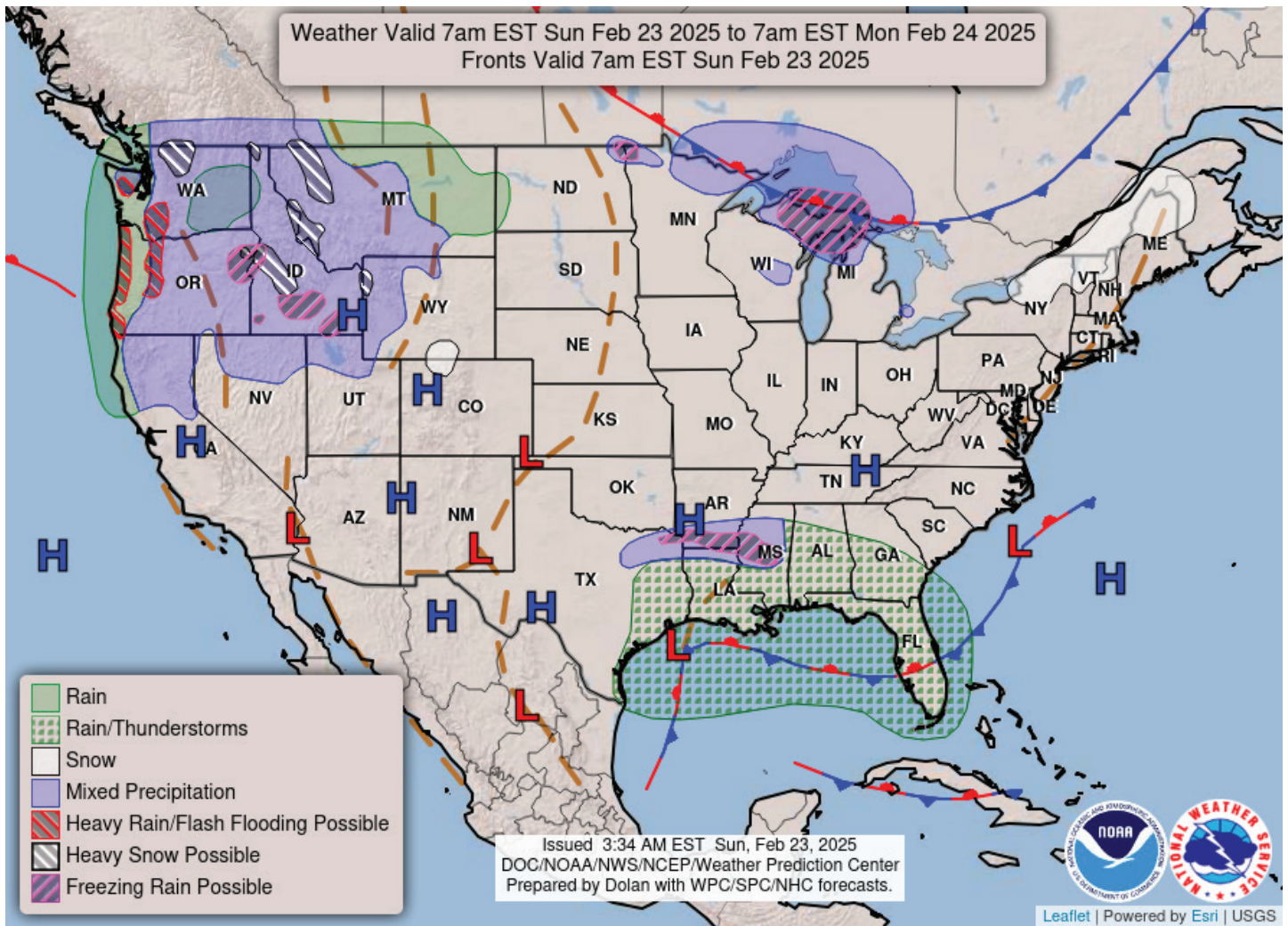
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 47 °F at 3:20 PM
Low Temp: 8 °F at 12:00 AM
Wind: 15 mph at 8:43 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1976
Record Low: -25 in 1910
Average High: 31
Average Low: 10
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.49
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.20
Average Precip to date: 1.04
Precip Year to Date: 0.20
Sunset Tonight: 6:12:49 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:16:45 am

Day length: 10 hours, 54 minutes



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 42 of 91

Today in Weather History

February 23, 1977: A storm center developed over Colorado the morning of the 22nd and moved to southeast Nebraska by midnight Wednesday the 23rd, with snow and rain entering southern Minnesota. The low-pressure center advanced to Iowa by sundown and weakened somewhat with precipitation across Minnesota. Snow fell over the north, and a combination of rain and freezing rain was in the south. The low then intensified over southeast Minnesota during the nighttime of Thursday the 24th before continuing northeast into Wisconsin with snow and blowing snow over much of the state before ending on the 26th. There was a combination of rain, freezing rain, and the winds over southern Minnesota, with 4 to 12 inches of snow in the north. Freezing rain and the heavy icing on power lines caused the worst power failure in a decade in the twin cities, with 125,000 homes affected. Power outages occurred over numerous areas of southern and central Minnesota. Many roads were ice-covered with multiple vehicle accidents and cars in the ditch. Many roads were blocked or closed, with numerous schools closed. The ice storm also damaged many trees.

February 23, 2007: A strong area of low pressure tracking across the central plains brought widespread snowfall to parts of central and much of northeast South Dakota along with west-central Minnesota. The precipitation initially began as freezing rain and sleet late in the evening of the 23rd as it lifted across the area through the morning of the 24th. The freezing rain and sleet then changed over to snow during the morning of the 24th. Thundersnow also occurred at some locations across the area. Snowfall amounts of 6 to 15 inches occurred by the end of the storm. Travel conditions became tough when the roads were slippery from the freezing rain and then the heavy snow. The South Dakota State Emergency Management, Highway Patrol, and Department of Transportation issued a travel advisory for no travel for Interstate-90 and many highways in central South Dakota. There were numerous accidents along the interstate. Some snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Browns Valley, 9 inches at Bryant, Webster, Wheaton, Artichoke Lake, and Tintah, 10 inches at Toronto, Roy Lake, Garden City, and Ortonville, 11 inches at Faulkton, 12 inches at Watertown, and 15 inches at Clear Lake.

February 23, 2010: Pierre sets a new record with a streak of 84 consecutive days with high temperatures failing to reach 40 degrees.

February 23, 2012: An area of low-pressure sliding across the region brought heavy snow to much of central and north-central South Dakota. As a result, travel became difficult, with many schools canceled.

1802 - A great snowstorm raged along the New England coast producing 48 inches of snow north of Boston. Three large ships from Salem were wrecked along Cape Cod. (David Ludlum)

1887: The Central Bureau of Meteorology of Rome began receiving the first reports of a massive earthquake from northern Italy Observers. The estimated magnitude earthquake of 6-7 killed at least 600 people in southern France and northern Italy.

1936 - A severe blizzard in the Sierra Nevada Range closed Donner Pass. It stranded 750 motorists and claimed seven lives. (David Ludlum)

1977: A rare February tornado touched down briefly in Mason City, Iowa, inflicting F1 damage on a home and injuring one person inside. This is the only known February tornado on record in Iowa.

1987 - A winter storm buried the Middle Atlantic Coast Region under heavy snow. Totals ranged up to 24 inches at Lancaster PA, with 23 inches at Coatesville PA. During the height of the storm Philadelphia PA received five inches of snow in just one hour. The Washington D.C. area was blanketed with up to 15 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong northwesterly winds ushered arctic air into the central U.S., and temperatures in Missouri were thirty degrees colder than the previous day. The strong winds produced squalls along the shore of Lake Superior, with up to 15 inches of snow reported over the Keweenaw Peninsula of Upper Michigan. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Nineteen cities in the central U.S. reported new record low temperatures for the date, including Lincoln NE with a reading of 19 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - A fast moving storm produced near blizzard conditions in Michigan. Snowfall totals ranged up to 9.5 inches in Allegan County, wind gusts reached 74 mph at Ann Arbor, and five foot snow drifts were reported around Saginaw. The Michigan AAA records showed more than 5000 traffic accidents reported, a near record for one day. There were several chain reaction collisions. One near Pontiac involved a hundred cars. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 43 of 91



KEEP ALERT!

Years ago LSU and Indiana were playing in the NCAA Regional finals. LSU was leading Indiana by eight points going into the last few minutes of the game.

Suddenly, LSU began playing a different type of game. They were trying to use the clock to their advantage. But it did not work out the way they planned. As they took their eyes off of the ball and watched the clock, Indiana stayed focused on the ball – not the clock – and won the game.

In the last hours of the life of Jesus, He asked three of His disciples to “stay awake and watch” as He prayed. But they fell asleep. When He returned and found them sleeping, He did not scold them. Instead, He warned them to “keep alert and pray!”

Temptations come to the Christian, as the disciples of Jesus – when least expected. Jesus wisely warned and advised His disciples to combine praying with alertness or they would not see temptation taking advantage of them. Nothing’s changed.

Prayer: Lord, please help us to be aware and alert to the subtlety of any and every temptation. May we always realize the power of Satan. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak! Matthew 26:41

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, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 44 of 91

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Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 45 of 91



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.21.25

1 13 28 37 46 10

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$181,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.22.25

3 24 26 34 35 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$24,890,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.22.25

2 6 29 35 44 7

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 30 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.22.25

6 9 13 14 17

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$45,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.22.25

9 18 26 35 57 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.22.25

7 18 22 50 65 15

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$230,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 46 of 91

Upcoming Groton Events

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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

States threaten fines and jail time for local officials who resist Trump's immigration crackdown

By CHARLOTTE KRAMON and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Republican state lawmakers seeking to aid President Donald Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration are threatening local officials who resist with lawsuits, fines and even potential jail time.

Lawmakers in more than 20 states this year have filed legislation targeting so-called sanctuary policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities, according to an Associated Press analysis using the bill-tracking software Plural.

Some of those states already ban sanctuary policies but are now proposing to punish mayors, council members and other government officials who violate the prohibition.

The goal is to provide "teeth to those who are being aggrieved by local governments and local officials who are not abiding by Georgia immigration law," said Republican state Sen. Blake Tillery, whose legislation would allow lawsuits against anyone who implements sanctuary policies. His bill recently passed the Senate and is now in the House.

Opponents have raised concerns that the legislation could lead local police and sheriffs to detain immigrants for longer than they are supposed to under federal law out of fear of getting sued.

"We're threatening our local law enforcement who are doing the best job they can to keep our communities safe," said Georgia state Sen. Nikki Merritt, a Democrat.

The state proposals come as the Trump administration also has begun taking legal action against governments that have adopted policies inhibiting arrests and deportations by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The Department of Justice has sued Illinois, Chicago and Cook County, alleging they are violating federal law by not cooperating with immigration authorities.

Using lawsuits to enforce anti-sanctuary laws

A Georgia law enacted last year already mandates that local law enforcement cooperate with federal authorities to identify and detain immigrants in the U.S. illegally, or else lose state funding and face misdemeanor charges. The legislation recently passed by the state Senate doubles down by letting people sue local governments, officials and employees for violating the ban.

Immigrants and advocates in Georgia say the legislation, if passed, could stoke fear in communities already worried about ICE officials arresting loved ones in homes, churches or schools.

"This all relates to Donald Trump's war on immigrants and local people trying to garner favor with him through legislation that doesn't solve any problems," said Charles Kuck, an Atlanta immigration attorney who opposes the legislation.

Mike Mitchell, deputy executive director of the Georgia Sheriffs' Association, said the organization has a "neutral" position on the bill but noted sheriffs already are following immigration law.

Louisiana passed a law last year requiring law enforcement agencies to "use best efforts" to enforce federal immigration law. Earlier this month, Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill sued the sheriff's office in New Orleans, alleging it is violating the state ban on sanctuary immigration policies.

The Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office declines ICE requests to hold detainees for extra time except when they face murder, rape, kidnapping, treason or robbery charges, according to a 2013 policy put in place under a consent judgment in federal court. The attorney general's lawsuit seeks to end that federal court order.

The sheriff's office also restricts the information it shares with ICE and prevents federal immigration agents from entering its facilities without court authorization or interviewing detainees without legal counsel.

The sheriff's office said in an emailed statement that it "remains in full compliance with all applicable state laws and valid court orders related to ICE detainees."

Imposing fines and jail time

An anti-sanctuary measure was the first item signed into law by Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden of South

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 48 of 91

Dakota after he took over for former Gov. Kristi Noem, who was picked by Trump to be homeland security secretary. The law bans state and local policies that limit communication with federal officials about people's immigration status, however it contains no penalties.

Other states have gone further. A sweeping immigration law signed recently by Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis requires the attorney general to take legal action against local governments that adopt policies refusing to comply with federal requests to detain immigrants in the country illegally. Local officials who willfully violate a ban on such sanctuary policies can face fines up to \$5,000.

Tennessee law already denies state economic development funds to local governments that violate a ban on sanctuary policies. A law signed recently by Gov. Bill Lee enhances that by subjecting local officials who vote for such policies to felony charges punishable by up to six years in prison. Legislative attorneys have said such penalties could be unconstitutional due to protections afforded elected officials while carrying out their duties.

Legislation that passed the Wyoming House and is now pending in the Senate would not only bar local governments from adopting immigration sanctuary policies but also block citizens from proposing them through initiative petitions. The measure contains steep penalties. The governor could withhold state funds from counties, cities and towns that adopt such policies. Local officials who refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities could face felony charges punishable by 5-10 years in prison and a fine up to \$20,000.

Republican state Rep. Joel Guggenmos acknowledged there are no sanctuary jurisdictions in Wyoming but told colleagues during a committee hearing that he was sponsoring the legislation as a preemptive measure.

"As I look at other states, this is becoming a problem," Guggenmos said.

New Hampshire lawmakers have advanced two separate bills targeting sanctuary policies. A Senate version would allow the state attorney general to sue local governments that prohibit the enforcement of federal immigration laws and seek fines equal to 25% of their state funding. A House version omits the fine but includes more detailed directives for local governments to cooperate with federal immigration authorities.

Sutton scores 36 points, grabs 12 rebounds to lead Omaha over South Dakota 93-85

By The Associated Press undefined

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Marquel Sutton's 36 points and 12 rebounds led Omaha past South Dakota 93-85 on Saturday night.

JJ White added 22 points and seven assists for the Mavericks (18-12, 12-3 Summit League). Lance Waddles scored 14 points.

Chase Forte led the Coyotes (17-12, 8-6) in scoring, finishing with 25 points, six rebounds, four assists and two steals. Quandre Bullock added 19 points and seven rebounds for South Dakota. Isaac Bruns had 10 points.

NEXT UP

Up next for Omaha is a Saturday matchup with Oral Roberts at home, and South Dakota visits North Dakota State on Wednesday.

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 63, Harrisburg 47

Edgemont 37, Hot Springs 35

Gayville-Volin High School 51, Avon 11

Herreid-Selby 52, Potter County 42

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 49 of 91

Jones County 65, White River 46
Lower Brule 63, Wakpala 36
Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 82, St. Francis Indian 30
New Underwood 58, Newell 16
Spearfish 58, Rapid City Christian 51
Sturgis Brown High School 57, Belle Fourche 46
T F Riggs High School 66, Sioux Falls Lincoln 39
Tiospaye Topa 89, Oelrichs 19
Todd County 61, Little Wound 51

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 72, Waverly-South Shore 56
Alcester-Hudson 59, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 54
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 62, Marty 54
Avon 77, Colome 23
Bridgewater-Emery 63, Mitchell Christian 47
Centerville 68, Gayville-Volin High School 54
Corsica/Stickney 43, Irene-Wakonda 41
Custer 73, Hot Springs 38
Freeman Academy-Marion 52, Burke 43
Great Plains Lutheran 63, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 52
Highmore-Harrold 66, Langford 36
Hill City 52, St Thomas More 49
Hitchcock-Tulare 50, Jones County 39
James Valley Christian School 61, Warner 49
Lemmon High School 65, Faith 29
Little Wound 62, White River 55, OT
McLaughlin 55, North Central 50
New Underwood 75, Faith 32
Oelrichs 68, Tiospaye Topa 63
Rapid City Christian 70, Spearfish 45
S.C. East, Iowa 81, Dakota Valley 60
Scotland/Menno 53, Sioux Falls Lutheran 51
Sioux Falls Christian 81, Marshall, Minn. 56
Sturgis Brown High School 60, Belle Fourche 39
Sully Buttes 55, Lower Brule 54
Webster 71, Redfield 41
Wolsey-Wessington 60, Mobridge-Pollock 54
NDSCS Bonanza=
Sisseton 65, Sargent County, N.D. 27
Warner Classic=
Wilmot 77, Herreid-Selby 58

Israel ramps up West Bank offensive and says troops to remain in some areas 'for the coming year'

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel's defense minister said Sunday troops would remain "for the coming year" in parts of the occupied West Bank where Israel has staged a weekslong offensive, as Israel says it was deepening its crackdown on the Palestinian territory.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 50 of 91

Israel launched a broad offensive on the northern West Bank on Jan. 21 — two days after the ceasefire that paused the war in Gaza took hold — and then expanded it to include other nearby areas. Israel says it is determined to stamp out militancy in the territory, but Palestinians view such raids as part of an effort to cement Israeli control over the territory, where 3 million Palestinians live under military rule. The raids have been deadly and caused destruction to urban areas and displaced tens of thousands.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said he had instructed the military to prepare to remain in some of the West Bank's refugee camps, from where he said some 40,000 Palestinians had fled — a figure confirmed by the United Nations — leaving the areas "emptied of residents."

He said in a statement he had ordered the military to "prepare for an extended stay in the camps that were cleared for the coming year and to not allow the return of residents or for terror to grow again."

