

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Upcoming Events

**Friday & Saturday, Nov. 12-13**

Debate & Oral Interp at SF Washington

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

**OPEN:** **Recycling Trailer in Groton**  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
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Harvest for many farmers started early this year, but with the fall rains, it was just finished up prior to Wednesday's rain. Pictured are harvest scenes of Gary, Jon, Gavin Voss Farms. Three generations of family farmers. From left to right are Gary Voss, Gavin Voss, Jerad Shepherd, Mark Anderson, Jon Voss, Kevin Evenson, and Bruce Babcock. (Courtesy Photos)



## Autonomous difficulty in quarterfinals cost them advancement points at Canton Tournament

Groton Robotics traveled down to Canton on Saturday, October 30th for their first Vex/robotics tournament of the year competing against 19 other robotics teams from South Dakota. Three teams participated: Gear Heads 9050B (Jack Dinger, Ethan Clark, not-present Axel Warrington), G-Force 9050A (Travis Townsend, Jace Kroll), Gladiator 9050F (Garrett Schultz, Bradyn Wienk, not present Isaac Higgins).

The teams started building their robots in June and worked about 3-4 hours a week building and programming their robot based on the challenge set up new each year by Vex Robotics (see attached information regarding the challenge and points). Our new team this year, Gladiators-headed by Garret Schultz and members Bradyn and Issac worked hard designing and programming focusing on collecting the rings to gain points. Great job to the Gladiators for designing and building their own robot for the first time! One of the most frustrating aspects for new robotists, everything is self-taught and older robotists mentor the younger ones. Robotists build and program from trial and error, all a learning experience, each tournament builds on the previous, sometimes the entire robot gets tore apart after a tournament!!

The competition starts off with 34 qualifying matches, each team competing 7 times. At the end of the 34 qualifying matches Gear Heads was ranked 2nd, G-Force ranked 6th, Gladiators ranked 19th.

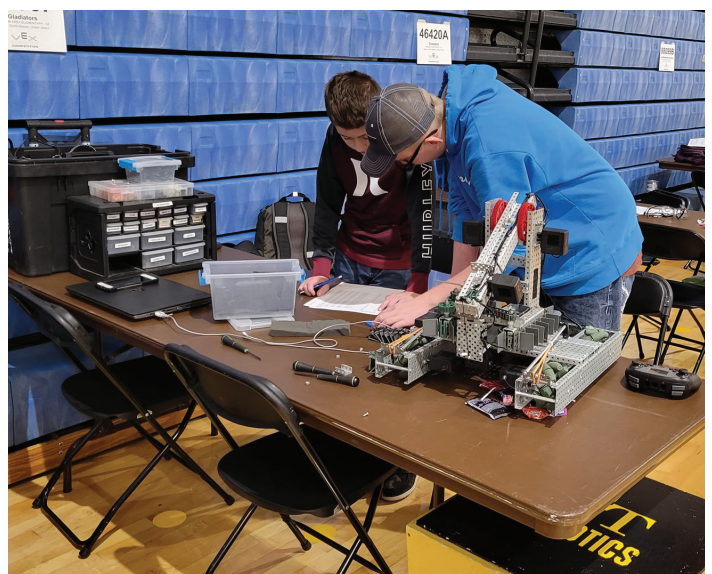
After the 34 qualifying matches 18 teams go into the tournament determined by an alliance selection. Each team choses a tournament partner starting with the team that is ranked first and down the line. Gear Heads was ranked #2 going into the tournament and chose G-Force to partner with against the appointment in the tournament. In the quarter final match they ran into some difficulties with their autonomous (see definition in challenge description) not working properly after successfully running during all the qualifying matches and lost 123-129. This cost them the 6 extra points they could have used to move on to the next round.

Tournament champions were from Harrisburg and North Sioux City. Congratulations to all the robotists who participated! Groton's next tournament will be Saturday, November, 13th as they travel down to Mitchell. MARK YOUR CALENDAR as Groton will be hosting one tournament this year on Saturday, January 8th. For more information check out the vex VRC robotics website, download the VEX via app and follow Groton Tiger Robotics on facebook. Thanks to all who support Groton Robotics!



**Jack Dinger and Ethan Clark reviewing the rules before the tournament.** (Photo submitted by

Weston Dinger)



**Garrett Schultz and Bradyn Wienk checking the schedule before the tournament starts.**

(Photo submitted by Weston Dinger)

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**Travis Townsend and Jace Kroll doing some last minute programming before the tournament starts.** (Photo submitted by Weston Dinger)



**Garrett Schultz and Bradyn Wienk from the Gladiators waiting for the referees to tally scores.** (Photo submitted by Weston Dinger)



**The Gear Heads, Jack and Ethan pair with G-Force, Travis and Jace.** (Photo submitted by Weston Dinger)

**Groton Post No. 39 American Legion**



# *Annual*



# *Turkey Party*

**Saturday, Nov. 13, 2021**

**Starting at 6:30 p.m.**

Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon  
to be given away

**FREE ADMISSION**

**DOOR  
PRIZE!**

Lunch served  
by Auxiliary



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## Call to get an ADT Security System + Get a \$100 ADT Visa Reward Card FREE\*

ADT's 24/7 monitoring plus top of the line security cameras help ensure your loved ones are safe – whether you're out and about or in the next room.



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\*\$100 ADT Visa Reward Card: Requires 36-month monitoring contract starting at \$28.99/mo. (24-month monitoring contract in California, total fees from \$695.76), and enrollment in ADT EasyPay. Requires minimum purchase price of \$449. One (1) Visa Reward Card valued at \$100 is redeemable seven (7) days after system is installed, wherein an email is sent to the customer's email address associated with their account with a promo code. The customer must validate the promo code on the website provided in the email and a physical card will be sent in the mail. Installation must occur within 60 days of offer expiration date to receive card. Applicable to new and resale sale types only. Card is issued by MetaBank®, N.A., Member FDIC, pursuant to a license from Visa U.S.A. Inc. No cash access or recurring payments. Can be used everywhere Visa debit cards are accepted. Card valid for up to 6 months; unused funds will forfeit after the valid thru date. Card terms and conditions apply. Interactive Services: ADT Command Interactive Solutions Services ("ADT Command") helps you manage your home environment and family lifestyle. Requires purchase of an ADT alarm system with 36-month monitoring contract ranging from \$45.99-\$59.99/mo. with GSP (24-month monitoring contract in California, total fees ranging \$1,103.76-\$1,439.76), enrollment in ADT EasyPay, and a compatible device with Internet and email access. These interactive services do not cover the operation or maintenance of any household equipment/systems that are connected to the ADT Command equipment. All ADT Command services are not available with all interactive service levels. All ADT Command services may not be available in all geographic areas. You may be required to pay additional charges to purchase equipment required to utilize the interactive service features you desire.

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\* **Only \$23.99** (reg. \$37.99) plus \$5.99 shipping and handling per pack to 48 contiguous states. Some restrictions may apply. **IC: H2YH39**



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- 4 Gourmet Jumbo Franks (3 oz.)
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- 1 jar Signature Seasoning (3.1 oz. jar)
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65658TLN separately \$223.93\* **\$99.99**  
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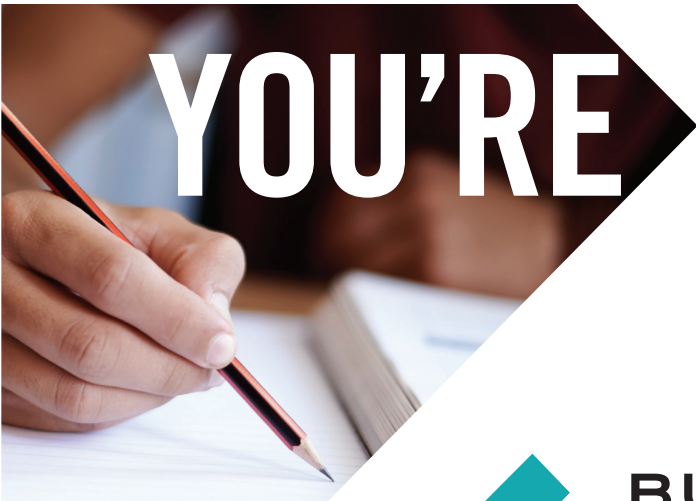
Ask for free burgers with offer 65658TLN

\*Savings shown over aggregated single item base price. Limit 2. 8 free (5.3 oz.) Filet Mignon Burgers will be sent to each shipping address that includes (65658). Free product(s) may be substituted. Standard S&H added per address. Offer available while supplies last. Items may be substituted due to inventory limitations. Cannot be combined with other offers. Other restrictions may apply. All purchases acknowledge acceptance of Terms of Use. Visit omahasteaks.com/terms-of-useOSI or call 1-800-228-9872 for a copy. Expires 12/31/21. ©2021 OCG | Omaha Steaks, Inc.



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# YOU'RE INVITED!



Please join us to learn about strategies to build your workforce and your future with this full-ride scholarship opportunity.

## EVENT DETAILS

DATE: Tuesday, November 30, 2021

TIME: 10:30-11:10am CST

LOCATION: Groton School District  
502 N 2nd Street  
Groton, SD 57445

CONTACT: Becky Hubsch- 605.397.8381 or [Becky.Hubsch@k12.sd.us](mailto:Becky.Hubsch@k12.sd.us)

## CALLING ALL

STUDENTS | PARENTS | INDUSTRY CEOs/HUMAN RESOURCES |  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS | NEWSPAPERS |  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS | HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

For more information about the Build Dakota Scholarship Fund and additional partner programs, visit [builddakotascholarships.com](http://builddakotascholarships.com).





## **Groton Residential Development Meeting**

Monday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon

At the Groton Community Center

Welcoming Casey Crabtree, Director of Economic Development

The Groton City Council invites you to join our open meeting in effort to add residential development to the Groton Community!



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## FREE DATE CHANGES



FROM  
\$2,549\*  
**\$2,299\***

### BEST OF HAWAII FOUR-ISLAND TOUR

12 days, departs year-round

**Oahu • Hawaii Island • Kauai • Maui**  
— Enjoy a fully guided 4-island Hawaiian vacation with centrally located lodging in Waikiki on Oahu, and beachfront lodging on the “Big Island” of Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui. Guided throughout by our friendly Tour Directors—your local experts. Includes 3 inter-island flights.



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Visit Denali and Glacier Bay on the same incredible trip! Cruise through the Gulf of Alaska and the Inside Passage as you discover the best of the Frontier State by land and by sea.



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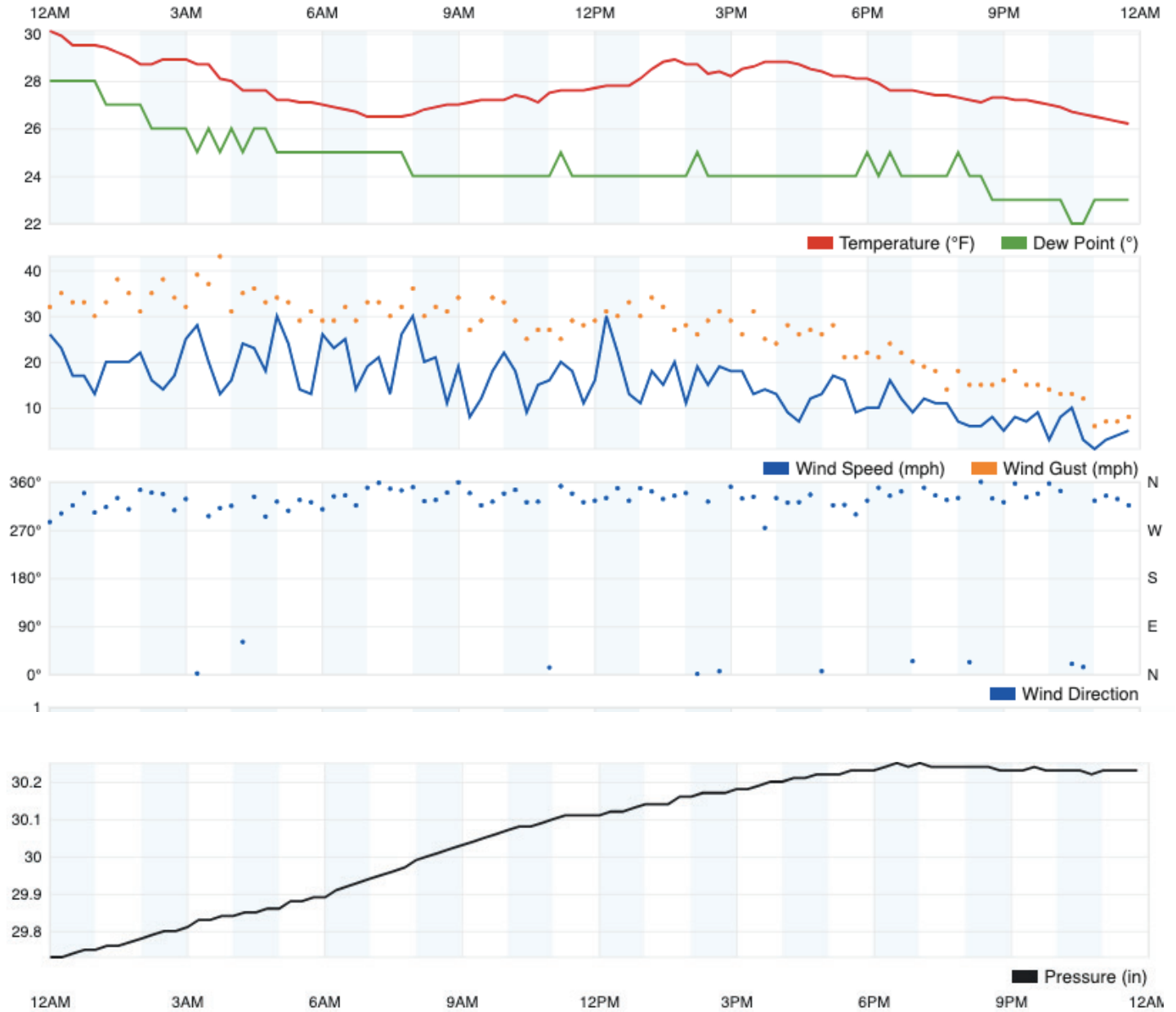
**CALL 1-833-581-1380**

\* Prices are per person based on double occupancy plus up to \$299 in taxes & fees. Single supplement and seasonal surcharges may apply. Add-on airfare available. Free date changes prior to final payment. Deposits and final payments are non-refundable. Onboard Credit requires purchase of Ocean View or Balcony Cabin. Offers apply to new bookings only, made by 12/31/21. Other terms & conditions may apply. Ask your Travel Consultant for details.

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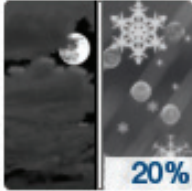

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
 70% → 40%	 30%		 20%	 20%
Snow Likely then Chance Rain/Sleet	Blustery. Chance Rain then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow/Sleet	Slight Chance Wintry Mix then Mostly Sunny
<b>High: 40 °F</b>	<b>Low: 24 °F</b>	<b>High: 39 °F</b>	<b>Low: 28 °F</b>	<b>High: 52 °F</b>



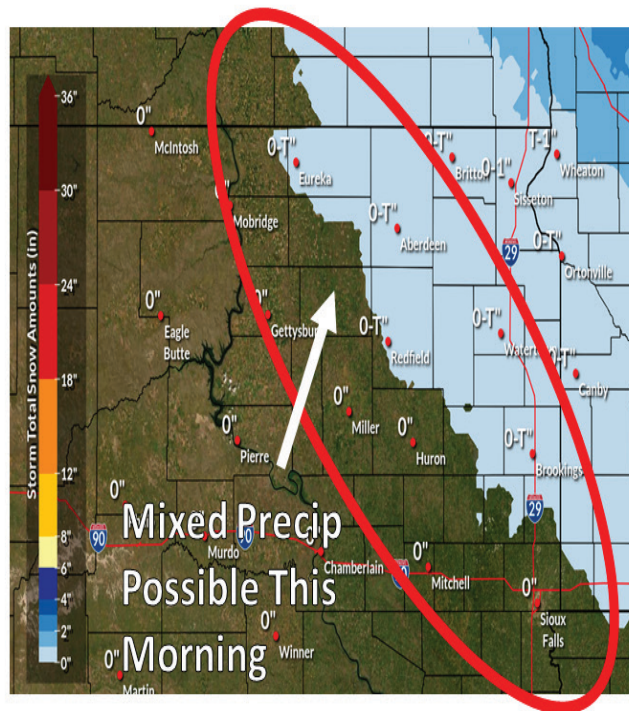
## Mixed Precipitation Today

A clipper-like system will track across the region today, with mixed precip types possible this morning. (rain/snow/freezing rain/sleet)

Gusty winds likely again behind the system later today and this evening.



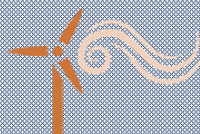
## Possible Snow Amounts Through This Evening



A quick moving storm will bring some mixed precipitation to the region today. Snow amounts should be fairly light, with the highest chances for measurable expected over northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. #sdwx #mnwx

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The wind will increase again later this morning!

A system moving through today will again lead to increased winds over the region. The strongest winds should occur over the Missouri valley



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

## Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	11/13 Sat						11/14 Sun		
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am
<b>Aberdeen</b>	16	24	25	29	35	38	30	23	15
<b>Britton</b>	14	23	31	30	29	32	31	23	17
<b>Eagle Butte</b>	21	31	43	48	49	40	33	29	23
<b>Eureka</b>	18	23	26	38	44	38	32	23	18
<b>Gettysburg</b>	20	24	35	44	47	40	35	28	21
<b>Kennebec</b>	15	18	32	40	39	43	33	29	21
<b>McIntosh</b>	21	37	47	51	52	41	32	28	24
<b>Milbank</b>	9	13	21	22	22	30	30	26	20
<b>Miller</b>	17	23	29	35	38	38	32	26	20
<b>Mobridge</b>	18	22	36	43	45	38	30	23	17
<b>Murdo</b>	14	28	39	46	45	43	35	29	23
<b>Pierre</b>	14	14	31	40	45	43	32	24	20
<b>Redfield</b>	16	23	23	26	36	38	32	24	16
<b>Sisseton</b>	10	15	24	23	28	32	31	26	20
<b>Watertown</b>	10	18	25	26	32	37	33	28	23
<b>Wheaton</b>	8	13	21	22	20	26	29	25	20

\*Table values in mph

\*\*Created: 3 am CST Sat 11/13/2021

\*\*\*Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

The wind will increase again today behind a system moving over the Northern Plains.

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## Today in Weather History

November 13, 1985: Snowfall of 4 to 8 inches spread from the southwest part of South Dakota on the morning of the 13th to the northeast part of the state by early morning on the 14th. Winds gusted to 35 mph in the western half of the state and produced considerable blowing and drifting snow, which significantly reduced visibilities. The snowfall caused many accidents, including a four-vehicle pileup that occurred three miles east of De Smet in Kingsbury County, during the afternoon of the 13th. Some snowfall amounts include; 7.0 inches in Britton; 5.5 inches in Timber Lake and 5.0 inches in Leola.

1833: In 1833, observers were familiar with the Leonid meteor shower, but the event that year was very intense and leads to the first formulation of a theory on the origin of meteors. By some estimates, the 1833 Leonid meteor shower had 240,000 meteors in a nine-hour period.

1933 - The first dust storm of the great dust bowl era of the 1930s occurred. The dust storm, which had spread from Montana to the Ohio Valley the day before, prevailed from Georgia to Maine resulting in a black rain over New York and a brown snow in Vermont. Parts of South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa reported zero visibility on the 12th. On the 13th, dust reduced the visibility to half a mile in Tennessee. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1946: General Electric scientists produced snow in the Massachusetts Berkshires in the first modern-day cloud seeding experiment. Scientist Vincent Schaefer dropped six pounds of dry ice pellets into a cloud over Pittsfield, MA. The cloud seeding experiment produced snowfall, as a 4-mile long cloud was converted into snow flurries. The success of the experiment became the basis of many weather modification projects.

1953 - Strong southeasterly winds associated with a Pacific cold front reached 70 mph at Sacramento CA to equal their all-time record. The previous record had been established in a similar weather pattern on December 12th of the previous year. (The Weather Channel)

1981 - A powerful cyclone brought high winds to Washington State and Oregon. The cyclone, which formed about 1000 miles west of San Francisco, intensified rapidly as it approached the Oregon coast with the central pressure reaching 28.22 inches (956 millibars). A wind trace from the Whiskey Run Turbine Site, about 12 miles south of Coos Bay in Oregon, showed peak gusts to 97 mph fifty feet above ground level. The wind caused widespread damage in Washington and Oregon, with 12 deaths reported. As much as four feet of snow fell in the Sierra Nevada Range of northern California. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm moving off the Pacific Ocean produced rain and gale force winds along the northern and central Pacific coast, and heavy snow in the Cascade Mountains. Cold weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Five cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Asheville NC with a reading of 21 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure brought rain and snow and gusty winds to the northeastern U.S. A thunderstorm drenched Agawam MA with 1.25 inches of rain in fifteen minutes. Winds gusted to 58 mph at Nantucket MA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thirty-two cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s as far north as Michigan and Pennsylvania. Afternoon highs in the 80s were reported from the Southern Plains to the southern Atlantic coast. Columbia SC reported a record high of 86 degrees, and the high of 71 degrees at Flint MI was their warmest of record for so late in the season. (The National Weather Summary)

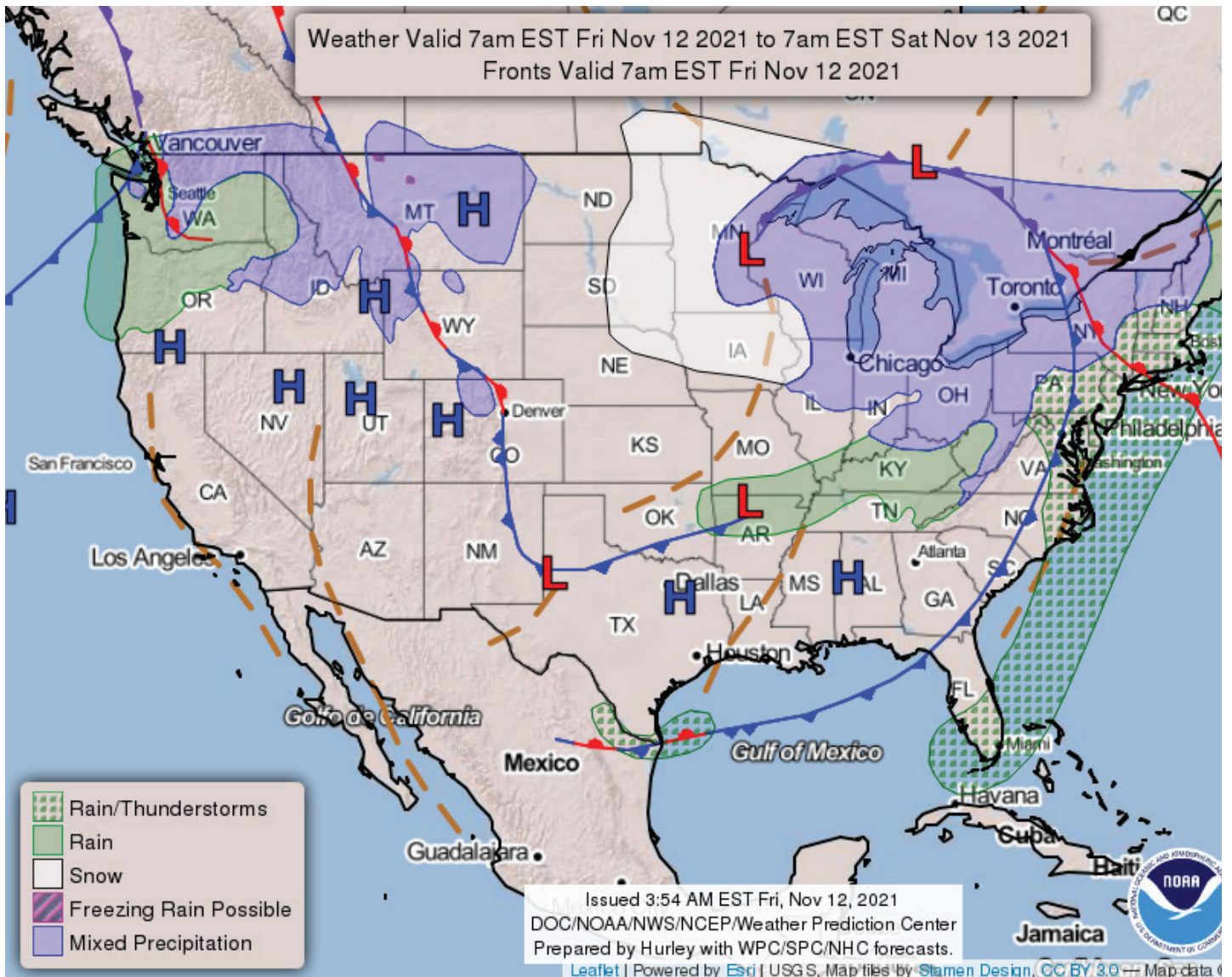
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 30.1 °F at Midnight**  
**Low Temp: 26.2 °F at 11:45 PM**  
**Wind: 43 mph at 3:45 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

**Record High: 71° in 2016**  
**Record Low: -11° in 1919**  
**Average High: 44°F**  
**Average Low: 20°F**  
**Average Precip in Nov.: 0.38**  
**Precip to date in Nov.: 0.13**  
**Average Precip to date: 20.85**  
**Precip Year to Date: 19.85**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:05:51 PM**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:29:00 AM**





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## FROM HUMILIATION TO EXALTATION

One evening when my son John came home from football practice, I noticed that his arms and hands had an unusual number of cuts and bruises on them. "What happened?" I asked.

