

Groton Daily Independent

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UpComing Events

Monday, Dec. 6

4 p.m.: School Board planning/work session
5 p.m.: Junior High Wrestling at Sisseton
JH GBB hosts Langford. 7th at 6 p.m. with 8th to follow

Tuesday, Dec. 7

7 p.m.: City Council meeting at City Hall
GBB hosts Flandreau Indian. Varsity only at 6 p.m.
4 p.m.: 7th GBB at Tiospa Zina (7th only)

Thursday, Dec. 9

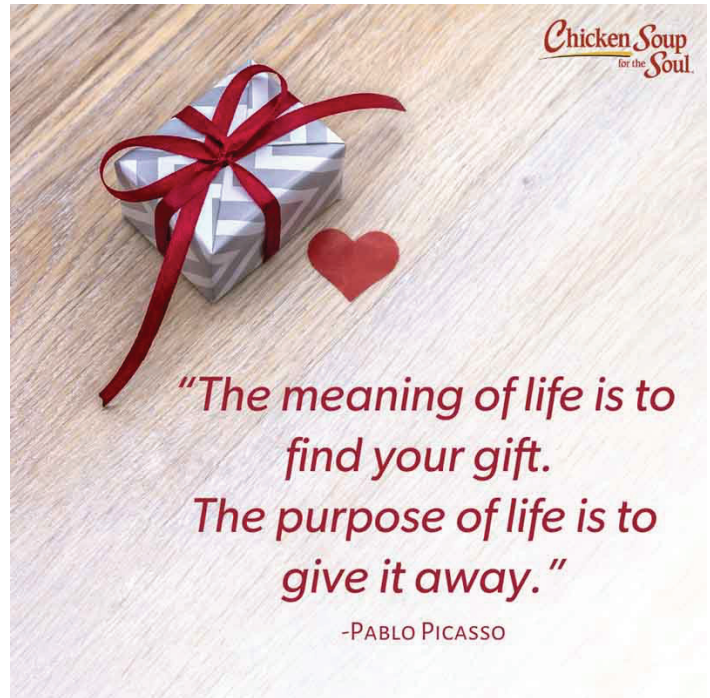
7 p.m.: MS/HS Christmas Concert

Friday, Dec. 10

GBB hosts Britton-Hecla. JV at 6 p.m. with Varsity to follow

Groton Daily Independent

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



Saturday, Dec. 11

Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

8 a.m. to Noon: ACT testing at GHS

10 a.m.: Wrestling Tourney at LaMoure

Boys Basketball at Britton-Hecla. JV at 1:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Monday, Dec. 13

4:30 p.m.: Junior High Wrestling at Webster

Junior High GBB hosts Warner. (7th at 6 p.m. followed by 8th grade game)

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Thursday, Dec. 16

Basketball Double Header with Hamlin at Groton. Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5 p.m., Girls Varsity at 6:15 p.m. followed by boys varsity.

Friday, Dec. 17

Brookings Bell Debate

Saturday, Dec. 18

Brookings Bell Debate

10 a.m.: Wrestling at Sioux Valley High School

Boys Basketball at Sioux Falls Lutheran. JV at 3 p.m. with varsity at 4 p.m.

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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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, December 5, 2021

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Sunday School - Lesson and practice Christmas Program 10:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Monday, December 6, 2021

Pastor Brandon Christmas Study 7:00 PM

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Conde Advent Study 7:00 PM

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Community Coffee Hour 9:30 AM
Confirmation Snack Time 3:30 PM
Angel Tree Shopping by Confirmation 4:00 PM

Sunday, December 12, 2021

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Sunday School - Lesson and practice Christmas Program 10:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, Dec. 5

9am Worship/Communion
10:15 Sunday School
10:15 Grace Alone Study
7:00pm Choir practice

Monday, Dec. 6

6:30am Bible Study

Wednesday, Dec. 8

6:30pm Confirmation

Thursday, Dec. 9

6:00pm Grace Alone

Sunday, Dec. 12

9am Worship
10:15 Sunday School
10:15 Grace Alone Study
7:00pm Choir practice

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton
Sunday 8:30am Groton & 11:00am Turton

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton
Sat 10am Newman Center

Confessions:

Sat. 3:45-4:15pm & Sun. 7:45am to 8:15am (G)
Sun. 10:30-10:45am (T)

St. John's Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, Dec. 5

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's worship with communion
10 a.m.: Sunday School
11 a.m.: Zion worship with communion

Tuesday, Dec. 7

12:30 pm.: Ladies Aid Christmas Party

Wednesday, Dec. 8

3:45 p.m.: Confirmation
7 p.m.: Advent Service

Sunday, Dec. 12

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's worship
10 a.m.: Sunday School
11 a.m.: Zion worship

To submit your monthly or weekly church calendar, email to
news@grotonsd.net

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Avantara-Groton is rapidly growing its team and hoping to invest in cook, dietary aides and Dietary Manager. Full and part time with after school hours available. Competitive wages, sign-on bonus, etc. Call Shana or Sarah to discuss your future employment opportunities today!

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AVANTARA
GROTON

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Five wrestlers place at Clark Tourney

The wrestling season began Saturday with The Groton Area wrestling squad taking part in the Clark/Willow Lake Wrestling Tourney. Five Groton Area grapplers placed in the tournament with the Tigers placing fourth as a team in the 11-team tournament. Lane Krueger placed first while Porter Johnson, Brevin Fliehs and Christian Ehresmann placed second, Cole Bisbee placed third and Pierce Ketterling placed fourth. Kingsbury County placed first with 185 points followed by Pierre JV with 145, Webster Area 119.5, Groton Area 112, Faulkton Area 96, Clark/Willow Lake 92.5, Canton JV 87, Britton-Hecla 33, Tiospa Zina 19, Iroquois/Doland 15 and Ortonville 0.

106: Walker Zoellner (0-2)

Champ. Round 1 - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Cooper Pommer (Clark/Willow Lake) 4-1 won by fall over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 5:19)

Cons. Round 2 - Kamryn Rhodes (Faulkton Area) 1-2 won by decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 0-2 (Dec 11-5)

113-G: Liza Krueger (0-2) placed 2nd.

Round 1 - Dani Batchelor (Clark/Willow Lake) 2-0 won by injury default over Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 0-2 (Inj. 0:00)

Round 2 - Dani Batchelor (Clark/Willow Lake) 2-0 won by injury default over Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 0-2 (Inj. 0:00)

113: Porter Johnson (2-1) placed 2nd and scored 18.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Porter Johnson (Groton Area) 2-1 won by fall over Bryce Heitkamp (Britton/Hecla) 0-2 (Fall 0:27)

Semifinal - Porter Johnson (Groton Area) 2-1 won by fall over Logan Foster (Clark/Willow Lake) 0-2 (Fall 1:08)

1st Place Match - Greyson Nielsen (Kingsbury County) 2-0 won by major decision over Porter Johnson (Groton Area) 2-1 (MD 14-2)

126: Isaiah Scepaniak (1-2) scored 3.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Bryce Hawkinson (Britton/Hecla) 3-0 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-2 (Fall 1:26)

Cons. Round 1 - Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-2 won by fall over Thomas Anderson III (Tiospa Zina) 0-2 (Fall 1:50)

Cons. Semi - Carter Schulte (Faulkton Area) 2-2 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-2 (Fall 0:31)

132: Pierce Ketterling (2-2) placed 4th and scored 7.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Pierce Ketterling (Groton Area) 2-2 won by decision over Caden Wilson (Faulkton Area) 1-2 (Dec 2-1)

Semifinal - Kaleb Johnson (Kingsbury County) 3-0 won by decision over Pierce Ketterling (Groton Area) 2-2 (Dec 6-2)

Cons. Semi - Pierce Ketterling (Groton Area) 2-2 won by decision over Ben Suther (Britton/Hecla) 1-2 (Dec 7-6)

3rd Place Match - Hudson Shaffer (Pierre JV) 3-1 won by decision over Pierce Ketterling (Groton Area) 2-2 (Dec 7-3)

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138: Brevin Flihs (2-1) placed 2nd and scored 18.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 2-1 received a bye () (Bye)
Quarterfinal - Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 2-1 won by fall over Ethan Johnson (Kingsbury County) 5-1 (Fall 5:09)
Semifinal - Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 2-1 won by decision over Gage Baumgarn (Webster Area) 1-2 (Dec 13-8)
1st Place Match - Dylan Zell (Kingsbury County) 3-0 won by fall over Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 2-1 (Fall 0:33)

138: Nick Morris (0-2)