The military said it was expanding the raid in the West Bank to other areas and, in a rare move, was sending tanks to Jenin, long a bastion of armed struggle against Israel.

Under interim peace agreements from the early 1990s, Israel maintains control over large parts of the West Bank while the Palestinian Authority administers other areas. Israel regularly sends troops into Palestinian zones but it typically withdraws them once forces complete their missions.

The U.N. says the current operation is the longest since the early 2000s when Israel regularly raided the West Bank in response to a deadly Palestinian uprising.

Violence has surged in the West Bank throughout the Israel-Hamas war. Israel has carried out repeated raids during that time, but with fighting in Gaza and in Lebanon on hold, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been under pressure from his far-right governing partners to crack down on militancy in the West Bank.

More than 800 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the war in Gaza erupted on Oct. 7, 2023. Israel says most of those were militants, but stone-throwing youths protesting the incursions as well as people not involved in confrontations have also been killed. In the most recent operation, a pregnant Palestinian woman was killed.

Jewish settlers have also carried out repeated rampages throughout Palestinian areas in the territory. There has also been a spike in Palestinian attacks emanating from the West Bank and late Thursday, blasts rocked three empty parked buses in Israel, what police are viewing as a suspected militant attack.

The raid's intensification comes at a sensitive time, as the truce between Israel and Hamas holds yet remains tenuous. Israel said it was delaying the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners until it gets assurances that Hamas stops what Israel says are "humiliating" handovers of hostages being freed. The sides do not yet appear to have begun negotiations on extending the ceasefire and its collapse could lead to renewed fighting in war-torn Gaza.

Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, and Palestinians want all three territories for their future independent state.

Discontented Germany votes in an election with economy, migration and far-right strength in focus

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — German voters are choosing a new government in an election Sunday dominated by worries about the years-long stagnation of Europe's biggest economy, pressure to curb migration and growing uncertainty over the future of Ukraine and Europe's alliance with the United States. The center-right opposition is favored to win, while polls point to the strongest result for a far-right party since World War II.

Germany is the most populous country in the 27-nation European Union and a leading member of NATO. It has been Ukraine's second-biggest weapons supplier, after the U.S. It will be central to shaping the continent's response to the challenges of the coming years, including the Trump administration's confrontational foreign and trade policy.

The top candidates, conservative front-runner Friedrich Merz and current Chancellor Olaf Scholz of the Social Democrats, voted within minutes of each other in different parts of the country on Sunday morning.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 51 of 91

What are Germans voting for?

More than 59 million people in the nation of 84 million are eligible to elect the 630 members of the lower house of parliament, the Bundestag, who will take their seats under the glass dome of Berlin's landmark Reichstag building.

Germany's electoral system rarely produces absolute majorities, and no party looks anywhere near one this time. It's expected that two or more parties will form a coalition, following potentially difficult negotiations that will take weeks or even months before the Bundestag elects the next chancellor.

This election is taking place seven months before it was originally planned after center-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition collapsed in November, three years into a term that was increasingly marred by infighting. There's widespread discontent and not much enthusiasm for any of the candidates.

Who could take charge?

Center-right opposition leader Friedrich Merz's Union bloc has consistently led polls, with 28-32% support in the most recent surveys, and Merz is favored to replace Scholz. Scholz's Social Democrats have been polling between 14-16%, which would be their worst postwar result in a national parliamentary election.

The far-right, anti-immigration Alternative for Germany, or AfD, has been running in second place with around 20% of the vote — well above its previous best of 12.6% in a national election, from 2017 — and has fielded its first candidate for chancellor in Alice Weidel. But other parties say they won't work with it, a stance often known as the "firewall."

The environmentalist Greens also are running for the top job, with outgoing Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck, but have been polling a little behind Scholz's party.

Merz has pledged "stability instead of chaos" after Scholz's three-party coalition collapsed following long-running internal arguments, including over how to revitalize the economy.

But it's unclear whether the conservative leader, if he wins, will be able to put together a stable government that does much better. Merz hopes for a two-party coalition, but may end up needing a third partner to form a government.

The realistic candidates to join a Merz government are Scholz's Social Democrats, the Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats — who were the smallest partner in Scholz's collapsed government and may not manage to stay in parliament.

The Free Democrats and another small party are hovering at around 5% of the vote, the threshold to qualify for seats in parliament. If they do, there may be no majority for a two-party coalition.

What are the main issues?

The contenders have made contrasting proposals to turn around the German economy, which has shrunk for the past two years and hasn't managed real growth in much longer. That's going to be a central job for the new government.

Migration moved to the forefront of the campaign in the past month following deadly attacks committed by immigrants.

Merz vowed to bar people from entering the country without proper papers and to step up deportations if he is elected chancellor. He then brought a nonbinding motion calling for many more migrants to be turned back at Germany's borders. Parliament approved it by a narrow majority thanks to AfD votes — a first in postwar Germany.

Rivals made Merz's attitude toward AfD, which generated protests, an issue. Scholz accused Merz of "irresponsible gambling" and breaking a taboo. Merz has rejected those accusations, saying that he didn't and won't work with AfD. He has repeatedly and categorically said since that his party will "never" do so.

Mainstream parties have vowed to keep up support for Ukraine in its war against Russia. And after the Scholz government reached a NATO target of spending 2% of gross domestic product on defense, the next administration will have to find a way to keep that going — and likely expand it, in the face of U.S. demands — once a special 100 billion-euro (\$105 billion) fund to modernize the military is used up in 2027.

Japan's emperor marks his 65th birthday with a call to keep telling the tragedy of WWII to the young

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's Emperor Naruhito, marking his 65th birthday Sunday, stressed the importance of telling the tragedy of World War II to younger generations, pledging to contribute to efforts to promote the understanding of history and the determination for peace as the world this year observes the 80th anniversary of the war's end.

"As the memory of the war fades today, it is important that the tragic experiences and history are passed on to the generations who do not know the war," Naruhito told a news conference in a pre-recorded comments released Sunday.

Those who went through the ordeals during and after the war grew have grown older and it is difficult for younger generations to hear their firsthand stories, Naruhito said.

Naruhito, accompanied by his wife, Empress Masako, their daughter Princess Aiko and some of his younger brother's family, waved from the palace balcony at the cheering well-wishers. Later Sunday, he was to celebrate his birthday at a palace banquet.

The war was fought in the name of his grandfather, then- Emperor Hirohito. Naruhito said he and Masako, who were born after the war, have learned from his parents by hearing their stories of wartime experiences and thoughts about peace. His father Akihito, who abdicated in 2019, was known for his devotion to making amends for the war, and Naruhito said he will follow his example.

His concern resonates especially with that of many survivors of U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945, who are worried about the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament and growing support for nuclear deterrence.

The survivors, or hibakusha, have said they hope the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to their organization, Nihon Hidankyo, for the decades-long nuclear disarmament effort would raise awareness of the younger generations.

This year, Naruhito and Masako are expected to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki to pay tribute to those killed by the U.S. atomic bombings and Okinawa, the site of one of the harshest battles in the war.

Afghan women's radio station will resume broadcasts after Taliban lift suspension

By The Associated Press undefined

An Afghan women's radio station will resume broadcasts after the Taliban lifted their suspension over alleged cooperation with an overseas TV channel.

Radio Begum launched on International Women's Day in March 2021, five months before the Taliban seized power amid the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops.

The station's content is produced entirely by Afghan women. Its sister satellite channel, Begum TV, operates from France and broadcasts programs that cover the Afghan school curriculum from seventh to 12th grade. The Taliban have banned education for women and girls in the country beyond grade six.

In a statement issued Saturday night, the Taliban Information and Culture Ministry said Radio Begum had "repeatedly requested" to restart operations and that the suspension was lifted after the station made commitments to authorities.

The station pledged to conduct broadcasts "in accordance with the principles of journalism and the regulations of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and to avoid any violations in the future," it added.

The ministry did not elaborate what those principles and regulations were. Radio Begum confirmed the ministry had granted permission to resume broadcasting. It did not give further details.

Since their takeover, the Taliban have excluded women from education, many kinds of work, and public spaces. Journalists, especially women, have lost their jobs as the Taliban tighten their grip on the media.

In the 2024 press freedom index from Reporters without Borders, Afghanistan ranks 178 out of 180

countries. The year before that it ranked 152.

The Information Ministry did not initially identify the TV channel it alleged Radio Begum had been working with. But the Saturday statement mentioned collaboration with "foreign sanctioned media outlets."

Pope Francis had a peaceful night following a respiratory crisis and blood transfusions

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis, in critical condition with a complex lung infection, rested well during a peaceful night following a respiratory crisis and blood transfusions, the Vatican said Sunday.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni's one-line statement early Sunday didn't mention if Francis was out of bed or eating breakfast. "The night passed quietly, the pope rested."

The brief update came after doctors said the 88-year-old pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, was in critical condition. On Saturday morning, he suffered a prolonged asthmatic respiratory crisis while being treated for pneumonia and a complex lung infection.

The pope received "high flows" of oxygen to help him breathe. He also received blood transfusions after tests showed low counts of platelets, which are needed for clotting, the Vatican said in a late update.

The Saturday statement also said that the pontiff "continues to be alert and spent the day in an armchair although in more pain than yesterday." Doctors said the prognosis was "reserved."

Doctors have said Francis' condition is touch-and-go, given his age, fragility and pre-existing lung disease.

Prayers for pope at Vatican

Francis was supposed to have celebrated Mass on Sunday morning in St. Peter's Basilica and ordained hundreds of deacons as part of the Vatican's yearlong Holy Year commemoration.

The organizer of the Holy Year, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, celebrated the Mass in his place and offered a special prayer for Francis from the altar before delivering the homily the pope had prepared.

"Even though he is in a hospital bed, we feel Pope Francis close to us, we feel him present among us," Fisichella told the hundreds of white-robed deacons. "And this compels us to make even stronger and more intense our prayer that the Lord will assist him in his time of trial and illness."

The main threat facing the pope is sepsis

Doctors have warned that the main threat facing Francis would be the onset of sepsis, a serious infection of the blood that can occur as a complication of pneumonia. As of Friday, there was no evidence of any sepsis, and Francis was responding to the various drugs he is taking, the pope's medical team said in their first in-depth update on the pope's condition.

Saturday's blood tests showed that he had developed a low platelet count, a condition called platelopenia or thrombocytopenia. Platelets are cell-like fragments that circulate in the blood that help form blood clots to stop bleeding or help wounds heal. Low platelet counts can be caused by a number of things, including side effects from medicines or infections, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

Francis, who has chronic lung disease and is prone to bronchitis in winter, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14 after a weeklong bout of bronchitis worsened.

Doctors first diagnosed the complex viral, bacterial and fungal respiratory tract infection and then the onset of pneumonia in both lungs. They prescribed "absolute rest" and a combination of cortisone and antibiotics, along with supplemental oxygen when he needs it.

Vatican hierarchy tamps down speculation Francis might resign

Meanwhile, the Vatican hierarchy went on the defensive to tamp down rumors and speculation that Francis might decide to resign. There is no provision in canon law for what to do if a pope becomes incapacitated. Francis has said that he has written a letter of resignation that would be invoked if he were medically incapable of making such a decision. The pope remains fully conscious, alert, eating and working.

The Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, gave a rare interview to Corriere della Sera to respond to speculation and rumors about a possible resignation. It came after the Vatican issued an unusual and official denial of an Italian media report that said Parolin and the pope's chief canonist had

visited Francis in the hospital in secret. Given the canonical requirements to make a resignation legitimate, the implications of such a meeting were significant, but the Vatican flat-out denied that any such meeting occurred.

Parolin said such speculation seemed "useless" when what really mattered was the health of Francis, his recovery and return to the Vatican.

"On the other hand, I think it is quite normal that in these situations uncontrolled rumors can spread or some misplaced comment is uttered. It is certainly not the first time it has happened," Parolin was quoted as saying. "However, I don't think there is any particular movement, and so far I haven't heard anything like that."

Tens of thousands attend funeral of late Hezbollah leader Nasrallah 5 months after his killing

By BASSEM MROUE and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Tens of thousands of people packed into a stadium in Beirut early Sunday to attend the funeral of Hezbollah's former leader, nearly five months after he was killed in an Israeli airstrike on a southern suburb of the Lebanese capital.

Hassan Nasrallah was killed when Israel's air force dropped more than 80 bombs on the militant group's main operations room. His death was a major blow for the Iran-backed group that the late leader transformed into a potent force in the Middle East.

Nasrallah was the group's leader for more than 30 years and one of its founders. He enjoyed wide influence among Iran-backed groups in the region and was widely respected in the so-called Iran-led axis of resistance that included Iraqi, Yemeni and Palestinian factions.

Sahar al-Attar, a mourner who traveled from Lebanon's Bekaa valley for the funeral said she still "cannot believe what happened."

"We would have come even under bullets" to attend Nasrallah's burial, she said. "It is an indescribable feeling."

Officials from around the region including Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were expected to attend the funeral at the Lebanese capital's main sports stadium. Lebanese officials including the parliament speaker and representatives of the president and prime minister were expected to attend the funeral believed to be Lebanon's largest in two decades.

The two officials arrived on separate flights from Tehran Sunday morning in an apparent lifting of a ban on flights from Iran that was imposed after the Israeli army claimed Iran was smuggling cash to Hezbollah on commercial flights.

Senior Hezbollah official Ali Daamouh told reporters Saturday that about 800 personalities from 65 countries will be attending the funeral in addition to thousands of individuals and activists from around the world.

"Come from every home, village and city so that we tell the enemy that this resistance will stay and is ready in the field," Daamouh said, referring to Israel.

Nasrallah will be laid to rest later Sunday in Beirut, while his cousin and successor, Hashem Safieddine, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike on a Beirut suburb a few days later, will be laid to rest in his hometown in southern Lebanon. The two had temporarily been buried in secret locations. Hezbollah earlier this month announced plans for their official funerals.

Hezbollah has been calling on its supporters to attend the funeral in large numbers in what appears to be a move to show that the group remains powerful after suffering major blows during a 14-month war with Israel that left many of its senior political and military officials dead.

Another blow for Hezbollah was the fall in early December of the Assad family's five-decade rule in Syria that was a strong ally of the Lebanese group and a main route for the flow of weapons and money from Iran.

As part of the U.S.-brokered ceasefire deal that ended the war with Israel on Nov. 27, Hezbollah is not

supposed to have an armed presence along the border with Israel. Hezbollah's rivals have been calling on the group to lay down its weapons all over Lebanon and become a political faction.

Hezbollah has prepared for the funeral by setting up the stadium to host tens of thousands of people while giant screens were placed along the airport road outside the stadium for people who won't get a space inside to watch the funeral. Tight security measures have been taken, including the closure of major roads in the area of the funeral.

Lebanese army and police forces were placed on alert and the army has banned the use of drones in Beirut and its suburbs during the day. Flights to and from Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport were set to halt for four hours starting at noon.

Hours before the funeral was set to start, the Israeli military launched a series of strikes in southern Lebanon. The Israeli army said in a statement that it had "conducted a precise intelligence-based strike on a military site containing rocket launchers and weapons in Lebanese territory."

Hezbollah has given a title to the funeral: "We are committed to the covenant."

Kamala Harris receives prestigious Chairman's prize at NAACP Image Awards

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Former Vice President Kamala Harris stepped on the NAACP Image Awards stage Saturday night with a sobering message, calling the civil rights organization a pillar of the Black community and urging people to stay resilient and hold onto their faith during the tenure of President Donald Trump.

"While we have no illusions about what we are up against in this chapter in our American story, this chapter will be written not simply by whoever occupies the oval office nor by the wealthiest among us," Harris said after receiving the NAACP's Chairman's Award. "The American story will be written by you. Written by us. By we the people."

The 56th annual Image Awards was held at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium in the Los Angeles area.

Harris, defeated by Trump in last year's presidential election, was the first woman and the first person of color to serve as vice president. She had previously been a U.S. senator from California and the state's attorney general.

In her first major public appearance since leaving office, Harris did not reference her election loss or Trump's actions since entering the Oval Office, although Trump mocked her earlier in the day at the Conservative Political Action Conference.

Harris spoke about eternal vigilance, the price of liberty, staying alert, seeking the truth and America's future.

"Some see the flames on our horizons, the rising waters in our cities, the shadows gathering over our democracy and ask 'What do we do now?'" Harris said. "But we know exactly what to do, because we have done it before. And we will do it again. We use our power. We organize, mobilize. We educate. We advocate. Our power has never come from having an easy path."

Other winners of the Chairman's prize have included former President Barack Obama, the late Rep. John Lewis and the late actor Ruby Dee.

NAACP Hall of Fame

Harris was honored during the ceremony along with the Wayans family. The family was inducted into the NAACP Image Awards Hall of Fame in recognition of pioneering contributions to film, TV, sketch and stand-up comedy that have shaped Hollywood for decades.

Keenen Ivory Wayans, Damon Wayans Sr., Marlon Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Kim Wayans and Damon Wayans Jr. each were recognized.

Marlon Wayans, whose guest appearance on Peacock's "Bel-Air" was up for an NAACP award, shared how Keenen Ivory Wayans sparked the family's rise.

"He raised us all like Jedis," he said. "We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for our big brother."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 56 of 91

Marlon Wayans joked that when his brother told their mom he was leaving college for comedy, she said, "Boy, I've known you your whole life, and you ain't never said nothing funny. That's the funniest thing you've said."

The crowd erupted in laughter, a fitting tribute to a family that has kept audiences laughing for more than three decades.

The family has a long list of credits. Keenen Ivory Wayans created the sketch comedy series "In Living Color" in 1990 and directed the 2000 slasher spoof "Scary Movie," which was written by Marlon Wayans and Shawn Wayans, who also wrote and starred in "White Chicks" in 2004. Damon Wayan's had a starring role in the 1995 comedy "Major Payne," and currently co-stars with son Damon Wayans Jr. in the CBS sitcom "Poppa's House," which was nominated for an NAACP Award. The pair also were nominated for their acting on the show.