"Have you ever noticed, Dad," he replied, "that pain is optional, but suffering isn't? I wanted to be on the starting team, so I knew it would take some 'pain' on my part. I'd been 'playing,' and now I wanted the coach to know I could be a 'winner' at football."

The Psalmist reminded us that Joseph was sold as a slave, and that "They bruised his feet with shackles and that his neck was put in irons, till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the Lord proved him true."

Tucked away in the great plan that God has for each of us is our fair share of suffering. After Joseph was sold into slavery, he did not complain about his situation. He persevered through the horrible conditions that were placed on him. By honoring God, the King honored him.

When he was tempted by King Potiphar's wife, he resisted her seductive behaviors. She did everything she could do to seduce him, but through his dependence on God, he did not give in to his passions. And, when she grabbed him physically, he was able to escape through God's strength. When she lied about him, he was thrown into prison. And, rather than becoming bitter, he became better. Because he was true to God, he triumphed and eventually became the premier of Egypt. His path to power was through pain and imprisonment. If we are true to God in our times of trial, we will be triumphant.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to be faithful to You, knowing that temptation and suffering is part of Your plan for us. Help us to trust You for the final triumph. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And he sent a man before them - Joseph, sold as a slave. Psalm 105:17

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## 2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)  
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)  
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS  
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.  
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament  
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon  
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament  
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament  
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton  
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament  
**Cancelled** Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)  
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)  
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)  
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
10/29/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)  
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/11/2021 Veteran's Day Program at the GHS Arena  
11/21/2021 Groton Area Snow Queen Contest  
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
11/30/2021 James Valley Telecommunications Holiday Open House 10am-4pm  
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes  
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White..... \$41.54/year
- Colored ..... \$74.55/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$21.30/year

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

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Groton, SD 57445-0034

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News from the  Associated Press

## Friday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined

PREP FOOTBALL=

SDHSAA State Championship=

Class 11A=

Madison 31, Milbank 0

Class 11AA=

Pierre 30, Tea Area 27

Class 11B=

Winner 40, Bridgewater-Emery 8

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

Information from: ScoreStream Inc., <http://ScoreStream.com>

## Emmy-winning Yankton man finds retirement job in hardware

By CORA VAN OLSON Yankton Press And Dakotan

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Sometimes, the road less traveled has some interesting turns.

Emmy Award winner John McCuin has been quietly living in Yankton with his family for the last 10 years. Recently retired, he is currently spending more time at home and is also working at Kopetsky's ACE Hardware.

"I was working for ESPN, that's how I got the Emmy, and it was for U.S. Open Tennis in 2018. It was a technical Emmy for the people putting together the show, the people operating the equipment," McCuin told the Yankton Press and Dakotan. "When I got a call from a lady at (the place) where the Emmys are made — one at a time — she called to verify my address. She said, 'I never sent an Emmy to South Dakota.' At that point, that was her quote."

The way McCuin sees it, the Emmy represents all those who came before him and helped him become the person he is today, he said.

"It represents my family, who has made incredible sacrifices to support me in what I love to do," he said. "I tell my family, 'This Emmy is yours.'"

By 2018, McCuin had already started planning his exit from the world of television.

"It's been a fun, interesting and very fulfilling career, but it is time for me to be home," he said. "I felt like it was time in my heart, and I recognized that with both kids being out of the house now, my wife needed me to be home, as well."

The family moved from Colorado after John's wife, Deborah McCuin, who was a teacher in Fort Collins, Colorado, earned a Ph.D. When she accepted a job as director of Graduate Teacher Education with Mount Marty University, the family decided to move to Yankton, he said.

"It was hard to leave Colorado but, at the same time, Debbie worked very hard to get a Ph.D., so we were going to follow her to wherever her next venture was," McCuin said. "I just told her I'd like to be within 100 miles of an airport."

McCuin's routine involved flying out of Sioux Falls and getting to the TV truck at the stadium or arena where he was assigned, he said, though more recently, his trips also involved stays in quarantine.

"That's where all the editing equipment and slow-motion equipment was," he said "And that pretty much was my world — operating all of that."

"My last tenure was with 'Monday Night Football.' I was department head for the Editing and Replay Department," McCuin said, noting that during that 10-year time frame he also did a lot of NBA basketball,

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baseball and hockey. "I've worked for just about every network during my career. I worked for Telepictures Productions for 10 years doing Academy Awards, Grammys, Golden Globes, Country Music Awards, and I worked with Joan Rivers' 'Red Carpet Show.'"

The job required lots of travel and long hours — typically 12- to 14-hour days — and considerable travel, he said.

Though travel was always part of the job, McCuin said that about five years ago, he no longer had the drive or the passion for the job and began preparing for his retirement.

"When we first moved here, my son and my daughter (and I) were driving and I pointed at ACE Hardware and I told my kids, 'One day, I will work there,'" he said. "They're like, 'Why?' and I said, 'I love that place.'"

During home remodeling projects, McCuin said he often found himself at an ACE Hardware store and appreciated how helpful to staff always was.

"I spent a career training people, helping people," he said. "I have a heart for helping people be successful because, I believe, if you're not helping people be successful, you're helping them fail."

After about a three-month retirement, McCuin — who said he was never the type to sit around — got a job at Yankton's ACE Hardware store.

"I've always loved the culture of ACE really helping people. That's what really drew me there," he said. "I have remodeled three or four homes that we've lived in, so it's kind of a hobby, a nice way for me to relax."

McCuin said that, over the years, he has acquired quite a bit of knowledge in the area of home improvement and the types of questions people have about it.

"I have a heart to serve and help people and the culture at ACE allows me to do that," he said. "Emmy to ACE Hardware' has been an interesting and fulfilling journey."

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Friday:

Mega Millions

30-32-42-46-48, Mega Ball: 15, Megaplier: 2

(thirty, thirty-two, forty-two, forty-six, forty-eight; Mega Ball: fifteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$53 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$173 million

## No. 1 South Carolina cruises to 72-41 win over South Dakota

By TOM SAVAGE Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Carolina shot 46.7% from the field and made quick work of South Dakota on Friday night at the Mammoth Sports Construction Invitational, but it was the stingy defensive effort that led the No. 1 Gamecocks to a 72-41 win over South Dakota.

Destanni Henderson scored 15 points, including 4 3-pointers for the Gamecocks. South Carolina's defense limited South Dakota to just 25.4% from the field.

"We're probably a far better defensive team at this stage of the game," Staley said. "I think we did a really good job of making them second-guess, or making them play a little bit faster than what they wanted to play. We just imposed our defensive will on them."

The Gamecocks (2-0) built a quick 10-0 lead and South Dakota didn't get its first field goal until Liv Korngable scored with just under three minutes to play in the first quarter. Korngable finished with 24 points to lead the Coyotes.

South Dakota (0-2) got the home crowd into things when they cut it to 43-30 on a Chloe Lamb basket midway through the third quarter. But Henderson hit back-to-back 3 pointers and the lead ballooned to 21 at the end of the third quarter.

"We were trying to get to the point where we could cut it down to under 10 and build from there," South

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Dakota head coach Dawn Plitzuweit said. "But when they impose their will, there's not a whole lot you can do about it."

The Gamecocks got the lead to as many as 32 in the fourth quarter when Bree Hall hit one of South Carolina's eight 3-pointers.

"We've got a lot of 3-point shooters on our team," Henderson said. "The ball will find who needs to shoot it and I feel like that's what I did tonight."

## INJURY UPDATE

Highly recruited South Carolina freshman point guard Raven Johnson left the game with 3:57 to play in the first quarter. The No. 1 point guard and No. 2 overall player nationally last season did not return to the floor and was wearing a knee brace on the bench in the second half.

## STATS OF THE NIGHT

Although South Carolina won by 31 and shot 46.7% from the field, they turned it over 20 times. The Gamecocks outrebounded South Dakota 49-25.

## BIG PICTURE

It was the second straight year South Carolina played in Sioux Falls as the No. 1 seed against South Dakota. After beating the Coyotes last year, South Carolina won 13 of its next 14.

## UP NEXT

South Carolina: Hosts Clemson on Wednesday before heading to the Bahamas for the Women's Battle for Atlantis tournament.

South Dakota: At Drake on Monday.

More AP women's college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/womens-college-basketball> and <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-womens-college-basketball-poll> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## No. 14 Alabama pulls away 104-88 over South Dakota State

By JOHN ZENOR AP Sports Writer

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — Jahvon Quinerly scored 26 points and Jaden Shackelford had 23 to lead No. 14 Alabama to a 104-88 victory over South Dakota State on Friday night.

The Crimson Tide (2-0) parlayed several second-half flurries into a comfortable win after the Jackrabbits (1-1) kept it to within one for a bit after coming back out of the locker room.

"They gave us everything we could handle," Alabama coach Nate Oats said. "They outscored us in transition, they exposed a lot of stuff we need to work on. That's why we play these games, though. It's good that we can get a win, while we got plenty of stuff exposed."

South Dakota State couldn't quite keep up with Quinerly, Shackelford & Co. at times when Alabama was able to turn up the tempo and start making 3-pointers.

"Coach preaches getting three stops in a row, a kill is what we call it," said Quinerly, a preseason All-Southeastern Conference pick. "We were able to guard a couple of possessions and get stops consecutively."

"I feel like our transition defense needs some work after this game, but I was still proud of the fight we showed tonight."

Keon Ellis had 15 points and a career-high 13 rebounds for the Tide, which had five players score in double figures. Darius Miles had 13 and seven-foot freshman Charles Bediako scored 12 points on 6-of-7 shooting with six rebounds.

"They told me to do it and I got it done," Bediako said.

Miles was 3 for 3 from 3-point range in the first half while the rest of the team hit 2 of 18.

Quinerly also had eight assists.

Noah Freidel led five South Dakota State scorers in double figures with 23 points. Douglas Wilson scored 12 despite playing just 13 minutes before fouling out. Alex Arians and Zeke Mayo also scored 12 apiece and Baylor Scheierman added 10.

Like Alabama as a whole, Quinerly didn't have a hot shooting night but kept firing away. He made 4 of

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15 3-pointers.

It was a one-point game until Alabama made three 3-pointers in a quick 13-2 spurt to make it 54-42 early in the second half. The Tide answered every rally attempt from there.

"They're really talented obviously, and offensively they just have so many weapons," Jackrabbits coach Eric Henderson said. "And they can get downhill, and they're such a willing passing team. They share the basketball very well.

"They just seemed to answer every one of our runs."

Alabama missed its first four free throw attempts and didn't make any until Ellis hit two with just over 7 minutes left. The Tide is 2-0 for the first time in Oats' three seasons.

## BIG PICTURE

South Dakota State: The preseason favorite to win an eighth Summit League regular-season title in 10 years kept it close much of the way, but couldn't quite keep up the pace. Outrebounded 47-38, and Wilson's limited minutes didn't help.

Alabama: The Tide, which won the opener 93-64 over Louisiana Tech, had a much harder time partly because the 3-pointers weren't falling early. Alabama went 13 of 40 but did make 8 of 19 after the half.

## GARY HURT

Alabama forward Juwan Gary injured his right ankle in the first half and didn't return. He was helped to the locker room after sprawling out next to the Tide bench.

Oats said Gary would get the ankle examined Saturday morning.

## UP NEXT

South Dakota State: At Stephen F. Austin on Sunday.

Alabama: Hosts South Alabama on Tuesday night.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-basketball> and [http://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](http://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## South Dakota governor formally launches reelection campaign

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, who's considered a rising star in the Republican Party, formally launched her reelection campaign Friday.

Her campaign said in a statement that she has raised over \$10 million since she was elected three years ago. She has more than \$6.5 million in cash on hand, the campaign said. She had already said she would seek a second term.

"We have been through challenging times but have also accomplished great things together," Noem said in the statement. "We've embraced fiscal responsibility, protected the freedoms of our people, fought federal government intrusions and invested in the next generation through education, healthcare, expanding broadband, and providing new career opportunities so our children can stay in South Dakota."

Noem adamantly opposed government-imposed restrictions to respond to the pandemic though she would not forbid private businesses to mandate vaccinations for their own employees.

She closely tied herself to former President Donald Trump. When she staged a fireworks display over Mount Rushmore to celebrate Independence Day last year, she gave Trump an opportunity to personally star in a patriotic display attended by thousands of people.

But she exasperated some Republicans with her disposition of a bill to bar transgender females from girls' and women's sports in a way that deviated from conservative orthodoxy.

Noem has also had to contend with questions about a meeting last year that included her daughter, Cassidy Peters, and state employees who were overseeing Peters' application for a real estate appraiser license. The episode raised concerns from ethics experts about whether Noem had improperly exerted influence.

Noem has said she never requested special treatment for her daughter, dismissing an initial report by The Associated Press on the meeting as a political attack, and cast the episode as part of an attempt to

improve the processes for such certifications.

The governor didn't mention any of the criticism in her announcement, keeping the tone upbeat.

"Together we're setting an example for the nation," Noem said in a short campaign video posted Friday. "And we'll ensure that the next generation of South Dakotans can grow up happy and free."

After serving in the state legislature, Noem swept into the U.S. House with the tea party wave in 2010 and served eight years. She won the governor's office with 51 percent of the vote in 2018.

## South Dakota lawmakers to press for Noem daughter's records

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers are pressing Gov. Kristi Noem's administration to hand over a document that could prove whether a plan was in place to give her daughter another chance to win a real estate appraiser license prior to a meeting last year that has spurred conflict-of-interest questions.

The Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee is readying to initiate a subpoena Monday if the Department of Labor and Regulation doesn't hand over a signed agreement between the governor's daughter, Kassidy Peters, and state regulators. Peters won her appraiser certification after a state agency moved to deny it last year. Noem's labor secretary has said the agreement was a road map for how Peters could improve her work.

Two lawmakers on the committee — Republican Rep. Randy Gross and Democrat Rep. Linda Duba — said the committee was ready to issue the subpoena. However, any subpoena would also require approval from the Executive Board, a ranking committee of top legislators that will meet later next week.

The timing of when the agreement was put into place has become a key question for lawmakers as they look into an episode that has prompted ethics experts to say Noem appeared to abuse the powers of her office. The Associated Press first reported that just days after a state agency moved to deny Peters application to upgrade her appraiser certification last year, Noem held a meeting with Peters and state employees overseeing her application. Four months later, Peters received her license.

Noem has defended her actions, telling the AP last week that the agreement was already in place before the meeting and that it was not discussed at the meeting. The Republican governor, who has positioned herself for a 2024 White House bid, has cast the meeting as part of a long-standing effort to solve a shortage of appraisers in the state.

Secretary of Labor Marcia Hultman, who was also at the meeting in the governor's mansion last year, gave a similar account when questioned by lawmakers in October, although she said the agreement was briefly discussed at the end of the meeting.

After hearing from Hultman, lawmakers moved to request the agreement from her department to confirm the sequence of the agreement being implemented and the meeting. They also agreed to keep any documents confidential to the committee.

The Department of Labor and Regulation did not immediately respond to a question from the AP about whether it would fulfill the request from lawmakers.

Noem has indicated she is loath to turn it over.

"When you make a decision and open something up, it sets precedent," she said at a news conference last week after being asked if she would release the documents. "That's why for consistency and to make sure that I'm being fair — because that's exactly what I'm focused on — I would have to set that same precedent for everybody."

While the agreements themselves state they are open to public inspection, the Department of Labor and Regulation denied a request from the AP for them, citing an exemption that allows the government to keep records secret if they deal with examinations. An appeals office later ruled that the department was right to deny the records request.

Lawmakers may also subpoena the former director of the Appraiser Certification Program, Sherry Bren. She was pressured to retire late last year by Hultman, shortly after Peters received her license. Bren filed an age discrimination complaint and received a \$200,000 payment from the state to withdraw the com-



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plaint and leave her job.

The committee this week sent a letter to Bren with 24 questions on the episode, but on Friday lawmakers released a letter from her lawyer, Tim Rensch, stating that she would prefer to receive a subpoena and testify in person.

Noem has said the settlement had nothing to do with her daughter.

The committee had requested that Bren appear before them last month, but she declined. Part of her settlement with the state bars her from disparaging state officials. However, Bren told the AP that she would work with lawmakers to "correct any factual inaccuracies" in Hultman's testimony to the committee.

Republican Rep. Chriss Karr, one of the lawmakers on the committee, said, "We're just trying to sort through it and see what is accurate, what is true and what is misinformation so we get the facts."

## Strong winds, blowing snow making travel difficult in SD

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Strong winds, icy roads and blowing snow are making travel difficult in South Dakota Friday.

High winds warnings are in effect for all of South Dakota where the gusty conditions are creating hazardous conditions for truck drivers and other high profile vehicles. According to the Highway Patrol, more than 10 semitrailers overturned on state roadways Thursday.

Forecasters said wind gusts could reach up to 70 mph in western and central South Dakota.

The road conditions have prompted some schools to close or delay classes. The Sisseton School District and Sisseton Wahpeton College are among those closed Friday.

Conditions were expected to improve later in the day. Snow is expected to taper off, but winds should remain strong with gusts still at 40 miles per hour.

Winds will slowly decrease during the afternoon and evening, forecasters said. But, the National Weather Service's wind advisory lasts until 6 p.m. on Sunday.

## Britney Spears got all to agree she needed to be freed

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — There were no more of the heated arguments or dueling court filings of the past few months, no more tearful testimony or angry accusations.

For one day at least, everyone surrounding Britney Spears agreed. She needed to be freed.

Most important among them was Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Brenda Penny, who at a hearing Friday terminated the conservatorship that controlled the pop singer's life and money for nearly 14 years.

Spears did not attend the 30-minute hearing that was almost anti-climactic after the courtroom drama of recent proceedings, in which Spears demanded first the ouster of her father from power over her, then the removal of the legal shackles on her life.

It felt almost like a formality. The celebration that followed was plenty dramatic, though.

"Best day ever ... praise the Lord ... can I get an Amen???" Spears said on Twitter and Instagram minutes after the ruling.

Jubilation erupted outside the courthouse, with fans cheering and shouting after the decision was announced. The crowd chanted "Britney! Britney! Britney!" and fans sang and danced to Spears' song "Stronger."

"Good God I love my fans so much it's crazy!!!" Spears said in her posts. "I think I'm gonna cry the rest of the day!!!!"

The decision capped a stunning odyssey that saw Spears publicly demand the end of the conservatorship, hire her own attorney, have her father removed from power and finally win the freedom to make her own medical, financial and personal decisions for the first time since 2008.

Those surrounding Spears said she is equipped to make those decisions.

"We have a safety net in place for Britney both on the personal side and on the financial side," her attorney Mathew Rosengart said outside the courthouse. "But Britney, as of today, is a free woman and she's

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an independent woman. And the rest, with her support system, will be up to Britney.”

Jodi Montgomery, the court-appointed conservator who oversaw the singer’s life and medical decisions starting in 2019, developed a care plan with her therapists and doctors to guide Spears into the aftermath.

“There is no reason Ms. Spears can’t lead a safe, happy, fulfilling life after this conservatorship,” Montgomery’s attorney, Lauriann Wright, said at the hearing.

Penny’s decision came with remarkably few caveats.

She gave no orders that Spears should undergo mental evaluations first, something legal experts had assumed would be part of the conservatorship’s endgame. The judge said California law did not require her to order further evaluation of Spears if no one requested it.

The judge kept a small part of the conservatorship temporarily in place so that the singer’s money can be moved around in the coming months as financial power is transferred back to her.

California law says a conservatorship, called a guardianship in some states, is justified for a “person who is unable to provide properly for his or her personal needs for physical health, food, clothing, or shelter,” or for someone who is “substantially unable to manage his or her own financial resources or resist fraud or undue influence.” The conservator, as the appointee put in charge is called, may be a family member, a close friend or a court-appointed professional.

As recently as last spring, it appeared that Spears’ conservatorship could continue for years. Then it unraveled with surprising speed.

Key to the unraveling was a speech Spears made at a hearing in June when she passionately described the restrictions and scrutiny as “abusive” and said “I just want my life back,” a line her lawyer repeated in court Friday.

The consensus on display Friday is unlikely to last.

Rosengart has further vowed to pursue an investigation of James Spears’ role in the 13 years he oversaw the conservatorship. He said he and his team have found mismanagement of Britney Spears’ finances, suggesting she could pursue further legal action. Court records put her net worth at about \$60 million.

He also said law enforcement should investigate revelations in a New York Times documentary about a listening device placed in her bedroom.

James Spears’ attorneys said Rosengart’s allegations ranged from unsubstantiated to impossible, and that he only ever acted in his daughter’s best interest.

The post-conservatorship fight has in some ways already begun. James Spears has parted ways with the attorneys who helped him operate it, and he has hired Alex Weingarten, a lawyer specializing in the kind of litigation that may be coming.

In court filings last week, Britney Spears’ former business managers, Tri Star Sports and Entertainment Group, pushed back against Rosengart’s demands for documents about the firm’s involvement in the conservatorship from 2008 to 2018. The group also denied any role in or knowledge of any surveillance of the superstar.

Britney Spears was a 26-year-old new mother at the height of her career when her father established the conservatorship, at first on a temporary basis, in February 2008 after a series of public mental health struggles.

It ends a few weeks before her 40th birthday, with her sons in their mid-teens and her career on indefinite hold, as she is engaged to be married a second time.

A turning point came early in 2019, when she canceled a planned concert residency in Las Vegas. Her career has been on hold ever since.

Convinced she was put in a mental hospital against her will, fans began coalescing and demanding that the court #FreeBritney. At first, they were dismissed as conspiracy theorists, but the singer herself gave them validation in 2020 in a series of court filings that said they were correct to demand greater transparency and scrutiny of her legal situation.

Those filings proved to be the first indication from Spears, who had remained silent on the conservatorship for years, that she would seek major changes.

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Britney Spears has indicated that she'll focus on family and her newfound freedom for now. She may or may not resume making music.

"Whether Britney performs again will be up to Britney, at the right time," Rosengart said.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>

## Merkel calls on all to get shots to avoid bad virus winter

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday called on all unvaccinated Germans to get their shots as quickly as possible as the country's coronavirus infection rate hit the latest in a string of new highs and death numbers were growing.

"If we stand together, if we think about protecting ourselves and caring for others, we can save our country a lot this winter," Merkel said in her weekly podcast.

Still, the chancellor warned that "these are very difficult weeks ahead of us."

Germany's disease control center said that the country's infection rate climbed to 277.4 new cases per 100,000 residents over seven days, up from 263.7 the previous day.

The Robert Koch Institute reported 45,081 new infections, two days after the daily total topped 50,000 for the first time.

Another 228 COVID-19 deaths brought Germany's total in the pandemic so far to 97,617.

While the infection rate isn't yet as high as in some other European countries, its relentless rise in Germany has set off alarm bells. Outgoing Chancellor Merkel plans to meet with the country's 16 state governors to coordinate nationwide measures next week, and parliament is mulling legislation that would provide a new legal framework for restrictions over the winter.

German magazine Der Spiegel reported that the army wants to mobilize up to 12,000 soldiers until Christmas to help out in overwhelmed hospitals, support vaccination and testing efforts in nursing homes, and aid health offices with contact tracing of infected people to contain the virus.

Merkel expressed her concern about the high number of intensive care patients and rising death numbers — especially in regions with low vaccination rates.

"Think about it again," Merkel said to those who still hadn't got the jab. "We just need to grab it, grab it fast."

"I am asking you: Join us, and try to convince relatives and friends as well," she added.

The chancellor also called on those who are vaccinated already to get a booster shot against COVID-19.

The booster vaccinations are "a real chance to break the severe fall and winter wave of the pandemic," Merkel said.

Germany has struggled to bring new momentum to its vaccination campaign lately, with a bit over two-thirds of the population fully vaccinated. It has balked so far at ordering vaccine mandates for any professional group.

Children under the age of 12, who cannot yet get vaccinated in Germany, are among the worst hit group.

The head of the German Teachers' Association warned Saturday that local health offices were struggling to keep control amid the many outbreaks in schools across the country.

"The reality is that we are already on the verge of losing control in some hotspot areas," Heinz-Peter Meidinger told weekly paper Welt am Sonntag. "We no longer know how to contain infection outbreaks in schools."

Also on Saturday, the government started offering free rapid COVID-19 tests again. They were scrapped a month ago in an effort to persuade more people to get vaccinated.

Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

## Inside DNC chair's 'challenging' bid to avert midterm defeat

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By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

He's not particularly close to the White House. He's never won statewide office or a seat in Congress. And just last year, he lost a high-profile Senate race by double digits.

But if you ask him, Jaime Harrison will tell you he is uniquely prepared to lead a Democratic Party confronting fierce Republican obstruction, intense infighting and the burden of history heading into next year's midterm elections.

He will tell you of his own childhood of poverty in rural South Carolina, where he ate cereal with water instead of milk before eventually becoming an attorney, a congressional aide, the first Black state party chair, a prodigious fundraiser and now, at 45 and the father of two young children, the chair of the Democratic National Committee.

He will also tell you about the intense pressure he feels to stave off political disaster in 2022.

"Let me tell you, man, it is a big weight. It is a tremendous weight," Harrison said in an interview from a makeshift television studio in the basement of his South Carolina home. "My experiences are the experiences that we need at this moment to help really thread a needle. This is going to be challenging."

Harrison is leading a party in peril.

A year after seizing control of Congress and the White House, Democrats are struggling with painful losses across several states in the recent off-year elections that raised serious concerns about a much larger Republican wave in 2022. Suddenly, the Democratic optimism of this spring has been replaced by doubt as party officials ponder whether they have the right message, the right messengers and the right political strategy.

The finger-pointing has already begun.

DNC members, who accepted Harrison as President Joe Biden's pick for chair in January, have begun to grumble about his limited engagement with the rank-and-file activists and state party officials who do much of the day-to-day heavy lifting in Democratic politics. Others believe the White House isn't giving him the freedom he needs to do the job well.

Some allies worry that Biden's team hasn't let Harrison select the members he wants, hire his preferred staff or drive the party's messaging.

"Jaime Harrison knows how to do that job. I fear that he may not be allowed to do the job," said Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., whom Harrison describes as a father figure and mentor.

Clyburn declined to criticize the White House directly but questioned whether Harrison is being "hamstrung by people who never ran for anything."

The White House declined to comment publicly, while Harrison played down any tension as a simple matter of navigating a new relationship with Biden's chief political emissary, Jen O'Malley Dillon. Harrison said they meet two times to three times a month, and after getting to know each other better, are building a friendship.

"Are there challenges that we all have to navigate in this process because the DNC is not normally involved in the midterms? Yes, there always will be, and there are now," Harrison said. "I'm going to continue to push, I'm going to continue to be creative, but Jen and I are working hand in glove in terms of trying to make this work."

These days, Harrison is doing most of his work from his basement in Columbia, South Carolina, his home of the past five years. The DNC's Washington headquarters is still largely closed because of pandemic concerns. So, like thousands of Americans working from home, he is balancing his work life with the demands of raising two young sons, scheduling video meetings with the White House and television interviews around nap times, school activities and even the occasional COVID-19 scare.

From his home base 500 miles (800 kilometers) south of Washington, he acknowledges that he is fighting tremendous odds. Political parties that hold the White House have lost congressional seats in virtually every midterm election in the modern era. And Democrats are clinging to the narrowest majorities in both chambers of Congress.

Polling suggests there is cause for concern.

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Gallup found in September that 55% of Americans had a negative view of the Democratic Party, the highest disapproval in five years. At the same time, majorities of Americans believe the nation is on the wrong track with Democrats in charge.

Democratic concerns deepened earlier this month after losses across Virginia, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. The party's Trump-era advantages eroded in the suburbs, while their struggle in rural areas worsened.

Harrison rejected a popular takeaway from the off-year drubbing that Democrats should no longer focus on former President Donald Trump as a centerpiece of their message to voters. Such a strategy failed in Virginia, among other states.

"The odds are Donald Trump is gonna run for president in 2024. And he's the odds-on favorite to get the Republican nomination," Harrison said. "And so I think it'd be foolhardy for us to say, 'Let's forget Donald Trump because he's not here.' He's going to have his presence felt all over the 2022 midterms."

At the same time, Democrats believe that a positive message focused on their legislative accomplishments will also lift their standing — if they can effectively sell their achievements to voters.

Earlier in the year, Democrats enacted a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package, which sent \$1,400 checks to most Americans and provided billions more in support for people and businesses affected by the pandemic. On Nov. 6, Democrats, with some Republicans, approved the biggest infrastructure package in generations, a \$1 trillion measure that will fund years' worth of major construction projects in every state in the nation. Biden will sign the bill into law on Monday.

Still unsettled is Biden's larger social spending plan, which features unprecedented government funding to address climate change, childhood poverty and health care.

A week after Democrats approved the infrastructure package, however, the party has yet to unveil a comprehensive plan to promote their accomplishment, which polls suggest is overwhelmingly popular despite pockets of conservative opposition.

In an attempt to get things started, Harrison participated in four cable television interviews this past week. At the same time, some DNC leaders have made television or radio appearances. Elected officials in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Georgia, North Carolina and Michigan held news conferences to highlight the infrastructure bill.

Harrison said the modest start is intentional.

The party is planning a "slow simmer" strategy to sell the infrastructure package, he said, a shift from the burst of attention surrounding the passage of the Democrat-backed pandemic relief plan earlier in the year.

"What's the use of really jumping high into this right now, and then dropping off in December, and then by February or March, people are like, 'What? What happened?'" Harrison said. "The goal is to burn this into the minds of the American people and to have it sustained as we move forward into the 2022 midterms."

Soon, the DNC will begin rolling out a new wave of TV ads, radio spots and digital ads featuring a combination of Biden and everyday Americans talking about the impact of the infrastructure package on their lives. The party would then focus on highlighting the flood of nationwide groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings expected in the subsequent months.

"This has to be a long-term and sustained thing," Harrison said. "It just can't be a flash in the pan."

Beyond Washington, some Democrats aren't so sure the DNC should be focused on selling infrastructure at all — at least, not now.

John Verdejo, a North Carolina-based DNC member who describes himself as Harrison's friend, said he hears gripes from other members concerned that Harrison isn't engaged enough with local officials on the ground in key states. Others worry that he's simply repeating White House talking points instead of addressing more pressing issues affecting people's everyday lives.

"He's selling it, but people ain't buying it," Verdejo said of the Democrats' achievements. "That's not his fault because he's getting his messaging from the White House. Infrastructure is great and all, but that's way down the road, and I'm paying 17 bucks for a family pack of chicken wings."

Verdejo continued: "It's disappointing to see a guy like that with so much potential almost being handcuffed."

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Meanwhile, the memories of 2010 are persistent.

That year, Democrats went into the first midterm election of Barack Obama's presidency struggling to sell another major policy achievement, the health care law now known as "Obamacare," to frustrated voters. Democrats ultimately lost 63 seats in the House and six in the Senate.

Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine, who led the DNC from 2009 to 2011, says that much of the responsibility of selling Biden's accomplishments will fall to Harrison, even if the White House ultimately controls the big decisions on messaging and strategy.

"The leader of the party is the president, and when he goes out, he has the loudest microphone of anybody," Kaine said. "But the DNC chair does many, many more political events and many, many more calls to rally the troops."

"The fact that he's a young guy, African American, he's from a state that's not the bluest state, this gives him the ability to connect with a lot of folks," Kaine added. "He's very effective at it."

Harrison has another advantage that Kaine did not in 2010.

Democrats struggled to sell the health care overhaul to midterm voters in part because Obama personally didn't like having to sell the party's accomplishments, Kaine said. The Biden White House, Kaine suggested, seems more committed to ensuring that voters give Democrats credit for major achievements on the pandemic and infrastructure — and Biden's Build Back Better agenda, if approved.

But well-publicized Democratic infighting on Capitol Hill between competing factions has clouded the party's message. And Harrison is worried.

He said it's critical for Democrats from the party's moderate and progressive wings to come together on Capitol Hill to enact Biden's agenda.

"All of this infighting, it has to stop. It has to stop," he said. "We have to be on the same page. We have to pass these bills. Get them done and then get out on the ground and sell the hell out of them."

Harrison acknowledges he does not have enough clout on his own to persuade his party's warring factions to come together. So for now, he's focusing on the things he can control. A big piece of that is fundraising.

Harrison was Biden's pick for DNC chair, in part because of the extraordinary fundraising success he had in his underdog campaign against South Carolina Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham last year. Harrison's campaign raised an eye-popping \$109 million, although he lost the election by 10 percentage points.

By any measure, he has carried that fundraising acumen to the DNC.

So far in 2021 alone, the DNC and its allied Democratic Grassroots Victory Fund has raised more than \$127.6 million, the most ever for a nonpresidential year. The committees currently boast \$74.5 million in the bank.

The DNC has also announced plans to invest \$23 million in state parties ahead of the 2022 midterms, including a new "red state fund" to put Republicans on the defensive in traditionally Republican-leaning states.

The commitment to state parties has drawn praise from people like Ray Buckley, the New Hampshire Democratic Party chair, who praised Harrison's personal relationships with the committee's large delegation of rank-and-file members and state party leaders. He noted that Harrison served as the South Carolina Democratic chair and then as a senior DNC aide before become the national chair, which allowed him to develop connections to members across the country.

"He has the backing of the membership and the trust of the membership," Buckley said. "But we certainly are aware that when you have the White House, there are different challenges. You're not a free agent."

Meanwhile, Harrison has not lost sight of the big picture: History suggests that Democrats will soon lose their House and Senate majorities. But he insists there is hope for his party.

"We can buck history. We can make our own history," he said. "The question is whether we can get all together in order to do so. That is the real question."

## Climate talks resume, cautious coal phaseout still on table

By FRANK JORDANS and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

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GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — Negotiators at the this year's U.N. climate talks were poring over fresh proposals aimed at sealing a deal that could credibly be said to boost the world's efforts to tackle global warming.

British officials chairing the talks in Glasgow, Scotland, released new draft agreements early Saturday after shuttle diplomacy continued past the official Friday evening deadline. U.S. climate envoy John Kerry and his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua both indicated cautious optimism late Friday that talks were moving forward.

A proposal for the overarching decision retains contentious language calling on countries to accelerate "efforts towards the phase-out of unabated coal power and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies."

But in a new addition, the text says nations will recognize "the need for support towards a just transition" — a reference to calls from those working in the fossil fuel industry for financial support as they wind down jobs and businesses.

Alok Sharma, the British official chairing the talks, said he hoped countries would clinch an ambitious agreement in Glasgow.

"I hope the colleagues will rise to the occasion," Sharma told The Associated Press as he walked into the conference venue.

Some campaign groups said the current proposals were not strong enough.

"Here in Glasgow, the world's poorest countries are in danger of being lost from view, but the next few hours can and must change the course we are on," said Tracy Carty of Oxfam. "What's on the table is still not good enough."

But the possibility of having fossil fuels explicitly mentioned in a decision coming out of a Conference of the Parties, or COP, for the first time, was well-received by some environmentalists.

"It's weaker and compromised, but we see it as a bridgehead, a bit of a breakthrough," said Jennifer Morgan, the executive director Greenpeace.

"We will have to fight like hell to keep it in there and have it strengthened in the coming hours," she said, adding that there were "a clutch of countries really seeking to strike that line from the deal."

Divisions remained on the issue of financial support sought by poor countries for the disastrous impacts of climate change they will increasingly suffer in future — the United States and European Union, two of the world's biggest historic emitters, continued to have deep reservations.

Mohammed Quamrul Chowdhury of Bangladesh, a lead negotiator for less-developed countries, ticked off the ways that vague wording in the latest draft fell short of committing wealthier countries to putting any new money on the table for countries struggling with climate damage.

"There is a lot of frustration," he told AP.

"This package is very hard to explain for those already suffering the consequences at the front lines of the rising risks, or to anyone aware of the scientific evidence of what is coming our way unless we act faster," said University of Twente climate scientist Maarten van Aalst, who is also director of the Climate Centre of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

In another proposal, countries are "encouraged" to submit new targets for emissions reduction for 2035 by 2025, and for 2040 by 2030, establishing a five-year cycle. Previously, developing countries were expected to do so only every 10 years. Developed countries are also being asked to turn in a short-term update next year.

The proposed agreement states that in order to achieve the 2015 Paris accord's ambitious goal of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) by the end of the century compared with pre-industrial times, countries will need to make "rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45% by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around mid-century, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases."

Scientists say the world is not on track to meet that goal yet, but various pledges made before and during the two-week talks, which are now in overtime, have brought them closer.

The latest draft agreement expresses "alarm and utmost concern that human activities have caused

around 1.1C (2F) of global warming to date and that impacts are already being felt in every region.”

Progress was being made on the sticky issue of carbon markets, known as “Article 6,” rules for which have eluded previous talks going back to 2015. The idea is to unleash the power of trading carbon reduction measures, with poorer nations getting money, often from private companies, for measures that reduce carbon in the air.

It provides “strong” provisions to prevent double counting of offsets — a longtime point of contention — and allows about 100 million tons of carbon credits to be carried over from previous years and agreements, a “good result,” said Environmental Defense Fund Vice President Kelly Kizzier, a former European Union negotiator and expert on carbon market negotiations.

Next year’s talks are scheduled to take place in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. Dubai will host the meeting in 2023.

Ellen Knickmeyer contributed to this report.

Follow AP’s coverage of the talks at <http://apnews.com/hub/climate>

## Polish police find body of young Syrian near Belarus border

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Polish police said Saturday that the body of a young Syrian man was found in the woods near the border with Belarus, the latest victim in a political standoff at the European Union’s eastern border.

The regime in Minsk has for months been encouraging illegal migration across its border into the EU nations of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. All three countries are reinforcing their frontiers, seeking to block the newly opened migration route, and the situation is growing more dangerous as winter approaches.

Polish police said the body of a Syrian man about 20 years old was found a day earlier near the village of Wólka Terechowska. They said the exact cause of death could not be determined and that an autopsy would be performed.

It brings the death toll now to at least nine reported victims in the migration encouraged by Belarus’ longtime President Alexander Lukashenko.

Many of the migrants are from Syria, Iraq, or elsewhere in the Middle East, people seeking to flee conflict and hopelessness for the prospect of better lives in Europe.

The crisis is creating another point of tension between the West and Belarus, and by extension with its closest ally: Russia.

Though Russia this week sent nuclear-capable strategic bombers and paratroopers to patrol over Belarus in a show of support, Russian President Vladimir Putin denied allegations of being involved in creating the flow of migrants to Europe.

“I want everyone to know that we have nothing to do with it. Everyone is trying to impose any responsibility on us for any reason and for no reason at all,” Putin said in excerpts released Saturday of an interview with state television that is to be broadcast in full on Sunday.

He said that no Russian aviation companies carry the migrants to Belarus, and also lashed out at the West as a root cause for the crisis, with military operations in Iraq and elsewhere that have led to continued conflict in the region.

“Is it Belarus that pioneered these problems, or what? No, these are causes that were created by the Western countries themselves, including European countries,” Putin said.

A large number of migrants are in a makeshift camp on the Belarusian side of the border in frigid conditions. Polish authorities report daily new attempts by the migrants to breach the border.

The situation shows no signs of ending soon. Belarusian state news agency Belta reported that Lukashenko on Saturday ordered the military to set up tents at the border where food and other humanitarian aid can be gathered and distributed to the migrants.



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Poland's Border Guards agency on Saturday morning said in one case, Belarusian soldiers began destroying a temporary border barrier near the Polish village of Czeremcha and used laser beams to blind Polish security services.

Nearby, a group of some 100 migrants was waiting to cross the border. "Belarusians equipped the foreigners with tear gas, which was used toward the Polish services," the Border Guards said, saying the Poles stopped the attempts to cross.

Many of the reported incidents at the border are very hard to verify. Independent journalists face limits to their reporting in Belarus, and a state of emergency in Poland's border zone prevents media from entering the area.

The state of emergency ends Nov. 30, and the Polish government said Saturday that it is working on a plan to let journalists at that time be able to again report from the border area with the permission of the Border Guards.

After the large migration into Europe in 2015, Europe has been reinforcing its borders to discourage the arrival of more migrants and refugees. Still, every year, tens of thousands try to get in, embarking on dangerous and sometimes deadly journeys by sea and land.

Since the summer, thousands have been lured by what appeared to be a new and easier way to slip into Europe, through Belarus.

The EU accuses Lukashenko of creating the artificial route in order to retaliate for sanctions against his regime imposed after an election in 2020 widely viewed as flawed and a harsh crackdown on internal dissent that followed.

The restrictions were toughened after an incident in May when a passenger jet flying from Greece to Lithuania was diverted by Belarus to Minsk, where authorities arrested dissident journalist Raman Pratashevich. The EU called it air piracy, barred Belarusian carriers from its skies and cut imports of the country's top commodities, including petroleum products and potash, an ingredient in fertilizer.

A furious Lukashenko shot back by saying he would no longer abide by an agreement to stem illegal migration, arguing that the EU sanctions deprived his government of funds needed to contain flows of migrants. Planes carrying migrants from Iraq, Syria and other countries began arriving in Belarus.

Jim Heintz in Moscow contributed.

Follow AP's migration coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>

## Government-allied forces leave Yemeni city, rebels re-enter

By AHMED AL-HAJ Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — Forces loyal to Yemen's internationally recognized government have withdrawn from the strategic port city of Hodeida, allowing the rebels to retake their positions, Yemeni officials and the U.N. said.

The Joint Forces, backed by the United Arab Emirates, said late Friday they redeployed troops from Hodeida because there was no need to stay in the city amid a U.N.-brokered cease-fire deal.

They criticized the government for not allowing them to retake control of the city from the Houthi rebels. The Joint Forces say the rebels repeatedly violated the 2018 deal that ended their offensive against Hodeida.

A U.N. mission observing the cease-fire said government-allied forces have withdrawn from their positions in the city and areas south of the city and the Houthis have taken over the vacated positions. It said it wasn't notified before the withdrawal.

In 2018, heavy fighting erupted in Hodeida after government forces backed by a Saudi-led coalition moved in to wrest control of the strategic port city from the Houthis.

After months of clashes, the warring sides signed a U.N.-brokered agreement in December 2018 that included a cease-fire in the city and an exchange of more than 15,000 prisoners.

The deal, seen as an important first step toward ending the broader conflict, was never fully implemented.

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Yemen's war began with the 2014 takeover of the capital of Sanaa by the Houthis, who control much of the country's north. A Saudi-led coalition launched a bombing campaign months later, determined to restore the government and oust the rebels.

The grinding regional proxy war has killed tens of thousands of civilians and fighters. The war also created the world's worst humanitarian crisis, leaving millions suffering from food and medical care shortages and pushing the country to the brink of famine.

The Joint Forces said they recognized the mistake of remaining in defensive positions without fighting in Hodeida as other government-held areas face intensified attacks by the Houthis.

In recent months, the Houthis have attacked government forces in different areas, including the provinces of Shabwa, Bayda and Marib, despite calls by the U.N., U.S. and others to stop fighting and engage in negotiations to find a settlement to the conflict.

## Africa's 'Great Green Wall' shifts focus to hold off desert

By CARLEY PETESCH Associated Press

KEBEMER, Senegal (AP) — The idea was striking in its ambition: African countries aimed to plant trees in a nearly 5,000-mile line spanning the entire continent, creating a natural barrier to hold back the Sahara Desert as climate change swept the sands south.

The project called the Great Green Wall began in 2007 with a vision for the trees to extend like a belt across the vast Sahel region, from Senegal in the west to Djibouti in the east, by 2030. But as temperatures rose and rainfall diminished, millions of the planted trees died.

Efforts to rein in the desert continue in Senegal on a smaller scale. On the western end of the planned wall, Ibrahima Fall walks under the cool shade of dozens of lime trees, watering them with a hose as yellow chicks scurry around his feet. Just beyond the green orchard and a village is a desolate, arid landscape.

The citrus crop provides a haven from the heat and sand that surround it. Outside the low village walls, winds whip sand into the air, inviting desertification, a process that wrings the life out of fertile soil and changes it into desert, often because of drought or deforestation.

Only 4% of the Great Green Wall's original goal has been met, and an estimated \$43 billion would be needed to achieve the rest. With prospects for completing the barrier on time dim, organizers have shifted their focus from planting a wall of trees to trying a mosaic of smaller, more durable projects to stop desertification, including community-based efforts designed to improve lives and help the most vulnerable agriculture.

"The project that doesn't involve the community is doomed to failure," says Diegane Ndiaye, who is part of a group known as SOS Sahel, which has helped with planting programs in Senegal and other countries across the Sahel, a broad geographic zone between the Sahara in the north and the more temperate African savanna to the south.

The programs focus on restoring the environment and reviving economic activity in Sahel villages, Ndiaye said.

With the loss of rainfall and the advance of the desert, "this strip of the Sahel is a very vulnerable area to climate change," he said. "So we should have projects that are likely to rebuild the environment ... fix the dunes and also help protect the vegetable-growing area."

On Senegal's Atlantic Coast, filao trees stretch in a band from Dakar up to the northern city of St. Louis, forming a curtain that protects the beginning of Green Wall region, which also grows more than 80% of Senegal's vegetables. The sky-reaching branches tame the winds tearing in from the ocean.

This reforestation project started in the 1970s, but many trees were cut down for wood, and work to replant them has been more recent. More trees are also planted in front of dunes near the water in an effort to protect the dunes and keep them from moving.

"We have had a lot of reforestation programs that today have not yielded much because it is often done with great fanfare" and not with good planning, Ndiaye said.

Fall, the 75-year-old chief of his village, planted the citrus orchard in 2016, putting the trees near a water

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source on his land. His is one of 800 small orchards in six communes of a town called Kebemer.

"We once planted peanuts and that wasn't enough," he said in the local Wolof language. "This orchard brings income that allows me to take care of my family." He said he can produce 20 to 40 kilos of limes per week during peak season.

Enriched by the trees, the soil has also grown tomatoes and onions.

The village has used profits from the orchard to replace straw homes with cement brick structures and to buy more sheep, goats and chickens. It also added a solar panel to help pump water from a communal well, sparing villagers from having to pay more for water in the desert.

African Development Bank President Akinwumi A. Adesina spoke about the importance of stopping desertification in the Sahel during the United Nations' COP26 global climate conference. He announced a commitment from the bank to mobilize \$6.5 billion toward the Great Green Wall by 2025.

The newest projects in Senegal are circular gardens known in the Wolof language as "tolou keur." They feature a variety of trees that are planted strategically so that the larger ones protect the more vulnerable.

The gardens' curving rows hold moringa, sage, papaya and mango trees that are resistant to dry climates. They are planted so their roots grow inward to improve water retention in the plot.

Senegal has 20 total circular gardens, each one adapted to the soil, culture and needs of individual communities so they can grow much of what they need. Early indications are that they are thriving in the Great Green Wall region. Solar energy helps provide electricity for irrigation.

Jonathan Pershing, deputy special envoy for climate at the U.S. State Department, visited Senegal as part of an Africa trip last month, saying the U.S. wants to partner with African nations to fight climate change.

"The desert is encroaching. You see it really moving south," Pershing said.

In terms of the Great Green Wall project, he said, "I don't think that very many people thought it was going to go very far," including himself. But there are indications of progress, as seen in the community projects.

"It has a global benefit, and people are prepared to make those kinds of long-term investments through their children and their families, which I think is a hallmark of what we need to do in other climate arenas."

## With Dems' prized bill at stake, a numbers game looms ahead

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Like Hercules and his 12 labors, Democrats' \$1.85 trillion package of social and climate initiatives seems afflicted by a maddening parade of hurdles. Looming ahead is the Congressional Budget Office, which could cause problems that would be messy but probably surmountable.

The office, created in 1974 as Congress' nonpartisan fiscal scorekeeper, is working on a 10-year cost estimate of the bill and its component spending and tax proposals. The key question politically is how close the measure comes to paying for itself with savings, like President Joe Biden and top Democrats claim it does.

Here's a guide to understanding the numbers blizzard that CBO is about to unleash:

### A BIG DEAL FOR MODERATES

After months of backbiting and bargaining among Democrats, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer are confronting the same stubborn problem. Facing unbroken Republican opposition, Democrats can lose no votes in the Senate and just three in the House to pass their mammoth bill.

That gives Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and his moderate House counterparts significant leverage. Among other things, the centrists want the measure's savings — chiefly tax increases on wealthy people, big corporations and companies doing business abroad — to fully pay for its family services, health care and environment programs.

Five moderates blocked the House from voting on it last week. They demanded to first see CBO's official estimate of the bill, mainly to see if the agency thinks it would worsen already huge federal deficits. Many centrists are from districts where accusing Democrats of aggravating budget shortfalls is easy fodder for

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GOP campaign attacks.

In a compromise with progressives, the centrists said they'd vote for the bill if CBO figures are "consistent" with preliminary White House estimates asserting that the measure paid for itself. They promised to try resolving "discrepancies" if CBO's numbers were worse.

Pelosi, D-Calif., hopes to finally push the measure through her chamber next week. The Senate is certain to change the bill and its work will take longer.

WILL CBO'S NUMBERS HELP DEMOCRATS?

Maybe, eventually.

The budget office has released estimates on pieces of the 2,100-page legislation. It has promised overall figures "as soon as practicable, but the exact timing is uncertain."

That means a complete score on the bill may not be ready next week.