Champ. Round 1 - Kieshon Smith (Canton JV) 2-2 won by fall over Nick Morris (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 1:41)
Cons. Round 1 - Nick Morris (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)
Cons. Round 2 - Ethan Johnson (Kingsbury County) 5-1 won by fall over Nick Morris (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 0:53)

145: Christian Ehresmann (2-1) placed 2nd and scored 20.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 2-1 received a bye () (Bye)
Quarterfinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 2-1 won by fall over Jerard Satterlee (Britton/Hecla) 0-2 (Fall 2:40)
Semifinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 2-1 won by fall over Luke Steffensen (Kingsbury County) 1-2 (Fall 1:41)
1st Place Match - Cael Larson (Webster Area) 3-0 won by fall over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 2-1 (Fall 4:57)

152: Korbin Kucker (1-2) scored 6.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 1-2 received a bye () (Bye)
Quarterfinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 1-2 won by fall over Gavin Witt (Webster Area) 1-2 (Fall 3:07)
Semifinal - Garrett Cramer (Faulkton Area) 3-0 won by major decision over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 1-2 (MD 16-4)
Cons. Semi - Tyler Frick (Canton JV) 3-1 won by decision over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 1-2 (Dec 6-2)

170: Cole Bisbee (4-1) placed 3rd and scored 20.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 4-1 won by fall over Riley Popp (Clark/Willow Lake) 0-2 (Fall 0:47)
Quarterfinal - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 4-1 won by fall over Dane Hansen (Britton/Hecla) 0-2 (Fall 0:30)
Semifinal - Connor Johnson (Kingsbury County) 4-0 won by fall over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 4-1 (Fall 1:34)
Cons. Semi - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 4-1 won by fall over Cole Shoemaker (Webster Area) 2-2 (Fall 2:12)
3rd Place Match - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 4-1 won by fall over Tristen Baloun (Faulkton Area) 3-2 (Fall 2:04)

285: Lane Krueger (2-0) placed 1st and scored 20.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 2-0 received a bye () (Bye)
Semifinal - Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 2-0 won by fall over Parker Bode (Faulkton Area) 3-1 (Fall 2:19)
1st Place Match - Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 2-0 won by decision over Lucas Colman (Pierre JV) 2-1 (Dec 9-4)

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Northern men crack NSIC win column with dominant performance over U-Mary

Aberdeen, S.D. - The Northern State men's basketball program cracked the win column in conference play Saturday afternoon with a dominant 82-49 win over U-Mary at Wachs Arena. Northern held a wire-to-wire lead in the win, its first in three early NSIC games.

QUICK HITS

Final score: Northern State 82; U-Mary 49

Records: Northern State 7-4, 1-2 NSIC; U-Mary 3-5, 2-1 NSIC

Attendance: 1,571

HOW IT HAPPENED

Jordan Belka couldn't miss on the turn-around and Augustin Reede was nearly automatic from distance as both players notched 20 or more points to lead the way for Northern State.

Belka was 10-for-14 from the floor, largely on turn-around fadeaways, while Reede hit 6 of 10 attempts from 3-point range.

As a team, the Wolves hit on 32 of 57 (56.1) attempt from the floor, including 12 of 30 (40 percent) long range shots.

Conversely, U-Mary finished just 16 of 56 of its attempts (29.6 percent).

Northern also had eight blocks and 18 assists in the win while forcing the Marauders into 22 total turnovers.

STATISTICAL LEADERS

Jordan Belka: 21 points, 7 rebounds, 2 blocks, 10-for-14 shooting

Augustin Reede: 20 points, 2 assists, 6-of-10 3-point shooting

Kailleb Walton-Blanden: 12 points, 5-of-6 shooting

Trey Longstreet: 5 rebounds, 5 assists, 3 steals, 1 block

UP NEXT

Northern goes on the road next weekend to continue NSIC play, visiting Minnesota Crookston Friday and Bemidji State on Saturday. Friday's game is set to tip at 5:30 p.m., while Saturday will start at 3:30 p.m.

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Wolves Women Complete Fourth Quarter Comeback in Win Over Marauders

Aberdeen, S.D. The Northern State defense shut down the UMary offense in the fourth quarter, closing the game on a 15-0 run and holding the Marauders scoreless the final 7:59 of game time. Northern State would use that scoring run in the fourth quarter to earn a 66-59 victory over UMary in their NSIC home opener.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 66, UMARY 59

Records: NSU 5-3 (2-1 NSIC), UMARY 6-5 (1-2 NSIC)

Attendance: 1,571

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Sparked by a 3-pointer by Lexi Roe, the Wolves used an 11-0 run in the first quarter to jump out to an early 15-4 advantage
- A 3-pointer by Rianna Fillipi with 1:55 left in the period gave the Wolves their largest lead of the game at 22-10
- The 26 point first quarter was Northern's highest scoring quarter of the season
- UMary used a 19-11 advantage in the second quarter to claw back within one point at halftime
- A 3-pointer by Carly Kottsick gave UMary their largest lead of the game at 55-44, with 1:03 remaining in the third quarter
- The lone Marauder made field goal in the fourth quarter came at the 9:48 mark by Megan Zander
- Haley Johnson scored six consecutive points to start what would end up being a 15-0 scoring run to close the game for the Wolves
- Northern State went 5-6 at the free throw line in the final 23 seconds to put the game away
- NSU controlled the glass in fourth quarter with a 19-10 advantage, and 7-1 lead in offensive rebounds
- Three of Northern's seven offensive rebounds in the fourth came in the final minute of regulation
- UMary's four points in the fourth quarter was the fewest points allowed by the Wolves defense in a period this season

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Kailee Oliverson: 25 points, 8 rebounds, 3 assists

Laurie Rogers: 13 points, 12 rebounds, 9 blocks

Haley Johnson: 10 points, 10 rebounds, 4 steals

BEYOND THE BOX SCORE

- Laurie Rogers nine blocks in tonight's game is tied for the second most in a single game all-time, and was one short of the record of ten set by Miranda Ristau in 2017
- Rogers has recorded two or more blocks in six of the eight games so far this season

UP NEXT

Northern State will be on the road for a pair of games in Minnesota next weekend. The Wolves will play at Minnesota Crookston at 7:30 p.m. on Friday and will then play at Bemidji State at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday.



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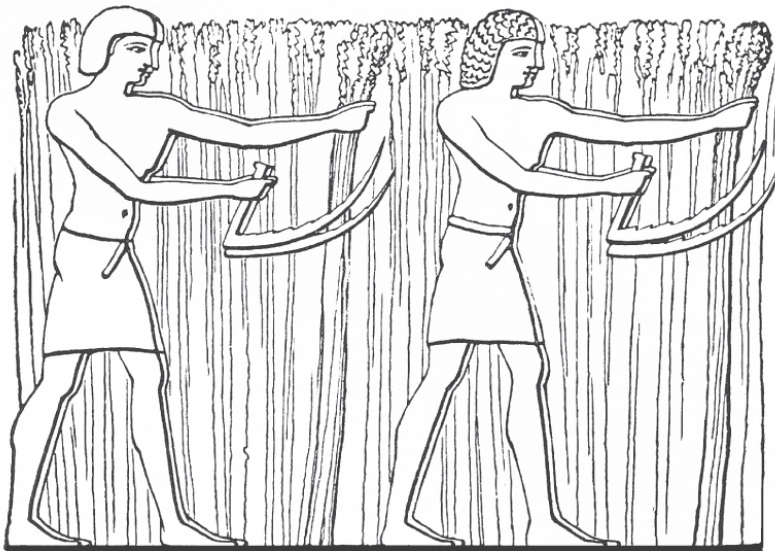
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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



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righteousness;
reap in mercy;
break up your fallow
ground, for it is time
to seek the Lord, till
He comes and rains
righteousness on you.*

🌀 HOSEA 10:12 🌀

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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Luke in the Old Testament or New Testament or neither?

2. From Matthew 1:18, when Mary became pregnant, she and Joseph were ...? *Married, Engaged, Just friends, Strangers*

3. How many times is "nativity" mentioned in the Bible (KJV)? *Zero, 1, 2, 7*

4. At the birth of Jesus, who was king of Judaea? *Solomon, Herod, Balak, Belshazzar*

5. What was the home city of Mary and Joseph? *Capernaum, Nazareth, Apeh, Shechem*

6. Which of these wasn't a gift from the wise men (Magi)? *Silver, Myrrh, Gold, Frankincense*

ANSWERS: 1) New; 2) Engaged; 3) 7 (4 times in Ezekiel); 4) Herod; 5) Nazareth; 6) Silver

Looking for a great holiday gift? Wilson Casey's Golf Trivia 2022 daily calendar will challenge and entertain golfers of all skill levels. Available in stores and online.