Damon Wayans Jr. has acted in two of the most critically acclaimed comedies in recent years: "Happy Endings" and "New Girl." Kim Wayans, a comedian, actor and director, also received praise for her work in the 2011 drama "Pariah."

Entertainer of the year

Keke Palmer expressed her surprise after her name was called as winner of the coveted entertainment of the year.

"Oh my gosh. Guys, I didn't think I was going to win," said Palmer, who paid homage to fellow nominee Cynthia Erivo's Oscar-nominated performance in "Wicked."

Palmer starred in the buddy comedy "One of Them Days," which debuted No. 1 at the box office last month. She also won an Emmy for her hosting efforts on NBC's "Password."

"It's such an amazing category to be in with all these people," Palmer said. "It's a beautiful night. It's Black History Month, y'all. It's so important we all come here together and celebrate one another with one another."

Other nominees included Kendrick Lamar, Kevin Hart and Shannon Sharpe.

Awards recognize LA residents impacted by wildfires

Image Awards host Deon Cole honored residents of the nearby Altadena neighborhood who were affected by January's devastating Los Angeles-area wildfires.

A video of the fire devastation played before actor Morris Chestnut took the stage.

"Homes were lost, stores destroyed, countless lives shattered and over two dozens souls gone forever," said Chestnut, a Los Angeles native who referenced impacted areas such as Altadena, the Pacific Palisades and Malibu.

"But what was not lost is the spirit of our community," said Chestnut, who noted 22 Altadena residents attended the show on Saturday. Many in the audience stood and applauded.

Cole shifted tone and brightened the mood with a comedic prayer for Kanye West's wife to find more clothes after her barely-there Grammys look and for Shannon Sharpe to finally size up his T-shirts.

The opening act was a lead-up to the evening's first award: Queen Latifah as best actress in a drama series for her role in "The Equalizer."

Chappelle honored

Dave Chappelle was honored with the President's Award for his "thought-provoking humor."

Accepting the award, Chappelle talked about the NAACP's push against negative portrayals of Black people in media and the importance of representation.

"Every opportunity we get, we just keep chipping away at this monster of a machine," he said.

Past recipients of the President's Award include Jay-Z, Lauryn Hill, Usher, Rihanna and John Legend.

Wounded, recovered and back to war. Ukrainian soldiers are returning to battle after amputation

By HANNA ARHIROVA, EVGENIY MALOLETKA and VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press
DONETSK REGION, Ukraine (AP) — The Ukrainian intelligence soldier doesn't know how long his clinical death lasted after an explosive detonated beneath him.

All Andrii Rubliuk remembers is overwhelming cold, darkness and fear. When he regained consciousness in his shattered body — missing both arms and his left leg — excruciating pain engulfed him, and hallucinations clouded his mind.

"It's an experience you wouldn't wish on anyone," the now 38-year-old says.

Two years later, Rubliuk is again dressed in military fatigues, his missing limbs replaced by prosthetics — hooks in place of fingers, one leg firmly planted on an artificial limb.

From the moment of the explosion, Rubliuk knew his life had changed forever. But one thing was certain — he vowed to return to the battlefield.

"Fighting with arms and legs is something anyone can do. Fighting without them — that's a challenge," he says. "But only those who take on challenges and fight through them are truly alive."

Many Ukrainian brigades have at least one, and often several, amputee soldiers still on active duty — men who returned to combat out of a sense of duty amid the grim outlook for their country.

They are among Ukraine's 380,000 war wounded, according to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Some 46,000 soldiers have been killed during the three-year war, and tens of thousands are missing and in captivity.

On the front line Russia is expending huge amounts of weaponry and human life to make small but steady territorial gains to the nearly one-fifth of Ukraine it controls. Meanwhile Ukraine, outnumbered and outgunned, faces challenges not only on the battlefield but also in diplomacy, as its once strongest ally — the U.S.— enters talks with Russia, raising fears that Ukraine and its European partners will be sidelined.

It is this dire situation that has driven wounded soldiers back to the front, where little has changed since they first left their civilian lives to defend their families from an invading neighbor.

For them, lying in a hospital bed was unbearable compared to standing alongside their brothers-in-arms to defend Ukraine. But they all agree on one thing — when the war ends, they won't spend another day in uniform; joining the army was never their first choice.

Rubliuk rejoined the special forces last spring as a senior sergeant in the Artan intelligence unit, training new soldiers and monitoring enemy drones. His rehabilitation began in late 2022, but he believes it never truly ends.

"Every new day is part of my rehabilitation," he says. His new body, he adds, is a balance between self-acceptance and continuous recovery.

A comrade who was with Rubliuk when the explosion happened and suffered minor injuries, remembers the moment vividly. "I thought he was dead," said the soldier who did not give his name in compliance with special forces rules.

At that moment, Rubliuk's life hung in the balance. He was transported to a nearby hospital, suffered cardiac arrest and eventually was resuscitated, said Dr. Anton Yakovenko, a military surgeon who treated him.

After months in hospital wards and rehabilitation centers in Philadelphia and Florida, Rubliuk has returned to take on a role near the front line where, like others who have done so, his knowledge and experience are the greatest weapon.

Being back in uniform is like 'returning home'

Maksym Vysotskyi had just completed a drone mission in November 2023 when he took a detour after heavy rains turned the battlefield into a swamp and stepped on a land mine.

The explosion was instantaneous. When he looked down at his left leg, all he saw was bone.

"I quickly accepted the fact that my leg was gone. What's the point of mourning? Crying and worrying

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 58 of 91

won't bring it back," the 42-year-old says.

By May, he was back in uniform, describing the feeling as "returning home."

"You need to come out of this not as someone broken by the war and written off, but as someone they tried to break, but couldn't," he says. "You came back, proved you could still do something, and you'll step away only when you decide to."

Vysotskyi now commands a team operating explosives-laden drones on nighttime missions. He assesses risk and makes strategic decisions but rarely goes on combat missions. Despite his injury, he has never regretted enlisting.

"Everyone must walk their own path, and there will be challenges along the way. You can try to escape your fate, but it will always catch up with you," he says. "That's why I never had regrets."

A combat medic who became a war psychologist

Two and a half years ago, when Capt. Oleksandr Puzikov called his wife to tell her his left arm had been severed, she thought he was joking.

"I will never forget that day," says Iryna Puzikova, her voice trembling. "When I walked into the ICU, his first words were, 'You won't leave me, right?'"

She stayed by his side, traveling from hospital to hospital as he recovered and learned to live with a full-arm amputation.

When he decided to return to the military, she wasn't surprised. "I never doubted for a moment that it could be any different," she says.

Before his injury, Puzikov, now 40, was a combat medic. After returning to service, he retrained as a psychologist, helping soldiers cope with the mental toll of three years of war.

"As long as the war continues, I won't leave — I'll help in any way I can," he says.

Yet, his own struggle continues. He suffers from phantom limb pain. It feels as if his missing hand is clenched in a fist, the pain so sharp it cuts like a knife. He hopes another surgery might finally relieve it.

A proper prosthetic remains out of reach due to bureaucratic delays and poor-quality options. Like many other amputees struggling to find a good arm prosthesis, he continues his military duties without one.

Life after war

After he lost his right arm in battle, Oleksandr Zhalinskyi transitioned from an infantry soldier to a navigator-driver and chose not to use a prosthetic.

"It's only good for fishing," jokes the 34-year-old of a hobby he still enjoys.

In his current role, he evaluates missions and finds the safest evacuation routes.

"At first, I did not like this job. When I returned to service, I was ready to go back to the infantry," Zhalinskyi says. "But over time, I accepted this new role."

When an artillery strike hit his position in the fall of 2023, severing his arm, the pain was unbearable. He pushed himself up, scanning for comrades; he was the only one who survived.

He tried three times to tighten a tourniquet, but it wouldn't hold. With communications destroyed and no way to call for help, he had only one option — move toward the evacuation point, forcing himself to stay conscious with every step.

"It felt like I was walking forever."

Dark thoughts crept in, but he reminded himself of his five godchildren — he had to survive. Soldiers from a neighboring unit spotted him, stabilized him, and got him to safety. From that moment, there was no doubt — once he recovered, he would return to the fight.

But once he sheds his uniform, he has a plan. Before the invasion, he dreamed of opening a pub in his hometown. That dream remains — except he's changed its name.

Now, he plans to call it Amputated Conscience.

As Rwanda-backed rebels seized Goma, the families of Congolese soldiers became a target

By RUTH ALONGA Associated Press

GOMA, Congo (AP) — The Rwanda-backed rebels who captured eastern Congo's major city of Goma have targeted relatives of fleeing Congolese soldiers, the families say, with the troops' wives chased from military barracks and left stranded in the city while some of their children are allegedly being forced to join the rebellion.

As the M23 rebels swept into Goma in late January, they moved into military camps in and around the city, which had hosted hundreds of military families, and quickly emptied them of their relatives, the women said.

M23 is the most potent of about 100 armed groups vying for a foothold in Congo's mineral-rich east. In a major escalation of their yearslong fighting with government forces, the rebels captured Goma and Bukavu, the region's biggest cities, in fighting that has forced thousands of soldiers to either flee or surrender while at least 2,000 people have been killed.

After being forced to leave military camps in Goma, many families of fleeing Congolese soldiers are sheltering in temporary settlements, including schools where their belongings lie around and where several families are cramped in some classrooms. At the shelters, they spoke to The Associated Press about their new life of hardship and uncertainty.

All that Francine Kayenga and her three children managed to save as they were chased out of the Mubambiro military base in Masisi territory were some clothes and a mat. Her husband died recently in the conflict.

"I cry every night," said a distraught Kayenga, who is heavily pregnant. "If I didn't have my children, I would have ended my life."

Military families stuck in the middle of a rebellion

Unlike in 2012 when M23 first captured Goma and withdrew after days as international pressure grew, their rebellion this time is different in various ways.

The group has spoken of unseating the government of Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi. They are attempting to gain more ground despite calls for a ceasefire and they have been bolstered with around 4,000 troops from neighboring Rwanda.

M23 leaders have also promised to "cleanse" the cities of alleged bad governance and insecurity.

Albertine Malongi, whose husband is among Congolese soldiers killed in the conflict, said that her 19-year-old son fled Goma amid news that the rebels were forcefully conscripting people in their fight against government forces.

"They want all the older boys, especially the sons of soldiers, to join their army," said Malongi, 33.

The AP couldn't independently verify news of the forced conscription. However, the U.N. human rights office has reported cases of "child and forced recruitment" as well as "summary execution of children" by the rebels in areas they control, particularly in Bukavu, the South Kivu provincial capital.

"We call on Rwanda and M23 to ensure that human rights and international humanitarian law are respected," the U.N. rights office has said.

Nowhere to go

M23 has continued their fighting with Congolese forces in a push to expand to other parts of eastern Congo while asserting their control in Goma and Bukavu. They have spoken of quickly reopening schools, raising fears among the families about where next they would settle when studies resume in the classrooms hosting them.

"We don't know where we're going to live, where we're going to go (because) our houses had been burned (and) we don't know if our husbands are still alive," said Mwamini Tusawe, 37, at Furaha Primary School.

At both that school and Rutoboko Secondary School, among the temporary settlements, children play around the school premises as their mothers are settling into a new life.

Several women were also seen selling what they could from their belongings to get money for their

family's next meal.

Peace and safety also continue to elude them, with M23 rebels often appearing in search of the soldiers. Lucie Mapasa, who lost her husband in the conflict, recalled the horror of the M23's last visit to the shelter. "They pointed a gun at me demanding to know where my husband was," Mapasa said. "I showed them my children and explained that their father was dead."

Inside the classrooms are wall paintings and pictures of learning materials. But education seems to be their lowest priority as many are fast running out of food.

"We've sold everything just to eat," said Louise Sabina, a 39-year-old mother of 10. "One day, there will be nothing left, and we will starve."

States threaten fines and jail time for local officials who resist Trump's immigration crackdown

By CHARLOTTE KRAMON and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Republican state lawmakers seeking to aid President Donald Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration are threatening local officials who resist with lawsuits, fines and even potential jail time.

Lawmakers in more than 20 states this year have filed legislation targeting so-called sanctuary policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities, according to an Associated Press analysis using the bill-tracking software Plural.

Some of those states already ban sanctuary policies but are now proposing to punish mayors, council members and other government officials who violate the prohibition.

The goal is to provide "teeth to those who are being aggrieved by local governments and local officials who are not abiding by Georgia immigration law," said Republican state Sen. Blake Tillery, whose legislation would allow lawsuits against anyone who implements sanctuary policies. His bill recently passed the Senate and is now in the House.

Opponents have raised concerns that the legislation could lead local police and sheriffs to detain immigrants for longer than they are supposed to under federal law out of fear of getting sued.

"We're threatening our local law enforcement who are doing the best job they can to keep our communities safe," said Georgia state Sen. Nikki Merritt, a Democrat.

The state proposals come as the Trump administration also has begun taking legal action against governments that have adopted policies inhibiting arrests and deportations by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The Department of Justice has sued Illinois, Chicago and Cook County, alleging they are violating federal law by not cooperating with immigration authorities.

Using lawsuits to enforce anti-sanctuary laws

A Georgia law enacted last year already mandates that local law enforcement cooperate with federal authorities to identify and detain immigrants in the U.S. illegally, or else lose state funding and face misdemeanor charges. The legislation recently passed by the state Senate doubles down by letting people sue local governments, officials and employees for violating the ban.

Immigrants and advocates in Georgia say the legislation, if passed, could stoke fear in communities already worried about ICE officials arresting loved ones in homes, churches or schools.

"This all relates to Donald Trump's war on immigrants and local people trying to garner favor with him through legislation that doesn't solve any problems," said Charles Kuck, an Atlanta immigration attorney who opposes the legislation.

Mike Mitchell, deputy executive director of the Georgia Sheriffs' Association, said the organization has a "neutral" position on the bill but noted sheriffs already are following immigration law.

Louisiana passed a law last year requiring law enforcement agencies to "use best efforts" to enforce federal immigration law. Earlier this month, Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill sued the sheriff's office in New Orleans, alleging it is violating the state ban on sanctuary immigration policies.

The Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office declines ICE requests to hold detainees for extra time except when

they face murder, rape, kidnapping, treason or robbery charges, according to a 2013 policy put in place under a consent judgment in federal court. The attorney general's lawsuit seeks to end that federal court order.

The sheriff's office also restricts the information it shares with ICE and prevents federal immigration agents from entering its facilities without court authorization or interviewing detainees without legal counsel.

The sheriff's office said in an emailed statement that it "remains in full compliance with all applicable state laws and valid court orders related to ICE detainees."

Imposing fines and jail time

An anti-sanctuary measure was the first item signed into law by Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden of South Dakota after he took over for former Gov. Kristi Noem, who was picked by Trump to be homeland security secretary. The law bans state and local policies that limit communication with federal officials about people's immigration status, however it contains no penalties.

Other states have gone further. A sweeping immigration law signed recently by Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis requires the attorney general to take legal action against local governments that adopt policies refusing to comply with federal requests to detain immigrants in the country illegally. Local officials who willfully violate a ban on such sanctuary policies can face fines up to \$5,000.

Tennessee law already denies state economic development funds to local governments that violate a ban on sanctuary policies. A law signed recently by Gov. Bill Lee enhances that by subjecting local officials who vote for such policies to felony charges punishable by up to six years in prison. Legislative attorneys have said such penalties could be unconstitutional due to protections afforded elected officials while carrying out their duties.

Legislation that passed the Wyoming House and is now pending in the Senate would not only bar local governments from adopting immigration sanctuary policies but also block citizens from proposing them through initiative petitions. The measure contains steep penalties. The governor could withhold state funds from counties, cities and towns that adopt such policies. Local officials who refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities could face felony charges punishable by 5-10 years in prison and a fine up to \$20,000.

Republican state Rep. Joel Guggenmos acknowledged there are no sanctuary jurisdictions in Wyoming but told colleagues during a committee hearing that he was sponsoring the legislation as a preemptive measure.

"As I look at other states, this is becoming a problem," Guggenmos said.

New Hampshire lawmakers have advanced two separate bills targeting sanctuary policies. A Senate version would allow the state attorney general to sue local governments that prohibit the enforcement of federal immigration laws and seek fines equal to 25% of their state funding. A House version omits the fine but includes more detailed directives for local governments to cooperate with federal immigration authorities.

Ohio bathroom law targeting transgender students has brought internal strife to some campuses

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

For some famously progressive colleges in Ohio, a new state law designed to keep transgender women from using women's restrooms at schools is bringing a moment of soul-searching for students, alumni and administrators.

It's one of many such laws adopted around the country, with the stated intent of protecting female students. The Ohio law — which applies fully to private colleges, unlike the others — allows individual institutions to decide how they will obey and enforce the measure.

But navigating the law has become a challenge, especially at colleges like Antioch and Oberlin, campuses built on a bedrock of idealism and protest where many see the law as part of a wider attack on transgender students.

For some, the idea of complying at all runs counter to the long-held value of being gender-inclusive. At

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 62 of 91

the same time, colleges across the country are sorting the impact of the Trump administration's crackdown on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, including a threat to cut federal funding for schools that reject its interpretation of civil rights laws.

Oberlin has published policies saying the school will comply with the law taking effecting Tuesday and is offering counseling and a chance for students to ask to move out of their dorms. Antioch has not announced a detailed plan.

Ahri Morales-Yoon, a first-year student at Antioch College who is nonbinary, said the law's impact will go beyond bathroom access.

"It will cause a lot of fear and uncertainty," they said. "It's in the back of your head that this law is hanging over us."