If that's the case, would House moderates accept partial CBO numbers or cost estimates from another source? Demand fresh assurances from Biden and Pelosi? Insist on changing the bill, or delaying it again?

That's unclear. Concerns about worsening inflation may only intensify moderates' qualms.

In a reassuring report for Democrats, Congress' Joint Committee on Taxation, which works with CBO and produces nonpartisan estimates about tax legislation, said last week the measure would raise \$1.5 trillion in new revenue over the next decade. That alone would cover most of the legislation's cost.

Yet there's another complication.

DUELING NUMBERS

Unlike the White House's early estimate, CBO's score may show the bill isn't fully paid for. It follows stricter rules for making calculations than the White House, which — no matter which party holds the presidency — almost always produces rosier numbers than CBO.

For example, the White House estimated that by increasing IRS tax enforcement, mostly aimed at the highest earners, by \$80 billion over 10 years, the bill would raise \$480 billion in additional revenue.

Under guidelines CBO follows, it's not expected to credit the bill with any savings from tougher tax audits. In any event, the budget office projected in September that giving the IRS \$80 billion would yield just \$200 billion in additional revenue.

BUT REMEMBER, THIS IS CONGRESS

Even if CBO's numbers aren't great, there's reason to believe the bill would survive. When lawmakers have reached a political consensus to do something, bad budget numbers seldom upend it.

Democrats know that sinking legislation carrying Biden's top domestic priorities would threaten disaster in next year's congressional elections. At key moments like that, Congress is renowned for its political and budgetary dexterity.

Though CBO's numbers determine a bill's official price tag, Democrats could simply talk instead about better figures from the White House or elsewhere to paint a brighter fiscal picture. That's what Republicans did in 2017 when they claimed their huge tax cut would pay for itself, even though CBO projected it would worsen deficits by well over \$1 trillion.

If the bill's savings fall short but Democrats find the political payoff for passage irresistibly strong, they might decide to swallow some red ink and insist the bill would bolster the economy. CBO said the bipartisan \$1 trillion infrastructure bill, which Biden plans to sign Monday, will increase deficits by \$256 billion over the next decade, but almost all Democrats and some Republicans backed it anyway.

If needed, Democrats could tweak some of the measure's tax provisions to raise more revenue. Moderates could try forcing progressives to accept additional spending reductions in a bill that's already been squeezed down from an earlier \$3.5 trillion price tag. That would encounter stiff resistance from progressives who say they've compromised enough.

AND THEN THERE ARE GIMMICKS

The huge bill has plenty of provisions that help keep its price tag in check.

Many of its priorities don't start immediately or are temporary, even though Democrats hope they'll eventually be made permanent. Since the cost of legislation is measured over 10 years, that effectively makes those programs seem more affordable.

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More generous tax credits for children and many low-income workers are extended for just one year. Subsidies for buying private health insurance would last four years, while free universal pre-school and bolstered child care benefits would run for six years. New Medicare hearing benefits would begin in 2023, paid family leave in 2024.

The nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, which advocates fiscal discipline, has estimated that the measure's overall price tag could exceed \$4 trillion if its temporary programs were made permanent.

## Federal court declines to lift stay on vaccine mandate

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal court declined Friday to lift its stay on the Biden administration's vaccine mandate for businesses with 100 or more workers.

The New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals granted an emergency stay last Saturday of the requirement by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration that those workers be vaccinated by Jan. 4 or face mask requirements and weekly tests.

Lawyers for the Justice and Labor departments filed a response Monday in which they said stopping the mandate from taking effect will only prolong the COVID-19 pandemic and would "cost dozens or even hundreds of lives per day."

But the appeals court rejected that argument Friday. Judge Kurt D. Engelhardt wrote that the stay "is firmly in the public interest."

"From economic uncertainty to workplace strife, the mere specter of the Mandate has contributed to untold economic upheaval in recent months," Engelhardt wrote.

At least 27 states have filed legal challenges in at least six federal appeals courts after OSHA released its rules on Nov. 4. The federal government said in its court filings Monday that the cases should be consolidated and that one of the circuit courts where a legal challenge has been filed should be chosen at random on Nov. 16 to hear it.

Administration lawyers said there is no reason to keep the vaccine mandate on hold while the court where the cases ultimately land remains undetermined.

## Bannon indicted on contempt charges for defying 1/6 subpoena

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, MICHAEL BALSAMO and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Steve Bannon, a longtime ally of former President Donald Trump, has been indicted on two counts of criminal contempt of Congress after he defied a subpoena from the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

On Friday, the Justice Department said Bannon, 67, was indicted on one count for refusing to appear for a deposition last month and the other for refusing to provide documents in response to the committee's subpoena. He is expected to surrender to authorities on Monday and will appear in court that afternoon, a law enforcement official told the AP. The person was granted anonymity to discuss the case.

The indictment comes after a parade of Trump administration officials — including Bannon — have defied requests and demands from Congress over the past five years with little consequence, including during Democrats' impeachment inquiry. President Barack Obama's administration also declined to charge two of its officials who defied congressional demands.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said Bannon's indictment reflects the Justice Department's "steadfast commitment" to the rule of law. Each count carries a minimum of 30 days of jail and as long as a year behind bars.

The indictment came as a second expected witness, former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, defied his own subpoena from the committee on Friday and as Trump has escalated his legal battles to withhold documents and testimony about the insurrection.

If the House votes to hold Meadows in contempt, that recommendation would also be sent to the Justice Department for a possible indictment.

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Officials in both Democratic and Republican administrations have been held in contempt by Congress, but criminal indictments for contempt are exceedingly rare. The most recent notable examples of criminal penalties for not testifying before Congress date to the 1970s, including when President Richard Nixon's aide G. Gordon Liddy was convicted of misdemeanor charges for refusing to answer questions about his role in the Watergate scandal.

Democrats who voted to hold Bannon in contempt praised the Justice Department's decision, saying the charges reinforce the authority of Congress to investigate the executive branch and signal potential consequences for those who refuse to cooperate.

"The days of defying subpoenas with impunity are over," tweeted House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, who sits on the Jan. 6 panel and also led Trump's first impeachment inquiry. "We will expose those responsible for Jan 6. No one is above the law."

The chairman of the Jan. 6 panel, Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson, told reporters at an event in his home state of Mississippi on Friday that he will recommend contempt charges against Meadows next week.

Thompson and the vice chairwoman of the panel, Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, said in a statement: "Mr. Meadows, Mr. Bannon, and others who go down this path won't prevail in stopping the Select Committee's effort getting answers for the American people about January 6th, making legislative recommendations to help protect our democracy, and helping ensure nothing like that day ever happens again."

Meadows and Bannon are key witnesses for the panel, as they both were in close touch with Trump around the time of the insurrection.

Meadows was Trump's top aide at the end of his presidency and was one of several people who pressured state officials to try and overturn the results. Bannon promoted the Jan. 6 protests on his podcast and predicted there would be unrest. On Jan. 5, he predicted that "all hell is going to break loose."

The indictment says Bannon didn't communicate with the committee in any way from the time he received the subpoena on Sept. 24 until Oct. 7 when his lawyer sent a letter, seven hours after the documents were due.

Bannon, who worked at the White House at the beginning of the Trump administration and currently serves as host of the conspiracy-minded "War Room" podcast, is a private citizen who "refused to appear to give testimony as required by a subpoena," the indictment says.

When Bannon declined to appear for his deposition in October, his attorney said the former Trump adviser had been directed by a lawyer for Trump citing executive privilege not to answer questions. The attorney did not respond to a message seeking comment on Friday.

This is not the first time the longtime Trump ally has faced legal peril. In August of last year, Bannon was pulled from a luxury yacht and arrested on allegations that he and three associates ripped off donors trying to fund a southern border wall. Trump later pardoned Bannon in the final hours of his presidency.

Meadows, a former congressman from North Carolina, defied his subpoena on Friday after weeks of discussions with the committee. His lawyer said that Meadows has a "sharp legal dispute" with the panel as Trump has claimed executive privilege over the former chief of staff's testimony, as he had with Bannon's.

The White House said in a letter Thursday that President Joe Biden would waive any privilege that would prevent Meadows from cooperating with the committee, prompting Meadows' lawyer to say he wouldn't comply.

"Legal disputes are appropriately resolved by courts," said the lawyer, George Terwilliger. "It would be irresponsible for Mr. Meadows to prematurely resolve that dispute by voluntarily waiving privileges that are at the heart of those legal issues."

As the sitting president, Biden has so far waived most of Trump's assertions of privilege over documents and interviews, citing the interest of the public in knowing what happened on Jan. 6. Trump sued the committee and the National Archives to stop the release of documents, and U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan has repeatedly backed Biden's position, noting in one ruling this week that "Presidents are not kings, and Plaintiff is not President."

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The panel's proceedings and attempts to gather information have been delayed as Trump has appealed Chutkan's rulings. On Thursday, a federal appeals court temporarily blocked the release of some of the White House records the panel is seeking, giving that court time to consider Trump's arguments.

Still, the House panel is continuing its work, and members have already interviewed more than 150 witnesses in an attempt to build a comprehensive record of how a violent mob of Trump's supporters broke into the Capitol and temporarily halted the certification of Biden's victory.

The committee has subpoenaed almost three dozen people, including former White House staffers, Trump allies who strategized about how to overturn his defeat and people who organized a giant rally near the White House on the morning of Jan. 6. While some, like Meadows and Bannon, have balked, others have spoken to the panel and provided documents.

Emily Wagster Pettus reported from Mississippi. AP writers Eric Tucker, Nomaan Merchant, Zeke Miller, Farnoush Amiri and Jill Colvin contributed.

## **EXPLAINER: Conservatorships and how Britney Spears was freed**

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A judge has freed Britney Spears from the conservatorship that controlled her life and money for nearly 14 years.

Here's a look at how conservatorships operate, what's unusual about hers, and how calls from her and her fans to #FreeBritney eventually worked.

### HOW DO CONSERVATORSHIPS WORK?

When a person is considered to have a severely diminished mental capacity, a court can step in and grant someone the power to make financial decisions and major life choices for them.

California law says a conservatorship, called a guardianship in some states, is justified for a "person who is unable to provide properly for his or her personal needs for physical health, food, clothing, or shelter," or for someone who is "substantially unable to manage his or her own financial resources or resist fraud or undue influence."

The conservator, as the appointee put in charge is called, may be a family member, a close friend or a court-appointed professional.

Several states have recently used the attention that Spears has brought to the issue to reform their conservatorship laws.

### HOW DOES SPEARS' WORK?

With a fortune of nearly \$60 million comes secrecy, and the court closely guarded the inner workings of Spears' conservatorship.

Some aspects have been revealed in documents. The conservatorship had the power to restrict her visitors. It arranged and oversaw visits with her two teenage sons, whose father has full custody. It took out restraining orders in her name to keep away interlopers deemed shady.

It had the power to make her medical decisions and her business deals. She said at a June hearing that she has been compelled to take medication against her will, has been kept from having an intrauterine device for birth control removed and has been required to undertake performances when she didn't want to.

Spears also said she had been denied the right to get married or have another child, but she has since gotten engaged to longtime boyfriend Sam Asghari.

### WHO HAD POWER OVER SPEARS?

The ultimate power in the conservatorship fell to Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Brenda Penny. She used it on Friday to end it.

Before his suspension in September, her father James Spears had the lion's share of day-to-day power over his daughter's choices for 13 years. In 2019, he gave up the role of conservator over her life decisions, maintaining control only over her finances. His replacement, John Zabel, now has a few minimal administrative powers to move Britney Spears' money around as power over it transitions back to her.

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Jodi Montgomery, a court-appointed professional, acted as conservator over her personal matters from 2019 until Friday. Her agreement was key when the termination finally came.

WHY DID SO MANY CALLED TO #FREEBRITNEY?

Some fans objected to the conservatorship soon after it began. But the movement, and the #FreeBritney hashtag, truly took hold early in 2019, when some believed she was being forced into a mental health hospital against her will.

They pored over her social media posts to extract clues about her well-being and protested outside the courthouse at every hearing.

They were long dismissed by Spears' father and others as conspiracy theorists, but in the end their power was undeniable.

They felt vindicated by two dramatic speeches she gave this summer, in which she confirmed many of their suspicions. They felt triumphant when her father was removed. And they felt truly jubilant when the conservatorship was terminated.

She was quick to give them credit, since first acknowledging in court filings in 2020 that they may have a point. "Good God I love my fans so much it's crazy" she said on Twitter and Instagram after Friday's ruling, along with video of the celebrations outside the courthouse and the new hashtag #FreedBritney.

WHY WAS IT IMPOSED IN THE FIRST PLACE?

In 2007 and 2008, shortly after she became a mother, she began to have very public mental struggles, with media outlets obsessed over each moment. Hordes of paparazzi aggressively followed her every time she left her house, and she no longer seemed able to handle it.

She attacked one cameraman's car with an umbrella. She shaved her own head at a salon. She lost custody of her children. When she refused to turn over her boys after a visit, she was hospitalized and put on a psychiatric hold. The conservatorship was put in place within days.

WHY DID IT GO ON SO LONG?

A conservatorship can always be dissolved by the court. But it's rare that a person achieves their own release from one, as Britney Spears essentially did.

They can last decades because the circumstances that lead to them, like traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's, or dementia, are not things people just bounce back from.

Spears' father and his attorneys justified the continued conservatorship by arguing that she was especially susceptible to people who seek to take advantage of her money and fame.

Normally a series of mental evaluations would take place before a conservatorship ended, but on Friday Penny said that with no one asking for any examinations, none would be required.

HOW DOES SPEARS FEEL ABOUT ALL OF THIS?

For years it was largely a mystery. But allowed to speak publicly in court in June, she called the conservatorship "abusive" and "stupid" and says it does her "way more harm than good."

And in her social media posts on Friday, she declared, "Best day ever ... praise the Lord."

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Regaining her personal and financial powers after so many years will take some untangling. Montgomery, along with therapists and doctors, have created a care plan for the transition, and her attorney Mathew Rosengart says a financial safety net is in place too.

Rosengart has vowed to pursue an investigation of James' Spears handling of the conservatorship even after it ends. He could take action in civil court, and has suggested he may even turn over his findings to law enforcement for consideration of criminal charges. James Spears has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing.

Britney Spears is likely to hire financial managers, assistants and attorneys to perform many of the same duties previously performed by the conservatorship. But their decisions will be subject to her approval, instead of vice-versa.

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Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>



## Federal court declines to lift stay on vaccine mandate

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal court declined Friday to lift its stay on the Biden administration's vaccine mandate for businesses with 100 or more workers.

The New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals granted an emergency stay last Saturday of the requirement by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration that those workers be vaccinated by Jan. 4 or face mask requirements and weekly tests.

Lawyers for the Justice and Labor departments filed a response Monday in which they said stopping the mandate from taking effect will only prolong the COVID-19 pandemic and would "cost dozens or even hundreds of lives per day."

But the appeals court rejected that argument Friday. Judge Kurt D. Engelhardt wrote that the stay "is firmly in the public interest."

"From economic uncertainty to workplace strife, the mere specter of the Mandate has contributed to untold economic upheaval in recent months," Engelhardt wrote.

At least 27 states have filed legal challenges in at least six federal appeals courts after OSHA released its rules on Nov. 4. The federal government said in its court filings Monday that the cases should be consolidated and that one of the circuit courts where a legal challenge has been filed should be chosen at random on Nov. 16 to hear it.

Administration lawyers said there is no reason to keep the vaccine mandate on hold while the court where the cases ultimately land remains undetermined.

## Alzheimer's drug cited as Medicare premium jumps by \$21.60

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Medicare's "Part B" outpatient premium will jump by \$21.60 a month in 2022, one of the largest increases ever. Officials said Friday a new Alzheimer's drug is responsible for about half of that.

The increase guarantees that health care will gobble up a big chunk of the recently announced Social Security cost-of-living allowance, a boost that had worked out to \$92 a month for the average retired worker, intended to help cover rising prices for gas and food that are pinching seniors.

Medicare officials told reporters on Friday that about half the increase is due to contingency planning if the program ultimately has to cover Aduhelm, the new \$56,000-a-year medication for Alzheimer's disease from pharmaceutical company Biogen. The medication would add to the cost of outpatient coverage because it's administered intravenously in a doctor's office and paid for under Part B.

The issue is turning into a case study of how one pricey medication for a condition afflicting millions of people can swing the needle on government spending and impact household budgets. People who don't have Alzheimer's would not be shielded from the cost of Aduhelm, since it's big enough to affect their premiums.

The new Part B premium will be \$170.10 a month for 2022, officials said. The jump of \$21.60 is the biggest increase ever in dollar terms, although not percentage-wise. As recently as August, the Medicare Trustees' report had projected a smaller increase of \$10 from the current \$148.50.

"The increase in the Part B premium for 2022 is continued evidence that rising drug costs threaten the affordability and sustainability of the Medicare program," said Medicare chief Chiquita Brooks-LaSure in a statement. Officials said the other half of the premium increase is due to the natural growth of the program and adjustments made by Congress last year as the coronavirus pandemic hit.

The late Friday afternoon announcement — in a time slot government agencies use to drop bad news — comes as Congress is considering Democratic legislation backed by President Joe Biden that would restrain what Medicare pays for drugs. However, under the latest compromise, Medicare would not be able to negotiate prices for newly launched drugs. The news on Medicare premiums could reopen that debate internally among Democrats.

"Today's announcement ... confirms the need for Congress to finally give Medicare the ability to negotiate lower prescription drug costs," Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J., said in a statement. "We simply cannot wait

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any longer to provide real relief to seniors." Pallone has been a proponent of the original House version of the legislation, which took a tougher approach toward the pharmaceutical industry.

Alzheimer's is a progressive neurological disease with no known cure, affecting about 6 million Americans, the vast majority old enough to qualify for Medicare.

Aduhelm is the first Alzheimer's medication in nearly 20 years. It doesn't cure the life-sapping condition, but the Food and Drug Administration determined that its ability to reduce clumps of plaque in the brain is likely to slow dementia. However, many experts say that benefit has not been clearly demonstrated.

Medicare has begun a formal assessment to determine whether it should cover the drug, and a final decision isn't likely until at least the spring. For now, Medicare is deciding on a case-by-case basis whether to pay for Aduhelm.

Cost traditionally does not enter into Medicare's coverage determinations. But in this case there is also plenty of debate about the effectiveness of Aduhelm. Last November, an FDA advisory panel voted nearly unanimously against recommending its approval, citing flaws in company studies. Several members of the panel resigned after the FDA approved the drug anyway over their objections.

A nonprofit think tank focused on drug pricing pegged Aduhelm's actual value at between \$3,000 and \$8,400 per year — not \$56,000 — based on its unproven benefits.

But Biogen has defended its pricing, saying it looked carefully at costs of advanced medications to treat cancer and other conditions. The company also says it expects a gradual uptake of the Alzheimer's drug, and not a "hockey-stick" scenario in which costs take off. Nonetheless Medicare officials told reporters they have to plan for contingencies.

Two House committees are investigating the development of Aduhelm, including contacts between company executives and FDA regulators.

Medicare covers more than 60 million people, including those 65 and older, as well as people who are disabled or have serious kidney disease. Program spending is approaching \$1 trillion a year.

## California, Colorado and NM expand virus booster access

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California is among three U.S. states now allowing coronavirus booster shots for all adults even though federal health officials recommend limiting doses to those considered most at risk.

The nation's most populous state, along with Colorado and New Mexico, instituted their policies to try to head off a feared surge around the end-of-year holidays when more people are gathering inside.

Colorado and New Mexico have among the nation's highest rates of new infections, while California — lowest in the nation earlier this fall — now joins them in the "high" tier for transmission, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed an executive order Friday expanding eligibility for COVID-19 booster shots. Her state health department's acting secretary, Dr. David Scrase, said rising case numbers have some hospitals in New Mexico overwhelmed.

"COVID-19 is incredibly opportunistic and it's our job to ensure that the virus has fewer and fewer opportunities to spread," Scrase said. "If it's time for you to get a booster, please do so right away."

President Joe Biden's administration had sought approval for boosters for all adults, but U.S. Food and Drug Administration advisers in September decided it isn't clear that young healthy people need another dose. They instead recommended boosters only for those over 65 and younger people with certain underlying health conditions or whose jobs are high risk for the virus.

In California, state Public Health Officer Tomás Aragón sent a letter to local health officials and providers saying they should "allow patients to self-determine their risk of exposure."

"Do not turn a patient away who is requesting a booster" if they are age 18 and up and it has been six months since they had their second Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or two months since their single Johnson & Johnson shot, he wrote.

He told pharmacies to prioritize boosters to those in skilled nursing or assisted living facilities due to

waning immunity from the earlier shots. But generally, providers "should not miss any opportunity" to give vaccines to the unvaccinated or boosters to everyone else anytime they visit a drug store, hospital or medical office.

Many states are now experiencing rising cases and more hospitalizations. Nationwide in the last week there were about 73,000 new cases daily, roughly 10,000 more than three weeks ago.

In Colorado, where some hospitals are stretched to the breaking point, Gov. Jared Polis signed an executive order on Thursday to expand use of booster shots. A day later he had a dire warning for the roughly 20% of eligible people in his state who have yet to get a single dose.

"We wouldn't even be here talking about this if everyone was vaccinated," the Democratic governor said at a news conference. "If you are not vaccinated, you're going to get COVID. Maybe this year, maybe next year."

Officials in Colorado, California and New Mexico said they have ample supplies of vaccines to provide initial vaccinations and boosters to all who want them.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki on Friday said the Biden administration continues to advise health leaders across the country "to abide by public health guidelines coming from the federal government."

California Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly earlier in the week said California's decision doesn't conflict with federal guidelines. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was "very clear that they had two categories — groups that should get a booster and groups that may," he said.

"We know that a number of Californians work in crowded public settings," Ghaly said. "Because of your work-related risk or even you live with people who have underlying conditions (and) are at higher risk themselves, or you're a member of a community that's been ravished and hard-hit by COVID ... it's permissive by the CDC and the FDA to go ahead and get the booster."

Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, a professor of epidemiology at University of California, San Francisco, said boosters have lagged. That's worrisome as winter approaches and the highly contagious delta variant, which caused a summer spike, continues to circulate.

The delta variant is "really good at finding people, including people who got vaccinated at the beginning of the year and now that vaccination is wearing off a little bit," she said. "Delta is a powerful force and everybody needs that third dose."

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Associated Press writers Jim Anderson in Denver, Susan Montoya in Sante Fe, New Mexico, and Darlene Superville in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Britney freed: Judge dissolves Spears' conservatorship**

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Britney Spears is free. A Los Angeles judge on Friday ended the conservatorship that has controlled the pop singer's life and money for nearly 14 years.

The decision capped a stunning odyssey that saw Spears publicly demand the end of the conservatorship, hire her own attorney, have her father removed from power and finally win the freedom to make her own medical, financial and personal decisions for the first time since 2008.

"As of today, the conservatorship of the person and estate of Britney Jean Spears is hereby terminated," Judge Brenda Penny said.

Jubilation erupted outside the courthouse, with fans cheering and shouting after the decision was announced. The crowd chanted "Britney! Britney! Britney!" and fans sang and danced to Spears' song "Stronger."

Spears promptly tweeted about the decision: "Good God I love my fans so much it's crazy!!! I think I'm gonna cry the rest of the day!!!! Best day ever ... praise the Lord ... can I get an Amen???"

Spears' attorney, Mathew Rosengart, told fans and reporters that the case "helped shine a light on conservatorships and guardianships from coast to coast, from California to New York. And that took a tremendous amount of insight, courage and grace."

The judge's move was widely expected, with little support left for prolonging the legal arrangement. No

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new arguments were offered at the 30-minute hearing. Spears did not attend.

As recently as last spring, it appeared that the conservatorship could continue for years. Then it unraveled with surprising speed.

Key to the unraveling was a speech Spears made at a hearing in June when she passionately described the restrictions and scrutiny as "abusive" and said "I just want my life back," a line her lawyer repeated in court Friday. Spears demanded that the conservatorship end without any prying evaluation of her mental state.

Legal experts at the time said that was unlikely to happen, and would represent a departure from common court practice.

But the judge said at Wednesday's hearing that California law did not require her to order further evaluation of Spears if no one requested it.

The judge allowed Spears to hire Rosengart, an attorney of her choice, in July. He made it his goal first to have James Spears removed from his role as conservator of his daughter's finances before working to end the conservatorship altogether. The judge suspended James Spears at a September hearing, citing the "toxic environment" his presence created.

But more courtroom battles could lie ahead.

Rosengart has further vowed to pursue an investigation of James Spears' role. He said he and his team have found mismanagement of Britney Spears' finances, suggesting she could pursue further legal action. Court records put her net worth at about \$60 million.

He also said law enforcement should investigate revelations in a New York Times documentary about a listening device placed in her bedroom.

James Spears' attorneys said Rosengart's allegations ranged from unsubstantiated to impossible, and that he only ever acted in his daughter's best interest.

The post-conservatorship fight has in some ways already begun. James Spears has parted ways with the attorneys who helped him operate it, and he has hired Alex Weingarten, a lawyer specializing in the kind of litigation that may be coming.