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Comfort foods

Made fast
and
healthy



by Healthy Exchanges

Golden California Vegetables

Whether you're serving ham or roast beef or turkey -- this is the perfect veggie dish. It goes with just about anything! Anything that versatile has to be golden, doesn't it?

3 cups frozen broccoli, cauliflower and carrot blend
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 cup water
1 (12 fluid ounce) can evaporated fat-free milk
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
3/4 cup shredded reduced-fat Cheddar cheese
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes

1. In a medium saucepan, combine vegetable blend, onion and water. Cook over medium heat until vegetables are just tender. Drain well and return to saucepan.

2. In a covered jar, combine evaporated milk and flour. Shake well to combine. Pour mixture into saucepan and return to heat. Add Cheddar cheese, black pepper and parsley flakes. Mix well to combine. Continue cooking over medium heat until mixture thickens, stirring often.

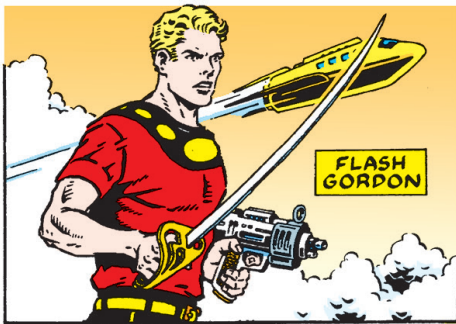
3. Stir in vegetables. Continue cooking until mixture is heated through, stirring often. Makes 4 (3/4 cup) servings.

* Each serving equals: 196 calories, 4g fat, 15g protein, 25g carb., 352mg sodium, 3g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 1/2 Vegetable, 1 Meat, 1/2 Fat-Free Milk, 1/2 Starch.

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FLASH GORDON

By JIM KEEFE
11-28

A VICTIM OF A CAVE-IN, FLASH'S ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO THE SOUNDS OF EXCAVATION...

THE CREATURES... DIGGING ME OUT! WITHOUT A WEAPON I'M DONE FOR!



Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

HERE'S HOW TO MOVE UP A STEP FROM YOUR PRESENT LEVEL OF GOLF.

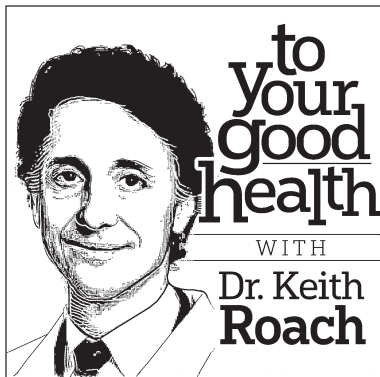
IF YOU'RE A 100-PLUS SHOOTER DYING TO GET INTO THE 90s, TAKE SOME LESSONS FROM A PRO WHO'LL TAKE A REAL INTEREST IN YOU.

JM

TO DROP FROM THE 90s INTO THE 80s, WORK TWICE AS HARD AT YOUR SHORT GAME AS YOU DO AT THE FULL SWING.

TO GO FROM THE 80s TO THE 70s, PRACTICE MORE THAN YOU PLAY, ENSURING YOU WORK ON ALL THE SHOTS.

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Why Do Older Folks Have Balance Issues?

DEAR DR. ROACH: Apparently, it is common for older people to have balance issues. Do these balance problems usually stem more from muscular issues or inner ear issues? -- E.M.

ANSWER: It is often a combination of issues that lead to balance problems in older adults. Inner ear problems, where the organs of balance are located, are a major cause. However, balance problems are exacerbated by muscle weakness, vision problems, arthritis and medications, to name a few common ones.

The body has many safeguards to keep us from falling. If the balance system can't tell us our exact position in space, our eyes can, and the neurological system uses fine muscle control to keep us upright and safe. We can often do well even with one system not working properly. When multiple systems are affected, falls are more common.

Improving balance and reducing fall risk often involves multiple interventions. One is working on balance directly. This can be achieved with home exercises; group exercises, like tai chi and yoga, which have the added advantage of increasing muscle control; or with a skilled therapist such as physical or occupational therapy. Making sure vision is as good as possible and staying on top of joint, muscle and neurological conditions will help reduce fall risk.

Medications are so often the source of balance and fall problems that many medical practices (including mine) review medications at every visit to look for errors, medicines that have combined toxicities, medicines that are less safe in older adults and any medicines that might safely be discontinued.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am an 89-year-old man who has been taking tamsulosin (Flomax), 0.4 mg, for many years. I take it after supper in the evening. I get up at night three or four times to urinate. Would it be better to take the medication after lunch? I would be happy if I could reduce the number of times I get up to maybe only once or twice. -- P.J.S.

ANSWER: Tamsulosin is in the class of alpha blockers, and they relax smooth muscle, a special type of muscle found in the prostate and in blood vessels (among other places). Relaxing the smooth muscle in the prostate makes the urethra, the tube that carries the urine from the bladder and through the prostate, larger. As a result, men can empty their bladders more easily.

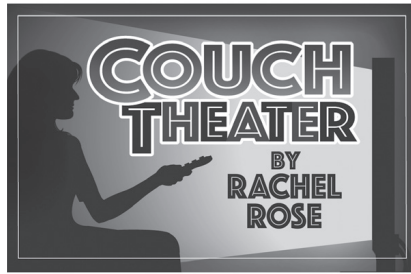
However, even though tamsulosin is better at relaxing smooth muscle in the prostate than in blood vessels, some men will get lightheaded upon standing when using it. This occurs especially on the first dose, and over time most men no longer have trouble. It is usually dosed at nighttime so that the lightheadedness on standing is minimized. You can take it at any time of the day (a half-hour after eating is recommended, at the same meal of the day), but I doubt it will work much better.

Many experts will use 0.8 mg in men who haven't had an ideal response and who do not have lightheadedness. I'd ask your doctor whether an increased dose might be better. Before considering another drug, be sure you avoid too many liquids at night, especially alcohol, and try voiding your bladder twice before bed to make sure it is as empty as possible.

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

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King Richard (PG-13) — Long before Venus and Serena Williams were household names known worldwide, they were just two sisters in a family of seven living in Compton, California. Their father, Richard, was both homeschool teacher and athletic trainer. More importantly, he was the visionary providing the steady push behind the incredible athletes we know today. Will Smith gives a thoughtful performance as the Williams' patriarch, ever focused on paving a path for his daughters to hone their own greatness. Saniyya Sidney as young Venus and Demi Singleton as young Serena are each charming, convincingly athletic and talented at portraying the determined yet humble champions. (HBOMax)

A Very Boy Band Holiday! (NR) — It's OK if you missed the NKOTBSB tour, or failed to book a cabin on the New Kids Cruise. Because come Dec. 6, (almost) all of your favorite boy banders from the '80s and '90s are in one place at one time for an epic boys-travaganza of holiday delight! Dudes from *NSYNC, 98 Degrees, Boyz II Men, New Edition, New Kids on the Block and even O-Town converged to create the ultimate manly song-and-dance special to rev up your holiday spirit. After it airs on ABC, it can be viewed the next day on demand and Hulu. (Hulu)

Snoopy Presents: For Auld Lang Syne (TV-G) — Anyone under the age of 55 doesn't know life without the classic "Peanuts" cartoon TV specials. So having a brand-new holiday-themed special is a big happening. The plot of this future classic centers around three story lines: Lucy throwing herself a great New Year's Eve party, Charlie Brown attempting to successfully complete just one of his resolutions from the prior year (good grief!), and everyone being bummed because Grandma could

not visit for the holidays. It remains unknown if a tuxedo-donned Snoopy will try to kiss Lucy at the stroke of midnight, but I'm hopeful. Premieres Dec. 10. (Apple TV+)

Saturday Morning All Star Hits! (NR) — This eight-episode Netflix original series is a quirky melding of live action and animation that pays homage to the great cartoons that Gen X and Gen Y grew up watching. The creation of "Saturday Night Live" cast member Kyle Mooney and Ben Jones (of the animation studio Bento Box), this adult series promises to take viewers through the Saturday morning cartoon experience of our youth. Pour yourself a heaping bowl of sugary cereal and plop yourself on the couch ... this feels like a binge-watch selection. Premieres Dec. 10. (Netflix)



Apple TV+

Scene from "Snoopy Presents: For Auld Lang Syne"

Life Below Zero: Northern Territories (TV-14) — The NatGeo series takes viewers to the far reaches of northernmost Canada for a fascinating lesson on how people survive without many of the conveniences most of us couldn't live without for a single day. Sub-Arctic living takes significant heartiness of mind and spirit, and surviving off the grid in such unrelenting conditions is a non-stop effort. "Nothing comes easy up here," says one resident as she hunts musk ox by herself as her eyelashes freeze over. So grab some hot tea and prepare to really appreciate your municipal utility services and corner grocer. (Disney+)

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1. Which artist's debut album was titled "The Kick Inside"?
2. Name the duo who released "Summer Nights." What soundtrack was it used in?
3. What do "One Fine Day," "Sh-Boom," "Stagger Lee" and "Da Doo Ron Ron" have in common?
4. Who had a debut hit with "I Only Want to Be with You"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Goodbye, Papa, please pray for me, I was the black sheep of the family."