Colleges see effort to undercut support for transgender students

Jane Fernandes has been president of Antioch College since 2021. In that time, she said, she hasn't fielded a single complaint about anyone's presence in a restroom.

The school, about an hour's drive west of Columbus, was founded in 1850. Horace Mann, the education reformer, abolitionist and former member of Congress became its first president. The school shuttered in 2008 amid financial struggles but relaunched three years later. Nearly 90% of the school's 120 students identify as LGBTQ+ and about 1 in 6 say they are transgender.

"We will do everything we can to make it possible for transgender students to be very supported and safe here," said Fernandes, who has spoken out repeatedly against the law.

Shelby Chestnut, the executive director of the Transgender Law Center, who is an Antioch graduate and chair of the school's board of trustees, said the law is an effort to deter colleges from supporting students.

"This is an outright attack on student safety," they said in an interview.

The law calls for colleges in Ohio to designate all multioccupancy restrooms, locker rooms, changing rooms and showers for the exclusive use of males or females, based on sex at birth.

Ten other states already enforce bathroom laws. But none of those apply broadly at private colleges and universities.

"The point was that we're treating our students equally across the board in Ohio," said Republican state Rep. Beth Lear, one of the measure's sponsors.

The bathroom laws are part of a wave of anti-transgender policies. Most GOP-controlled states, including Ohio, have banned gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors and passed laws to keep transgender women from competing in women's sports.

Since returning to office, President Donald Trump has signed a series of executive orders targeting transgender and nonbinary people on several fronts, an abrupt change from President Joe Biden's efforts to include them explicitly in civil rights protections.

External pressure leads to internal campus strife

Since its founding in 1833, Oberlin College and Conservatory, outside Cleveland, has broken down social barriers, including being among the first colleges to admit women and Black students. The college was on the cover of Life magazine in 1970 when it offered co-ed dorms.

By the 1990s, dorm residents were voting on bathroom policies, and they often made facilities open to any gender.

The bathroom law has sparked angst on campus and among some alumni, who see the administration's intention to comply with the law as an abdication of values by the school of nearly 3,000 students. The college said in a campus-wide note that following the law "does not diminish our support for every member of our diverse community."

But it's not that simple to everyone.

It goes against "the whole idea of Oberlin," English professor DeSales Harrison said, "to refrain from making a decisive argument about what seems true and good in the world."

Some have called for Oberlin to take a more forceful stand.

Kathryn Troup Denney, who graduated in 1995, is a Massachusetts-based musical theatre director who wrote a production about transgender people. Like several alumni on message boards, she said her alma

mater should not comply with the state law, even if it means risking government funding.

"When the law is deliberately causing discriminating against one particular population of people," Denney said, "that's when good people can rise up and say, 'No, this law is not fair, it is not equitable, and it is not safe.'"

Oberlin officials declined interview requests.

Signs are changing, but it's not clear restroom use will

When students returned to Oberlin for the spring semester, there were new signs designating multi-person bathrooms as being for either men or women.

Many dorm bathrooms previously had signs designating them as open to everyone, people of just one gender or just one occupant. Students could change the signs. In academic and other buildings, instead of designating a gender, some signs described whether a bathroom had stalls or urinals.

Some of the new signs have been removed, apparently as acts of protests, and the administration has been replacing them.

But at both Antioch and Oberlin, it's not clear that who uses which restroom will change.

Natalie DuFour, Oberlin's student body president, noted the law does not require anyone to check who is using the bathrooms.

"Students, in theory, have the freedom to use whatever they want," she said.

Antioch's Fernandes has signaled the same thing: "We're not going to monitor who's going in which bathroom."

The leaders of France and Britain head to Washington to urge Trump not to abandon Ukraine

By JILL LAWLESS and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The leaders of France and Britain are making tag-team visits to Washington this week as Europe attempts to persuade President Donald Trump not to abandon Ukraine in pursuit of a peace deal in the three-year-old war with Russia.

There is an element of good cop, bad cop in efforts by U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron to salvage American support for Kyiv.

Starmer, reluctant to openly confront Trump, speaks of being a bridge between Europe and the U.S. administration. Macron has more strongly criticized Trump's recent statements that echo Russia's narrative and American moves to negotiate with Moscow while sidelining Ukraine.

Both leaders stress Ukraine's voice and sovereignty must be at the center of any peace talks.

The French president warned Trump against appearing "weak in the face of President Putin."

"It's not you, it's not your trademark, it's not in your interest," said Macron, who is due at the White House on Monday, the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Starmer is set to follow on Thursday.

Double-track diplomacy

The trips come after Macron called a crisis meeting of European leaders in Paris last week to discuss the continent's next steps — and after Trump on Friday claimed Macron and Starmer "haven't done anything" over the past three years to end the war.

The centrist French leader, known for his bold diplomatic moves, says he'll seek to persuade Trump that American and European interests are the same, telling him: "If you let Russia take over Ukraine, it would be unstoppable."

Starmer, a cautious center-left politician, has avoided directly contradicting Trump or criticizing his actions. The U.K. joined the U.S. in refusing to sign a joint declaration at an Artificial Intelligence summit hosted by Macron in Paris this month in what was seen as an attempt to curry favor with Washington.

But the prime minister has reaffirmed Britain's support for Ukraine, rejecting Trump's assertion that Zelenskyy is a "dictator" and the president's suggestion that Kyiv started the war, which erupted when Russia invaded its neighbor on Feb. 24, 2022.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 64 of 91

Starmer spoke to Zelenskyy on Saturday, expressing "the U.K.'s ironclad support for Ukraine and commitment to securing a just and enduring peace." He said he would stress "safeguarding Ukraine's sovereignty" when he speaks to Trump in Washington.

Some historians say the idea that Britain can be a transatlantic bridge is built on shaky foundations.

"The 'special relationship' has always been more important from the British end," said Oxford University history professor Margaret MacMillan. "When it comes right down to it, great powers tend to do what suits them."

She said the bottom line for Macron and Starmer "is they want the U.S. to stay involved in Europe. Whether they can achieve that is another matter."

Overcoming U.S. reluctance

Macron and Starmer will say in Washington that Ukraine must be at the table for negotiations on its future. They hope to get U.S. support for an emerging plan to have Europe deploy troops in a "reassurance force" to help guarantee Ukraine's future security. Starmer has stressed that the plan will only work if there is a U.S. "backstop," likely in the form of American air power, to deter Russia from attacking again.

Trump may well be skeptical. He has long questioned the value of NATO and complained that the U.S. provides security to European countries that don't pull their weight.

Both Macron and Starmer appear ready to answer Trump's call to boost defense spending. France spends just over 2% of its gross domestic product on the military, and Macron said last week that Europeans "must increase our war effort."

Britain spends 2.3% of gross domestic product on defense, and Starmer has said that will rise to 2.5%. He may put a date for reaching that target during his Washington trip.

Jamie Shea, a retired senior NATO official, said Starmer should try to appeal to Trump's keen sense of his place in history.

"The main argument Starmer can put will be to say, 'Mr. President this is going to be your peace agreement. You did it and for better or worse you will be associated with it forever. And do you want to risk a failure?'" Shea said.

Talking trade and tariffs

Trade — and an effort to avoid U.S.-imposed tariffs — will also be on the agenda for both Macron and Starmer.

Trump has ordered reciprocal import taxes on America's trading partners, slapped 10% tariffs on China; effectively raised U.S. taxes on foreign steel and aluminum; and threatened, then delayed for 30 days, 25% taxes on goods from Canada and Mexico.

U.K. officials hope Britain's departure from the European Union — a move Trump has praised — and relatively balanced trade with the U.S. will help it avoid harsh tariffs.

Starmer also wants to raise U.K. opposition to Trump's suggestion that Palestinians be deported from Gaza so the U.S. can take over the territory. And he will seek to allay U.S. concerns about a U.K. agreement to cede to Mauritius the Chagos Islands, an Indian Ocean archipelago that's home to a strategic U.S. military base.

If all else fails, Britain can deploy ceremonial soft power of royalty. The Daily Telegraph reported that Starmer will present Trump with an invitation from King Charles III for a state visit replete with royal pomp and pageantry.

The 31st SAG Awards are today. Here's what to know

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

The 31st Screen Actors Guild Awards on Sunday night should offer the final clue in an unusually unpredictable Oscar race.

The other major awards — including the BAFTAs, the Producers Guild Awards, the Directors Guild Awards and the Golden Globes — have all had their say. But actors make up the largest piece of the film academy pie, so their picks often correspond strongly with Academy Award winners.

After wins from the PGA and the DGA — and last night, the Independent Spirit Awards — Sean Baker's

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 65 of 91

"Anora" is seen as the favorite to win best picture in a week's time at the Oscars. But Edward Berger's "Conclave" won last weekend at the BAFTAs, the latest wrench in an award season full of them. That's included the unlikely rise and precipitous fall of another top contender, "Emilia Pérez."

So there are plenty of questions heading into the SAG Awards, hosted by Kristen Bell from the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. Can "Wicked" make a late push and win the guild's top award, best ensemble? Can Adrien Brody hold off Timothée Chalamet for best actor? Can Mikey Madison keep the momentum and win best actress over Demi Moore?

How to watch the SAG Awards

The 31st SAG Awards will be streamed live by Netflix beginning at 8 p.m. Eastern. An official pre-show will start an hour earlier, also on Netflix. Last year's show, the first to air on the streaming platform, drew an audience of 1.8 million, roughly on par with earlier SAG ceremonies broadcast by TNT and TBS.

Who's nominated by SAG?

"Wicked" comes in the leading film nominee, with five nods, while "Shōgun" heads the TV categories.

Jon M. Chu's hit musical hasn't yet had a major awards win, but the Screen Actors Guild has often favored populist contenders. Also up for best ensemble are "Anora," "The Brutalist," "Conclave" and "A Complete Unknown."

The best actor and best actress categories should be nail biters. While Brody ("The Brutalist") has won a string of awards, Chalamet ("A Complete Unknown") and Ralph Fiennes ("Conclave") could easily pull off the upset. Best actress could go to either Moore ("The Substance") or Madison ("Anora").

In the supporting categories, Kieran Culkin ("A Real Pain") and Zoe Saldana ("Emilia Pérez") are the favorites.

In addition to the competitive categories, Jane Fonda will be given the SAG Life Achievement Award.

How the ceremony plans to address the Los Angeles wildfires

The devastating wildfires that began in early January forced the guild to cancel its in-person nominations announcement and instead issue a press release. The guild has launched a disaster relief fund for SAG-AFTRA members affected by the fires. Producers have said the show will honor those affected.

California governor asks Congress for nearly \$40 billion for Los Angeles wildfire relief

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom has asked Congress to approve nearly \$40 billion in aid to help the Los Angeles area recover from January's devastating wildfires, which he said could become the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history.

Newsom sent a letter Friday asking for support from lawmakers including House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) and Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), the House Appropriations Committee chair.

"Los Angeles is one of the most economically productive places on the globe, but it can only rebound and flourish with support from the federal government as it recovers from this unprecedented disaster," Newsom wrote.

Estimates of the total economic loss from the firestorm have been estimated to surpass \$250 billion — with real estate losses from the Palisades and Eaton fires predicted to potentially top \$30 billion, according to a Los Angeles Times analysis. More than 16,200 structures were destroyed as flames ripped through Pacific Palisades, Malibu, Pasadena and Altadena.

Newsom vowed that the funding would be used to rebuild homes, infrastructure, businesses, schools, churches and health care facilities, while supporting the needs of people affected by the devastation.

"Make no mistake, Los Angeles will use this money wisely," Newsom wrote.

His largest request is for an additional \$16.8 billion from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, mostly intended for the rebuilding of property and infrastructure, with \$5 billion earmarked for debris cleanup.

Newsom also asked for \$9.9 billion from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for grants to fire victims, homeowners, businesses and renters, as well as \$5.29 billion from the Small Business Ad-

ministration for homeowner and business loans.

Newsom thanked President Donald Trump for support for fast-tracking debris removal. The letter did not mention recent threats by the Trump administration that federal aid could come with strings attached.

"We are eternally grateful," Newsom said.

Trump has been a frequent critic of Newsom and California's water policies. Ric Grenell, a Trump ally serving as his envoy for special missions, said Friday that "there will be conditions" to any federal aid for the state.

He said one of the possible conditions being discussed was defunding the California Coastal Commission, which regulates coastal development and protects public beach access. Trump has criticized the agency as overly restrictive, bureaucratic and a hindrance to timely rebuilding efforts.

Trump revels in mass federal firings and jeers at Biden before adoring conservative crowd

By WILL WEISSERT and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

OXON HILL, Md. (AP) — President Donald Trump said Saturday that "nobody's ever seen anything" like his administration's sweeping effort to fire thousands of federal employees and shrink the size of government, congratulating himself for "dominating" Washington and sending bureaucrats "packing."

Addressing an adoring crowd at the Conservative Political Action Conference just outside the nation's capital, Trump promised, "We're going to forge a new and lasting political majority that will drive American politics for generations to come."

The president argues that voters gave him a mandate to overhaul government while cracking down on the U.S.-Mexico border and extending tax cuts that were the signature policy of his first administration.

Trump clicked easily back into campaign mode during his hour-plus speech, predicting that the GOP will continue to win and defy history, which has shown that a president's party typically struggles during midterm elections. He insisted of Republicans, "I don't think we've been at this level, maybe ever."

"Nobody's ever seen anything like this," Trump said, likening his new administration's opening month to being on a roll through the first four holes of a round of golf — which he said gives him confidence for the fifth hole.

Trump has empowered Elon Musk to help carry out the firings, and the billionaire suggested Saturday that more might be coming.

"Consistent with President @realDonaldTrump's instructions, all federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week," Musk posted on X, which he owns. "Failure to respond will be taken as a resignation."

Later, an "HR" email was sent to federal workers across numerous agencies titled "What did you do last week" and asking that recipients "reply with approx. 5 bullets of what you accomplished last week and cc your manager." It cautioned against sending classified information, and gave a deadline of Monday at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Trump also said during the speech that he'd carry out harsher immigration policies. But those efforts have so far largely been overshadowed by his administration's mass federal firings. He announced that one entity with a workforce that had been significantly reduced, the U.S. Agency for International Development, would have its Washington office taken over by Customs and Border Protection officials.

"The agency's name has been removed from its former building," he said.

The president also repeated his previous promises to scrutinize the country's gold depository at Fort Knox. "Would anybody like to join us?" he asked to cheers from the crowd at the suggestion that administration forces might converge on the complex. "We want to see if the gold is still there."

But Trump also devoted large chunks of his address to reliving last year's presidential race, jeering at former President Joe Biden and mispronouncing the first name of former Vice President Kamala Harris — his Election Day opponent — gleefully proclaiming, "I haven't said that name in a while."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 67 of 91

He went on to use an expletive to describe Biden's handling of border security, despite noting that evangelical conservatives have urged him not to use foul language.

Trump had kinder words for Chinese President Xi Jinping, saying "I happen to like" him, while saying, "we've been treated very unfairly by China and many other countries."

On the sidelines of the conference, Trump met with conservative Polish President Andrzej Duda amid rising tensions in Europe over Russia's war in Ukraine. After he took the stage, Trump saluted Duda and another attendee, Argentine President Javier Milei.

Trump called Duda "a fantastic man and a great friend of mine" and said "you must be doing something right, hanging out with Trump." He noted that Milei was "a MAGA guy, too, Make Argentina Great Again."

Poland is a longtime ally of Ukraine. Trump upended recent U.S. policy by dispatching top foreign policy advisers to Saudi Arabia for direct talks with Russian officials that were aimed at ending fighting in Ukraine.

Those meetings did not include Ukrainian or European officials, which has alarmed U.S. allies. Trump is meeting on Monday at the White House with French President Emmanuel Macron and Thursday with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Trump also has begun a public tiff with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whom the U.S. president called a "dictator" while falsely suggesting that Ukraine started the war — though on Friday Trump acknowledged that Russia attacked its neighbor.

Trump told the CPAC crowd, "I'm dealing with President Zelenskyy. I'm dealing with President Putin" and added of fighting in Ukraine, "It affects Europe. It doesn't really affect us."

Zelenskyy has said Trump is living in a Russian-made "disinformation space."

For much of the time since Russia invaded in February 2022, the United States, under Biden, pledged that Ukraine would play in any major effort to end the fighting, vowing "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine." Trump's administration has dispensed with that notion, as the Republican president has accelerated his push to find an endgame to the war.

"I think we're pretty close to a deal, and we better be close to a deal," Trump said Saturday.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt subsequently told reporters that Trump and his team were focused on negotiations to end the war and "the President is very confident we can get it done this week," though such a tight timeline seems difficult.

Leavitt is one of three administration officials who face a lawsuit from The Associated Press on First- and Fifth-Amendment grounds.

The AP says the three are punishing the news agency for editorial decisions they oppose. The White House says the AP is not following an executive order to refer to the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America.

Later, Trump hosted a formal dinner at the White House for governors from around the country who were in Washington for a meeting of the National Governors Association. Trump said Republicans and Democrats can always call him and joked that he might address Democratic concerns first.

"Let us all recommit ourselves to strengthening America and making it something even more special than it has been," Trump said. "And we're going to be one united nation, and maybe together, this is going to be easier if we start uniting."

The president, who wore a tuxedo and bow tie, was accompanied by first lady Melania Trump, who had her own tuxedo but no tie. Trump told those gathered that his wife helped organize the event.

"She worked very hard on making sure everything was beautiful," he said to applause.

Trump also said he'd give a tour of the Lincoln Bedroom after the meal to anyone who wished to see it.

"I think maybe it's like the most important room in the whole country," he said. "The most important bedroom definitely."

Musk gives all federal workers 48 hours to explain what they did last week

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of federal workers have been given little more than 48 hours to explain what they accomplished over the last week, sparking confusion across key agencies as billionaire Elon Musk expands his crusade to slash the size of federal government.