In court filings last week, Britney Spears' former business managers, Tri Star Sports and Entertainment Group, pushed back against Rosengart's demands for documents about the firm's involvement in the conservatorship from 2008 to 2018. The group also denied any role in or knowledge of any surveillance of the superstar.

Jodi Montgomery, the court-appointed conservator who oversaw the singer's life and medical decisions starting in 2019, developed a care plan with her therapists and doctors to guide Spears through the end of the conservatorship and its aftermath.

"There is no reason Ms. Spears can't lead a safe, happy, fulfilling life after this conservatorship," Montgomery's attorney, Lauriann Wright, said at the hearing.

The judge kept a small part of the conservatorship temporarily in place to allow the accountant who took over for James Spears to put the singer's affairs in order in the coming months before transferring power back to her.

Britney Spears was a 26-year-old new mother at the height of her career when her father established the conservatorship, at first on a temporary basis, in February 2008 after a series of public mental health struggles.

It ends a few weeks before her 40th birthday, with her sons in their mid-teens and her career on indefinite hold, as she is engaged to be married a second time.

A turning point came early in 2019, when she canceled a planned concert residency in Las Vegas.

Convinced she was put in a mental hospital against her will, fans began coalescing and demanding that the court #FreeBritney. At first, they were dismissed as conspiracy theorists, but the singer herself gave them validation in 2020 in a series of court filings that said they were correct to demand greater transparency and scrutiny of her legal situation.

Those filings proved to be the first indication from Spears, who had remained silent on the conservatorship for years, that she would seek major changes.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>

## Tech disputes at Rittenhouse trial not new issue for courts

By KATHLEEN FOODY Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The late stages of Kyle Rittenhouse's murder trial in the shooting of three men highlighted the U.S. legal system's constant debate over forensic technologies, even fundamental ideas taken for granted outside the courtroom.

Rittenhouse's defense team challenged Kenosha County prosecutors' attempt to introduce enlarged images taken from drone video footage. Prosecutors said the images were a clear contradiction of Rittenhouse's earlier testimony that he had not pointed his weapon at protesters prior to killing Joseph Rosenbaum.

Rittenhouse's defense, though, argued that the method used by a state investigator to enlarge the photos couldn't be trusted to accurately show Rittenhouse's actions.

James Armstrong, a senior forensic imaging specialist with the Wisconsin State Crime Lab, acknowledged on the stand Thursday that enlarging an image requires the addition of pixels. But prosecutors said the software Armstrong used is widely accepted — as is the method he used to enlarge the photos.

Software programs used to analyze video evidence provide several ways to enlarge photo or videos, based on algorithms. The attorneys' debate over which is more accurate created a technical slog as testimony wound down this week.

In one instance, Judge Bruce Schroeder opted to let jurors see the evidence and make their own decision. In another, he told prosecutors they would need to bring someone in to address the issue.

The sparring experts in the Rittenhouse case used different software and methods in those programs to enlarge images supporting their testimony. Each method has drawbacks but any means of enlarging an image requires adding pixels, said David Forsyth, a professor of computer science at the University of Illinois.

But there is "no way" that any means of enlarging a photograph will "create structures, objects, people, handguns," said Forsyth, who isn't involved in the case.

Still, Forsyth said he understands judges who scrutinize the details before allowing similarly technical evidence to go before a jury.

"If someone is going to spend a long time in prison based on evidence, it's probably a good idea that the jury does it based on evidence they understand rather than what they think they understand," Forsyth said.

Assistant District Attorney James Kraus accused defense attorneys of making a dishonest argument because the enlarged footage "shows their client is lying." The defense team's hired video analyst used similar software to enlarge video footage during his testimony earlier Thursday, Kraus noted.

"All due respect to Your Honor, I think the defense is trying to take advantage of your lack of knowledge about technology which you've expressed," Kraus said.

Schroeder's confusion with the technical details was obvious in court. Earlier in the week, he questioned whether using the pinch-and-zoom feature on an iPad would alter an image and barred prosecutors from using that while presenting video evidence to jurors.

"I totally agree with your comment about my lack of familiarity with these concepts, although logic, I have some logical skills," he said on Thursday. "This is a difficult concept for me, yes."

At one point, Schroeder, attorneys for both sides and Rittenhouse clustered around a television as a detective played the video footage repeatedly.

At least one forensic video expert uninvolved in the case said Rittenhouse's attorneys were right to challenge the state's approach to enlarging the video evidence. Grant Fredericks of Forensic Video Solutions said the state's first proposal — the pinch and zoom method — is impossible to exactly replicate, which is essential when creating a record of a criminal case for potential appeal.

Fredericks said he's testified on video evidence hundreds of times, both for defendants and prosecutors

in criminal and civil cases, and instructs law enforcement on video analysis. He said the witness called by Rittenhouse's team used video analysis software in a way that could be exactly replicated and "stayed in his lane," while the state crime lab expert struggled to justify the method he had used.

"If a video is not reproduced accurately, one juror might interpret it incorrectly or might see something that they consider to be really clear," Fredericks said. "My duty as an expert is to make sure everything I'm showing is reliable."

The legal system also tends to be years behind technology advancements, said Stan Goldman, a law professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

"Unless this kind of scientific or picture evidence is really dramatically prejudicial or doesn't really have a good scientific basis, (judges) usually let it in," Goldman said. "And then you let the lawyers explain what the problems might be."

Find AP's full coverage on the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse: <https://apnews.com/hub/kyle-rittenhouse>

## **Bannon indicted on contempt charges for defying 1/6 subpoena**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, MICHAEL BALSAMO and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press  
WASHINGTON (AP) — Steve Bannon, a longtime ally of former President Donald Trump, was indicted Friday on two counts of criminal contempt of Congress after he defied a subpoena from the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

The Justice Department said Bannon, 67, was indicted on one count for refusing to appear for a deposition last month and the other for refusing to provide documents in response to the committee's subpoena. He is expected to surrender to authorities on Monday and will appear in court that afternoon, a law enforcement official told the AP. The person was granted anonymity to discuss the case.

The indictment comes after a parade of Trump administration officials — including Bannon — have defied requests and demands from Congress over the past five years with little consequence, including during Democrats' impeachment inquiry. President Barack Obama's administration also declined to charge two of its officials who defied congressional demands.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said Bannon's indictment reflects the Justice Department's "steadfast commitment" to the rule of law. Each count carries a minimum of 30 days of jail and as long as a year behind bars.

The indictment came as a second expected witness, former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, defied his own subpoena from the committee on Friday and as Trump has escalated his legal battles to withhold documents and testimony about the insurrection.

If the House votes to hold Meadows in contempt, that recommendation would also be sent to the Justice Department for a possible indictment.

Officials in both Democratic and Republican administrations have been held in contempt by Congress, but criminal indictments for contempt are exceedingly rare. The most recent notable examples of criminal penalties for not testifying before Congress date to the 1970s, including when President Richard Nixon's aide G. Gordon Liddy was convicted of misdemeanor charges for refusing to answer questions about his role in the Watergate scandal.

Democrats who voted to hold Bannon in contempt praised the Justice Department's decision, saying the charges reinforce the authority of Congress to investigate the executive branch and signal potential consequences for those who refuse to cooperate.

"The days of defying subpoenas with impunity are over," tweeted House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, who sits on the Jan. 6 panel and also led Trump's first impeachment inquiry. "We will expose those responsible for Jan 6. No one is above the law."

The chairman of the Jan. 6 panel, Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson, told reporters at an event in his home state of Mississippi on Friday that he will recommend contempt charges against Meadows next week.

Thompson and the vice chairwoman of the panel, Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, said in a

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statement: "Mr. Meadows, Mr. Bannon, and others who go down this path won't prevail in stopping the Select Committee's effort getting answers for the American people about January 6th, making legislative recommendations to help protect our democracy, and helping ensure nothing like that day ever happens again."

Meadows and Bannon are key witnesses for the panel, as they both were in close touch with Trump around the time of the insurrection.

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When Bannon declined to appear for his deposition in October, his attorney said the former Trump adviser had been directed by a lawyer for Trump citing executive privilege not to answer questions. The attorney did not respond to a message seeking comment on Friday.

This is not the first time the longtime Trump ally has faced legal peril. In August of last year, Bannon was pulled from a luxury yacht and arrested on allegations that he and three associates ripped off donors trying to fund a southern border wall. Trump later pardoned Bannon in the final hours of his presidency.

Meadows, a former congressman from North Carolina, defied his subpoena on Friday after weeks of discussions with the committee. His lawyer said that Meadows has a "sharp legal dispute" with the panel as Trump has claimed executive privilege over the former chief of staff's testimony, as he had with Bannon's.

The White House said in a letter Thursday that President Joe Biden would waive any privilege that would prevent Meadows from cooperating with the committee, prompting Meadows' lawyer to say he wouldn't comply.

"Legal disputes are appropriately resolved by courts," said the lawyer, George Terwilliger. "It would be irresponsible for Mr. Meadows to prematurely resolve that dispute by voluntarily waiving privileges that are at the heart of those legal issues."

As the sitting president, Biden has so far waived most of Trump's assertions of privilege over documents and interviews, citing the interest of the public in knowing what happened on Jan. 6. Trump sued the committee and the National Archives to stop the release of documents, and U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan has repeatedly backed Biden's position, noting in one ruling this week that "Presidents are not kings, and Plaintiff is not President."

The panel's proceedings and attempts to gather information have been delayed as Trump has appealed Chutkan's rulings. On Thursday, a federal appeals court temporarily blocked the release of some of the White House records the panel is seeking, giving that court time to consider Trump's arguments.

Still, the House panel is continuing its work, and members have already interviewed more than 150 witnesses in an attempt to build a comprehensive record of how a violent mob of Trump's supporters broke into the Capitol and temporarily halted the certification of Biden's victory.

The committee has subpoenaed almost three dozen people, including former White House staffers, Trump allies who strategized about how to overturn his defeat and people who organized a giant rally near the White House on the morning of Jan. 6. While some, like Meadows and Bannon, have balked, others have spoken to the panel and provided documents.

Emily Wagster Pettus reported from Mississippi. AP writers Eric Tucker, Nomaan Merchant, Zeke Miller, Farnoush Amiri and Jill Colvin contributed.

## Jury to get to weigh some lesser charges in Rittenhouse case

By SCOTT BAUER, MICHAEL TARM and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — The jurors who will decide Kyle Rittenhouse's fate will be allowed to consider lesser charges if they opt to acquit him on some of the original counts prosecutors brought, the judge said Friday during a contentious hearing in which both sides could claim partial victory.

Rittenhouse, of nearby Antioch, Illinois, testified that he acted in self-defense when he fatally shot two protesters and wounded a third during an August 2020 night of unrest in Kenosha following the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man.

Jurors are expected to begin deliberating on Monday after closing arguments in a case that has left Americans divided over whether Rittenhouse was a patriot who took a stand against lawlessness or a vigilante who brought a gun to a protest to provoke a response.

With a verdict near, Gov. Tony Evers said Friday that 500 National Guard members would be prepared for duty in Kenosha if local law enforcement requested them.

Rittenhouse, who was 17 at the time of the shootings, is charged with intentional homicide and other counts for killing Joseph Rosenbaum and Anthony Huber and wounding Gaige Grosskreutz.

Wisconsin law allows the prosecution and defense to ask that jurors be told they can consider lesser charges as part of the instructions they receive before deliberating. Defense lawyers can object to lesser charges, and in some cases Friday, they did. For those that they didn't object to, Judge Bruce Schroeder asked Rittenhouse to confirm that he agreed with his attorneys' decision.

Schroeder told Rittenhouse that by including the lesser charges, "you're raising the risk of conviction, although you're avoiding the possibility that the jury will end up compromising on the more serious crime. And you're also decreasing the risk that you'll end up with a second trial because the jury is unable to agree."

Rittenhouse said he understood.

Schroeder said he would issue his final rulings Saturday, but he made some findings from the bench and indicated how he might rule on others. For counts where jurors will be allowed to consider lesser charges, they will be instructed to only consider them if they first acquit Rittenhouse of the more serious original corresponding charge.

Friday's arguments over jury instructions were contentious at times, with attorneys rehashing debates they had earlier in the case. At one point, as prosecutors were seeking to add an instruction that would allow the jurors to consider whether Rittenhouse was provoked, the two sides debated about what a particular photo showed. Schroeder lost his temper, snapping: "You're asking me to give an instruction. I want to see the best picture!"

Schroeder ultimately said he would allow the provocation instruction, which would ask the jury to consider whether Rittenhouse provoked Rosenbaum into attacking him. If the jury finds he did, that would negate self-defense.

Rittenhouse, now 18, faces one count of first-degree reckless homicide in the killing of Rosenbaum, who was the first person he shot after Rosenbaum chased him in a used car lot. Prosecutors sought to add a second-degree reckless homicide charge, but the defense objected. Schroeder said he was unlikely to allow the lesser charge because he thought a guilty verdict on the lesser charge would be overturned on appeal.

Rittenhouse also faces two charges of first-degree reckless endangerment: one for firing at an unknown man who tried to kick him in the face and another because a reporter was in the line of fire when Rittenhouse shot Rosenbaum.

Schroeder said he was inclined to allow a lesser charge of second-degree reckless endangerment when it comes to endangering the reporter, but he might not. He said he would not allow the lesser charge in the case of the unidentified man who tried to kick Rittenhouse.

Rittenhouse also faces one count of first-degree intentional homicide in Huber's death. That's the most serious charge against him and carries a mandatory life sentence. Huber swung his skateboard at Rittenhouse shortly after Rittenhouse killed Rosenbaum.



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The defense did not object to adding lesser counts of second-degree intentional homicide and first-degree reckless homicide as it relates to Huber. It did object to adding a charge of second-degree reckless homicide. Schroeder said he "embraced" that argument.

Rittenhouse also faces one count of attempted first-degree intentional homicide for shooting and wounding Grosskreutz in the arm. Grosskreutz, who had a gun in his hand, confronted Rittenhouse right after Rittenhouse shot Huber.

Prosecutors asked to add second-degree attempted intentional homicide, first-degree reckless endangerment and second-degree reckless endangerment options. Rittenhouse attorney Corey Chirafisi didn't object to the second-degree attempted homicide count, but he objected to adding the reckless endangerment counts, saying he doesn't believe someone can "attempt to be reckless."

Schroeder said he would mull it over but was inclined to agree with prosecutors.

Rittenhouse is also charged with possessing a dangerous weapon while under the age of 18. It was not clear Friday what Schroeder intended to tell jurors on that charge.

Legal observers said both sides got some wins during the hearing. Julius Kim, a Milwaukee criminal defense attorney and former prosecutor, said no matter how confident Rittenhouse may be of his defense, accepting the lesser charge on the most serious count minimizes the risk of him being convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

"I think that they recognize it could be a good thing for Mr. Rittenhouse to allow the jury to potentially convict him of a lesser offense if they convict him of anything," Kim said, adding that the lack of a defense objection on that count could signal that they might not be confident in an acquittal.

Still, the fact that prosecutors are seeking a lesser offense is a "tacit acknowledgement" that they aren't confident the jury will convict Rittenhouse on the original charges.

"I think they are trying to salvage something at his point in time," Kim said.

Michael O'Hear, a criminal law professor at Marquette University in Milwaukee, agreed, saying lesser included charges are usually sought by the defense.

"Normally the prosecutor would not request a lesser included instruction if the prosecution had a very high degree of confidence in the likelihood of conviction of the greater offense," O'Hear said, noting that adding it "practically invites the jury to compromise on the lesser offense."

Testimony in the case ended Thursday after nearly two weeks. The most riveting moment in the trial came when Rittenhouse told the jury that he was defending himself from attack when he used his rifle to shoot the three men.

Closing arguments will be Monday, after which names will be drawn to decide which 12 jurors will deliberate and which will be dismissed as alternates. Eighteen people have been hearing the case. The panel appears to be overwhelmingly white, like Rittenhouse and those he shot.

The protests were set off by the wounding of Blake by a white police officer. Rittenhouse went to the protest with a rifle and a medical kit in what the former police and fire youth cadet said was an effort to protect property after rioters set fires and ransacked businesses on previous nights.

The case has stirred fierce debate over vigilantism, self-defense, the Second Amendment right to bear arms and the unrest that erupted throughout the U.S. over the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and other police violence against Black people.

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Bauer reported from Madison and Forliti reported from Minneapolis.

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Find AP's full coverage of the Rittenhouse trial: <https://apnews.com/hub/kyle-rittenhouse>

## Officials worry China's men's hockey team not Olympics ready

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

International hockey officials are hoping to avoid a Humiliation On Ice when the Chinese men's national team debuts at the Beijing Winter Olympics.

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They begged the NHL to send players to the Games in China, but now they are worried that the home team might not even be able to score a goal.

The host nation automatically qualifies for every sport at the Olympics, but the Chinese men's lineup — with a handful of naturalized Americans and Canadians — will face off against virtual NHL all-star teams from Canada and the United States in the first round. The International Ice Hockey Federation fears historic blowouts could hurt Olympic hockey's image, especially after persuading the NHL to take a two-week break to allow the world's top players to compete.

To figure out how it might all go down, the IIHF is holding an unusual test next week in Moscow, where players on the Chinese team will play against Russian professionals and attempt to be competitive. It's not clear what might happen if the team plays as poorly as it has in recent games, which raised fears that it might not score even once on home ice in front of its own fans.

Ice hockey is not a popular sport in China, with no pro or significant amateur league. After China won the right to host the Games, an academy was set up to nurture young talent, and Chinese officials went around the world looking for players with Chinese ancestry — or who were willing to naturalize there — who could join the team.

But China's men's team is ranked 32nd in the world, and it is in a group with the U.S. and Canada, two of the medal favorites among the 12 teams going to the Winter Games in February. It has struggled against other competition.

That's why new IIHF president Luc Tardif scheduled the games in Moscow, where the Beijing-based Kontinental Hockey League team Kunlun Red Star — which has been used as something of a proxy for the Chinese national team to get experience in a professional league — will play against Russian opponents.

IIHF and Chinese hockey officials will be watching closely, in person and online, and hoping the team isn't on its way to being embarrassed against NHL competition in February.

"The team we will have in front of us, in two games, we will just to see the score and the way the game was playing, we will quickly know if they've got the level or not," Tardif told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "It will be not only the score but the way the game was played."

It's unclear who will grade this test — or how. The IIHF said last week it will not remove China from the tournament — it does not have the unilateral authority to do that — and it would be up to the Chinese government to pull the plug.

That would be a humiliating step: A host country's team has never been withdrawn from the modern-day Olympics for solely performance-related reasons, according to Olympic historian Bill Mallon.

There is good reason it is even being contemplated: Kunlun has lost 20 of its 26 KHL games this season and been outscored 96-57 in the process. Kunlun has played in the mostly Russian league since 2016.

Tardif said there are no such concerns about China's women's team, which is ranked 20th and in an Olympic group with less daunting competition.

The disappointing performance by the Chinese men's team so far is not for lack of effort. The Chinese Ice Hockey Association failed in its attempt to develop a homegrown roster, so the team's top players are North American — some with family ties to the country and others who have been naturalized after joining Kunlun and earning international approval to play for China.

Leading scorers Spencer Foo and Brandon Yip and top defenseman Ryan Sproul are Canadian and starting goaltender Jeremy Smith is American, though there is still some uncertainty about who will go to Beijing. The IIHF would not confirm which players on Kunlun's roster were eligible.

Stocking Olympic rosters with international players is not uncommon, certainly not since the host country started getting an automatic berth in the hockey tournament in 2006. Italy that year had nine Canadians and two Americans, and South Korea in 2018 had six Canadians and one American. Neither team won a game.

Yip, by far the most accomplished player for China with 174 games of NHL experience, hopes playing together for several years and employing a tight defensive scheme can help his team hang with Canada, the U.S. and Germany in a difficult Olympic group.

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"Obviously when you look at our teams on paper, it's a big discrepancy," said Yip, a 36-year-old from British Columbia who has played for Kunlun since 2017. "We obviously know what we're up against. They're the best players in the world, so we've got a big task in front of us."

How big a task?

Longmou Li, a longtime Chinese broadcaster who is VP of communications for Kunlun, figures the U.S. and Canada will shut out China, maybe 8-0 or 10-0, and added the focus is on the third game against Germany. Asked what would be considered success, Li said: "Score one goal and better performance. Not a disaster."

China has endured painful sporting losses before, namely in soccer when it did not qualify for the 2010 World Cup and sacked its manager after going winless on home soil at the 2008 Olympics. Susan Brownell, a professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and expert on Chinese sports, believes a poor result this time could cause an inspection of hockey from the head government level.

"If I was a hockey administrator, I'd be shaking in my boots," said Brownell, who considers the failure of China's hockey academy program a big reason for the current conundrum. "The criticism really is that you invest all this money and you can't produce results."

Much like in other sports, China brought in international coaches to help: Stanley Cup winner Mike Keenan was fired after just 36 games behind the bench with Kunlun in 2017, and the team has gone through Bobby Carpenter, Curt Fraser and Alexei Kovalev before landing on Italian-Canadian Ivano Zanatta for the Olympic job.

Li Li Ji, a Chinese national and professor of kinesiology who brings Chinese athletes and coaches to study at the University of Minnesota, said money is usually not an issue for China in building Olympic teams, but time was not on its side.

Li pointed out that it took Switzerland decades to reach the top level of international hockey, and China only put efforts into high gear after being awarded the 2022 Olympics in the summer of 2015.

The result could be similar to men's basketball, in which China lost 108-57 in the '88 Games to a U.S. team made up of college all-stars. Still, it sparked the nation's appreciation of that sport's best and the NBA-stacked Dream Team steamrolled the competition four years later while the world watched in admiration.

"It's going to be six dream teams — hockey teams — that play in Olympics in front of China fans," Li said.

Still, there could be unwelcome optics if China gets blown out of its sparkling arena by Canada and the U.S. while relations between it and those nations are chilly. And there's the possible blowback of home fans taking issue with a Chinese team full of foreigners.

Brownell, an American who represented Beijing University in collegiate track and field in the 1980s, said Chinese people will take it as an honor if foreigners perform well. If they don't, it could become a source of parody.

As one of those players who chose to play for China, Yip is trying to see the big picture. Beyond a few anticipated losses in February, he wants to set the stage for a brighter future.

"If I'm sitting on the couch 20 years from now and I flip on the TV and you see a Chinese national player getting drafted in the first round or the Chinese men's hockey team in the Olympics again, and they interview one of those players: 'Why did you get into hockey?' And they said, 'I watched the Chinese national team in Beijing in 2022 and that inspired me' — that would be really what success is determined by this whole experience," Yip said.

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AP Sports Writer James Ellingworth contributed.

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Follow AP Hockey Writer Stephen Whyno on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/SWhyno>

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**Out of time: Climate talks go past deadline over coal, cash**

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By FRANK JORDANS, ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press  
GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — Going into overtime Friday night, negotiators at U.N. climate talks in Glasgow were still trying to find common ground on phasing out coal, when nations need to update their emission-cutting pledges and, especially, on money.

Talks are at a "bit of a stalemate," and the United States, with support from the European Union, is holding back talks, said Lee White, the Gabonese minister for forests and climate change.

Mohamed Adow of Power Shift Africa, a long-time talks observer, said poorer nations are beyond disappointed with the way the United Kingdom presidency has come up with drafts and that this has become "a rich world" negotiation. He said poorer nations cannot accept what has been proposed.

As the talks approached midnight, rich nations had a much more optimistic view, showing the split that might occur after new drafts appear Saturday.

United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson, host of the meeting, said through a spokesperson that he believes "an ambitious outcome is in sight."

U.S. Climate Envoy John Kerry told The Associated Press on Friday night that climate talks were "working away," commenting after a late night meeting with his Chinese counterpart and before a hallway chat with India's minister.

Chinese Climate Envoy Xie Zhenhua told Kerry in the hallway: "I think the current draft is more close" in a conversation that AP witnessed. When Kerry asked him if he felt better about it, Xie answered: "Yes, I feel better about it because Alok Sharma is a smart guy."

No agreement was ready by the 6 p.m. local time scheduled end of the conference. And sometimes that helps diplomats get in a more deal-making mood.

"The negotiating culture is not to make the hard compromises until the meeting goes into extra innings, as we now have done," said long-time climate talks observer Alden Meyer of the European think tank E3G. "But the U.K. presidency is still going to have to make a lot of people somewhat unhappy to get the comprehensive agreement we need out of Glasgow."

Three sticking points were making people unhappy on Friday: cash, coal and timing.

A crunch issue is the question of financial aid for poor countries to cope with climate change. Rich nations failed to provide them with \$100 billion annually by 2020, as agreed, causing considerable anger among developing countries going into the talks.

A Friday morning draft reflects those concerns, expressing "deep regret" that the \$100 billion goal hasn't been met and urging rich countries to scale up their funding for poor nations to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change — an issue with which developed countries are also grappling.

Poorer nations say regret isn't enough.

"Don't call them donor countries. They're polluters. They owe this money," said Saleemul Huq, a climate science and policy expert who is director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Bangladesh.