Answers

1. Kate Bush, in 1978. She insisted that her self-penned "Wuthering Heights" be included instead of "James and the Cold Gun," which was being pushed on her by the record company.
2. John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John, in the 1978 musical film "Grease." They sang seven of the 24 tracks on the double album.
3. They were dropped (!!) from the 2010 update of Rolling Stone magazine's 500 Greatest Songs list.
4. Dusty Springfield, in 1963.
5. "Seasons in the Sun," by Terry Jacks, in 1974. It's based on the 1961 song "Le Moribond" by Belgian singer-songwriter Jacques Brel, with lyrics rewritten in English by American poet Rod McKuen. It was offered to the Beach Boys, who declined it, and Jacks' version went on to top the charts worldwide.

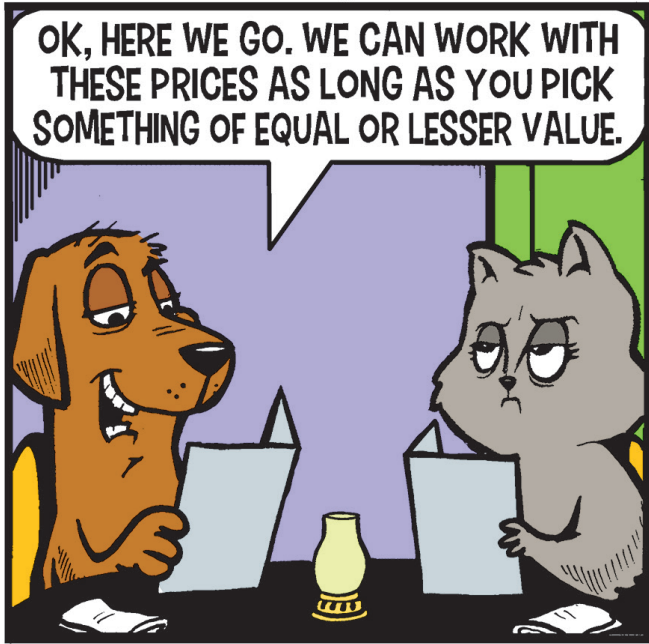
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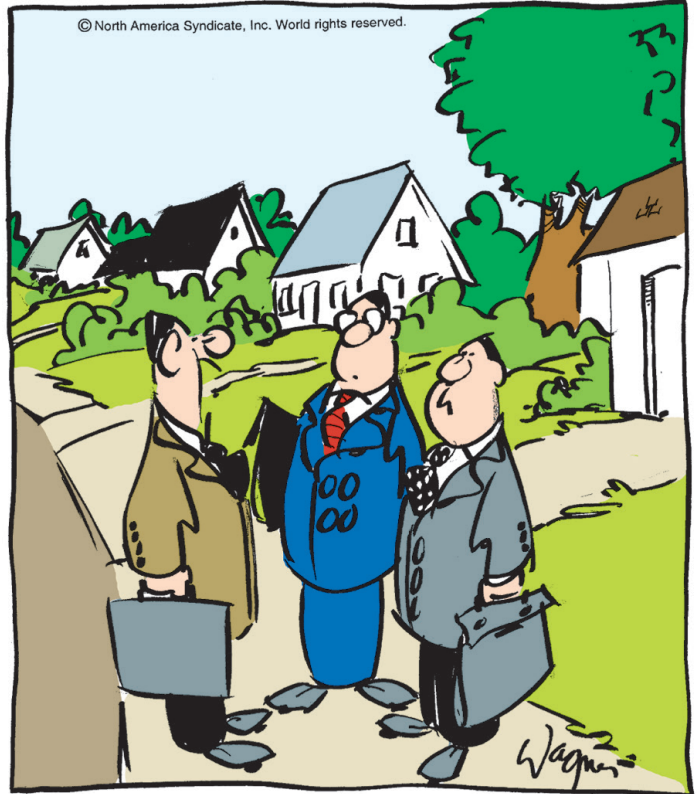
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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



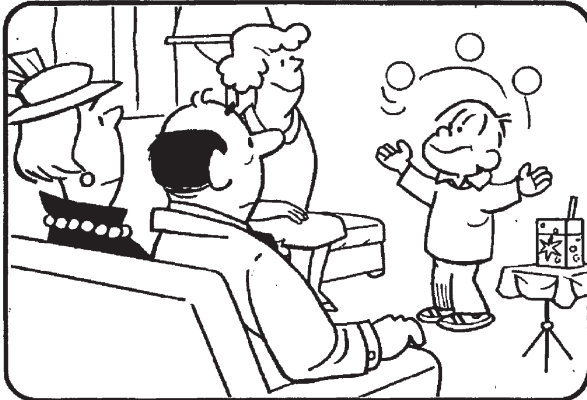
GRIN and BEAR IT



"When we formed this carpool, I think we all assumed that one of us had a car."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Table is moved. 2. Ball is missing. 3. Glasses are added. 4. Pants are different. 5. Hair is added. 6. Necktie is removed.



- Candles will burn more evenly if you refrigerate them for a few hours before lighting.

- “My great-nephew and his family came to visit, and his toddler son is quite into opening doors. I had baby-proofed my home, but I did not think about his being able to turn a doorknob. His very smart mother pulled out a sock and slipped it over the doorknob, then secured it with a wide rubber band. Even I was unable to get a good grip on the doorknob after that!”
— *V.R. in North Carolina*

- Surprise guests? Here’s how to quickly clean your living areas: First, clean the toilet, mirror and vanity in the guest bathroom and leave a fresh towel; grab a laundry basket and remove any clutter from the living room and kitchen; put away or clean dirty dishes and wipe down counters in the kitchen; finally, give carpets a quick vacuum. Then maybe light a great-smelling candle and greet your guests!

- “Fireplaces are wonderful for heat and ambience, but the ashes! When cleaning up, I spritz the ashes with a rosemary water solution. This keeps them from dusting up and flying all over, and it smells great. My neighbor puts her damp loose-leaf tea in the fireplace for scent.” — *C.W. in Iowa*

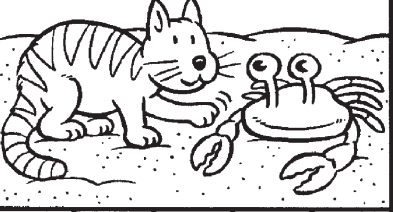
- “In cold winter months, keep your robe (and slippers or whatever else) under the covers with you when you sleep. Pull it next to or over you a few minutes before you get up. It’ll be toasty and will help make the transition into the cold a little less harsh.”
— *Giselle in New York*

- Empty spice containers can be used to hold different hardware in the shop or in your toolbox.

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

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L	A	S	H	W	T	
S	WHY IS A CAT on the beach like Christmas?				A	
I					I	
S					L	
K					S	
A					C	
E	N	X	D	M	Y	A

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

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A TREE TRIMMER!

Starting with the word TINSELED at the bottom of our word tree, try dropping one letter at a time as you work your way up. The remaining letters at each level should spell out a new word.

The following hints are from the bottom up:

1. Decorated a tree (TINSELED).
2. Long fishing line.
3. Join the Army.
4. Fork features.
5. State of irritation.
6. Food container.
7. Not out.
8. Oneself.

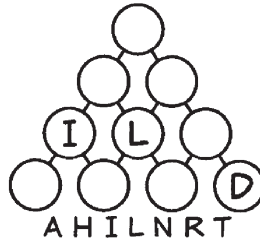
Find out by reading every other letter as you go around the picture frame counterclockwise. The trick is to start at the right letter. (Santa Claus, "Like Xmas, it has sandy claws.") Start at the L in the upper left corner.

TOPSY-TURVY! Seven cups are placed upside down on the table. By inverting any three cups during one move, how many moves would it take to turn them all right side up?

Three. Move No. 1: 1, 2 & 3. Move No. 2: 3, 4 & 5. Move No. 3: 3, 6 and 7. Other ways are possible.



CHAIN REACTION! Take the seven letters printed below our diagram and place them in the circles so that eight four-letter words can be read, top to bottom, along the connecting lines. All the words will begin with the letter in the top circle.