Musk, who serves as President Donald Trump's cost-cutting chief, telegraphed the extraordinary request on his social media network on Saturday.

"Consistent with President @realDonaldTrump's instructions, all federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week," Musk posted on X, which he owns. "Failure to respond will be taken as a resignation."

Shortly afterward, federal employees — including some judges, court staff and federal prison officials — received a three-line email with this instruction: "Please reply to this email with approx. 5 bullets of what you accomplished last week and cc your manager."

The deadline to reply was listed as Monday at 11:59 p.m., although the email did not include Musk's social media threat about those who fail to respond.

The latest unusual directive from Musk's team injects a new sense of chaos across beleaguered multiple agencies, including the National Weather Service, the State Department and the federal court system, as senior officials worked to verify the message's authenticity Saturday night and in some cases, instructed their employees not to respond.

Thousands of government employees have already been forced out of the federal workforce — either by being fired or offered a buyout — during the first month of Trump's administration as the White House and Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency fire both new and career workers, tell agency leaders to plan for "large-scale reductions in force" and freeze trillions of dollars in federal grant funds.

There is no official figure available for the total firings or layoffs so far, but The Associated Press has tallied hundreds of thousands of workers who are being affected. Many work outside of Washington. The cuts include thousands at the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Health and Human Services, the Internal Revenue Service and the National Parks Service, among others.

Labor union leaders quickly condemned the ultimatum and threatened legal action.

AFGE President Everett Kelley called the new order an example of Trump and Musk's "utter disdain for federal employees and the critical services they provide to the American people."

"It is cruel and disrespectful to hundreds of thousands of veterans who are wearing their second uniform in the civil service to be forced to justify their job duties to this out-of-touch, privileged, unelected billionaire who has never performed one single hour of honest public service in his life," Kelley said. "AFGE will challenge any unlawful terminations of our members and federal employees across the country."

Musk on Friday celebrated his new role at a gathering of conservatives by waving a giant chainsaw in the air. He called it "the chainsaw for bureaucracy" and said, "Waste is pretty much everywhere" in the federal government.

McLaurine Pinover, a spokesperson at the Office of Personnel Management, confirmed Musk's directive and said that individual agencies would "determine any next steps."

What happens if an employee is on leave or vacation? Again, she said individual agencies would determine how to proceed.

In a message to employees on Saturday night, federal court officials instructed recipients not to respond.

"We understand that some judges and judiciary staff have received an email ... directing the recipient to reply with 5 accomplishments from the prior week. Please be advised that this email did not originate from the Judiciary or the Administrative Office and we suggest that no action be taken," officials wrote.

Judges around the country got emails from Musk's team in late January, apparently by mistake, U.S. District Judge Randolph Daniel Moss said earlier this month. Moss said he'd also gotten a message and ignored it.

The National Weather Service leadership acknowledged some confusion in a message to its employees late Saturday as well.

"Within the last few hours, some of us — potentially all of us -- received an email message titled 'What did you do last week?' Until such time as we can verify that the message that was received at or around 4:46pm ET is authentic, please do not respond."

National Weather Service leadership continued: "Thank you all for your continued support and dedication ensuring public safety and the national security of our country."

New FBI Director Kash Patel will also be named acting head of the ATF, official says

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — New FBI Director Kash Patel is expected to be named the acting head of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, a Justice Department official said Saturday.

Patel could be sworn in next week, the official said, putting Patel in charge of two of the Justice Department's largest agencies in an unusual arrangement that raises questions about the future of the bureau that has long drawn the ire of conservatives.

The Justice Department official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the move before it's announced publicly. White House officials didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Saturday evening.

Patel was sworn in Friday as FBI director after winning Senate approval despite Democrats' concerns about the steadfast Trump ally's plans to radically overhaul the FBI.

ATF is a separate agency with about 5,500 employees and is responsible for enforcing the nation's laws around firearms, explosives and arson. Among other things, it's in charge of licensing federal firearms dealers, tracing guns used in crimes and analyzing intelligence in shooting investigations.

The move was first reported Saturday by ABC News.

The news comes days after Attorney General Pam Bondi fired the ATF's top lawyer. Bondi said in a Fox News interview Friday that she fired chief counsel Pamela Hicks because the agency was "targeting gun owners." Hicks, who spent more than 20 years as a Justice Department lawyer, said in a social media post that being ATF chief counsel was the "highest honor" of her career.

Conservatives have long railed against ATF over its role in regulating firearms and have suggested shuttering the agency. Under the Biden administration, the ATF advanced new regulations aimed at cracking down on ghost guns and requiring thousands more firearms dealers to run background checks on buyers at gun shows or other places outside brick-and-mortar stores.

In an executive order earlier this month, President Donald Trump directed the attorney general to review all actions taken by the Biden administration around firearms "to assess any ongoing infringements of the Second Amendment rights of our citizens."

Gun safety groups have raised alarm about putting Patel in charge of the FBI, with gun control group Brady calling him a "known gun rights extremist." Gun Owners of America, a gun rights group, called his confirmation as FBI director "a major victory for gun owners and constitutional rights advocates nationwide."

The last confirmed ATF director was Steve Dettelbach, a former federal prosecutor, who led the agency from July 2022 until last month. He was the first confirmed director since 2015 as both Republican and Democratic administrations failed to get nominees through the politically fraught process.

Border Patrol agent whose death is tied to cultlike Zizians is buried with military honors

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A U.S. Border Patrol agent whose killing in Vermont during a traffic stop near the Canadian border has been tied to a cultlike group was buried with full military honors Saturday at a national cemetery in Minnesota.

David Maland, 44, died Jan. 20 during the stop on Interstate 91 in Conventry, about 20 miles (30 kilometers) south of the border with Canada. The driver of the stopped car is accused of opening fire on Maland and other agents, sparking a shootout that left her companion dead. Both belonged to a group called the Zizians that may be linked to six deaths in three states, investigators said.

Maland was memorialized at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis during a funeral attended by family, friends, community members and Border Patrol agents from around the country.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz ordered flags to fly at half-staff in Maland's honor.

A native of Minnesota, Maland, who went by Chris, served in the Air Force and the State Department before joining the Border Patrol.

"Chris was a loving son, brother, uncle, fiance and dedicated colleague," his family said Friday in a statement. "His kind heart and fighting soul made him a warm and inviting person to be around and pillar of strength for his country.

"We love you, Chris. You'll live in our hearts forever."

In the Air Force, Maland was responsible for protecting bases, personnel and property. In 2001, he worked security duty at the Pentagon during the Sept. 11 attacks, his family said.

He received the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, among other honors, according to his obituary.

Maland was a K-9 handler at the State Department and at his Border Patrol job in Vermont. He first joined the Border Patrol in Texas.

"He will be remembered for his courage and commitment to protecting fellow Americans," Minnesota state Rep. Krista Knudsen, Maland's cousin, said on the House floor last month. "He is also a person who served faithfully with honor and bravery. He always put his service above himself."

Israel delays release of Palestinian prisoners, citing 'humiliating' handovers of hostages

By WAFAA SHURAF, MOHAMMED JAHJOUH and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel says the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners is delayed "until the release of the next hostages has been assured, and without the humiliating ceremonies" at handovers of Israeli captives in Gaza.

The statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office came early Sunday as military vehicles that normally move in advance of the buses carrying prisoners left the open gates of Ofer prison, only to turn around and go back in.

The release of 620 Palestinian prisoners had been delayed for several hours and was meant to occur just after six Israeli hostages were released on Saturday. It was meant to be the largest one-day prisoner release in the Gaza ceasefire's first phase.

Israel's announcement abruptly put the future of the truce into further doubt.

The Palestinian Authority's commission for prisoners' affairs confirmed the delay "until further notice." Associated Press video in the West Bank showed prisoners' families, waiting outdoors in near-freezing weather, apparently dispersing. One woman was shown walking away in tears.

Five of the six hostages freed Saturday had been escorted by masked, armed militants in front of a crowd — a display that the U.N. and Red Cross have criticized as cruel after previous handovers.

The Israeli statement cited "ceremonies that demean the dignity of our hostages and the cynical use of the hostages for propaganda purposes." It was likely a reference to a Hamas video showing two hostages who have yet to be released watching a handover in Gaza on Saturday and speaking under duress.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 71 of 91

The six were the last living hostages expected to be freed under the ceasefire's first phase, with a week remaining in the initial stage. Talks on the ceasefire's second phase are yet to start.

The six included three Israeli men seized from the Nova music festival and another taken while visiting family in southern Israel during the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the 16-month war in Gaza. The two others were held for a decade after entering Gaza on their own.

Five were handed over in staged ceremonies. In one, Omer Wenkert, Omer Shem Tov and Eliya Cohen were posed alongside Hamas fighters. A beaming Shem Tov, acting under duress, kissed two militants on the head and blew kisses to the crowd. They wore fake army uniforms, though they were not soldiers when abducted.

Cohen's family and friends in Israel chanted "Eliya! Eliya! Eliya!" and cheered.

"You're heroes," Shem Tov told his parents as they later embraced, laughing and crying. "You have no idea how much I dreamt of you." His father, Malki Shem Tov, told public broadcaster Kan his son was held alone after the first 50 days and lost 17 kilograms (37 pounds).

Earlier Saturday, Tal Shoham, 40, and Avera Mengistu, 38, were freed. Mengistu, an Ethiopian-Israeli, entered Gaza in 2014. His family told Israeli media he has struggled with mental health issues. The Israeli-Austrian Shoham was taken from Kibbutz Be'eri. His wife and two children were freed in a 2023 exchange.

Later, Israel's military said Hisham Al-Sayed, 36, was released. The Bedouin Israeli entered Gaza in 2015. His family has told Israeli media he was previously diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Israel's government didn't respond to questions about the delay in releasing prisoners. Hamas accused Israel of violating the ceasefire deal, with spokesperson Abdel Latif Al-Qanou accusing Netanyahu of "deliberately stalling."

The hostage release followed a heartrending dispute when Hamas on Thursday handed over the wrong body for Shiri Bibas, an Israeli mother abducted with her two young boys. The remains were determined to be those of a Palestinian woman. Netanyahu vowed revenge for "a cruel and malicious violation." Hamas suggested it was a mistake.

Israeli forensic authorities confirmed a body handed over on Friday was Bibas. Dr. Chen Kugel, head of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine, said they found no evidence Bibas and her children were killed in an Israeli airstrike, as Hamas has claimed. Kugel did not give a cause.

Hamas denied the Israeli military claim, based on forensic evidence and unspecified "intelligence," that its militants killed the children "with their bare hands," calling it a lie aimed at justifying Israeli military actions against civilians in Gaza.

Difficult talks likely over the ceasefire's next phase

The ceasefire deal has paused the deadliest and most devastating fighting ever between Israel and Hamas, but there are fears the war will resume. Negotiations on the ceasefire's second phase are likely to be more difficult.

Hamas had said it will release four bodies next week, completing the truce's first phase. After that, Hamas will hold over 60 hostages — about half believed to be alive.

Hamas has said it won't release the remaining captives without a lasting ceasefire and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Netanyahu, with the backing of U.S. President Donald Trump's administration, says he's committed to destroying Hamas' military and governing capacities and returning all hostages, goals widely seen as mutually exclusive.

An Israeli official had said Netanyahu would meet with security advisers on Saturday evening about the ceasefire's future, focusing "on the goal of returning all our hostages, alive and dead." The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the meeting had not been formally announced.

Freed hostages bring relief and a sign of life

Wenkert, Cohen, Shoham and Shem Tov had an "extremely difficult period in captivity," the Beilinson hospital said, but it did not give details at the families' request.

Niva Wenkert, Omer's mother, told Israel's Channel 12 that "on the surface, he looks OK, but there's no telling what's inside."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 72 of 91

"This is an unforgettable moment, where all emotions are rapidly mixing together," Shoham's family said, and called for a deal to free all hostages still held.

Families and others rallied again Saturday night in Tel Aviv to pressure Netanyahu's government for a deal.

"How is it possible that President Trump and special envoy (Steven) Witkoff are more committed to the return of Israeli hostages than you are?" said Naama Weinberg, cousin of deceased hostage Itay Svirsky. "Netanyahu, these are your citizens who were abandoned on your watch!"

Hamas later released a video showing two hostages still held, Evyatar David and Guy Gilboa Dallal, as they sat in a vehicle and spoke under duress at the handover for Shem Tov, Cohen and Wenkert. A group representing hostages' families called the video "sickening."

Hundreds of Palestinian prisoners

The 620 Palestinian prisoners meant to be freed include 151 serving life or other sentences for attacks against Israelis. Almost 100 would be deported, according to the Palestinian prisoners' media office.

A Palestinian prisoner rights association said they include Nael Barghouti, who spent over 45 years in prison for an attack that killed an Israeli bus driver.

Also meant to be released are 445 men, 23 children aged 15 to 19, and a woman, all seized by Israeli troops in Gaza without charge during the war.

Israel's military offensive has killed over 48,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants. Israel says it has killed more than 17,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

The offensive destroyed vast areas of Gaza, reducing entire neighborhoods to rubble. At its height, the war displaced 90% of Gaza's population.

The Oct. 7 attack killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Hundreds of Israeli soldiers have died in the war.

Oscar favorite 'Anora' wins best film, director and actor at the Independent Spirit Awards

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Sean Baker's "Anora" won best film, best director and best actor for Mikey Madison at the Independent Spirit Awards on Saturday in what could be a preview of next Sunday's Oscars: The film about a Brooklyn sex worker and her whirlwind affair with a Russian oligarch's son has emerged in recent weeks as an awards season front-runner.

The Spirit Awards, held in a beachside tent in Santa Monica, California, is the shaggier, more irreverent sister to the Academy Awards, celebrating the best in independent film and television.

Host Aidy Bryant called it "Hollywood's third or fourth biggest night."

In accepting the directing prize, Baker spoke passionately about the difficulty of making independent films in an industry that is no longer able to fund riskier films. He said indies are in danger of becoming calling card films — movies made only as a means to get hired for bigger projects.

"The system has to change because this is simply unsustainable," Baker said to enthusiastic applause. "We shouldn't be barely getting by."

"Anora's" best film competition included Jane Schoenbrun's psychological horror "I Saw the TV Glow," RaMell Ross' adaptation of Colson Whitehead's "Nickel Boys," Greg Kwedar's incarceration drama "Sing Sing" and Coralie Fargeat's body horror "The Substance."

This year had several other possible Oscar winners celebrating. Kieran Culkin, considered an Oscar favorite, won the supporting performance award for "A Real Pain." His director, co-star and writer Jesse Eisenberg won best screenplay for the film about two cousins embarking on a Holocaust tour in Poland.

Culkin was not there to accept — he also missed his BAFTA win last weekend to tend to a family member — but other Oscar nominees like Madison and Demi Moore were.

Madison won the top acting prize over Moore at the BAFTAs last weekend, as well, and stopped Saturday to pet Moore's dog Pilaf on the way to the stage. Acting categories for the Spirit Awards are gender neu-

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 73 of 91

tral and include 10 spots each, meaning Madison and Moore were up against Oscar nominees like Colman Domingo ("Sing Sing") and Sebastian Stan ("The Apprentice").

The documentary prize went to "No Other Land," the lauded film by a Palestinian-Israeli collective about the destruction of a village in the West Bank which doesn't have distribution. It's also a strong Oscar contender in a competitive category. The filmmakers were not in attendance to accept the award.

"Flow," the wordless animated Latvian cat film, won best international film. At the Oscars, it's competing in the international film category and animation.

While the Spirit Award winners don't always sync up with the academy, they can often reflect a growing consensus as in the "Everything Everywhere All At Once" year. The awards limit eligibility to productions with budgets of \$30 million or less, meaning more expensive Oscar nominees like "Wicked" and "Dune: Part Two" were not in the running.

Sean Wang accepted best first feature and best first screenplay prizes for "Didi." He said it was special to be sharing the stage with one of his stars, Joan Chen, who was also nominated for the same award 25 years ago for "Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl."

The Netflix phenomenon "Baby Reindeer" also picked up several prizes, for actors Richard Gadd, Jessica Gunning and Nava Mau.

Mau, who is trans, spoke about the importance of actors sticking together "as we move into this next chapter."

"We don't know what is going to happen, but we do know our power," Mau said. "We are the people and our labor is everything."

Other television winners included "Shōgun," for best new scripted series, and "How to Die Alone," for best ensemble.

"How to Die Alone" creator and star Natasha Rothwell was emotional while accepting the ensemble prize. The show was recently canceled after its first season.

Rothwell said it was "a show about the need to feel seen, to be valued just as you are."

"For Black stories, visibility isn't a privilege: It is a necessity," Rothwell said. "We deserve to take up space, to be complex, to be hilarious and to be fully human."

The generally lighthearted show took a moment to acknowledge the impact of the wildfires on Los Angeles. Bryant made a plea to anyone watching the show, in the audience or on the YouTube livestream, to help rebuild L.A. She pointed to a QR code that appeared on the livestream to make donations to the Film Independent Emergency Filmmaker Relief Fund, providing grants to alumni impacted by the wildfires.

The show also paid tribute to longtime Film Independent president Josh Welsh, who died earlier this year at age 62. Welsh had colon cancer.

Bryant said in her opening that it had been a "great year for film and a bad year for human life." The "Saturday Night Live" alum kicked off the event ribbing some of the nominees, like Emma Stone.

"Emma was a producer on four nominated projects tonight," Bryant said. "But even more importantly, her hair is short now."

Stone also featured prominently in Eisenberg's speech, when he picked up the best screenplay prize for "A Real Pain." Since they met on the set of "Zombieland" in 2009, he said, she's been supportive of his writing despite being "the most famous person I know" and produced both of his films.