The draft also proposes creating a loss-and-damage fund to help poor countries tap existing sources of aid when they face the devastating impacts of climate change. But rich nations such as the United States, which have historically been the biggest source of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, are opposed to any legal obligation to compensate poor countries.

But Gabon's White said rich countries, particularly the United States and the European Union, had said they weren't ready. "They said we never agreed to that. It won't work. It's too complicated."

The proposal for creating this mechanism is like creating a bank account, said Adow of Power Shift Africa. "We don't need to push cash into the account now. It is just the opening of the account."

This was the "elephant in the room," said Lia Nicholson, lead negotiator for the alliance of small islands at the summit. She said that developing nations and China had a "united position" on this but the proposal hadn't met with "significant pushback" from rich countries.

"Small islands can't always be the ones who are asked to compromise our interest with the objectives of reaching consensus," she said.

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That Friday draft also called on countries to accelerate “the phaseout of unabated coal power and of inefficient subsidies for fossil fuels.”

A previous draft Wednesday had been stronger, calling on countries to “accelerate the phasing out of coal and subsidies for fossil fuel.”

Kerry said Washington backed the current wording. “We’re not talking about eliminating” coal, he told fellow climate diplomats. But, he said: “Those subsidies have to go.”

Kerry said it was “a definition of insanity” that trillions were being spent to subsidize fossil fuels worldwide. “We’re allowing to feed the very problem we’re here to try to cure. It doesn’t make sense.”

But there was a mixed response from activists and observers on how significant the addition of the words “unabated” and “inefficient” was.

Richie Merzian, a former Australian climate negotiator who directs the climate and energy program at the Australia Institute think tank, said the additional caveats were “enough that you can run a coal train through it.”

Countries like Australia and India, the world’s third-biggest emitter, have resisted calls to phase out coal any time soon.

Scientists agree it is necessary to end the use of fossil fuels as soon as possible to meet the 2015 Paris accord’s ambitious goal of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit). But explicitly including such a call in the overarching declaration is politically sensitive, including for countries, such as Saudi Arabia, that fear oil and gas may be targeted next.

Another issue from Friday morning’s draft concerns when nations have to come back with new emission-cutting targets which they were supposed to submit before the Glasgow talks. Because the pledges weren’t enough, the draft calls on the nations to submit another tougher target by the end of 2022, but some nations, such as Saudi Arabia, are balking about this said World Resources Institute’s David Waskow.

In 2015 in Paris, there was a debate about whether targets should be updated every five or 10 years so going to one year after Glasgow is a big deal, said Environmental Defense Fund Vice President Kelley Kizzier, a former EU negotiator.

Negotiators from almost 200 nations gathered in Glasgow on Oct. 31 amid dire warnings from leaders, activists and scientists that not enough is being done to curb global warming.

According to the proposed decision, countries plan to express “alarm and utmost concern” that human activities have already caused around 1.1C (2F) of global warming “and that impacts are already being felt in every region.”

While the Paris accord calls for limiting temperature to “well below” 2C (3.6F), ideally no more than 1.5C, by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times, the draft agreement notes that the lower threshold “would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change” and resolves to aim for that target.

In doing so, it calls for the world to cut carbon dioxide emission by 45% in 2030 compared with 2010 levels, and to add no additional CO2 to the atmosphere by mid-century. So far the world is not on track for that.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told The Associated Press this week that the 1.5C-goal “is still in reach but on life support.”

The annual meetings, first held in 1995 and only skipped once last year due to the pandemic, are designed to get all countries to gradually ratchet up their efforts to curb global warming.

But for many vulnerable nations the process has been far too slow.

“We need to deliver and take action now,” said Seve Paeniu, the finance minister of the Pacific island nation of Tuvalu. “It’s a matter of life and survival for many of us.”

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Ellen Knickmeyer, Philipp Jenne and Karl Ritter contributed to this report.

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Follow AP’s coverage of the talks at <http://apnews.com/hub/climate>

## 70 minutes at Astroworld: A countdown to catastrophe

By MATT SEDENSKY AP National Writer

Anticipation had been building for hours, but never more than now, as the red numerals on the countdown clock disappeared and the first synthesized notes vibrated. An image of an eagle in a fireball hovered above the stage, a neon red tunnel appeared and eight towers of flames rose to the sky. Leaping from darkness into the glow, rapper Travis Scott emerged, the instant for which tens of thousands gathered before him had waited.

In the thrill of the moment, clamoring for an idol, many pushed forward, thrusting revelers into revelers, closer and closer and closer, until it seemed every inch was swallowed. Then, fighting the compression or seeking escape, people pushed from the front to the back, and new ripples came with it.

What followed last Friday in Houston is clouded by unanswered questions and strikingly different experiences based on where someone stood, which swells of movement reached them, and how they handled the crush. But in the 70 minutes the headliner was on stage in a show that left nine dead, one thing was certain: Nearly everyone felt the waves of humanity, borne of excitement but soaked with risk, as they spread.

"You became an organism," said 26-year-old Steven Gutierrez of Ellenville, New York, who is 6-foot-2 and 391 pounds but nonetheless found himself struck by the power of the pushes that sent him drifting from his spot. "We're all one. You're moving with the crowd. The crowd's like water. It's like an ocean."

The enthusiasm of some 50,000 spectators at the sold-out Astroworld festival was evident from the time gates opened hours earlier, when some of the earliest arrivals rushed through entrances with such force that metal detectors were toppled as security guards and police on horseback struggled to keep up. Though the concert grounds hosted numerous acts, Scott, a Houston-born musician who founded the festival in 2018 on the heels of his chart-topping album "Astroworld," was undoubtedly the top draw. Some fans made a beeline for the stage built solely for the headliner, staking out positions they would hold for hours under the manufactured peaks of "Utopia Mountain."

By noon, a merchandise area was shut down because the crowd was out of control, according to Houston Fire Department logs, and by 5 p.m., as many as 5,000 people without festival wristbands were believed to have breached barricades, jumped fences and even used bolt cutters to make their way into the concert grounds.

As afternoon turned to evening and the countdown clock appeared around 8:30 p.m., the crowd grew denser and denser, attendees said, and the first waves of motion began to ripple.

With five minutes left and latecomers pushing in, it tightened more.

In the final 30 seconds on the clock, the craggy peaks of the stage's mountain turned to a volcano, and when the moment came, the crowd chanted: "Ten, nine, eight, seven, six ..."

Scott appeared. The pushes grew stronger. The first shockwaves of fear emerged.

Eligio Garcia, 18, of Corpus Christi, Texas, figures it was just 40 seconds into Scott's set that he looked at his girlfriend with concern. They felt heat swaddle their bodies. It became hard to breathe.

Screams echoed, begging: "Please, help me!" Behind him, people were falling. It looked to him like a human whirlpool. They felt the push and his left arm slipped away from her.

In an instant, both found themselves tangled on the ground in a pile of bodies.

They managed to get up, and Garcia said they screamed to nearby production staff for help but got no response. Every way out seemed impossible, but they eventually made their way to safety.

"We gotta get out of here," he told his girlfriend. "We can't fall back into this pit."

Travis Scott's fans are dubbed "ragers" and are expected to be in constant motion at a show. The rapper, who dreamed of being a wrestler as a child and has said he wants his shows to resemble WWF matches, cheers chaos from the stage and stirs up frantic energy. He even has a gold necklace mimicking a street sign: A jewel-encrusted red circle with a person standing still, a diagonal red slash through the body.

The message is clear: No bystanders at concerts. Ragers only.

And so the show continued, Scott headbanging and shrieking, running through a quick succession of hits.

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Some experienced concertgoers in the crowd grabbed whistles around their necks or shouted "Open it up!" to trigger those around them to form mosh pits, circles that were the only voids in the jam-packed horde. Moshers shoved and heaved their bodies against one another in an aggressive ritual toeing the line between dance and violence. Around mosh pits' perimeter, circles of participants rotated and crowdsurfers took flight.

Moshers want their pits to grow as big as possible. Their outward push, combined with the rotations of participants, can create a swirl of motion that moves through the crowd. It was nothing new to many at the show. But, combined with the push toward the stage, others felt the crowd compress in ways they hadn't before.

Billy Nasser, 24, of Indianapolis, noticed it a few songs in. His raised arms no longer had room to come down. People were falling. Some stepped on the lifeless body of a passed-out man with his eyes rolled back in his head.

"I had to let him go .. It was every man for himself," Nasser said. "And that was when I realized how bad it was because I literally had to drop him and no one else would help me."

As flashpoints emerged in some places, the show went on. Lasers springing from the stage's tunnel made it look at times like a prism capturing a blaring sun.

Some 530 Houston Police officers were on the scene and their walkie-talkies crackled with a warning: Don't leave your group. No fewer than 10 officers together. Danger looms.

"We're having some structural issues that could be catastrophic," a voice cautioned.

About 22 minutes into his set, Scott seemed to see something in the crowd.

"Make sure he good," he said. "Walk with him. Take him."

Around the same time, over police radio, a voice advised: "Folks are coming out of the crowd complaining of difficulty breathing, crushing type injuries. It seems like the crowd is compressing."

The mass of people continued to tighten in spots, but escape paths remained.

Kevin Perez, a 19-year-old from Davenport, Florida, saw a mosh pit collapse behind him and realized he no longer was controlling his own movement. His forearms felt bound to his chest, his hands clenched in fists near his neck. He tipped his chin toward the sky for shallow breaths.

"It went from like excited to scared," he said. "People were trying to get out."

Perez followed a snake of people cutting through the crowd. Others climbed barricades.

In the hindsight of their escapes, the moments of this night would take new meaning.

An opening song entitled "Escape Plan." T-shirts brandished with "See you on the other side." A man in the crowd holding a white sign that asked "Will we survive."

The situation appeared to be worsening, the waves growing stronger, the opportunities to break free fewer.

"It got to the point," said 21-year-old Jason Rodriguez of Texas City, Texas, "where nobody could move."

About 28 minutes into Scott's set, a golf cart with flashing blue and red lights barely inched through the sea.

"There's an ambulance in the crowd," the rapper said. "Whoa, whoa, whoa."

He paused for about a minute. Scott told the audience to raise their hands to the sky. "You all know what you came here to do," he said, a cue for two men who were picked from the crowd to launch into stagedives.

Scott finished "Upper Echelon" as he hit the 30-minute mark onstage. Houston Police Chief Troy Finner later said this was the point his department noticed attendees "going down."

At the medical tent, where the capacity was just 10 people, according to permit filings, concern grew. On police radio, word was broadcast: "There's a lot of people trampled and they're passed out."

On the perimeter of the concert area, people were being thrust against metal barricades. Some began to bend.

During the next song, a young woman was captured on video climbing a platform with a cameraman.

"There is someone dying!" she cried. "There is someone dead!"

A young man joined her on the camera platform, screaming: "Stop the show! Stop the show!"

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The show went on.

What the rapper could see remains unknown. He soon had a new vantage atop an elevated platform at center stage and said at one point he could see "all the way in the back." But in videos looking out at the spectators, thousands of glowing phones look like a sky of glittering stars. His attorneys said later he didn't know about the deaths or injuries until after the show.

As Scott sang from the platform, security guards were seen responding in the crowd, saying "He's not having a pulse" and "There's like four people out here without a pulse." Police say the festival's promoter, Live Nation, agreed to cut the show short around this time. Inexplicably, though, the concert continued.

Forty minutes had passed since Scott took the stage, and again he briefly stopped.

"We need somebody help. Somebody passed out right here," he said.

He returned to work shortly, singing lyrics that speak of "standing in the ocean." Before him, the real-life sea of humanity bubbled with problems. Panic spread.

"I gotta get out! I gotta get out!" Ariel Little cried, her chest throbbing under the crowd's crush.

"You're going to get trampled!" Michael Suarez told himself, struggling not to fall.

"I'm going to die in here!" Stacey Sarmiento thought as she tried to escape.

One woman bit a man to make her way through. A man said humans turned to animals as the situation spiraled.

It felt to some as if it couldn't get worse, but another rush was coming. Fifty-two minutes into Scott's set, superstar rapper Drake appeared on stage, a surprise that sent the crowd again pushing.

Gutierrez, a hulking former lifeguard, had returned to the crowd after a brief retreat after guiding two people to safety. Now, he was back among them, overwhelmed by the joy of seeing Drake before him.

"You felt the rush to the stage and there was a big push," he said. "The Drake effect."

Scott and Drake shared the stage for 14 minutes until, alone again, Scott delivered a final song as the mountain behind him burst with color and fireworks rocketed overhead.

"Make it home safe!" he yelled before jogging offstage.

The ocean receded, baring ground littered with shoes and clothes and trash. A field hospital bloated with the injured. And, from the lips of concertgoers, word of tragedy spread.

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Contributing to this report were Associated Press writers Juan Lozano, Jamie Stengle and Robert Bumsted in Houston; Ryan Pearson in Los Angeles; and David Sharp in Portland, Maine.

## Gruden sues NFL over publication of his offensive emails

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

Former Las Vegas Raiders coach Jon Gruden has sued Commissioner Roger Goodell and the NFL, alleging that a "malicious and orchestrated campaign" was used to destroy Gruden's career by leaking old emails he had sent that included racist, misogynistic and homophobic comments.

The suit was filed in district court in Clark County, Nevada, on Thursday, exactly a month after Gruden resigned as Raiders coach following the publication of his emails by the Wall Street Journal and New York Times.

The emails sent to former Washington Football Team executive Bruce Allen from 2011 to 2018 during Gruden's time as an announcer at ESPN included racist, misogynistic and homophobic comments. They came from a set of 650,000 emails obtained by the league in June during an investigation into the workplace culture of the Washington Football Team.

Gruden's attorney, Adam Hosmer-Henner, said in a statement that the defendants "selectively leaked Gruden's private correspondence to the Wall Street Journal and New York Times in order to harm Gruden's reputation and force him out of his job."

"In contrast to the formalities of the Washington Football Team investigation, Defendants' treatment of Gruden was a Soviet-style character assassination," the lawsuit alleges. "There was no warning and no



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process. Defendants held the emails for months until they were leaked to the national media in the middle of the Raiders' season in order to cause maximum damage to Gruden."

NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy denied the charges.

"The allegations are entirely meritless and the NFL will vigorously defend against these claims," McCarthy said.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Oct. 8 that Gruden used a racist term to describe NFL union chief DeMaurice Smith.

The suit says that NFL pressured the Raiders to fire Gruden after the release of that email and "intimated that further documents would become public if Gruden was not fired."

Gruden coached two days later and then on Oct. 11 the New York Times revealed additional offensive emails. Gruden then resigned less than halfway through the fourth year of his 10-year, \$100 million contract with the Raiders.

Raiders owner Mark Davis said last month that he had reached a settlement with Gruden over the final six-plus years of his contract. Davis did not reveal the terms of the settlement.

The lawsuit said Gruden lost a sponsorship deal with Skechers and was pulled from appearing in the Madden NFL 2022 video game, as well as having future employment and endorsement prospects damaged.

Gruden is seeking unspecified damages on seven claims, as well as punitive damages and attorneys' fees.

More AP NFL coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/NFL> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## **Officer: Ahmaud Arbery would have received trespass warning**

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) — A police officer testified Friday he planned to give Ahmaud Arbery a trespass warning for repeatedly entering a home under construction before the 25-year-old Black man was chased and shot dead by neighbors who spotted him running from the property.

Glynn County police Officer Robert Rash said he spoke several times to the house's owner, who sent him videos showing Arbery visiting the site several times between Oct. 25, 2019, and Feb. 23, 2020 — the day Arbery was killed at the end of a five-minute chase by white men in pickup trucks.

Rash said he had been looking for Arbery, whose identity was unknown at the time, to tell him to keep away from the unfinished home. He said police had a standard protocol for handling people caught trespassing — a misdemeanor under Georgia law.

"Once we make contact with the person on the property, we explain to them the homeowner does not want them there, they have no legal reason to be there," Rash said. He added: "I explain to that person, if you ever come back onto this property for any reason, you will be arrested."

Arbery was killed before the officer could find him.

Father and son Greg and Travis McMichael armed themselves and pursued Arbery in a truck after he ran past their home five doors down from the construction site on a Sunday afternoon. A neighbor, William "Roddie" Bryan, 52, joined the chase in his own truck and took cellphone video of Travis McMichael shooting Arbery three times with a shotgun.

More than two months passed before the three men were arrested on murder and other charges, after the graphic video leaked online and deepened a national reckoning over racial injustice.

All three men are standing trial at the Glynn County courthouse in coastal Brunswick. Defense attorneys say the men reasonably suspected Arbery was a burglar and were trying to hold him for police. They say Travis McMichael, 35, fired his gun in self-defense when Arbery attacked with his fists.

Larry English, who owns the unfinished home, has said there was no evidence Arbery stole anything from the site. Still, he said he was concerned that the same person kept coming in the house after dark.

A patrol officer assigned to the neighborhood, Rash said he was trying to track down the young man with tattoos and short twists in his hair who had been recorded inside English's house. He shared the clips with neighbors, including Greg McMichael, 65.

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Rash said he shared Greg McMichael's phone number with English in a text message that noted Greg McMichael was a former police officer and retired investigator for the local district attorney. He said it was Greg McMichael's idea to let English know he could help watch the property.

"Did you deputize Greg McMichael? Did you give him any authority as a police officer?" prosecutor Linda Dunikoski asked Rash.

"No ma'am," the officer replied, saying he never intended for Greg McMichael to do anything other than call police if the man was spotted inside the house again.

"Greg has training and experience," Rash said. "He in my opinion would be an expert witness to be on the phone with 911."

On Feb. 11, 2020, less than two weeks before Arbery was killed, Rash was again dispatched to the neighborhood after Travis McMichael called 911 and reported seeing the same man outside the unfinished home — and telling dispatchers the man reached for his pocket as if he had a gun.

The jury saw Rash's body camera video, which shows him entering the home with a flashlight and his gun drawn. Rash said Travis McMichael's report that the man could be armed made him more of a potential threat.

"So this was a different situation," said Robert Rubin, one of Travis McMichael's attorneys. "You're going into a house with a man who might have a gun."

Defense attorneys contend the McMichaels were justified in arming themselves before chasing Arbery because they feared he might have a gun. Police determined after the shooting that Arbery was unarmed.

When the Georgia Bureau of Investigation took over the case involving Arbery's death in May, Bryan gave interviews to GBI Agent Jason Seacrist and rode in the agent's car to retrace the route of the deadly chase.

Seacrist testified Friday that Bryan backed away from statements he'd made to local police that he used his truck to run Arbery off the road. He said Bryan told him that he wanted to take a cellphone photo of the running man to show police.

"I figured if I slowed down and got a picture, maybe something would happen in the end rather than him just getting away and the cops not knowing who he was," Bryan said, according to an interview transcript Seacrist read in court.

Seacrist said he asked Bryan why police would need a photo of Arbery, and Bryan replied: "I figured he had done something wrong. I didn't know for sure."

Bryan's attorney, Kevin Gough, noted that Seacrist had told Bryan at the time of their interviews that he was a witness in the case. The agent testified that Bryan wasn't under arrest at the time and had been told he was free to leave and stop talking at any time.

## Man who went to space with Shatner dies in plane crash

HAMPTON TOWNSHIP, N.J. (AP) — A man who traveled to space with William Shatner last month was killed along with another person when the small plane they were in crashed in a wooded area of northern New Jersey, according to state police.

The one-time space tourist Glen M. de Vries, 49, of New York City, and Thomas P. Fischer, 54, of Hopatcong, were aboard the single-engine Cessna 172 that went down Thursday.

De Vries was an instrument-rated private pilot, and Fischer owned a flight school. Authorities have not said who was piloting the small plane.

The plane had left Essex County Airport in Caldwell, on the edge of the New York City area, and was headed to Sussex Airport, in rural northwestern New Jersey, when the Federal Aviation Administration alerted public safety agencies to look for the missing plane around 3 p.m.

Emergency crews found the wreckage in Hampton Township around 4 p.m., the FAA said.

De Vries, co-founder of a tech company, took a 10-minute flight to the edge of space Oct. 13 aboard Blue Origin's New Shepard spacecraft with Shatner and two others.

"It's going to take me a while to be able to describe it. It was incredible," de Vries said as he got his Blue Origin "astronaut wings" pinned onto his blue flight suit by Blue Origin founder Jeff Bezos.

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"We are devastated to hear of the sudden passing of Glen de Vries," Blue Origin tweeted Friday. "He brought so much life and energy to the entire Blue Origin team and to his fellow crewmates. His passion for aviation, his charitable work, and his dedication to his craft will long be revered and admired."

De Vries co-founded Medidata Solutions, a software company specializing in clinical research, and was the vice chair of life sciences and health care at Dassault Systemes, which acquired Medidata in 2019. He had taken part in an auction for a seat on the first flight and bought a seat on the second trip.

De Vries also served on the board of Carnegie Mellon University.

Fischer owned the flight school Fischer Aviation and was its chief instructor, according to the company's website.

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating.

## Homer Plessy, key to 'separate but equal,' on road to pardon

By JANET McCONNAUGHEY Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A Louisiana board on Friday voted to pardon Homer Plessy, whose decision to sit in a "whites-only" railroad car to protest discrimination led to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1896 "separate but equal" ruling affirming state segregation laws.

The state Board of Pardons' unanimous decision to clear the Creole man's record of a conviction now goes to Gov. John Bel Edwards, who has final say over the pardon.

"Gov. Edwards is traveling today but looks forward to receiving and reviewing the recommendation of the Board upon his return" Tuesday evening, spokeswoman Christina Stephens said.

The Plessy v. Ferguson decision cemented racial segregation for another half-century, justifying whites-only spaces in trains and buses, hotels, theaters, schools and other public accommodations until the Supreme Court unanimously overruled it with their Brown v. the Board of Education decision in 1954. That decision led to the widespread desegregation of schools and the eventual stripping away of vestiges of the Jim Crow laws that discriminated against Black citizens.

The pardon recommendation came as New Orleans began a weekend marking the tumultuous integration of its public schools on Nov. 14, 1960, six years after the Brown decision.

"I think it will be a very good thing to pardon Mr. Homer Plessy after all these years," Leona Tate, 67, said at a City Hall news conference, where she stood between Gail Etienne and Tessie Prevost. The three, as 6 year olds, were escorted by U.S. marshals past angry white mobs and into McDonogh #19 elementary school building, the same day Ruby Bridges, the subject of an iconic Norman Rockwell painting, entered the all-white William Franz Elementary School in another part of town.

Keith Plessy, 64, who is descended from a cousin of Homer Plessy, attended the news conference. Later, he told the pardon board that he remembers meeting civil rights icon Rosa Parks, who refused in 1955 to leave a whites-only seat on a bus in Birmingham, Alabama, and kneeling to honor her.

"She said to me, 'Get up boy, your name is Plessy — you've got work to do,'" Keith Plessy said.

Homer Plessy, described in the Supreme Court opinion as of "one-eighth African blood," was arrested in 1892 after boarding the train car as part of an effort by civil rights activists to challenge a state law that mandated segregated seating. The 18-member Citizens Committee was trying to overcome laws that rolled back post-Civil War advances in equality.

Plessy, a 30-year-old shoemaker, lacked the business, political and educational accomplishments of most of the other members, Keith Weldon Medley wrote in the book "We As Freemen: Plessy v. Ferguson."

"His one attribute was being white enough to gain access to the train and black enough to be arrested for doing so," Medley wrote.

More than six decades before Parks was arrested in Alabama, police forcibly removed Plessy from the car, and he was imprisoned in the parish jail.

The Supreme Court ruled in Plessy v. Ferguson that state racial segregation laws didn't violate the Constitution as long as the facilities for the races were of equal quality.

Plessy pleaded guilty to violating the Separate Car Act a year later and was fined \$25. He died in 1925

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with the conviction still on his record.

Keith Plessy and Phoebe Ferguson, the great-great-granddaughter of John Howard Ferguson, the judge who oversaw his case in Orleans Parish Criminal District Court, now lead a nonprofit that advocates for civil rights education.

"We cannot undo the wrongs of the past but we can and should acknowledge them," Phoebe Ferguson told the pardon board.

The New Orleans City Council honored Plessy's role in history in 2018 by giving his name to a section of the street where he tried to board the train.

Keith Plessy and Phoebe Ferguson both credited New Orleans District Attorney Jason Williams' Civil Rights Office with seeking the pardon. Williams, who took office in January, ran for the open district attorney's post on a reform platform, with a stress on reviewing and reversing wrongful past convictions.

In an interview Friday, Williams noted that Plessy pleaded guilty to the Separate Car Act violation on Jan. 11, 1897 — exactly 124 years before Williams took office. "I think it just means that this was absolutely meant to be," Williams said.

The move to pardon Plessy comes amid a wider discussion about whether convictions or arrest records of civil rights activists should be overturned or removed.

Claudette Colvin, a Black woman who was 15 when she refused to move to the back of a bus months before Parks did so, has sued to wipe out her conviction. Civil rights attorney Fred Gray, who represented Parks and Martin Luther King Jr., has said he might file a suit to do the same for them.