Illustrated by David Coulson

Top to bottom, left to right: Hair, hail, halt, hill, hit, hint, hind.

1. Tinsel. 2. Setting. 3. Enlist. 4. Times. 5. Suit. 6. Tin. 7. In. 8. I.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Alum
- 5 Spell-off
- 8 Pit
- 12 Taylor of "Mystic Pizza"
- 13 Approves
- 14 Satan's forte
- 15 Leading man?
- 16 Landlocked Mideast territory
- 18 Disney's Ariel, for one
- 20 Van Gogh venue
- 21 CBS logo
- 22 Mimic
- 23 Wedding VIP
- 26 "I'm No Angel" actress
- 30 '60s chic

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16			17				
18				19				20				
			21				22					
23	24	25				26				27	28	29
30					31					32		
33			34	35				36	37			
			38				39					
40	41	42				43				44	45	46
47					48				49			
50					51				52			
53					54				55			

- 31 Green shade
- 32 Cattle call
- 33 "The Great Gatsby" setting
- 36 Self-reproach
- 38 Stop — dime
- 39 "— voyage!"
- 40 Skater Ohno
- 43 Within earshot
- 47 Oater setting
- 49 Author Bellow
- 50 Within (Pref.)
- 51 "Shoo!"
- 52 Exile isle
- 53 Beheld
- 54 Sugary suffix

- 55 Marvel super-heroes

DOWN

- 1 Glitz partner
- 2 Carousel, for one
- 3 Winged
- 4 Darkened
- 5 "Let's Dance" singer
- 6 Scratched (out)
- 7 Curved letter
- 8 Semitic language
- 9 Cameo shape

- 10 Queue
- 11 BPOE members
- 17 Carton sealer
- 19 Nay undoer
- 22 Motorist's org.
- 23 Upscale auto
- 24 Shad product
- 25 Egos' counterparts
- 26 Jo's sister
- 27 Brit. record label
- 28 Fa follower
- 29 Youngster
- 31 Links org.
- 34 Ratted out

- 35 Sufficient, old-style
- 36 Deity
- 37 Gender-neutral
- 39 Montana city
- 40 Dazzles
- 41 Freshener scent
- 42 Shoppe description
- 43 Unrepaired
- 44 Lip soother
- 45 Garage job
- 46 Panache
- 48 Conceit

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

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

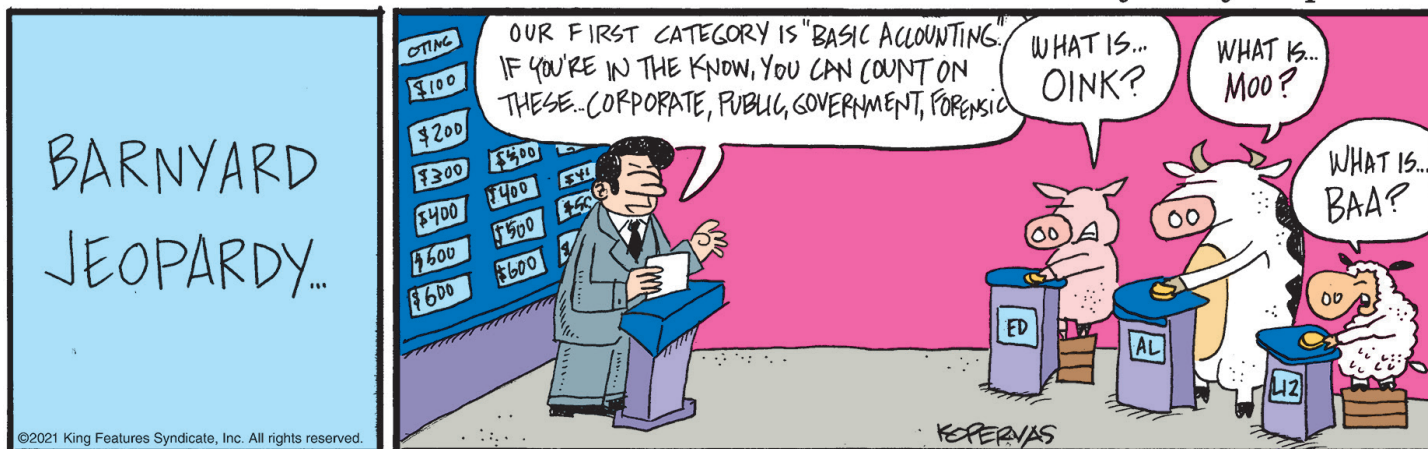
LAFF - A - DAY



"No, no, put it back! You have to cook that!"

Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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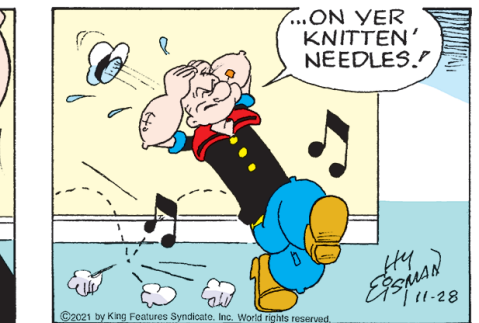
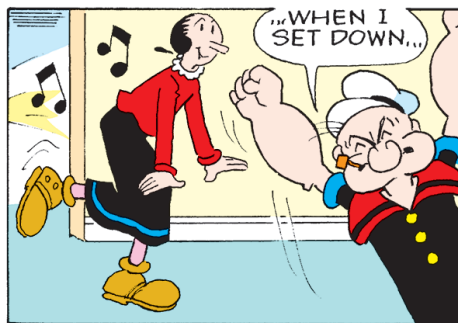
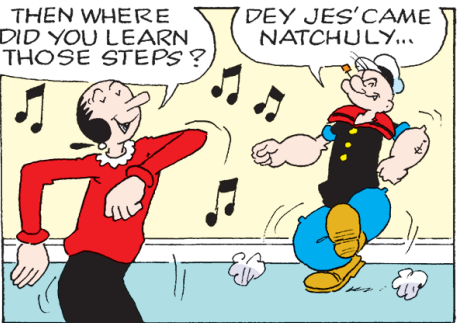
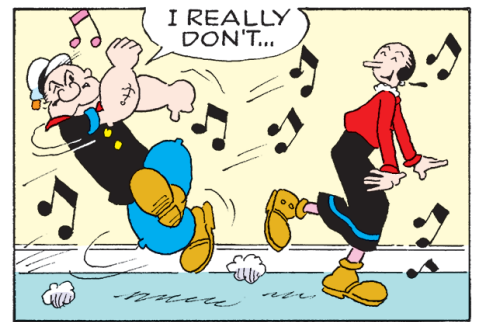
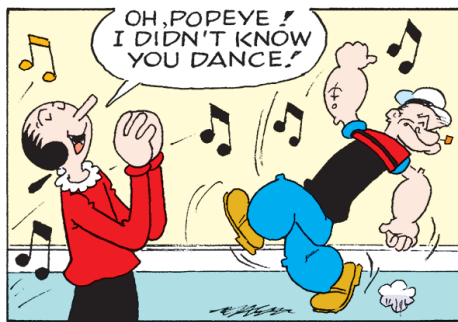
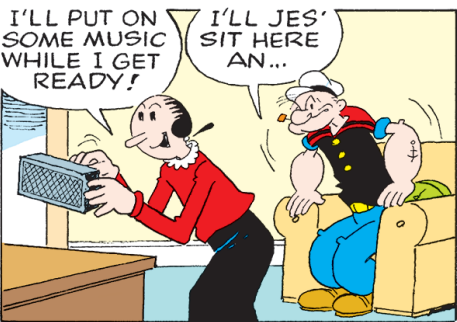
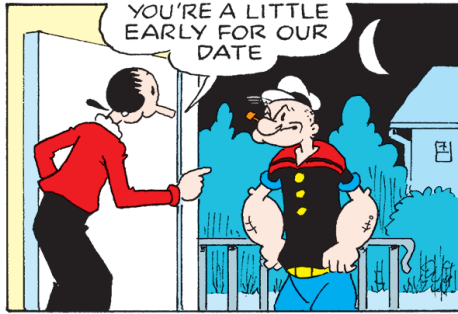
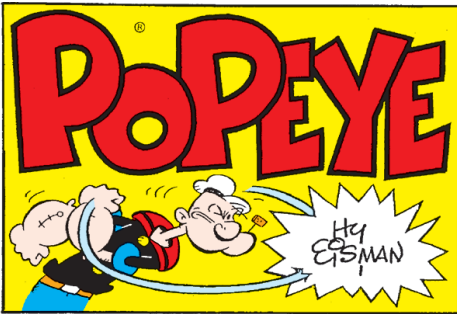
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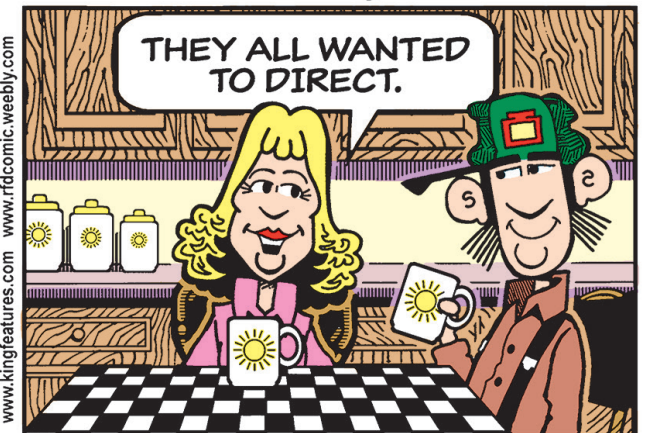
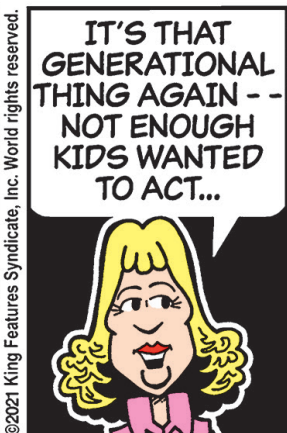
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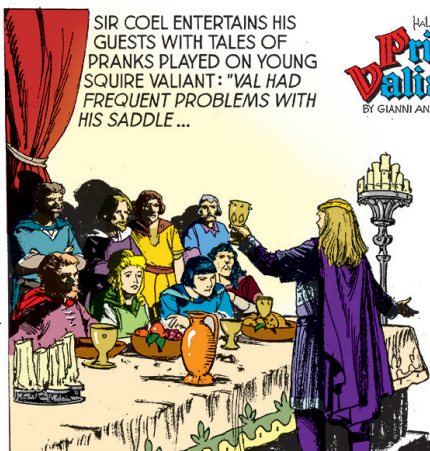
R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