"I think of her not as my producer, but as a fairy godmother, like I'm riding the coattails for her goodwill," Eisenberg said.

The camera cut to Stone, teary and moved, in the audience. She and her husband Dave McCary's production company Fruit Tree also produced Julio Torres' "Problemista" and "Fantasmas" and Schoenbrun's "I Saw the TV Glow."

"I Saw the TV Glow" went into the show tied with "Anora" with six nominations. It left with only one, for producer Sarah Winshall.

USDA scholarship for students at historically Black colleges suspended

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal scholarship aimed at boosting students from underserved and rural areas attending historically Black colleges and universities has been put on hold.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture suspended the 1890 Scholars Program, which provided recipients with full tuition and fees for students studying agriculture, food or natural resource sciences at one of 19 universities, known as the 1890 land grant institutions.

It's not clear exactly when the program was suspended, but some members of Congress first issued statements criticizing the suspension of the program on Thursday.

"The 1890 Scholars Program has been suspended pending further review," the Department of Agriculture said in a post on the program's website.

The suspension coincides with a funding freeze President Donald Trump's administration instituted. Administration officials had said the pause was necessary to review whether spending aligned with Trump's executive orders on issues like climate change and diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

A spokesperson for the department said Saturday in an email to The Associated Press that "every scholar — over 300 — regardless of matriculation date, was retained to finish their studies and complete their work with the Department." The spokesperson added that Secretary Brooke Rollins will review the scholarship program, its mission and its metrics to ensure taxpayer resources are used efficiently.

The funding freeze has been challenged in court, with a temporary hold on the executive action already in place.

The affected universities include Alabama A&M, Florida A&M, North Carolina A&T and Tuskegee University in Alabama, among others.

The scholarship program dates to 1992, but 1890 in the title refers to the Second Morrill Act of 1890, which established historically Black colleges and universities.

Eligibility rules include being a U.S. citizen with a GPA of 3.0 or better, along with acceptance to one of the 19 1890 land grant universities. Eligible students must also study agriculture or related fields and "demonstrate leadership and community service," according to the department's site.

In October, the department said it had set aside \$19.2 million for the program. In fiscal year 2024, 94 students were awarded scholarships, the department said.

Plane that flipped over in Canada highlights some of the dangers of holding kids on your lap

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

The crash landing of a Delta Air Lines flight in Toronto this week highlighted the potential dangers of flying with a young child sitting on an adult's lap. The plane flipped over, which would make holding onto a baby extremely difficult.

Authorities haven't said whether the 18-month-old child who was injured in the crash was riding on a parent's lap. All 21 people who were hurt were released from the hospital, but young children have died in previous crashes.

Despite the recent rash of aviation disasters, airline crashes remain rare, but children could easily get hurt if they are on a parent's lap when a plane encounters turbulence.

Experts agree it's safer for children younger than 2 years old to have their own plane seats and ride in approved car seats when flying, even if families have to pay for an extra ticket. But babies are still allowed to travel in laps, so parents continue doing it despite the risks.

"The saddest part is that most families who travel with a lap child think that because it's allowed, it's safe," said former flight attendant Jan Brown, who had to look a mother in the face after she had just lost her 22-month-old son when their plane crashed and broke into several pieces near Sioux City, Iowa, in 1989.

Brown stopped that mother from climbing back into the wreckage of United Flight 232 after it came to

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 75 of 91

rest upside down in a cornfield.

"I told her what I thought would stop her: that rescue workers would find him. And she just looked up at me and said, 'You told me to put my baby on the floor. And I did. And he's gone.' And so I think that was the moment that I became a child seat advocate," Brown said.

Of the four lap children on that plane, three were injured and the woman's son was among the 112 people who died.

A 6-month-old boy traveling on a parent's lap was killed in 2012 when a plane landed hard and overran the end of a runway in Nunavut, Canada. Last year, three infants on laps could have been sucked out of an Alaska Airlines plane after a door plug flew off midflight, but none were sitting close enough to the opening for that to happen.

What do experts recommend?

The National Transportation Safety Board and its counterpart in Canada, the Transportation Safety Board, have long recommended that young children fly only in approved car seats to protect them. The Federal Aviation Administration also recommends the use of car seats but doesn't require it despite lobbying from advocates.

In addition to those safety regulators, the American Academy of Pediatrics and most major airline trade groups and unions support requiring young children to fly in approved car seats.

The main crash investigators in the United States and Canada started recommending car seats for children under 2 and specialized restraint systems for older kids until they are taller than 40 inches (102 centimeters) after the deadly crashes in their countries decades ago.

"We've all been there at that point in your life when you've got young children. You're not swimming in money. You're trying to save nickels and dimes any way you can. And if you can avoid buying an extra seat, it's a completely understandable reaction," NTSB member Tom Chapman said. "It's just that people don't understand the risk that they are subjecting their child to by not buying that seat and properly restraining them."

Not only is it safer for children to ride in their own seats, but it's more enjoyable for parents who don't have to hold a squirming baby for hours in the air.

Car seat expert and mother Michelle Pratt, who founded Safe in the Seat, said no matter how tempting it is to check that lap child box, families should get everyone a ticket.

"Your baby could cost less than your checked suitcase. Why not take advantage?" Pratt said.

What do parents think?

Some parents like Clare Ronning aren't convinced. After landing in Burbank, California, with her husband and 5-month-old baby Thursday, she said she doesn't see a need for a car seat on a plane.

"I don't really see the difference, personally," said Ronning, who already has taken her daughter on six flights. "It just seems like another money grab."

But Meredith Tobitsch never imagined flying without a seat for her 3-year-old daughter and won't do it with her 14-month-old now, either, because of safety and practical concerns.

"If there was turbulence, your natural reflex would be to let go of your child," said Tobitsch, who lives in Connecticut, adding that her oldest daughter always slept better in her car seat, making the flights much more enjoyable.

"Obviously, that does add to the cost of air travel for families, but it is a safety thing. At least for us, we're fortunate to do that," she said.

Why isn't it required?

The FAA relies on a study done in the 1990s to justify not requiring families to buy tickets for children younger than 2.

The rationale is that if families had to buy those extra tickets, more of them might drive instead of fly. Because driving is riskier than flying, that would mean more kids would die in car crashes than would be saved in planes if car seats and separate tickets were required.

Chapman with the NTSB thinks that logic is a stretch and the study should be revisited, particularly since

airline tickets are more affordable today.

But parent Andrea Arredondo suggested there might be some truth to it, saying she might fly less if she had to buy a ticket and lug along a car seat for her 4-month-old when flying with her family and two older kids.

"I would be more likely to decrease our plane travel than bring a car seat," Arredondo said, explaining she and her husband already have their hands full traveling with three kids, three car seats that they check, a stroller and play set.

Shooting after pursuit at Air Force Base in New Mexico kills an airman and wounds another

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — A shooting at a U.S. Air Force base in New Mexico early Saturday left one airman dead and another wounded, military officials said, adding that it was not an act of terrorism or an attack by an outsider.

A statement from Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque said security forces responded to a shooting near one of the entrances to the base at about 2 a.m. One airman died at the scene, and the other was taken to a hospital with a gunshot wound to a hand and later discharged, the statement said.

An update in the afternoon said the shooting occurred following "an off-base pursuit." There was no threat to the public, it said.

The Air Force released few other details and did not immediately say whether anyone was in custody. A spokesperson declined to say whether the shooter or shooters also were airmen.

The names of the airmen who were shot were not immediately released.

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations was leading the probe.

FBI investigators were also at the scene being helped by Albuquerque police, said Gilbert Gallegos, a police spokesperson. Police were not searching for any suspects, he added.

Officer killed after a gunman took hostages at a Pennsylvania hospital

By MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

YORK, Pa. (AP) — A man armed with a pistol and carrying zip ties entered a Pennsylvania hospital's intensive care unit Saturday and took staff members hostage before he was killed by police in a shootout that also left an officer dead, authorities said.

Three workers at UPMC Memorial Hospital, including a doctor, a nurse and a custodian, and two other officers were shot and wounded in the attack, York County District Attorney Tim Barker said. A fourth staffer was injured in a fall.

Gunfire erupted after officers went to engage the shooter, whom Barker identified as Diogenes Archangel-Ortiz, 49. He said Archangel-Ortiz was holding at gunpoint a female staff member who had her hands bound with zip ties when police opened fire.

"This is a huge loss to our community," Barker said at a press conference following the shooting. "It is absolutely clear, and beyond any and all doubt, that the officers were justified in taking their action using deadly force."

Barker added that while the investigation is in its early stages, it appears Archangel-Ortiz had previous contact with the hospital's ICU earlier in the week for "a medical purpose involving another individual" and he intentionally targeted the workers there.

No one answered the door Saturday at an address in York believed to be that of Archangel-Ortiz.

The officer who died was identified as Andrew Duarte of the West York Borough Police Department.

"We all have broken hearts and are grieving at his loss," West York Borough Manager Shawn Mauck told The Associated Press.

Duarte was a law enforcement veteran who joined the department in 2022 after five years with the

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 77 of 91

Denver Police Department, according to his LinkedIn profile. He described receiving a "hero award" in 2021 from Mothers Against Drunk Driving for his work in impaired driving enforcement for the state of Colorado.

"I have a type A personality and like to succeed in all that I do," his LinkedIn profile said.

Duarte also worked as a patrol officer in Denver, was highly regarded for his work and was close friends with other officers, the department there said in a statement.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro said he met Saturday evening with Duarte's parents and fellow officers who were wounded.

"Their willingness to run toward danger helped save the lives of others," Shapiro said on the social platform X. "I'm grateful to them and all law enforcement who answered the call today in York."

At a makeshift memorial on the front steps of the West York Borough Police Department, Linda Shields dropped off roses Saturday and dabbed tears as she thought of her son, a police officer in Maryland.

"He was so young," Shields said of Duarte. "It makes no sense at all."

Shapiro called the attack on police and health care workers "the act of a coward."

UPMC Memorial is a five-story, 104-bed hospital that opened in 2019 in York, a city of about 40,000 people known for its creation of York Peppermint Patties in 1940.

The shooting is part of a wave of gun violence in recent years that has swept through U.S. hospitals and medical centers, which have struggled to adapt to the growing threats. Such attacks have helped make health care one of the nation's most violent fields, with workers suffering more nonfatal injuries from workplace violence than workers in any other profession, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In 2023, a shooter killed a security guard in the lobby of New Hampshire's state psychiatric hospital before being fatally shot by a state trooper. In 2022, a man killed two workers at a Dallas hospital while there to watch his child's birth. In May of that year, a man opened fire in a medical center waiting room in Atlanta, killing one woman and wounding four. And just one month later, a gunman killed his surgeon and three other people at a Tulsa, Oklahoma, medical office because he blamed the doctor for his continuing pain after an operation.

1 dead, 3 wounded in France knife attack labeled Islamic extremism

PARIS (AP) — A passerby was stabbed to death and three police officers injured Saturday near a crowded market in eastern France. An Algerian man identified as an Islamic extremist with a schizophrenic profile was detained in the attack, the interior minister said.

France's national anti-terrorism prosecutor's office took over the investigation. The attack happened in the city of Mulhouse, located in a region that borders Germany and Switzerland.

Macron said the government has "complete determination" to respond to the attack, which he blamed on "Islamist terrorism." France has been on high alert for extremist threats.

The victim was a 69-year-old Portuguese man, the anti-terrorism prosecutor's office said. The three injured included a parking control officer stabbed in the aorta and torso who remained hospitalized, Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau told reporters at the scene. The other two sustained lighter injuries.

A 37-year-old Algerian man was arrested, prosecutors said. He said "Allahu akbar," "God is great" in Arabic, during the attack, and was armed with a knife and screwdriver, Retailleau said.

The suspect arrived in France without papers in 2014, and was arrested and convicted of glorifying terrorism in the wake of the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, Retailleau said. Police experts had "detected a schizophrenic profile" in the suspect, he added.

After several months in prison for that conviction, the suspect was confined to house arrest as authorities sought to expel him to Algeria. Retailleau lashed out at Algeria for resisting the return of criminals France is seeking to deport.

Tensions have grown in recent months between France and Algeria — which shook off French rule after a brutal war 60 years ago — over the return of Algerians accused of inciting violence or other crimes in

France as well as diplomatic disputes.

Retailleau noted Islamic extremist attacks recently in Germany and other countries, and said France has made "immense progress" since a wave of attacks in 2015 and 2016 linked to the Islamic State group and al-Qaida.

Pope Francis is in critical condition after a long respiratory crisis, requiring oxygen at high flow

By NICOLE WINFIELD and SILVIA STELLACCI Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis was in critical condition Saturday after he suffered a prolonged asthmatic respiratory crisis while being treated for pneumonia and a complex lung infection, the Vatican said.

The 88-year-old pope, who remains conscious, received "high flows" of oxygen to help him breathe. He also received blood transfusions after tests showed low counts of platelets, which are needed for clotting, the Vatican said in a late update.

"The Holy Father's condition continues to be critical, therefore, as explained yesterday (Friday), the pope is not out of danger," the statement said. It was the first time "critical" had been used in a written statement to describe Francis' condition since he was hospitalized Feb. 14.

The statement also said that the pontiff "continues to be alert and spent the day in an armchair although in more pain than yesterday." Doctors declined to offer a prognosis, saying it was "reserved."

Doctors have said Francis' condition is touch-and-go, given his age, fragility and pre-existing lung disease. Doctors warn of the possible onset of sepsis

They have warned that the main threat facing Francis would be the onset of sepsis, a serious infection of the blood that can occur as a complication of pneumonia. As of Friday, there was no evidence of any sepsis, and Francis was responding to the various drugs he is taking, the pope's medical team said in their first in-depth update on the pope's condition.

Saturday's blood tests showed that he had developed a low platelet count, a condition called platelopenia or thrombocytopenia. Platelets are cell-like fragments that circulate in the blood that help form blood clots to stop bleeding or help wounds heal. Low platelet counts can be caused by a number of things, including side effects from medicines or infections, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

Francis, who has chronic lung disease and is prone to bronchitis in winter, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14 after a weeklong bout of bronchitis worsened.

Doctors first diagnosed the complex viral, bacterial and fungal respiratory tract infection and then the onset of pneumonia in both lungs. They prescribed "absolute rest" and a combination of cortisone and antibiotics, along with supplemental oxygen when he needs it. Saturday's update marked the first time the Vatican has referred to Francis suffering an "asthmatic respiratory crisis of prolonged magnitude, which also required the application of oxygen at high flows."

Dr. Sergio Alfieri, the head of medicine and surgery at Rome's Gemelli hospital, said Friday the biggest threat facing Francis was that some of the germs that are currently located in his respiratory system pass into the bloodstream, causing sepsis. Sepsis can lead to organ failure and death.

"Sepsis, with his respiratory problems and his age, would be really difficult to get out of," Alfieri told a news conference Friday at Gemelli. "The English say 'knock on wood,' we say 'touch iron.' Everyone touch what they want," he said as he tapped the microphone. "But this is the real risk in these cases: that these germs pass to the bloodstream."

"He knows he's in danger," Alfieri added. "And he told us to convey that."

Vatican hierarchy tamps down speculation Francis might resign

Meanwhile, the Vatican hierarchy went on the defensive to tamp down rumors and speculation that Francis might decide to resign. There is no provision in canon law for what to do if a pope becomes incapacitated. Francis has said that he has written a letter of resignation that would be invoked if he were medically incapable of making such a decision. The pope remains fully conscious, alert, eating and working.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 79 of 91

The Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, gave a rare interview to Corriere della Sera to respond to speculation and rumors about a possible resignation. It came after the Vatican issued an unusual and official denial of an Italian media report that said Parolin and the pope's chief canonist had visited Francis in the hospital in secret. Given the canonical requirements to make a resignation legitimate, the implications of such a meeting were significant, but the Vatican flat-out denied that any such meeting occurred.

Parolin said such speculation seemed "useless" when what really mattered was the health of Francis, his recovery and return to the Vatican.

"On the other hand, I think it is quite normal that in these situations uncontrolled rumors can spread or some misplaced comment is uttered. It is certainly not the first time it has happened," Parolin was quoted as saying. "However, I don't think there is any particular movement, and so far I haven't heard anything like that."

White House is 'praying for the pope'

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Saturday that President Donald Trump had been briefed on the pope's condition and was working on his own statement that will be released later.

"We're praying for the pope," Leavitt said.

Leavitt is one of three administration officials who face a lawsuit from The Associated Press on first- and fifth-amendment grounds. The AP says Leavitt and two others are punishing the news agency for editorial decisions they oppose. The White House says the AP is not following an executive order to refer to the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America.

Deacons, meanwhile, were gathering at the Vatican for their special Holy Year weekend. Francis got sick at the start of the Vatican's Holy Year, the once-every-quarter-century celebration of Catholicism. This weekend, Francis was supposed to have celebrated deacons, a ministry in the church that precedes ordination to the priesthood.

In his place, the Holy Year organizer will celebrate Sunday's Mass, the Vatican said. And for the second consecutive weekend, Francis will skip his traditional Sunday noon blessing, which he could have delivered from Gemelli if he were up to it.

"Look, even though he's not (physically) here, we know he's here," said Luis Arnaldo López Quirindongo, a deacon from Ponce, Puerto Rico, who was at the Vatican on Saturday for the Jubilee celebration. "He's recovering, but he's in our hearts and is accompanying us, because our prayers and his go together."

Trump-Putin summit preparations are underway, Russia says

By The Associated Press undefined

Preparations are underway for a face-to-face meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia's deputy foreign minister said Saturday. It marked a clear departure from Western efforts to isolate Moscow over its war in Ukraine.

Speaking to Russian state media, Sergei Ryabkov said a possible Putin-Trump summit could involve broad talks on global issues, not just the war in Ukraine.