But some civil rights advocates have said they don't want their arrest records expunged.

King biographer Clayborne Carson called his own civil rights arrest record "a badge of honor." Expunging the record "doesn't change the historical reality that you were arrested," he told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

After the Supreme Court ruling in 1896, "Homer Plessy returned to obscurity," Medley wrote.

He worked as a laborer, warehouseman, clerk and, starting in 1910, a collector for a Black-owned insurance company.

His obituary noted only the date and time of death and that he was the "beloved husband of Louise Bordenave."

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Associated Press reporters Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Kevin McGill in New Orleans and Sudhin Thanawala in Atlanta contributed to this report.

## Closing time: Climate diplomats decide wording and the world

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, ANNIRUDDHA GHOSAL and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — Thump, thump, thump. In the frantic last hours of U.N. climate talks in Scotland, a senior diplomat from Luxembourg came sprinting down a hallway inside the summit venue, his hair flying as he whooshed by clutching a sheaf of papers, only to vanish inside an office as abruptly as he appeared.

The final stretch of negotiations over what nearly 200 governments will do next about fossil fuels heating the Earth to disastrous levels was like that Friday: National delegations engaged in frenetic, often mysterious activity as they haggled to get as much of their position as possible into the final agreement from the talks in Glasgow.

U.S. diplomats mostly worked behind closed doors, with terse signs on the glass. The open doors of most other country's offices — South Korea, Ivory Coast, Austria, and others — showed rooms full of diplomats bent intently over their laptops, eyes fixed on screens and fingers flying over keyboards.

Chinese diplomats crowded into one of their offices stopped working, laughed and took photos when a wayward robin hopped in among them, lost in the warren of temporary tents and the event center.

In the office of India's delegation, there was muted excitement. Delegates sat cross legged on the floor, typing furiously on their laptops. A vase in the office held fresh pink lilies. Endless cups of chai flowed in

preparation for what would be a long night.

The Indian delegation got “home-cooked meals” dinners during the conference, provided by a restaurateur who runs curry houses across Britain. Vegetarian curries served with Indian flatbreads called chapatti were usually on the menu.

The conference’s cafes offer egg mayonnaise sandwiches, chicken mayonnaise sandwiches, and pork and pickle sandwiches, all on soft white bread. In two weeks, the words “I love this sandwich” have never been overheard.

The past few days have been a flurry of bilateral meetings for the Indian minister, Bhupender Yadav, and his top officials.

Some members of the delegation planned to return Saturday to India, where there are other challenges to tackle: not least New Delhi’s annual surge in air pollution that leaves its inhabitants gasping. But the “core team,” including the minister and top bureaucrats, are set to fly out Sunday.

As the conference neared its end — it was scheduled to close on Friday evening, but went into overtime — there was hour after hour of negotiation over what what from the outside could seem like the nit-pickiest of wording issues for the final agreement. “Urges” vs. “requests” was one raging debate Friday.

In fact, the distinction held significance for one of the biggest issues imaginable: how firmly nations commit to solid new steps to stave off a level of temperature rise that promises to wipe out some of the nations represented in the talks.

“You know in common English, ‘urge’ is stronger,” said Kelley Kizzier, a former climate negotiator for the European Union who attended the Glasgow talks as a climate advocate. In diplomatic language, however, “request” implies a legal requirement, and therefore carries more weight, she said.

How the linguistic cage match ends will determine whether countries have to ramp up their climate efforts again next year or can ride on this year’s pledges for a while longer.

More inside knowledge from the climate talks: “The bigger the room, the less important the thing is that’s going to happen,” Kizzier said. “The nitty-gritty negotiations happen” in tiny groups.

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Alistair Grant contributed to this report.

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Follow AP’s climate coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>

## What sub spat? Harris didn’t discuss it with French leader

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Talk about ignoring the elephant in the room: When she met this week with French President Emmanuel Macron, Vice President Kamala Harris says she didn’t even discuss the secret submarine deal that plunged U.S.-French relations to a historic low.

On a four-day trip to France seen as a charm offensive, Harris said that instead she focused her visit on “our mutual interest” in European security and Africa, fighting the pandemic and cooperating to make cyberspace safer.

Both sides stressed that relations are moving into a “new era” — and the fact that they didn’t even talk about the submarine problem drove that point home.

The crux of the issue: A secretly negotiated U.S.-British submarine deal with Australia announced in September that scuttled a prior, \$66 billion French-Australian submarine contract. The U.S. agreement was framed around concern in Washington about China’s military aggressiveness in the region.

But France was livid, saying it was kept in the dark about the deal and its interests were ignored despite having territories in the Indo-Pacific with 2 million people and 7,000 troops. The French accused the Biden administration of actions reminiscent of the Trump era.

The dispute “was not the purpose of the trip and we didn’t discuss it,” Harris told reporters Friday. At her meeting Wednesday with Macron, she said, “What we did discuss is the issues that are challenging us.”

She said her presence itself in France shows “the importance of alliances,” and that the dispute was a

reminder of both the “strength and fragility” of diplomatic relationships.

“We can’t take relationships for granted,” she added.

After recalling France’s ambassador for the first time in 250 years of diplomatic relations at the height of the crisis, Macron this week seemed ready to move forward — and happy to have Harris at his side as he hosted three days of international summits that put him and France center stage.

She and Macron agreed Wednesday that their countries are ready to work together again, though few firm U.S. promises have emerged from her trip, Harris’ first to Europe as vice president. It comes after President Joe Biden told Macron the U.S. had been “clumsy” in handling the submarine issue.

Harris and her husband Douglas Emhoff made a concerted effort to make up for that faux-pas while in Paris.

They visited a cemetery holding the graves of more than 1,500 Americans who died fighting for France in the two world wars, and she stood alongside Macron at a solemn Armistice Day ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe. Emhoff met with French groups fighting against inequality, and attended a no-cost cooking class for young people.

Stressing the theme of “America is back” on the global diplomatic stage, Harris reiterated U.S. hopes to rejoin the nuclear deal with Iran, and took part in an international conference aimed at supporting Libya’s upcoming elections after a decade of chaos and violence.

She and Macron also discussed tensions on the Belarus-Poland border, where thousands of migrants have amassed trying to enter the EU, encouraged by Belarusian authorities. “The eyes of the world and its leaders are watching what is happening there,” she said, without elaborating on what steps the U.S. might take.

With virus cases picking up across France and Europe, Harris shied away from a suggestion that the U.S. require virus vaccination passes similar to those used in several European countries to enter restaurants and other public venues.

Sylvie Corbet in Paris contributed.

## Travel trouble: US Olympians face uncertain road to Beijing

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

DENVER (AP) — Making an Olympic team is hard enough. This winter, those who earn their spots on the U.S. squad might find it takes even more work to get to Beijing.

Among the slow trickle of information coming out of China in advance of February’s Olympics was news that, with virtually no flights operating between North America and China, Olympians very well might have to get to Beijing through a still-undetermined set of connecting flights that could more than double their travel time.

As things stand this month, most of the 250 or so athletes who make the U.S. team will need to take a charter that connects them to Beijing-bound flights scheduled out of four cities, none of which are in North America.

The uncertainty has turned what is already a logistical challenge — getting all these Olympians and their thousands of pounds of equipment to China — into something even more complex. And it has turned what is already an event beset with unprecedented challenges — less freedom of movement, a vaccine mandate and the prospect of competing in a country that is poised to restrict negative coverage, including over widely documented human-rights abuses — into something even more difficult.

“We’re very used to being flexible with our planning and schedule,” U.S. skier Mikaela Shiffrin said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. “But we very rarely don’t have a plan at all. So that is definitely another added source of stress.”

Difficult travel is nothing new for Olympic athletes, and their schedules have only become more jumbled in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that reshuffled competition schedules and, with New Zealand mostly shut down, made it even harder to find snow during the offseason.

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The U.S. Olympic team's sponsor, Delta Airlines, might still be able to arrange charter flights directly from the U.S. to Beijing, but with 11 weeks until the start of the Games, everything is still up in the air.

As of this week, approved flights into Beijing are expected to depart from Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong and Paris. The U.S. ski and snowboard team's tentative plan is to charter flights from Los Angeles to one of the points in Asia, then switch to Olympic charters. Further complicating the issue is that some of these athletes are in Europe for the World Cup season. Without normal commercial options available, the task of moving them around is more difficult.

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee is ultimately in charge of getting the ski team and the rest of the U.S. teams, outside of hockey, to Beijing. With an extra connection through Asia, or a stop in Europe, travel times could be around double what would normally be a 12-hour journey from the U.S. West Coast to Beijing.

Rick Adams, the USOPC's chief of sport performance, said everyone was aware that the quick turnaround after the Tokyo Olympics and the COVID-19 protocols "would make planning for Beijing very complex."

"That said, we pride ourselves on being the best prepared NOC and NPC in the world, and we are exploring all options to get our Olympic and Paralympic athletes — as well as support staff — to the Games safely and efficiently," he said.

Athletes aren't the only group being impacted by China's rulemaking in advance of the Olympics.

The Foreign Correspondents Club of China put out a statement this month complaining of "lack of transparency" from the Beijing Organizing Committee and the IOC with regards to Olympic-related reporting in China.

The organizing committee told China's Xinhua news agency that it plans on increasing credentials for test events and is assigning staff to manage interview requests and inquiries. The committee said it does not recognize the FCCC.

Most journalists and Olympic support staff also have been on hold in making their travel plans.

Much of the travel confusion stems from U.S. and Chinese carriers' decisions to reduce the number of flights between the countries from more than 300 a week to single digits. The rollbacks started when demand dropped off sharply in the wake of early COVID-19 outbreaks. The reinstatement of the flights was slowed because of diplomatic wrangling between the countries, along with strict quarantine rules that makes travel to either place difficult. Just this week did the U.S. reopen travel to some foreign visitors who can show proof of vaccination.

The U.S. athletes are now collateral damage in this, as the USOPC negotiates with Delta for charter flights that are expected to cost well into six figures.

Though the extremely limited number of flights between America and China is unique, the U.S. isn't the only one dealing with an unprecedented amount of uncertainty this close to the Games. A recent search of the Air Canada website offered at least one option for flights between Vancouver and Beijing (with a stop in Shanghai), where similar searches of Delta and United websites offered none between the U.S. and Beijing.

"Planning for these Games has been challenging due to COVID-19, but we experienced similar issues during our planning for Tokyo," Canadian Olympic Committee CEO David Shoemaker said. "We have no reason to believe that we will have any trouble getting Team Canada to the Games on time and ready to compete."

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AP National Writer Howard Fendrich and Pat Graham contributed to this report.

## Not out of the woods: COVID cases rising in Western Europe

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Santa won't be getting his traditional welcome in the Dutch city of Utrecht this year. The ceremonial head of Carnival celebrations in Germany's Cologne had to bow out because he tested positive for COVID-19. And Austria is planning a lockdown on unvaccinated people in

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two hard-hit regions.

Nearly two years into a global health crisis that has killed more than 5 million people, infections are again sweeping across parts of Western Europe, a region with relatively high vaccination rates and good health care systems but where lockdown measures are largely a thing of the past.

The World Health Organization said coronavirus deaths rose by 10% in Europe in the past week, and an agency official declared last week that the continent was “back at the epicenter of the pandemic.” Much of that is being driven by spiraling outbreaks in Russia and Eastern Europe — where vaccination rates tend to be low — but countries in the west such as Germany and Britain recorded some of the highest new case tolls in the world.

While nations in Western Europe all have vaccination rates over 60% — and some like Portugal and Spain are much higher — that still leaves a significant portion of their populations without protection.

Dr. Bharat Pankhania, senior clinical lecturer at Exeter University College of Medicine and Health, says that the large number of unvaccinated people combined with a widespread post-lockdown resumption of socializing and a slight decline in immunity for people who got their shots months ago is driving up the pace of infections.

Thanks largely to vaccination, hospitals in Western Europe are not under the same pressure they were earlier in the pandemic, but many are still straining to handle rising numbers of COVID patients while also attempting to clear backlogs of tests and surgeries with exhausted or sick staff. Even the countries experiencing the most serious outbreaks in the region recorded far fewer deaths per person over the past four weeks than the United States did, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

The question now is if countries can tamp down this latest upswing without resorting to stringent shutdowns that devastated economies, disrupted education and weighed on mental health. Experts say probably — but authorities can't avoid all restrictions and must boost vaccination rates.

“I think the era of locking people up in their homes is over because we now have tools to control COVID — the testing, vaccines and therapeutics,” said Devi Sridhar, chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh. “So I hope people will do the things they have to do, like put on a mask.”

Many European countries now use COVID passes — proof of full vaccination, recovery from the virus or a negative test result — to access venues like bars and restaurants. Pankhania warned that the passes can give a false sense of security since fully vaccinated people can still get infected, though their chances of dying or getting seriously sick are dramatically lower.

But restrictions don't go much further these days, although the Dutch government on Friday announced a three-week partial lockdown.

“Tonight we have a very unpleasant message with very unpleasant and far-reaching decisions,” caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte said.

German lawmakers are mulling legislation that would pave the way for new measures. Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg announced Friday that unvaccinated people in two regions will only be able to leave home for specified reasons starting Monday, and he is considering implementing similar measures nationwide. But he has said he doesn't want to impose the restrictions on those who got the shot.

Austria is seeing one of the most serious outbreaks in Western Europe, along with Germany, which has reported a string of record-high infections in recent days.

“We have a real emergency situation right now,” said Christian Drosten, the head of virology at Berlin's Charite Hospital, which has started canceling scheduled surgeries.

Duesseldorf's university hospital said earlier this week that its ICU is full, though many facilities are struggling more with staff shortages than bed space.

Drosten said Germany must increase its vaccination rate of 67% further — and fast. But officials have balked at ordering vaccine mandates and want to avoid any blanket lockdowns.

Health Minister Jens Spahn indicated that Germany could improve its often lax enforcement of COVID pass requirements.

“If my vaccination certificate is checked more often in one day in Rome than it sometimes is in four weeks in Germany, then I think more can be done,” Spahn said recently.



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The Netherlands is in a similar bind: The country announced the highest daily tally of new cases since the pandemic began Thursday, hospitals are warning the situation could get worse, but officials are reluctant to clamp down too hard. Amid these concerns, organizers in Utrecht said they couldn't in good conscience bring tens of thousands of people together to greet Santa at the annual Sinterklaas party beloved of children.

Cities in Germany, by contrast, went ahead with outdoor Carnival celebrations this week — but the head of Cologne's party, Carnival Prince Sven I., canceled public appearances after testing positive.

In the United Kingdom, which lifted remaining restrictions in July and has seen big spikes as well as dips in cases since, Prime Minister Boris Johnson insists the country can "live with the virus." The government will only reimpose restrictions if the health service comes under "unsustainable" pressure, he says.

Spain, once one of Europe's hardest hit nations, perhaps offers an example of how the risks can be managed.

It has vaccinated 80% of its population, and while face masks are no longer mandatory outdoors, many people still wear them. While infections have ticked up slightly recently, Rafael Bengoa, one of Spain's leading public health experts, said that given the high vaccination rate, "the virus won't be able to dominate us again."

Several countries are hoping that pushing harder on immunizations will get them there. Germany plans to re-open vaccination centers across the country to speed booster shots. France is also pinning its hopes on booster doses while urging holdouts to get their first shots. Italy is also expanding its booster program as numbers edge higher.

Pankhania says that no single measure will control the pandemic.

"To really control it, it has to be multi-layered ... avoid crowds, avoid poorly ventilated places, be immunized, wear your mask," he said.

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Associated Press reporters across Europe contributed.

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Follow AP's coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>.

## **Cold, hungry, afraid: Mideast migrants stuck on EU doorstep**

By RASHID YAHYA and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

DOHUK, Iraq (AP) — Sarkawt Ismat was cold, hungry and terrified, trapped between Polish and Belarusian troops facing off on opposite sides of the European Union's eastern border.

The 19-year-old Iraqi taxi driver is among thousands from the Middle East who have been trying to cross into the EU in recent months through a backdoor opened by non-EU member Belarus.

Ismat left his home in Dohuk, a town in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, two weeks ago, after selling his taxi. He paid \$2,600 to a local travel agency for a bus to Turkey, a hotel stay in Istanbul, a plane ticket to Minsk, and three nights in a hotel in the Belarusian capital.

He hoped to enter Poland and eventually reach Germany to join his older brother, Sarwar, who had successfully completed the journey.

Somewhere near the Polish border, his dreams were crushed. He and others in his group were stopped by Belarusian troops who he said beat them and took their possessions, including his money and cellphone. For days, the group was trapped in a forest, not allowed to enter Poland or return to Minsk.

"I'm scared and want to come back but don't have a penny," he said in a phone interview, using a borrowed mobile. "It is an absolute humiliation here," he said.

"When I traveled, they told me it is very easy. 'It takes only three days to get to Europe.'"

That turned out to be wrong.

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For many in the Middle East, beaten down by conflict and hopelessness, the lure of jobs and stability in Europe has always been powerful. Legal entry has been near-impossible, with the EU tightening its

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borders in recent years. Every year, tens of thousands try to get in, embarking on treacherous and, at times, deadly journeys by sea and land.

Others were deterred by such risks until an opportunity for seemingly easy entry to Europe appeared to open up earlier this year.

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, angered after the EU imposed sanctions on his authoritarian regime following a harsh internal crackdown on dissent, responded by saying he was loosening border controls against Western-bound migrants. EU officials accused him of using the migrants as pawns, while Lukashenko denies that and says Europe is violating their rights by denying them safe passage.

Belarus began offering easy tourist visas to Iraqis, Syrians and others from the Middle East and Africa. This meant they could now reach the edge of Europe on comfortable flights to Belarus, then try to sneak into Poland, Lithuania or Latvia, all EU members.

Thousands have attempted the journey since summer. That has led in recent weeks to increasingly tense standoffs on the border Belarus and scenes of desperate migrants huddled in forests amid freezing temperatures. Poland sent riot police and troops to bolster its border guards. At least eight deaths have been reported.

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A 44-year-old car mechanic from Syria says he doesn't care about Lukashenko's motives or the reports of suffering at the Belarus border.

He is determined to reach Belarus with his older sons, ages 16 and 17, and eventually get to Germany. There he hopes to find work and arrange for his wife and two younger children to join him.

"There is no future here for young people, whether in education, culture or social life," he said, asking that his name not be used because he feared publicity could disrupt his plans.

Both Syria and Iraq have been devastated by years of conflict. Syria is a broken country after a decade of civil war that killed more than 400,000 people and displaced half its population. President Bashar Assad prevailed with the help of Russia and Iran, confining those trying to topple him to a small corner of Syria. But the country is in an economic free fall set off by Western sanctions and the cumulative costs of war.

The mechanic said there is absolutely no hope the situation will improve, and it's better to take a risk now than to see his children condemned to despair in Syria. Things are so bad that his oldest son can't even get a required textbook for 10th grade English, he said.

When he heard of what was happening in Belarus through social media, he went to a travel agency in Damascus that offered package deals for \$4,000 per person. He applied for the visa and borrowed money to cover the cost for himself and his sons.

He'll leave for Belarus once he gets the visa, he said.

At this stage, nothing will deter him. He said he's prepared to try four or five times.

"There are people who make it the first time, others the second time and others the third time, but eventually they arrive," he said. "I have to guarantee the future of my children."

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A Damascus travel agent said demand has driven up prices for packages to Belarus, from \$2,600 for a flight and five nights in a Minsk hotel, to about \$4,000.

Most Syrians make the trip on private Syrian carrier Cham Wings, said the agent, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of possible harm to his business.

The EU is looking at the role some airlines have played, reportedly considering sanctions against them.

Flight options are shrinking. Turkey said Friday it is halting airline tickets to Iraqis, Syrians and Yemenis wanting to travel to Belarus. Citing that decision, the Belarusian airline Belavia said it also would not ticket citizens of those countries on its Istanbul-Minsk flight.

Iraqi Airways, which suspended flights between Baghdad and Minsk on Aug. 5, has flown home about 1,000 stranded Iraqis from Belarus, and more rescue flights are planned, said spokesman Hussein Jalil.

Kameran Hassan, an Iraqi, said he and his family of four were forced onto a return flight. They made it into Poland but were caught. After three weeks in a holding center, they were put on a bus with other Iraqis. They were told they would be taken to another camp in Warsaw, but instead were driven to the airport.

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"They started to put us by force on the plane," said Hassan, speaking from Sulaymaniyah in Iraq's Kurdish region.

One man fainted when he saw they were being deported "because he had sold everything" for the attempt, Hassan said. Polish escorts carried him on a stretcher onto the flight back to Iraq.

For Sarkawt Ismat's mother, his predicament in Belarus seemed to confirm her fears. Adla Salim had pleaded with him not to go.

Her older son, 22-year-old Sarwar, had left for Belarus three months ago and reached Germany in early October, after spending 10 days hiding in a forest. He suffers from chronic heart problems, and is hospitalized in Germany, she said. The family only let him go because he was ill and they couldn't do anything for him in Dohuk.

"We tried to convince Sarkawt not to go, but he was very insistent," she said.

Sarkawt still owed \$10,000 on the taxi that he sold to pay for the trip — money that his father, a peshmerga fighter, now has to pay back from his monthly income of about \$1,000.

All that money now seems to have gone for nothing. Sarkawt was allowed Thursday to leave the forest for Minsk, in preparation for returning to Iraq.

His mother, a 45-year-old housewife, says all she wants is her boy home.

"He calls weeping, saying 'I want to go back to Iraq. I want nothing. I just want to go back. I am hungry and cold,'" she said.

Mroue reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Salar Salim and Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Baghdad and Albert Aji in Damascus contributed.

## NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Altered video twists Kamala Harris statements on COVID vaccines

CLAIM: A video from a speech shows Vice President Kamala Harris repeatedly saying that most people who were hospitalized or recently died from COVID-19 were vaccinated.

THE FACTS: The video was falsified to change what Harris said. The manipulated videos show Harris appearing to say that vaccinated people are being hospitalized and are dying from COVID-19, when the unedited version distributed by the White House shows she actually said this was happening among unvaccinated people. In the doctored clip, Harris appears to state, "Virtually every person who is in the hospital, sick with COVID-19 right now, is vaccinated," before repeating the sentence again and appearing to add: "Virtually everyone who has recently died from COVID-19 was vaccinated." But the clip had been edited to make it sound like she used the word "vaccinated." In the edited version, Harris' mouth doesn't match all the words and there is a short, unnatural pause where it appears the word "vaccinated" was inserted into the video in some instances. The real video of Harris captures her remarks at a vaccine mobilization event in Detroit. It was posted July 12 by the White House YouTube account. During the address, she states: "Virtually every person who is in the hospital, sick with COVID-19 right now, is unvaccinated. I'm going to repeat that. It's a fact. Virtually every person who is in the hospital right now, sick with COVID-19, is unvaccinated. And even more regrettably, virtually everyone who has recently died from COVID-19 was unvaccinated. The loss. The tragedy of that loss. Literally every person who has died from COVID-19 that we have recently been seeing was unvaccinated." Medical experts have continued to maintain that data shows the vaccines are safe and effective against COVID-19.

— Associated Press writer Sophia Tulp in Atlanta contributed this report.

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Pfizer CEO was not arrested by the FBI, nor charged with fraud

CLAIM: The CEO of Pfizer was arrested on Nov. 5 by FBI agents, charged with fraud and was being held in federal custody while awaiting a bail hearing.

THE FACTS: A conservative blog published an inaccurate article alleging that Albert Bourla, the CEO of the pharmaceutical company Pfizer, had been arrested at his home in a suburb of New York City and charged with fraud in connection with the company's COVID-19 vaccine. But Bourla has not been arrested, nor has he been charged with any federal crimes. Pfizer spokesperson Pamela Eisele wrote in an email to the AP that the article was "false news." Bourla made appearances on CNBC and CNN on Nov. 5 — the same day the article falsely claimed he was arrested — to discuss the company's oral COVID-19 antiviral drug, and he has continued to post on social media. The Federal Bureau of Prisons database does not list Bourla as an inmate and he is not listed on the inmate roster for Westchester County, where the article claimed Bourla was arrested. There are also no results for Bourla involving fraud in a database of federal court records and criminal complaints. The incorrect article, published by the Conservative Beaver, erroneously stated that Bourla faced fraud charges "for his role in deceiving customers on the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine." It also claimed Pfizer was "accused of falsifying data, and paying out large bribes." The site did not provide any evidence for its claims and attributed some information to an unnamed FBI agent. The FBI told the AP that it did not have any information on the allegations. The Conservative Beaver did not respond to a request seeking evidence for its claims or any comment on the matter.

— Sophia Tulp

COVID vaccines did not kill giraffes at Dallas Zoo

CLAIM: Three recent giraffe deaths at the Dallas Zoo may have been related to the COVID-19 vaccine.