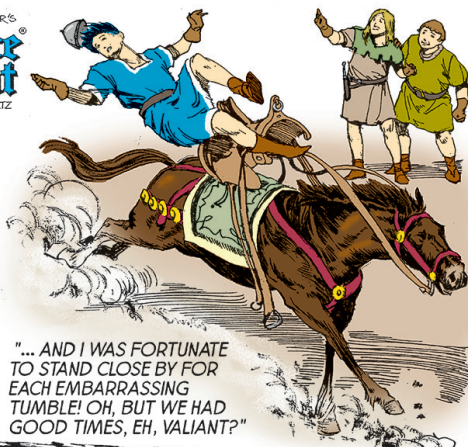
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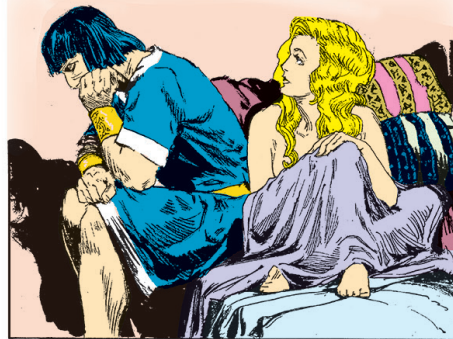
SIR COEL ENTERTAINS HIS GUESTS WITH TALES OF PRANKS PLAYED ON YOUNG SQUIRE VALIANT: "VAL HAD FREQUENT PROBLEMS WITH HIS SADDLE ..."

Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

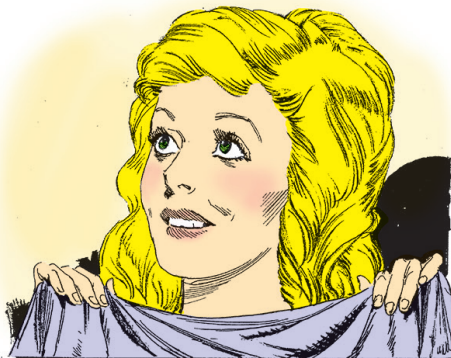


"... AND I WAS FORTUNATE TO STAND CLOSE BY FOR EACH EMBARRASSING TUMBLE! OH, BUT WE HAD GOOD TIMES, EH, VALIANT?"

LATER, IN THEIR BEDCHAMBER, VAL STEAMS AT ALETA. "THAT COEL MADE MY LIFE MISERABLE AND NOW HE RUBS MY NOSE IN IT! I NEED TO EVEN THE SCORE ..."



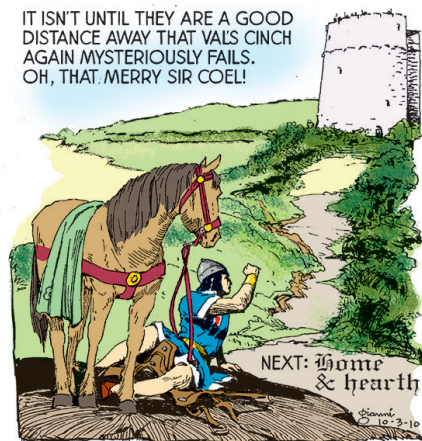
"NOW, VAL - THAT THUATHAN ELIXIR IS CAUSING YOU TO ACT INSECURE. COEL HAS BEEN GRACIOUS. BE THE BIGGER MAN AND TURN THE OTHER CHEEK."



AND SO VAL DOES, AS THEY DEPART AT DAWN. HE EVEN FEIGNS APPRECIATION FOR COEL'S HOSPITALITY.

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IT ISN'T UNTIL THEY ARE A GOOD DISTANCE AWAY THAT VALS CINCH AGAIN MYSTERIOUSLY FAILS. OH, THAT MERRY SIR COEL!



NEXT: Home & hearth

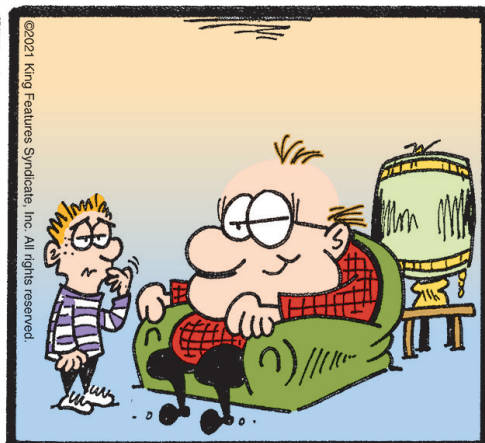
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The Spats

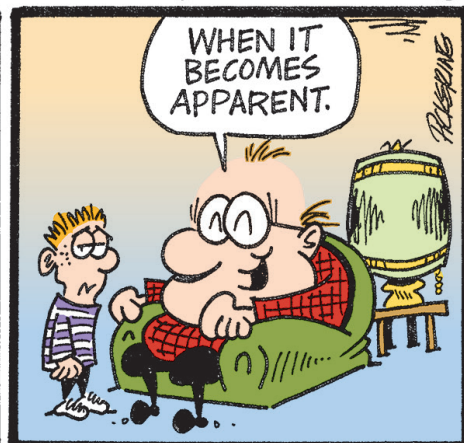
by Jeff Pickering



WHEN DOES A JOKE BECOME A DAD JOKE?



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WHEN IT BECOMES APPARENT.

PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Pricey New Drug Means Higher Part B Premiums

The Medicare Part B monthly premium is going up in 2022 by \$21.60, one of the biggest increases ever. The reason for it, they say, is the massive cost of a new Alzheimer's drug, Aduhelm. Our new premium will be \$170 per month.

That's going to be a big bite out of our new Social Security increase, \$92 for the average recipient with a benefit of \$1,657 per month.

Aduhelm will cost \$56,000 per year per patient. And that's only the beginning of the questions and concerns.

Whether Medicare is going to pay for the drug is still up in the air because it originally thought the price would be much less, closer to \$3,000. Certain other insurers have already stated they won't cover it unless the cost comes down.

As recently as a year ago, U.S. Food and Drug Administration advisers voted against approving the drug as they

wondered whether it really works. Clinical trials were inconclusive. Initially the FDA said it was for people with Alzheimer's, but they've already changed their prescribing information and narrowed the criteria for receiving it. Now Aduhelm is for people with very early Alzheimer's, mild cognitive impairment and mild dementia. It's no cure, they say, but it slows progression of the disease.

Part of its cost is that it has to be given in an IV in a doctor's office or hospital. Many hospitals, not knowing if they'll be paid for administering it (that \$56,000 is for the drug only) and who should have it, are holding back. Some are even insisting on doing their own in-house research to see if it works.