"The question is about starting to move toward normalizing relations between our countries, finding ways to resolve the most acute and potentially very, very dangerous situations, of which there are many, Ukraine among them," he said.

But he said efforts to organize such a meeting are at an early stage, and that making it happen will require "the most intensive preparatory work."

Ryabkov added that U.S. and Russian envoys could meet within the next two weeks to pave the way for further talks among senior officials.

Russian and U.S. representatives meeting in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday agreed to start working toward ending the war in Ukraine and improving their diplomatic and economic ties, an extraordinary about-face in U.S. foreign policy under Trump. Senior U.S. officials have suggested Ukraine will have to give up its goals of joining NATO and retaining the 20% of its territory seized by Russia.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 80 of 91

After the meeting, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told The Associated Press the two sides agreed broadly to pursue three goals: to restore staffing at their respective embassies; to create a high-level team to support Ukraine peace talks; and to explore closer relations and economic cooperation.

He stressed, however, that the talks, which were attended by his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, and other senior Russian and U.S. official, marked the beginning of a conversation, and more work needs to be done. Lavrov, for his part, hailed the meeting as "very useful."

No Ukrainian officials were present at the Saudi meeting, which came as their beleaguered country is slowly but steadily losing ground against more numerous Russian troops, nearly three years after Moscow launched an all-out invasion of its smaller neighbor.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country would not accept any outcome from the talks since Kyiv didn't take part, and he postponed his own trip to Saudi Arabia scheduled for last Wednesday. European allies have also expressed concerns that they are being sidelined.

Trump appears to soften criticism of Kyiv

Trump on Friday appeared to walk back his earlier comments that falsely blamed Kyiv for starting the war, but insisted that Zelenskyy and former U.S. President Joe Biden should have done more to come to terms with Putin.

"Russia attacked, but they shouldn't have let him attack," he said during a radio interview with Brian Kilmeade of Fox News, referring to the Russian leader.

Russia's army crossed the border on Feb. 24, 2022, in an all-out invasion that Putin sought to justify by falsely saying it was needed to protect Russian-speaking civilians in eastern Ukraine and prevent the country from joining NATO.

Later on Friday, at the Oval Office, Trump told reporters that the war "doesn't affect the United States very much. It's on the other side of the ocean. It does affect Europe."

On Saturday, Trump acknowledged that Russia did invade Ukraine. "Russia was never going to go in. And they went in because of a lot of reasons, and so many people are dead," Trump said during a Saturday afternoon speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference in suburban Washington.

Trump noted that he's "dealing with" Putin and Zelenskyy.

"I think that thing is going to end," Trump said of the war. "It's got to end."

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, whose position on Ukraine has differed sharply from the European mainstream, appeared to echo some of the Trump administration's recent rhetoric on Saturday. He described Hungary's war-ravaged neighbor as a "buffer zone" between Russia and NATO and implied Budapest might block Kyiv's efforts to join the EU.

Ukraine's European allies

Thousands of people waving blue-and-yellow Ukrainian flags marched to the Russian Embassy in London on Saturday, demanding Ukraine be given more support and a place at the table in talks to end the three-year war.

Protesters chanted "Trump you're no friend, you're a traitor to Ukraine." Organizers called for the withdrawal of Russian troops and increased military aid to strengthen Kyiv's hand.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is due to visit Washington next week for talks focused on Ukraine. He has stressed that no decisions about the country's future can be made without Kyiv's involvement.

Starmer spoke to Zelenskyy on Saturday and reiterated "the U.K.'s ironclad support for Ukraine and commitment to securing a just and enduring peace to bring an end to Russia's illegal war," the prime minister's office said.

Ukraine's EU allies also seemed to rally around it, as the country's foreign minister on Friday and Saturday held a series of bilateral calls that he said aimed to coordinate diplomatic efforts at a time of intense uncertainty over Washington's position. According to Andrii Sybiha's social media posts, he has been speaking with top diplomats from France, Spain, Poland, Finland and the Baltic states, among others.

"Allowing Putin to succeed would have disastrous consequences for the stability and common way of life of every family in Europe and the U.S. The cost of appeasement will be paid by ordinary people," Sybiha said in a post on X on Saturday.

Warren Buffett offers Donald Trump some advice while celebrating Berkshire Hathaway's success

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — In his annual letter to shareholders Saturday, Warren Buffett celebrated the successes of Berkshire Hathaway's companies last year and in the 60 years since he took over a struggling New England textile company and began converting it into a massive conglomerate while offering some advice to President Donald Trump.

Buffett opened the letter by acknowledging that he has occasionally made mistakes over the years without offering many specific examples, but he assured shareholders that the man he has chosen to one day succeed him as CEO, Greg Abel, isn't one of them. He wrote that Abel will be ready to act whenever he spots significant investment opportunities, and he will continue writing an annual report like Buffett's to update shareholders. Buffett's letters are always popular among investors because of the insights he offers and his remarkable track record.

Buffett hardly reflected on his long tenure as CEO in the letter — unlike 10 years ago when he and his longtime investing partner Charlie Munger, who died in 2023, issued separate reflections on the company after 50 years of their leadership. But Berkshire will offer a special 60th anniversary book at the annual meeting with stories and lessons from the company's history.

Buffett cited the fact that Berkshire paid zero income tax in the decade before he took over in 1965 as a sure sign the investment was a mistake, but over time the amount Berkshire pays to the IRS has grown along with the conglomerate to hit \$26.8 billion last year — “far more in corporate income tax than the U.S. government had ever received from any company — even the American tech titans that commanded market values in the trillions.”

Buffett has hardly mentioned politics and current events in his recent letters — preferring to stay away from anything controversial that might hurt Berkshire's companies — but Saturday he urged the government to be responsible with the money he sends it.

“Thank you, Uncle Sam. Someday your nieces and nephews at Berkshire hope to send you even larger payments than we did in 2024. Spend it wisely. Take care of the many who, for no fault of their own, get the short straws in life. They deserve better. And never forget that we need you to maintain a stable currency and that result requires both wisdom and vigilance on your part,” Buffett wrote, reinforcing some of the Democratic ideals he has long supported.

CFRA Research analyst Cathy Seifert said, “I thought honestly in a very subtle way that was a powerful message.”

Investing power

Abel will have plenty of resources to work with when he eventually takes over given that Berkshire now holds \$334.2 billion cash after selling off much of its Apple and Bank of America stock in the past year and continuing to generate money from all its subsidiaries that include Geico insurance, BNSF railroad, a collection of major utilities and an assortment of major manufacturers and well-known retail businesses that include brands like Dairy Queen and See's Candy. That's almost double the \$167.6 billion cash Berkshire held a year ago.

Buffett did find a few things to use some of that cash on last year by spending \$3.9 billion to acquire the rest of its utility business from the estate of a former partner and another \$2.6 billion to buy the rest of the Pilot truck stop chain it didn't already own. Buffett said he also increased Berkshire's investment in five major Japanese conglomerates, and he'll likely invest more in them because those companies agreed to let Berkshire increase its ownership beyond 10%. Berkshire has now spent \$13.8 billion over the past six years on those Japanese investments that are now worth \$23.5 billion.

But while Buffett has struggled to find major acquisitions in recent years he affirmed that he has no plans to offer a dividend because he believes reinvesting the money will generate better returns.

Investor Bill Smead of Smead Capital Management said Buffett's actions show he's actually “bearish as hell but won't admit it.” He said Buffett doesn't want to scare people, but shareholders can look to his past

writings and his actions to see that he likely thinks the stock market is terribly expensive. And some of the best investment opportunities he's found in recent years have been outside the United States.

But Macrae Sykes, portfolio manager at Gabelli Funds, said Berkshire's cash pile should also be viewed as a key asset because it ensures "the competitive ability of Berkshire to respond with alacrity and at significant scale when motivated. Although infrequent, when the conglomerate does deploy it has historically led to measurable future returns."

Softening results?

Buffett said Berkshire did better than he expected last year even though 53% of the 189 companies it owns reported lower earnings in 2024. That's because Berkshire collected more interest on all of its short-term investments and its insurance units reported much higher profits.

The bottom-line profit numbers Berkshire reports can make it hard to see how its companies are really doing because the numbers include the paper value of all the company's investments, which can vary widely quarter to quarter. So Buffett has long recommended focusing on the operating profits.

In the fourth quarter, Berkshire earned \$19.69 billion profit, or \$13,695 per Class A share. That's a little over half the \$37.57 billion, or \$26,043 per Class A share, it reported a year ago. But the operating earnings tell a much different story. By that measure, operating profits were up substantially at \$14.5 billion, or \$10,102.07 per Class A share, from the previous year's \$8.5 billion, or \$5,878.21 per A share. The four analysts surveyed by FactSet Research predicted operating earnings of \$6,932 per share.

Edward Jones analyst Jim Shanahan said the weakness in Berkshire's operating companies is worrisome. "There may not be a better company to look at for a diversified look into the strength of the broader manufacturing, retail, consumer economy than Berkshire. And these results kind of look soft to me, and it makes me concerned about how strong the economy might really be right now," Shanahan said.

And Berkshire's earnings might decline throughout 2025 if that weakness persists, he said. The company also said it expects to record at least a \$1.3 billion loss in the first quarter on insurance claims related to the devastating California wildfires.

Changes at the Woodstock for capitalists

In what might be a nod to the 94-year-old Buffett's age, the legendary investor announced that this year's shareholder meeting in May that routinely attracts tens of thousands of people will be shorter. Buffett and Berkshire's two vice chairmen will only answer questions from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. — several hours less than usual. Buffett also acknowledged using a cane these days to avoid "falling flat on my face."

Buffett said this year there won't be a humorous movie that traditionally opens the meeting with an assortment of celebrity cameos, sketches and ads from Berkshire companies. But he assured shareholders there will still be plenty of time for them to buy products from all the Berkshire companies that set up booths in the exhibit hall adjoining the Omaha arena where the meeting is held.

Shopping mall roof collapse in northern Peru leaves 6 dead, 78 injured

LIMA, Peru (AP) — The collapse of a food court roof at a shopping mall in northwestern Peru killed six people and left at least 78 others injured, the defense minister said Saturday.

The heavy iron roof at the Real Plaza Trujillo shopping mall, a city in the La Libertad region, fell Friday night on dozens of people who were at the site.

Defense Minister Walter Astudillo said at a news conference that according to the information provided by local firefighters in La Libertad, five people died on site and a sixth at a hospital after the collapse.

Astudillo also said that 30 injured people have already been discharged and 48 remain hospitalized. Three remained in critical condition. The minister expressed his condolences to the victims' families.

Luis Roncal, head of the local fire department, confirmed that they "did not find any signs of life" as they monitored with rescue dogs, but that the search for survivors would continue.

Meanwhile, the mayor of Trujillo, Mario Reyna, announced the closure of the shopping center "due to imminent risk" and said his government wanted to inspect other centers.

Cholera kills 58 and sickens about 1,300 others over 3 days in a Sudanese city, health officials say

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — A cholera outbreak in a southern Sudanese city killed nearly 60 people and sickened about 1,300 others over the last three days, health authorities said Saturday.

The outbreak in the southern city of Kosti was blamed mainly on contaminated drinking water after the city's water supply facility was knocked out during an attack by a notorious paramilitary group, the health ministry said. The group has been fighting the country's military for about two years.

The ministry said in a statement the disease killed 58 people and sickened 1,293 others between Thursday and Saturday in Kosti, 420 kilometers (261 miles) south of the capital, Khartoum.

The ministry said it has taken a series of measures to fight the outbreak, including launching a vaccination campaign against cholera in the city, which lies on the west bank of the White Nile River, opposite Rabak, the capital of White Nile province.

The ministry said it also expanded the capacity of an isolation center in cooperation with the United Nations and other international medical groups.

Doctors without Borders said its cholera treatment center in the Kosti hospital has been overwhelmed, prompting health authorities to use adult and pediatric emergency rooms to provide additional space to treat stricken patients.

"The situation is really alarming and is about to get out of control," said Dr. Francis Layoo Ocan, the group's medical coordinator in Kosti. "We've run out of space, and we are now admitting patients in an open area and treating them on the floor because there are not enough beds."

The group said the White Nile River is the most likely source of infection in the city, as many families have been bringing water from it using donkey carts following a major power outage in the area.

Local authorities banned residents from collecting water from the river and reinforced chlorination in the water distribution system, said MSF, the abbreviation for the French name of the group, Medecins Sans Frontieres.

The disease killed more than 600 and sickened over 21,000 others in Sudan between July and October last year, mostly in the country's eastern areas where millions of people displaced by the conflict were located. Another major outbreak in 2017 left at least 700 dead and sickened about 22,000 in less than two months.

Cholera is a highly contagious disease that causes diarrhea leading to severe dehydration and can be fatal if not immediately treated, according to the World Health Organization. It's transmitted through the ingestion of contaminated food or water.

Sudan was plunged into chaos in April last year when simmering tensions between the military and a powerful paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces, exploded into open warfare across the country.

The fighting, which wrecked the capital, Khartoum, and other urban areas has been marked by atrocities including mass rape and ethnically motivated killings. They amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, especially in the western region of Darfur, according to the United Nations and international rights groups.

The war in Sudan has killed more than 24,000 people and driven over 14 million people — about 30% of the population — from their homes, according to the U.N. An estimated 3.2 million Sudanese have escaped to neighboring countries.

Musk's cost-cutting team is laying off workers at the auto safety agency overseeing his car company

By BERNARD CONDON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Elon Musk's cost-cutting team is eliminating jobs at the vehicle safety agency that oversees Tesla and has launched investigations into deadly crashes involving his company's cars.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has cut a "modest" amount of positions, according to a statement from the agency. Musk has accused NHTSA of holding back progress on self-driving technology with its investigations and recalls.

Asked about whether the cuts would impact any probes into Tesla, the agency referred to its statement that says it will "enforce the law on all manufacturers of motor vehicles and equipment."

The job cuts at NHTSA enacted by Musk's advisory group on shrinking the federal government, the Department of Government Efficiency, was earlier reported by The Washington Post.

In addition to investigations into Tesla's partially automated vehicles, NHTSA has mandated that Tesla and other automakers using self-driving technology report crash data on vehicles, a requirement that Tesla has criticized and that watchdogs fear could be eliminated.

The staff reductions have come through a combination of firings, buyouts and layoffs. The agency noted in its statement that the Biden administration had expanded its payroll, suggesting the smaller staff was sufficient to carry out its mission.

"Even with these modest efficiencies, NHTSA is still considerably larger today than it was four years ago," the statement said. "We have retained positions critical to the mission of saving lives, preventing injuries, and reducing economic costs due to road traffic crashes."

Leading contenders make their final appeals to German voters before a landmark election

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The contenders in Germany's election made their final appeals to voters Saturday, with opposition leader and front-runner Friedrich Merz vowing to revive the stagnant economy and defend Europe's interests in the face of a confrontational U.S. administration.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz, meanwhile, insisted that he still hopes for an improbable last-minute comeback.

Germans are electing a new parliament Sunday after a campaign focused on the state of Europe's biggest economy and calls to curb migration, while uncertainty has grown rapidly about the future of Ukraine and the strength of Europe's alliance with the United States.

It appears to have done little to shift parties' position in polls. They have consistently shown the center-right opposition, main challenger Merz's Union bloc, in the lead. It's ahead of the far-right, anti-immigration Alternative for Germany, which is on course for the strongest result for a far-right party since World War II, but has no other party willing to go into government with it.

Scholz's center-left Social Democrats have shown little sign of coming back from a large poll deficit after the chancellor's three-party coalition collapsed in November following a long-running argument about how to revitalize the economy. That led to the election being held seven months ahead of schedule.

At a closing rally in a Munich beer hall, Merz told supporters that "three years in opposition are enough."

Germany is a traditional leader of the 27-nation EU and the bloc's most populous member, but like fellow heavyweight France has been consumed in recent months by domestic instability. Merz said that "with me, Germany will have a strong voice in the European Union again."

"Europe must be a player and not ask maybe to get a seat at a side table," he said. "No, we must sit at the main table; and we must safeguard our interests against Russia, against China, and if necessary also with respect to America."

"Anyone who shows up there as a dwarf is treated as a dwarf and sent home as a dwarf," Merz added.

He said, however, that "we will only gain respect in this European Union again if ... we finally overcome

our country's economic weakness." He said that was "overwhelmingly homemade."

Merz also underscored his calls for a tougher stance on migration, which created friction in recent weeks. Last month, he brought a nonbinding motion calling for many more migrants to be turned back at Germany's borders to parliament. The motion was approved thanks to votes from Alternative for Germany, or AfD — a first in postwar Germany that prompted opponents to accuse Merz of breaking a taboo. He rejects the criticism.

"We will under no circumstances discuss any talks, never mind negotiations or a participation in government, with AfD," Merz said Saturday.

At an event in Potsdam, which he represents in parliament, Scholz again cast doubt on Merz's reliability and portrayed his party as the strongest bulwark against AfD playing any role.

"Anyone who wants to be sure this doesn't happen must ensure that there are strong Social Democrats and that they can provide the next chancellor," Merz said.

On the sidelines of an earlier event in Potsdam, Scholz said that he was "convinced that, this time, many people will only make their decision at the polling station."

"I don't believe in miracles, but in an election victory," he said, German news agency dpa reported.

If Merz does win, it's unclear whether he will be able to put together a two-party coalition or need a third partner, a more awkward prospect.

"If we govern, we need few partners and not an endless number of them," senior conservative ally Markus Söder said in Munich.

Chaotic scene unfolded as 3 were shot and killed outside Kentucky driver's license office

By DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Witnesses described a chaotic scene in which three people were shot and killed outside of a Kentucky driver's license office, including one man shot multiple times by masked assailants.