THE FACTS: COVID-19 vaccines didn't contribute to the deaths of three giraffes at the Dallas Zoo in recent months, despite widespread social media posts suggesting otherwise. Several Facebook and Instagram posts incorporated screenshots of two news stories — one about Dallas and Fort Worth zoos planning to vaccinate animals for COVID-19, and the other about the recent giraffe deaths — to insinuate that the two were somehow related. But the giraffes at the Dallas Zoo have not received COVID-19 vaccines, nor have any other animals living onsite, the zoo's media team told the AP in an emailed statement on Tuesday. The team said the zoo was still waiting for shipments of animal vaccines, which it will initially administer to species that face the highest risk of getting the virus, including big cats and great apes. It's true that three giraffes at the Dallas Zoo died in October. A 3-month-old calf named Marekani was euthanized Oct. 3 after suffering a "catastrophic" knee injury that would have resulted in lifelong pain and arthritis, according to the zoo's Facebook page. Later in October, a 19-year-old giraffe named Auggie died "after dealing with age-related health issues that led to liver failure," the zoo said in a Facebook post. The following week, the death of a 14-year-old giraffe named Jesse, whose blood test results "showed abnormal liver enzymes," led the zoo to begin questioning whether the two older giraffes' deaths were related. The deaths are still being investigated. "We have been able to eliminate encephalomyocarditis (EMC) as a cause of death but are still awaiting results on other zoonotic diseases," the zoo posted on Facebook on Nov. 9. "We still believe exposure to a toxin is a potential connection given the abnormal liver enzymes, but we are exploring every possible cause — from bacteria, to parasite, to diseases." The zoo added that it had trimmed back some vegetation in the giraffes' habitat as a precaution. It also said it had been closely monitoring its hoofstock for symptoms and had seen no sign of any ongoing issues.

— Associated Press writer Ali Swenson in New York contributed this report.

Italy did not revise its COVID-19 death toll

CLAIM: Italy has revised its COVID-19 death toll numbers, showing 97% fewer COVID-19 deaths than initially recorded. This represented a change from over 130,000 deaths to under 4,000 deaths.

THE FACTS: Posts circulating on Instagram and Facebook falsely claim that Italy has revised its COVID-19 death toll due to reporting errors or changes to reporting methodology. The Italian Ministry of Health has

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not revised the number of deaths attributed to COVID-19 numbers, official data shows. Health officials say statistics in an Italian National Health Service report on the number of people who died of the virus with no comorbidities are being misrepresented. As of Monday, the Italian Health Ministry dashboard shows Italy has had 4,812,594 COVID-19 cases and 132,423 deaths, proving the death toll has not been revised downward. The false claims misrepresent figures from an October study by the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, the research arm of the Italian National Health Service, which said 2.9% of individuals who died of COVID-19 in the country had no pre-existing conditions. In an email to The Associated Press, ISS spokesperson Pier David Malloni said the false posts stemmed from a misleading article in the Italian press that erroneously reported that only 2.9% of the people deceased with a positive test for COVID-19 were really killed by the virus. "This is completely wrong," Malloni said. He added that the report stated that 2.9% of the people who died did not have other comorbidities. Having multiple chronic health conditions puts individuals at greater risk for complications and death from COVID-19, Malloni said, adding that COVID-19 is listed as the cause of death in cases where there are complicating risk factors. According to Malloni, Italy follows the European Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organization rules in classifying COVID-19 deaths.

— Associated Press writer Terrence Fraser in New York contributed this report.

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Overcrowding in Australian hospitals not caused by vaccine injuries

CLAIM: Australian hospitals are overwhelmed by "vaccine-injured" patients.

THE FACTS: A number of recent social media posts are incorrectly asserting that Australian hospitals are inundated with patients who have suffered side effects from COVID-19 vaccines, and are sharing a video clip of an Australian premier that is taken out of context to support the false claim. However, hospitals across Australia have experienced diminished capacity, longer wait times and increased demand for years. These issues are being exacerbated by the pandemic, but are not related to COVID-19 vaccine injuries, according to government and health officials. The false claims began circulating following an Oct. 31 news conference in which Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan encouraged vaccination. In response to a question about canceled elective surgeries, McGowan replied that hospitals were under "enormous pressure." He added, "Why? It is hard to know except that there is some evidence that it is some sort of delayed reaction to COVID." Many social media users shared a clip of McGowan's response with the caption: "Hospitals all over Australia are overwhelmed by vaccine-injured patients." A spokesperson for McGowan said his comments were misconstrued and that he was referring to the impacts of the pandemic on the health care system generally, not referencing the vaccine. While Australian hospitals are under stress that has intensified during the pandemic, the official attributed the strain to "increased demand in attendances to hospital for other ailments," a backlog of elective surgeries and other issues. "The Premier was not suggesting it is related to adverse reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine," the spokesperson wrote in an email. Two reports released by the Australian Medical Association in the past month have highlighted the pressure facing the health care system, but pointed to a long period of decline in hospital capacity and issues with funding as some of the reasons why facilities have been overwhelmed. In an Oct. 15 analysis, the AMA said public hospitals were in a "cycle of crisis" due to a funding formula that failed to address the "sustained decline of hospital performance" over the course of a decade. The organization's 2021 Public Hospital Report Card found that even during pandemic lockdowns when patient volumes were reduced, health care facilities still demonstrated "backsliding or barely improved performance." Neither the report card nor the analysis provided any evidence that vaccine injuries were to blame for crowded hospitals. In fact, the reports showed that hospital resources were strained before coronavirus vaccines became widely available. Australia's health department maintains that data shows the benefits of the vaccines continue to outweigh the risks, and that "the vast majority of COVID-19 vaccine adverse events" are not serious.

— Sophia Tulp

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## Americans give bosses same message in record numbers: I quit

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans quit their jobs at a record pace for the second straight month in September, in many cases for more money elsewhere as companies bump up pay to fill job openings that are close to an all-time high.

The Labor Department said Friday that 4.4 million people quit their jobs in September, or about 3% of the nation's workforce. That's up from 4.3 million in August and far above the pre-pandemic level of 3.6 million. There were 10.4 million job openings, down from 10.6 million in August, which was revised higher.

The figures point to a historic level of turmoil in the job market as newly-empowered workers quit jobs, often for higher pay or better working conditions. Incomes are rising, Americans are spending more and the economy is growing, and employers have ramped up hiring to keep pace. Rising inflation, however, is offsetting much of the pay gains for workers.

Friday's report follows last week's jobs report, which showed that employers stepped up their hiring in October, adding 531,000 jobs, while the unemployment rate fell to 4.6%, from 4.8%. Hiring rebounded as the Delta wave, which had restrained job gains in August and September, faded.

It is typically perceived as a signal of worker confidence when people leave the jobs they hold. The vast majority of people quit for a new position.

The number of available jobs has topped 10 million for four consecutive months. The record before the pandemic was 7.5 million. There were more job openings in September than the 7.7 million unemployed, illustrating the difficulties so many companies have had finding workers.

In addition to the number of unemployed, there are about 5 million fewer people looking for jobs compared with pre-pandemic trends, making it much harder for employers to hire. Economists cite many reasons for that decline: Some are mothers unable to find or afford child care, while others are avoiding taking jobs out of fear of contracting COVID-19. Stimulus checks this year and in 2020, as well as extra unemployment aid that has since expired, has given some families more savings and enabled them to hold off from looking for work.

Quitting has risen particularly sharply in industries that are mostly made up of in-person service jobs, such as restaurants, hotels, and retail, and factories where people work in close proximity. That suggests that at least some people quitting are doing so out of fear of COVID-19 and may be leaving the workforce.

Goldman Sachs, in a research note Thursday, estimates that most of the 5 million are older Americans who have decided to retire. Only about 1.7 million are aged 25 through 54, which economists consider prime working years.

Goldman estimates that most of those people in their prime working years will return to work in the coming months, but that would still leave a much smaller workforce than before the pandemic. That could leave employers facing labor shortages for months or even years.

Businesses in other countries are facing similar challenges, leading to pay gains and higher inflation in countries like Canada and the United Kingdom.

Competition for U.S. workers is intense for retailers and delivery companies, particularly as they staff up for what is expected to be a healthy winter holiday shopping season.

Online giant Amazon is hiring 125,000 permanent drivers and warehouse workers and offer pay between \$18 and \$22 an hour. It's also paying sign-on bonuses of up to \$3,000.

Seasonal hiring is also ramping up. Package delivery company UPS is seeking to add 100,000 workers to help with the crush of holiday orders, and plans to make job offers to some applicants within 30 minutes.

## Women in Argentina claim labor exploitation by Opus Dei

By DÉBORA REY Associated Press

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BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Lucía Giménez still suffers pain in her knees from the years she spent scrubbing floors in the men's bathroom at the Opus Dei residence in Argentina's capital for hours without pay.

Giménez, now 56, joined the conservative Catholic group in her native Paraguay at the age of 14 with the promise she would get an education. But instead of math or history, she was trained in cooking, cleaning and other household chores to serve in Opus Dei residences and retirement homes.

For 18 years she washed clothes, scrubbed bathrooms and attended to the group's needs for 12 hours a day, with breaks only for meals and praying. Despite her hard labor, she says: "I never saw money in my hands."

Giménez and 41 other women have filed a complaint against Opus Dei to the Vatican for alleged labor exploitation, as well as abuse of power and of conscience. The Argentine and Paraguayan citizens worked for the movement in Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Uruguay, Italy and Kazakhstan between 1974 and 2015.

Opus Dei — Work of God in Latin — was founded by the Spanish priest Josemaría Escrivá in 1928, and has 90,000 members in 70 countries. The lay group, which was greatly favored by St. John Paul II, who canonized Escrivá in 2002, has a unique status in the church and reports directly to the pope. Most members are laymen and women with secular jobs and families who strive to "sanctify ordinary life." Other members are priests or celibate lay people.

The complaint alleges the women, often minors at the time, labored under "manifestly illegal conditions" that included working without pay for 12 hours-plus without breaks except for food or prayer, no registration in the Social Security system and other violations of basic rights.

The women are demanding financial reparations from Opus Dei and that it acknowledges the abuses and apologizes to them, as well as the punishment of those responsible.

"I was sick of the pain in my knees, of getting down on my knees to do the showers," Giménez told The Associated Press. "They don't give you time to think, to criticize and say that you don't like it. You have to endure because you have to surrender totally to God."

In a statement to the AP, Opus Dei said it had not been notified of the complaint to the Vatican but has been in contact with the women's legal representatives to "listen to the problems and find a solution."

The women in the complaint have one thing in common: humble origins. They were recruited and separated from their families between the ages of 12 and 16. In some cases, like Gimenez's, they were taken to Opus Dei centers in another country, circumventing immigration controls.

They claim that Opus Dei priests and other members exercised "coercion of conscience" on the women to pressure them to serve and to frighten them with spiritual evils if they didn't comply with the supposed will of God. They also controlled their relations with the outside world.

Most of the women asked to leave as the physical and psychological demands became intolerable. But when they finally did, they were left without money. Many also said they needed psychological treatment after leaving Opus Dei.

"The hierarchy (of Opus Dei) is aware of these practices," said Sebastián Sal, the women's lawyer. "It is an internal policy of Opus Dei. The search for these women is conducted the same way throughout the world. ... It is something institutional."

The women's complaint, filed in September with the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, also points to dozens of priests affiliated with Opus Dei for their alleged "intervention, participation and knowledge in the denounced events."

The allegations in the complaint are similar to those made by members of another conservative Catholic organization also favored by St. John Paul II, the Legion of Christ. The Legion recruited young women to become consecrated members of its lay branch, Regnum Christi, to work in Legion-run schools and other projects.

Those women alleged spiritual and psychological abuse, of being separated from family and being told their discomfort was "God's will" and that abandoning their vocation would be tantamount to abandoning God.

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Pope Francis has been cracking down on 20th-century religious movements after several religious orders and lay groups were accused of sexual and other abuses by their leaders. Opus Dei has so far avoided much of the recent controversy, though there have been cases of individual priests accused of misconduct.

"We do not have any official notification from the Vatican about the existence of a complaint of this type," Josefina Madariaga, director of Opus Dei's press office in Argentina, told the AP. She said the women's lawyer informed the group last year of their complaints about the lack of contributions to Argentina's social security system.

"If there is a traumatic experience or one that has left them with a wound, we want to honestly listen to them, understand what happened and from there correct what has to be corrected," she said.

She added that all the people currently "working on site are paid," adding that some 80 women currently work for Opus Dei in Argentina.

However, she said, "in the 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's, society as a whole dealt with these issues in a more informal or family way. ... Opus Dei has made the necessary changes and modifications to accompany the law in force today."

Beatriz Delgado, who worked for Opus Dei for 23 years in Argentina and Uruguay, said she was told "that I had to give my salary to the director and that everyone gave it. ... It was part of giving to God."

"They convince you with the vocation, with 'God calls you, God asks this of you, you cannot fail God.' ... They hooked me with that," she said.

So far, the Vatican has not ruled on the complaint and it's not clear if it will. A Vatican spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for information.

If there is no response, the women's legal representatives say they will initiate criminal proceedings for "human trafficking, reduction to servitude, awareness control and illegitimate deprivation of liberty" against Opus Dei in Argentina and other countries the women worked in.

Argentine law sanctions human trafficking with prison sentences of four to 15 years. The statute of limitations is 12 years after the alleged crime ceases.

"They say, 'we are going to help poor people,' but it's a lie; they don't help, they keep (the money) for themselves," Giménez said. "It is very important to achieve some justice."

## Disease center urges Germans to cancel or avoid big events

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany's disease control center is calling for people to cancel or avoid large events and to reduce their contacts as the country's coronavirus infection rate hits the latest in a string of new highs.

The center, the Robert Koch Institute, said Friday that Germany's infection rate climbed to 263.7 new cases per 100,000 residents over seven days, up from 249.1 the previous day.

Germany reported 48,640 new cases Friday, a day after the daily total topped 50,000 for the first time. Another 191 COVID-19 deaths brought Germany's total in the pandemic so far to 97,389.

While the infection rate isn't yet as high as in some other European countries, its relentless rise in Germany has set off alarm bells. Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel plans to meet with the country's 16 state governors to coordinate nationwide measures next week, and parliament is mulling legislation that would provide a new legal framework for restrictions over the winter.

"We must now do everything necessary to break this momentum," Health Minister Jens Spahn told reporters. "Otherwise it will be a bitter December for the whole country."

In its weekly report released late Thursday, the Robert Koch Institute said it "urgently advises canceling or avoiding larger events if possible, but also reducing all other unnecessary contacts." If such events can't be avoided, it added, people should take a test before attending, regardless of whether they are vaccinated.

The head of the institute, Lothar Wieler, said Friday that there are fewer usable hospital beds than at any time during the pandemic, with more than half of intensive care units reporting "acute staff shortages," as they did during Germany's previous peak in January.

In the worst-affected areas, he said, the number of people attending large events should be reduced or



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authorities should consider banning such events and closing bars or clubs.

Most German regions restrict access to many indoor facilities and events to people who have been vaccinated against the virus, have recovered from COVID-19 or recently received negative test results — with the latter category now being excluded in an increasing number of areas. But enforcement is often slack.

Germany has struggled to bring new momentum to its vaccination campaign lately, with a bit over two-thirds of the population fully vaccinated, and has balked so far at ordering vaccine mandates for any professional group. Officials also want to ensure more people who were inoculated months ago get booster shots.

Spahn said he will order the revival of free rapid COVID-19 tests, which were scrapped a month ago in an effort to persuade more people to get vaccinated, effective Saturday.

He said he favors limiting public events to the vaccinated and those who have recovered from COVID-19, and also requiring them to be tested beforehand.

Germany on Friday declared neighboring Austria, whose infection rate is far higher, a “high-risk area” effective Sunday. That means people arriving from Austria who haven’t been vaccinated or haven’t recovered recently from COVID-19 will have to go into quarantine.

The Czech Republic and Hungary also were added to the list of “high-risk areas,” but the United States was removed.

Follow AP’s pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

## **Attorney: No more ‘Black pastors’ in court for Arbery case**

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) — An attorney for one of the white men standing trial in the death of Ahmaud Arbery told the judge Thursday he doesn’t want “any more Black pastors” in the courtroom after the Rev. Al Sharpton sat with the slain man’s family.

Kevin Gough represents William “Roddie” Bryan, who along with father and son Greg and Travis Michael is charged with murder and other crimes in Arbery’s Feb. 23, 2020, killing. The 25-year-old Black man was chased and fatally shot after the defendants spotted him running in their neighborhood outside the Georgia port city of Brunswick.

Gough told Superior Court Judge Timothy Walmsley that he was concerned Sharpton’s presence in court Wednesday was an attempt to intimidate the disproportionately white jury hearing the case. The jury was not in the courtroom when he made the remarks.

“Obviously there’s only so many pastors they can have,” Gough said. “And if their pastor’s Al Sharpton right now that’s fine, but then that’s it. We don’t want any more Black pastors coming in here ... sitting with the victim’s family, trying to influence the jurors in this case.”

Jason Sheffield, one of Travis McMichael’s lawyers, told the judge he didn’t notice any distractions caused by Sharpton, who sat in the back row of the courtroom gallery wearing a mask.

Gough said he didn’t realize Sharpton had been there until after court had adjourned for the day.

“You weren’t even aware of it until later?” the judge said. “I’m not sure what we’re doing.”

Sharpton held a prayer vigil and news conference outside the Glynn County courthouse Wednesday afternoon to show support for Arbery’s family. Afterward he joined Arbery’s parents and their lawyers to listen to portions of the trial testimony.

Sharpton said in a statement that Gough’s remarks showed “arrogant insensitivity.”

“I respect the defense attorney doing his job,” Sharpton said, “but this is beyond defending your client, it is insulting the family of the victim.”

Jury selection ended last week with prosecutors objecting to the final jury of 11 whites and one Black juror. The judge agreed there appeared to be “intentional discrimination” in the exclusion of Black potential jurors, but said Georgia law limited his authority to intervene.

One juror, a white woman, was dismissed before the trial began for medical reasons. Fifteen total

panelists are hearing the trial — 12 jurors plus three alternates. The judge has not given the races of the alternate jurors, and they were not asked to state their race in open court.

## **VIRUS DIARY: Thwarted at the finish line, but finding luck**

By PIA SARKAR Associated Press

HADDONFIELD, N.J. (AP) — There it was, the finish line, beckoning me to cross it.

There I was, running at top speed, eager to be over it.

I'd been on my best behavior since March 2020, when the pandemic reached the United States. Twenty months of not setting foot inside a restaurant or getting on a plane or seeing my 88-year-old father-in-law on the other side of the country. Twenty months of eyeing people who wore their masks dangling off one ear (or not at all), or packing together for birthday parties, baby showers and weddings. I'd lost co-workers to COVID-19. Earlier this year, I lost a beloved aunt.

We spent last Thanksgiving at home, just the four of us. Same for Christmas. My husband and I juggled our full-time jobs while trying to get our two sons through remote learning, me editing stories while cursing under my breath as I coached my 10-year-old through long division.

When I became eligible for the vaccine, I desperately searched for an appointment and drove an hour to Atlantic City to get the jab. Now there was hope.

I started to allow myself small indulgences, telling myself I had earned them. Over the summer, we got together with family (all of us vaxxed except for the kids). We drove to Rhode Island (limiting ourselves to outdoor activities). I went to a wedding (just the ceremony, not the reception).

Then my husband and I took the biggest leap of all. We booked plane tickets to California so we could spend Christmas with his dad. We knew the vaccine for kids was right around the corner, and we had already registered our sons for the clinic set up at their school. My husband and I had signed up for the boosters. I could see the finish line.

The day before the CDC gave final approval to Pfizer's kid-size COVID-19 shot, I woke up with a sore throat. My 10-year-old had a stuffy nose. It'll pass, I thought, like so many of our other false alarms.

Except it didn't. My 10-year-old tested positive for COVID later that night, running a high fever, throwing up multiple times and alternating between shivering and sweating. I lay next to him, sharing all the same symptoms.

A few days later, my 8-year-old also tested positive for COVID (fortunately, he was asymptomatic). My husband, spared, assumed the role of sole caregiver. We canceled the kids' vaccine appointment; I canceled mine for the booster. The finish line had receded.

The judgment that I had reserved for the unmasked and unvaccinated came raining down on me. After all, you can't tell if a person has been partying through a pandemic or sequestered in their home just by looking at them. All you know is that they have COVID and there's a good chance they somehow messed up.

And maybe I did mess up. Maybe I allowed myself one too many indulgences.

Or maybe, even if I hadn't gone anywhere at all in the last 20 months, I would have still gotten COVID. Or gone everywhere and dodged COVID. Because that's the thing with this damn pandemic: Sometimes, it just comes down to luck.

In my darker moods — and there are many — I look at all the people who went on far-flung vacations and bragged about having the beach to themselves, or got together for birthday parties and seemed genuinely happy. I think to myself: If I was just going to end up with COVID anyway, perhaps I should have at least tried to enjoy my life.

Then I realize things could have been a lot worse. I could have ended up in the hospital or died. My children could have gotten much sicker. Any one of us could have passed along COVID to my elderly mother or father-in-law — or anyone else, for that matter — if we had not been careful.

My family and I are now mostly recovered. We rescheduled the vaccine for the boys. My husband got his booster, and I'm about to get mine. And I'm trying to be less judgmental, because you never know what people's lives are like unless you're in it yourself.

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I've also come to realize: Maybe I really am lucky after all.

Virus Diary, an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus pandemic through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Pia Sarkar is a news editor in the Business News department of the AP. Follow her on Twitter at [http://twitter.com/PiaSarkar\\_TK](http://twitter.com/PiaSarkar_TK)

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 13, the 317th day of 2021. There are 48 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 13, 2015, Islamic State militants carried out a set of coordinated attacks in Paris on the national stadium, restaurants and streets, and a crowded concert hall, killing 130 people in the worst attack on French soil since World War II.

On this date:

In 1775, during the American Revolution, the Continental Army captured Montreal.

In 1849, voters in California ratified the state's original constitution.

In 1940, the Walt Disney film "Fantasia," featuring animated segments set to classical music, had its world premiere in New York.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a measure lowering the minimum draft age from 21 to 18.

In 1956, the Supreme Court struck down laws calling for racial segregation on public buses.

In 1969, speaking in Des Moines, Iowa, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew accused network television news departments of bias and distortion, and urged viewers to lodge complaints.

In 1971, the U.S. space probe Mariner 9 went into orbit around Mars.

In 1974, Karen Silkwood, a 28-year-old technician and union activist at the Kerr-McGee Cimarron plutonium plant near Crescent, Oklahoma, died in a car crash while on her way to meet a reporter.

In 1979, former California Gov. Ronald Reagan announced in New York his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination.

In 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

In 1985, some 23,000 residents of Armero, Colombia, died when a volcanic mudslide buried the city.

In 2019, the House Intelligence Committee opened two weeks of public impeachment hearings with a dozen current and former career foreign service officials and political appointees scheduled to testify about efforts by President Donald Trump and others to pressure Ukraine to investigate Trump's political rivals.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama dove into a day of summit diplomacy in his home state of Hawaii as he gathered with leaders of 20 other nations of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Five years ago: President-elect Donald Trump named Republican Party chief Reince Priebus (ryns PREE'-bus) as White House chief of staff and conservative media executive Stephen Bannon as his top presidential strategist. Leon Russell, who performed, sang and produced some of rock music's top records, died in Nashville at age 74.

One year ago: Speaking publicly for the first time since his defeat by Joe Biden, President Donald Trump refused to concede the election. Masked workers in teams of two began counting ballots in counties across Georgia; the hand tally of the presidential race stemmed from an audit required by a new state law. Republicans suffered setbacks to court challenges over the election in the battleground states of Arizona, Michigan and Pennsylvania. The governors of Oregon and New Mexico ordered near-lockdowns in the most aggressive response yet to the latest wave of coronavirus infections shattering records across the U.S. Peter Sutcliffe, the British serial killer known as the "Yorkshire Ripper," died at 74; he was serving a life sentence for the killings of 13 women. Former Green Bay Packers star Paul Hornung died at 84. The Miami Marlins hired Kim Ng as general manager, making her the highest-ranking woman in the operation of a major league team.

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Today's Birthdays: Journalist-author Peter Arnett is 87. Actor Jimmy Hawkins is 80. Blues singer John Hammond is 79. Country singer-songwriter Ray Wylie Hubbard is 75. Actor Joe Mantegna is 74. Actor Sheila Frazier is 73. Actor Tracy Scoggins is 68. Actor Chris Noth (nohth) is 67. Actor-comedian Whoopi Goldberg is 66. Actor Rex Linn is 65. Actor Caroline Goodall is 62. Actor Neil Flynn is 61. Former NFL quarterback and College Football Hall of Famer Vinny Testaverde (tehs-teh-VUR'-dee) is 58. Rock musician Walter Kibby (Fishbone) is 57. Comedian and talk show host Jimmy Kimmel is 54. Actor Steve Zahn is 54. Actor Gerard Butler is 52. Writer-activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali is 52. Actor Jordan Bridges is 48. Actor Aisha Hinds is 46. Rock musician Nikolai Fraiture is 43. Former NBA All-Star Metta Sandiford-Artest (formerly Ron Artest and Metta World Peace) is 42. Actor Monique Coleman is 41. Actor Rahul Kohli is 36. Actor Devon Bostick is 30.