Doctors, not knowing if their patients can get the drug, are often hesitant to prescribe it and raise hopes in patients.

Still, we'll be paying that increased Part B premium in 2022 while they work things out and determine whether Medicare will pay for Aduhelm.

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1. What competition, created and televised by ESPN in the early 2000s, featured fishing, sporting dogs, target sports and timber events?

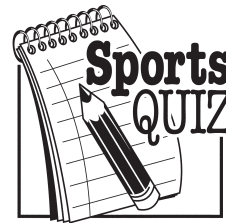
2. Ullamaliztli — resembling a combination of modern soccer and basketball — was a sport played by what ancient civilization?

3. At the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics, 12 of the 15 former Soviet Union republics competed together under what name?

4. What 1996 sports comedy film starred Adam Sandler as a failed hockey player who discovers a knack for golf?

5. Name the San Francisco 49ers placekicker who set the NFL single-season record with 44 field goals made in 2011?

6. Legendary figure skaters Willy



by Ryan A. Berenz

Bocki, Karl Schäfer and Emmerich Danzer all hailed from what country?

7. In July 1991, Dennis Martinez threw a perfect game pitching for what Major League Baseball team?

Answers

1. The Great Outdoor Games.
2. The Aztecs.
3. The Unified Team.
4. "Happy Gilmore."
5. David Akers.
6. Austria.
7. The Montreal Expos.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Beware Holiday Foods, Ornaments, Plants

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Please remind your readers of how important it is to keep their pets away from holiday foods. Some foods, like chocolate, can be deadly poisonous to dogs, while rich foods and ingredients like onions or raisins can be dangerous for cats and dogs. — *Jessica in New Jersey*

DEAR JESSICA: You told them, and thank you! The holiday season, with plenty of parties, family and food, can be hectic for everyone, but it's important to monitor pets and make sure they're kept away from potentially harmful items.

Many foods, not just chocolate but onions, grapes and raisins, nuts, avocados and other holiday foods can cause house pets great harm. Store them well

out of reach, and keep pets out of the kitchen when cooking and away from serving tables. A more extensive list of common foods that can be poisonous to pets is available from the Humane Society of the United States (www.humanesociety.org).

Christmas tree ornaments also can potentially be harmful. Cats love knocking down glass ornaments and may accidentally ingest tinsel or other shiny strands. Dogs may gnaw on interesting packages or break into gift boxes of candy or fruit.

Even plants need to be kept out of reach: poinsettias, for example, are toxic to cats.

To minimize risk, place breakable ornaments higher on the tree and put plants well out of reach. During parties or dinners, place your pets in a separate area of the house with bedding, food and water, and check on them occasionally. (This also is helpful in keeping pets' stress levels down.)

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* In 2008, PETA requested Ben & Jerry's use breastmilk instead of cow's milk to make ice cream. This was unanimously rejected by Ben & Jerry's and La Leche League International.

* Sixty-five percent of test subjects had the urge to yawn after reading about yawning.

* From 1746 until 1996, English law considered bagpipes not as a musical instrument, but a weapon of war, used to "instill courage in soldiers and put the fear of God into the enemy."

* The kitchen dishwasher was invented by a politician's socialite wife who was fed up with servants breaking her expensive dishes.

* Author Roger Highfield's 1999 book "The Physics of Christmas: From the Aerodynamics of Reindeer to the Thermodynamics of Turkey" detailed a darker side to Rudolph's famously red nose -- not alcoholism, but some kind of parasitic infection.

* A tornado in Oklahoma once ripped a full motel off the ground. Its sign was later found in Arkansas.

* Born in 1924, a horse called Lady Wonder was considered by many to be psychic. Not only did she make predictions and answer questions for over 30 years and more than 150,000 people, she was credited with helping to solve several crimes.

* Chilean poet Pablo Neruda always wrote in green ink, which for him was a color of hope and abundance.

* LeBron James's decision to leave Cleveland to join the Miami Heat was such a shocker that even Osama Bin Laden's translator, who was being held at Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, wrote about it to his lawyers, declaring that "LeBron James is a very bad man. He should apologize to the city of Cleveland."

Thought for the Day: "Beauty is the moment when time vanishes and eternity arises." -- Amit Ray

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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO

EVER HAPPEN TO YOU?

YOU'RE COLD AND DYIN' FOR A HOT DINNER-- AND YOU HAVE NEWS OF A BIG RAISE YOU JUST GOT, BUT YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT FOR A PAUSE IN WIFEY'S REAL IMPORTANT HOT NEWS OF THE DAY REPORT--

...AND THEN COUSIN HEPATICA CALLED AND SAID SHE'D BE COMING TO OUR FAMILY DINNER ON SUNDAY--WELL...I TOLD HER TO BRING AUNT EFFIE AND I TOLD HER NOT TO IGNORE HER MOTHER-IN-LAW-- AND SHE SAID-- AND THEN I SAID--AND...

Thank to S. FABER, BOSTON, MASS.

NOT ONE... BUT TWO UPMANSHIP...

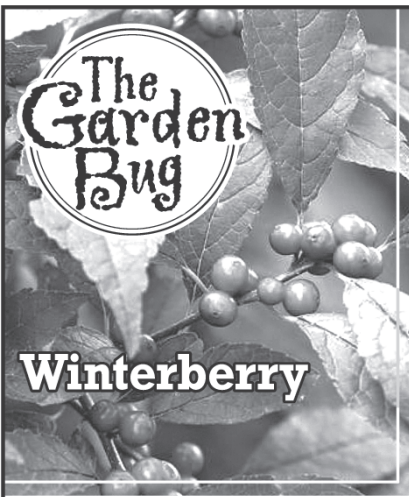
MY DAD LIVED TILL HE WAS 93--
 MY UNCLE ARFO IS 97 AND SWIMS EVERY DAY--
 MY AUNT HEPPA IS 102 AND JOGS 8 MILES EVERY DAY--

Thank to 'DEE-DEE' CALO, ROCKVILLE, MD

NEVER HAPPEN IN OUR LIFETIME--

HI...WE LIVE IN THE APARTMENT NEXT TO YOU-- WE JUST WANTED TO TELL YOUR WIFE TO KEEP PRACTICING HER OPERATIC LESSONS-- WE DON'T MIND HER SINGING EVEN IF IT IS VERY LATE-- WED APPRECIATE IT IF SHE'D SING REAL LOUD AND OFF-KEY... WE JUST LO-O-O-VE IT...

OH, YES--
 WOOP-P-P--
 EEK-O-O-O--
 YO-YO-O-O--
 AWK-K--



The Garden Bug

Winterberry

Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) is a shrub native to eastern North America. It produces bright red berries that persist through winter and into spring. It thrives best in wetland areas with acidic soil, but will tolerate some other environments as long as its moisture needs are met and the soil is not too alkaline. With the winterberry there are separate male and female plants. Because only fertilized female plants will produce a wonderful display of berries, there must be at least one male winterberry plant for every 6-10 female shrubs in the area to allow for cross-pollination. - Brenda Weaver

Source: www.thespruce.com

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

Veterans Service Groups Up and Running Again

Is your local Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars or American Legion up and running again? Many shut down over the past year due to COVID-19. Now, slowly, they're coming back. If you're eligible, this would be a good time to explore what they have to offer.

The DAV (www.dav.org) started back in 1920 and now has 1,300 chapters and over 1 million members. Its objective is to help disabled veterans and their families at no cost. In one year alone, the DAV provided nearly a quarter of a million rides to veterans going to doctor appointments. Last year, it helped veterans get over \$24 billion in benefits through assistance with Department of Veterans Affairs claims.

The VFW (www.vfw.org), with some 1.5 million members, was started back in 1899 to ensure that veterans got their rights and benefits. Eligibility

includes either active duty or prior service with Honorable or General (Under Honorable Conditions) discharge with service on foreign soil or in a hostile area. Like the DAV, the VFW can help with filing a VA claim. If you've gone back to school, the VFW might be able to help with scholarships. If you're in a jam (food, rent, electric bill, for example), small cash grants (not loans) are available for members.

The American Legion (www.legion.org) has well over a dozen veterans programs including family and youth, community and national affairs. It was incorporated by Congress in 1919 as an organization devoted to mutual helpfulness with a focus on communities, patriotism and national security. Check the website for specific eligibility periods and posts near you. (There might be more than you think, with 15,000 scattered around the country.) One of the unsung benefits is the alliance between the Legion and USAA. Car insurance, bank account, credit card ... it's worth checking out.

Take a look at what these groups offer — better yet, what you can offer them.