The Jefferson County Coroner's Office issued a statement late Friday identifying the victims from earlier in the day as ranging in age from 18 to 33 years old. Officers who responded around noon Friday found one man dead at the scene and two wounded women, who later died after being taken to a hospital, according to Louisville Metro Police Department.

The coroner's statement said that the man, 18-year-old Leslye M. Harbin Jr., died of multiple gunshot wounds at the scene, while the two women, 33-year-old Antwanette Chillers and 29-year-old Raysa Pacios Valdes, each died of a gunshot wound at a hospital.

Authorities have not said whether the victims knew each other or knew whoever was responsible for the shooting.

Witnesses said the chaos unfolded at the busy office, which had a line out the door. Jalen Eddings told WHAS-TV that he had gone to the office but went back to his car to wait out the long line when the shooting unfolded nearby. He said two masked men shot the man multiple times, including as he lay on the ground, before they ran off. He said he didn't see them fire at the women.

"Like I was just in shock, I couldn't believe it, it was like something off of a movie," Eddings said.

Numerous police responded to the shooting at a state Driver Licensing Office on the southern outskirts of Louisville. Police evidence markers were set on the ground around an area about 20 feet (about six meters) from the entrance to the building Friday afternoon.

Police Maj. Donald Boeckman said Friday that the shooter left in a vehicle. Boeckman did not have a description of the vehicle and said investigators were still reviewing surveillance video.

"It's absolutely a tragedy, and I'm surprised there wasn't more people injured," Boeckman said.

Aaron Ellis, a spokesman for the police department, said in an email Saturday that the department had no further updates to share about the search for suspects.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear posted a statement on social media calling the shooting "a senseless act of violence."

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, which operates the license office, said in a news release that security at the office locked down the building quickly after the shooting and that none of its employees were harmed.

Another witness, Ali Raza, told WHAS that he was inside the office when he "suddenly heard a lot of shots and the people were screaming."

He said that a security guard inside worked quickly by telling them to get on the ground.

"He told us to go back and get on the ground. He saved us basically," he said.

Get motivated to exercise regularly like these gym rats in their 70s and 80s

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

You know you should develop a regular exercise routine, but you lack motivation. Promises to yourself are quickly broken, and you never establish enough of the workout habit to experience any rewards.

Exercising as you age is important. It's not only good for physical health to help prevent falls or enable you to do basic tasks — exercise is also superb for the mind.

"If you want to be cognitively active, it is so important to be physically active," explained Dr. Amy Eyler, a professor of public health at Washington University in St. Louis. "There is a such a strong connection between these two behaviors."

Why make exercise part of my routine?

First, regular exercise helps maintain bone density and muscle strength. It also lowers the risk of heart disease and certain types of cancer.

For older people, regular exercise helps maintain strength and balance and allows them to live independently. Research also suggests the immune system may get a bump from physical activity.

There is also a psychological component. Successfully completing a daily exercise can improve one's mood and sense of self-satisfaction.

How to get started

Getting into the habit of doing regular physical activity can be difficult for some. The motivation to get moving is different for everyone.

Initially you'll need external motivation — I want to be able to play with my grandkids or keep driving the car — until you see results and the motivation shifts to internal, Eyler said.

"When you set a goal, you should ask yourself on a scale of 1 to 100, how confident am I that I can do this?" Eyler explained. "It has to be over the 90% level of confidence or you're not going to do it. Lots of people set these goal too high and then fail."

Build to your goals.

"Just walk whenever you can," Eyler said. "You can walk for 10 minutes pretty much anywhere — indoors, at work, at home."

And, if you're trying to encourage others, look for positive reasons rather than nagging.

"Telling someone they will be more independent if they take their blood pressure medicine is better than — take your blood pressure medicine," she said.

Here are some tips about how to start — and how to stay with it — from three gym rats between the ages of 77 and 86. All got started late and have stayed with it. All three work out with Dr. Irv Rubenstein, an exercise scientist who runs STEPS Fitness in Nashville, Tennessee.

I always hated gym class

Kathryn Dettwiller, 77, got pushed into exercising 34 years ago by her husband.

"I always hated gym class," she said. "I always hated getting down on the floor."

She works out in a gym twice a week with a trainer, which she said gives her added discipline and motivation.

"The external has become internal because I realize I need it," she said. She cautioned beginners to expect some setbacks — minor injuries — and not to be discouraged.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 87 of 91

"Try it as soon as your body starts playing out on you," she said. "It's like a game of Whack-A-Mole. One time your leg hurts, the next time it's your back."

It added structure to his life

Rick Bolsom, 82, enjoys the structure of having a trainer. In his case, his wife got him started almost two decades ago and he's into a three-times-a-week routine.

"I kept doing it because I had a sense of feeling better," he said. "The key to me was probably doing it with a trainer. The structure really helped me to continue with it. Now it's just become part of my life."

"I couldn't imagine quitting it," he added. "I work out as vigorously as I did 15, 18 years ago. It turned out to be the smart thing to do."

Bolsom also added in the social aspect to training in a gym or studio.

"I retired a few years ago. You do miss the connectivity with people."

Flattery will get you everywhere

Dr. Grover Smith, a retired radiologist, is 86 and still going strong. He attributes this partly to training regularly in a gym three times a week, a habit he didn't start until he was 74 and well into retirement. He was coaxed to go after several visits to his cardiologist.

He said he went after the fourth time his cardiologist suggested it, although he was not having any specific heart problems. His plan was to go once to appease the cardiologist and that would be it. That was more than a decade ago.

"Medicine was basically my life and it was very time consuming," Smith said. "It was sometimes seven days a week and I didn't have time for a lot of other things."

He's not only fit, but now he also gets flattered.

He tells the story about a recent visit to a doctor who, after looking at his charts, told him: "Dr. Smith, you look 15 years younger than your age."

Smith laughed as he added the punchline.

"I would have told her to get her eyes examined — except she's an ophthalmologist," he quipped.

Trump moves with light speed and brute force in shaking the core of what America has been

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is moving with light speed and brute force to break the existing order and reshape America at home and abroad. He likes the ring of calling himself king.

No one can absorb it all. By the time you try to process one big thing — he covets Greenland, Canada, the Panama Canal and the Gaza Strip; he turns away from historic alliances and Ukraine; fires many thousands of federal workers, then brings some right back; raises doubts whether he will obey laws he doesn't like; orders an about-face in the missions of department after department; declares there are only two genders; announces heavy tariffs, suspends them, then imposes some — three more big things have happened.

Trump's core supporters are thrilled. Those who don't like him watch in horror. The nation is far from any consensus on what makes America great and what may make it sink.

What's undeniable is that Trump has ushered in the sharpest change of direction for the country at least since Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Great Depression. But the long-term implications of his national reset, and by extension Trump's own legacy, cannot yet be determined.

"Make American Great Again" figure Steve Bannon calls all this action "muzzle velocity" — firing every way at once to confuse the enemy. The barrage has left a variety of foreign leaders and many public servants picking figurative buckshot out of their backsides.

Paul Light, an expert on the workings of government, reaches for another analogy: "It's the never-ending volcano. It just doesn't stop, and it's hot."

Says Max Stier of the Partnership for Public Service: "We're essentially playing Russian roulette and they just added a bunch more bullets to the chamber."

Or is it instead a "controlled burn," as Kevin Roberts, an architect of the conservative Heritage Founda-

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 88 of 91

tion's Project 2025, puts it? "A controlled burn destroys the dangerous deadwood so that the whole forest can flourish," he asserts.

Trump's political opponents are mulling which fights are worth fighting, out of so many to choose from. "Democrats," said one of them, Rep. Jake Auchincloss of Massachusetts, "are not going to engage in the outrage Olympics."

Polls suggest slightly less than half of U.S. adults like the Republican's handling of his job, a tick better than Democrat Joe Biden's approval when he left the White House in January.

In his first month, Trump performed a pirouette in foreign policy, disavowing the age-old commitment to defend fellow NATO members if they are attacked, reaching out to Russia and suspending most U.S. foreign aid. Washington, Ukraine's steadfast supporter for three years, has suddenly become its scold.

At home, Trump's explosion of executive orders and marching orders reaches beyond the workings of government and into the culture.

Corporate boardrooms as well as government itself are shedding their diversity, equity and inclusion programs in alignment with the nascent new order, though a judge on Friday largely blocked Trump's mandate. Institutions are also being pressed to abandon any recognition of or accommodations for transgender people, at risk of losing federal money if they don't.

How much all of this sticks will largely depend on courts. The Republican-controlled Congress has been compliant as Trump pursues his ends by executive action instead of legislation.

Longtime Republican articles of faith such as support for free trade and strong U.S.-led security guarantees against foreign adversaries have been lost in the din.

Republicans have also historically preached the virtues of letting state and local governments make decisions about their communities without dictates from Washington. But the Trump administration did just that this past week, halting New York City's new commuter tolls.

Trump was quick to take credit. "Long live the king," he posted in all-caps, meaning himself.

In the civil service upheaval, a blanket staff reduction has been combined with the targeted firing of senior officials deemed disloyal to Trump or otherwise an impediment. Multitudes of nonpolitical public servants, normally left in place when new presidents come in, are out.

Senior officials responsible for keeping agencies honest and accountable were among those purged. Nearly 20 departmental inspectors general were fired without the legally required 30 days notice. Trump also terminated a dozen federal career prosecutors who had worked on criminal cases brought against him, striking at the heart of what he calls the "deep state."

Congress, which holds the power of the purse, is letting the president exercise it instead, so far leaving federal judges to decide when to rein him in. The early result has been massive cuts or freezes in grants and other spending that Congress approved in law, but Trump is stopping solo if courts let him.

"The last month has been entirely distinctive in American history," said Cal Jillson, a constitutional and presidential scholar at Southern Methodist University. "We have never had an American president who moved this decisively in the face of the law and the Constitution. We are in a dangerous place."

To Trump and Elon Musk, though, a challenge to democracy comes not from them but from the unelected officials who resist the agenda of a duly elected president.

"There's a vast federal bureaucracy that is implacably opposed to the the president and the Cabinet," said Musk, the titan leading Trump's scouring of the civil service. "If the will of the president is not implemented and the president is representative of the people, that means the will of the people is not being implemented. "And that means we don't live in a democracy."

Some polls this month carry warning signs for Trump as he pursues his extraordinary course. More than half of adults in a Washington Post/Ipsos survey (57%) said he has exceeded his authority since taking office. More than half in a CNN/SSRS poll (55%) said he hasn't paid attention to the most pressing problems.

In essence, though, this is a half-and-half country that Trump is responsible for leading the whole of. For vast numbers of Americans, he can do no wrong, or no right, depending which side you are on.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 89 of 91

Trump moves with light speed and brute force in shaking the core of what America has been

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Says Max Stier, president and CEO of the Partnership for Public Service: "We're essentially playing Russian roulette and they just added a bunch more bullets to the chamber."

Or is it instead a "controlled burn," as Kevin Roberts, an architect of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, puts it? "A controlled burn destroys the dangerous deadwood so that the whole forest can flourish," he asserts. Project 2025 offered Trump a preelection blueprint for some of what is happening now.

Some 75,000 federal workers accepted the new administration's "deferred resignation" proposal in exchange for financial incentives, and tens of thousands more have been laid off or are in line to be, out of a civilian federal workforce of about 2.4 million, excluding postal workers.

Democrats, the minority in Congress, and the broader political opposition are mulling which fights are worth fighting and which are not, out of so many to choose from. "Democrats," said one of them, Rep. Jake Auchincloss of Massachusetts, "are not going to engage in the outrage Olympics."

At the moment, polls suggest slightly less than half of U.S. adults like the Republican president's handling of his job, a tick better than Democrat Joe Biden's approval when he left office in January. That sentiment could shift for the better or worse in an hour, after the next big things.

He brings Russia in from the cold

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How much all of this sticks will largely depend on courts, which appear to be the only check on Trump's expansive use of executive power. The Republican-controlled Congress has been compliant as Trump pursues his ends by executive action instead of legislation.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 90 of 91

Trump "has issued about a squillion executive orders," Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., said a while back. "I'm still trying to read them."

Longtime Republican articles of faith such as support for free trade and strong U.S.-led security guarantees against foreign adversaries have been lost in the din, if not discarded.

'Long live the king'

Republicans have historically preached the virtues of letting state and local governments make decisions about their communities without the federal government calling the shots. But the Trump administration did just that this past week, halting New York City's new commuter tolls for driving into Manhattan. Trump was quick to take credit.

"Long live the king," he posted in all-caps, meaning himself. The White House circulated an image of him wearing a crown.

In the civil service upheaval, a blanket staff reduction, largely of thousands of newer employees with fewer job protections, has been combined with the targeted firing of senior officials deemed disloyal to Trump or otherwise an impediment. Multitudes of nonpolitical public servants, normally left in place when new presidents come in, are out.

Senior officials responsible for keeping agencies honest and accountable were among those purged. Nearly 20 departmental inspectors general were fired late one night without the legally required 30 days notice. Trump also dismissed the head of the Office of Government Ethics, an agency that protects government whistleblowers; the Supreme Court on Friday temporarily kept the official on the job.

Trump terminated a dozen federal career prosecutors who had worked on criminal cases brought against him, striking at the heart of what he calls the "deep state."

'We are in a dangerous place'

Congress, which holds the power of the purse, is letting the president exercise it instead, so far leaving federal judges to decide when to rein him in. The early result has been massive cuts or freezes in grants and other spending that Congress approved in law, but Trump is stopping on his own, if courts let him.

"The last month has been entirely distinctive in American history," said Cal Jillson, a constitutional and presidential scholar at Southern Methodist University. "We have never had an American president who moved this decisively in the face of the law and the Constitution. We are in a dangerous place."

Jillson and other historians say such tumult in the machinery of government has only come in reaction to dire emergencies: states leaving the union before the Civil War, FDR's New Deal thrust in the depths of the Great Depression, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society burst of programs when taking office after John Kennedy's assassination.

No catastrophes of such magnitude greeted Trump. Illegal border crossings that had surged during the Biden administration, for example, subsided before Biden left office. Even so, Trump let loose in all the ways he telegraphed, and in most cases promised, in the campaign.

To Trump and Elon Musk, though, a challenge to democracy comes not from their efforts to upend the bureaucracy but from the bureaucracy itself — the unelected officials who resist the agenda of a duly elected president.

"There's a vast federal bureaucracy that is implacably opposed to the the president and the Cabinet," Musk told "Hannity" on Fox News Channel this past week in an interview joined by Trump. Musk, the Tesla, SpaceX and X titan, is leading Trump's scouring of the civil service.

"If the will of the president is not implemented and the president is representative of the people, that means the will of the people is not being implemented," Musk said. "And that means we don't live in a democracy. We live in a bureaucracy."

Chaos is a feature, not a bug

Light, author of several dozen books on the workings of government, said times like these can yield positive results. "Every once in a while you have to scrub down the operation."

But this chaos, he said, is both intentional and corrosive, exposing the country to the inadequacy of a hollowed-out civil service when the next crisis comes, whether it's a pandemic, a hurricane, a war or a massive IT attack.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 243 ~ 91 of 91

“That’s Trump’s basic MO — keep people jumping,” he said. Trump “really doesn’t know anything except breaking things.”

Some polls done this month carry warning signs for Trump as he pursues his audacious course. More than half of adults in a Washington Post/Ipsos survey (57%) said he has exceeded his authority since taking office. More than half in a CNN/SSRS poll (55%) said he hasn’t paid attention to the most pressing problems.

In essence, though, this is a half-and-half country that Trump is responsible for leading the whole of. For vast numbers of Americans, he can do no wrong, or no right, depending which side you are on.

Today in History: February 23, Marines raise flag on Iwo Jima

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, Feb. 23, the 54th day of 2025. There are 311 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 23, 1945, during World War II, U.S. Marines on Iwo Jima captured Mount Suribachi, where they raised two American flags. (The second flag-raising was captured in an iconic photograph by Joe Rosenthal of The Associated Press.)

Also on this date:

In 1836, the siege of the Alamo by Mexican troops began in San Antonio, Texas.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt signed an agreement with Cuba to lease the area around Guantanamo Bay to the United States.

In 1942, the first shelling of the U.S. mainland during World War II occurred as a Japanese submarine fired on an oil refinery near Santa Barbara, California.

In 1980, American Eric Heiden completed his sweep of the five men’s speed skating events at the Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid, New York, by winning the men’s 10,000-meter race in world record time; Heiden was the first athlete to win five gold medals in a single Winter Olympics.

In 2011, in a major policy reversal, the Obama administration said it would no longer defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act, a federal law banning recognition of same-sex marriage.

In 2020, Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man, was fatally shot on a residential Georgia street; a white father and son had armed themselves and pursued him after seeing him running through their neighborhood. (Greg and Travis McMichael and neighbor William “Roddie” Bryan were convicted of murder, aggravated assault and other charges and were sentenced to life in prison.)

In 2021, golfer Tiger Woods was seriously injured when his SUV crashed into a median and rolled over several times on a steep road in suburban Los Angeles.

In 2023, a federal judge handed singer R. Kelly a 20-year prison sentence for his convictions that include producing child sexual abuse materials and federal sex trafficking charges., but said he would serve nearly all of the sentence simultaneously with a 30-year sentence imposed a year earlier on racketeering charges.

Today’s birthdays: Football Hall of Famer Fred Biletnikoff is 82. Actor Patricia Richardson is 74. Singer Howard Jones is 70. Japanese Emperor Naruhito is 65. Actor Kristin Davis is 60. Business executive Michael Dell is 60. TV personality-business executive Daymond John is 56. Actor Niecy Nash is 55. Democratic Sen. Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland is 54. Country singer Steve Holy is 53. Actor Kelly Macdonald is 49. Rapper Residente, born René Juan Pérez Joglar, is 47. Actor Josh Gad is 44. Actor Emily Blunt is 42. Actor Aziz Ansari is 42. Actor Dakota Fanning is 31.