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Inflation

I'm sure most of you have noticed the rising costs of just about everything—gas, groceries, restaurants, coffee, home appliances, electricity, etc. Prices have risen steadily since January and we are all feeling the effects of inflation on our wallets and bank accounts. Gallup reported that 45% of Americans have experienced financial hardship triggered by these increased prices.

In South Dakota, gas prices are currently at \$3.39 per gallon – one year ago a gallon was \$2.10. This is a cost increase many Americans can't avoid even if they wanted to. You can skip the latte at Starbucks, but you can't skimp on gas if you want to drive to work. Americans are also experiencing high prices when buying appliances. In February 2020, to purchase a dishwasher plus tax, delivery, and installation, a consumer would pay \$1,086.28. Compare that price tag to today, for the same dishwasher, a consumer would pay \$1,805.13. That's a 66% increase.

While many experts had been hoping this inflation would be transitory or short-lived, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell admitted on Tuesday it was time to retire that idea. This is bad news – inflation is on track to be 7.4% – the highest rate since February 1982. Unfortunately, three in 10 lower-income households are already saying inflation is impacting their ability to maintain their current standard of living. I grew up in a low-income household, I know firsthand that every dollar counts.

Congress and the White House need to stop spending. Inflation has been exacerbated because of the reckless government spending throughout the year. That's why I consistently opposed the more than \$5 trillion of irresponsible packages advanced by the Biden Administration in a single year. It's unacceptable the Biden Administration is spending our country deeper into debt, expanding the role of government, and making it harder for families to pay their bills.

I remain committed in Congress to supporting policies that will lower spending and ease the burden of inflation on everyday Americans.

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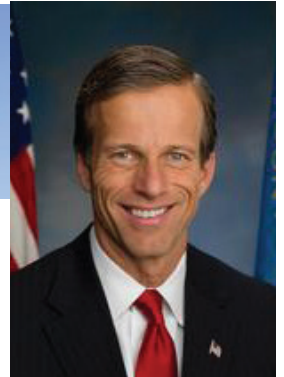
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John Thune
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Lower Prices Are at the Top of South Dakotans' Holiday Wish-List

If you think you're seeing the cost of everyday items skyrocket right before your eyes, you're not imagining it. Prices across the United States have been steadily rising, and South Dakotans are paying more for food, utilities, and gas than they've had to in recent years. In fact, as a result of the policies that have been enacted this year, the country is facing the highest levels of inflation its seen in more than 30 years. We are coming off the most expensive Thanksgiving in history, and as we quickly approach Christmas, this holiday season is going force families to dig even deeper into their pocketbooks.

On average, inflation is costing a typical household \$175 every single month. Utilities in South Dakota, including home heating costs, are projected to increase by up to 100 percent, consumer prices have hit a 30-year high, and the cost of beef is up 20 percent this year alone. It doesn't end there. Folks are also being hit at the pump with seven-year-high gas prices. This is a serious problem for working Americans – or any American who relies on automobile transportation. And if you're living paycheck to paycheck, these price increases may mean the difference between putting food on the table or paying an electricity bill. For coastal elites, \$175 per month might not seem like a lot of money, but I'd encourage them to visit small-town South Dakota where the value of a dollar truly means something.

At its most basic level, inflation is created when there are too many dollars chasing too few of goods in the economy. Democrats helped trigger this ongoing inflation problem earlier this year when they decided to pour trillions of dollars of unnecessary government money into the economy – despite being warned by me and many others that their partisan \$1.9 trillion spending bill would stoke inflation. Now, as inflation is clearly becoming a longer-term problem, Democrats are preparing to double down on the same kind of irresponsible government expansion with a partisan, multi-trillion-dollar tax-and-spending bill.

If you think inflation is bad now, the massive government spending the Democrats' bill would authorize would all but guarantee a more persistent and widespread inflation problem. What's just as concerning to me is that Democrats are actively trying to fool the American people by saying that their bill costs zero dollars. South Dakotans are smarter than that, and all of the various budget gimmicks Democrats are trying to use to disguise the true cost of their bill won't fool them. This is not rocket science. Flooding the economy with more government dollars will not solve America's inflation problem. It will make it worse.

As the holiday season gets fully underway, South Dakotans are increasingly worried about how these price increases are going to impact them. Everything from feeding their family to heating their home to making sure their son or daughter gets his or her desired toy for Christmas. The reality is, even if products are available on store shelves, they will likely cost more as a result of inflation. Unfortunately, it is not going away anytime soon, and if Democrats pass their reckless tax-and-spending spree, they'll be doubling down on these failed policies. I will continue to fight on behalf of all South Dakotans to stop this misguided, irresponsible, and partisan tax-and-spending spree from becoming law.

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Guest Column: Be Kind and Shop Locally

By: Tom Rounds

This guest column is written by Tom Rounds. Tom, along with his wife Shelly, own four businesses in the Pierre community. He is also the brother of Senator Mike Rounds.

With Christmas just weeks away, it's easy to get caught up in the rush of buying gifts. It's easy to be excited about seeing family and friends. And it's easy to forget to be kind to those who are working in the retail, manufacturing or service industries.

As a small business owner, I know firsthand the challenges that come during the holiday season. And this year, our biggest challenge is finding employees. You've undoubtedly noticed the help wanted signs in hundreds of businesses across the state. It's alarming, but what's even more alarming is when the sign says, "Closed today due to staff shortage."

Owning a small business is hard. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 20 percent of businesses fail within the first year. By year five, that number jumped to 50 percent. But every year, thousands of South Dakotans embark on the American dream of owning their own business. And every year, these business owners become the new mentors and new donors for our communities.

We all know shopping locally keeps more money in our economy, supports local jobs and is good for our towns. But let's talk about what else these local businesses do for our communities.

They are the people who serve as the first work mentors for our children. They take a chance on inexperienced teenagers and teach them about responsibility and work ethic. And they give your kids a paycheck so they can begin to learn fiscal responsibility.

Local business owners are the first ones tapped to donate for school functions, sporting events and any other fundraiser you can think of. And most of the time, these businesses give, and they give and they give some more because they know they are supporting their community and their customers.

And then when they aren't being asked to donate, some business owners take it upon themselves to continue to find ways to help. They might donate 10 percent of their profits to a local family or organization. Or in the case of one Pierre eating establishment, they donated a portion of their profits to a competing business who had recently lost everything to a fire. If that's not a sense of community, I don't know what is.

The other day I saw a sign that said, "Be kind to our employees. We are short staffed and they are doing the best they can." Let's face it, the last two years have been tough for local businesses and we need your support now more than ever.

It's easy to get caught up in the convenience of on-line shopping or traveling to a bigger town to get what you need. But before you hit send on that next order - especially with all of your holiday shopping coming up - think about your local businesses and the people they employ, the taxes they pay and the products they offer. And don't forget to be kind.



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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Caught in a Self-Inflicted Energy Crisis

The United States faces a federal-government-created energy crisis, and South Dakota is caught in the middle of it. Gas prices continue to rise, driving up the cost of shipping and making it more expensive to visit loved ones over the holidays. As we enter the winter season, Americans are outraged by the rising cost to heat their homes.

It is no secret that the regressive policies coming out of Washington, D.C. have led to this energy crisis. The President's agenda has hurt the energy industry and damaged other vital industries as well.

President Teddy Roosevelt once said, "Conservation is as much about development as it is protection. I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

Instead of a balanced approach to development and protection consistent with Teddy's comments, the current president sides against energy production every time.

First, President Biden canceled the Keystone XL Pipeline. He then doubled down by failing to support other pipelines, like Willow and Line 5.

To be clear, President Biden does not oppose all pipelines — just American pipelines that create American jobs and support our position as the number one global energy producer.

For instance, he gave his full backing to Russia's Nord Stream gas pipeline. He also begged OPEC to produce more oil. Yet, he limited American producers as they sought to increase activity. Making things worse, the President then sold off 50 million barrels of oil from our Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which had no effect on prices and only weakened our strategic reserves for a self-inflicted crisis.

Other energy-slashing policies include new regulations on methane emissions at oil and gas wells; attempting to ban new oil and gas development on federal lands and in federal waters; proposing to increase royalty rates and bonding requirements on federal oil and gas leases; and reducing access to credit for fossil fuel projects.

Add record surges in inflation fueled by out-of-control spending from Washington, D.C. and the country finds itself stuck in a mega-crisis that continues to drive up the price Americans pay at the gas pump.

Of course, just as these federal policies hurt South Dakotans, they help foreign companies and countries.

In South Dakota, at the state level, we do things differently. Unlike the White House, here in South Dakota we do not demonize the energy industry.

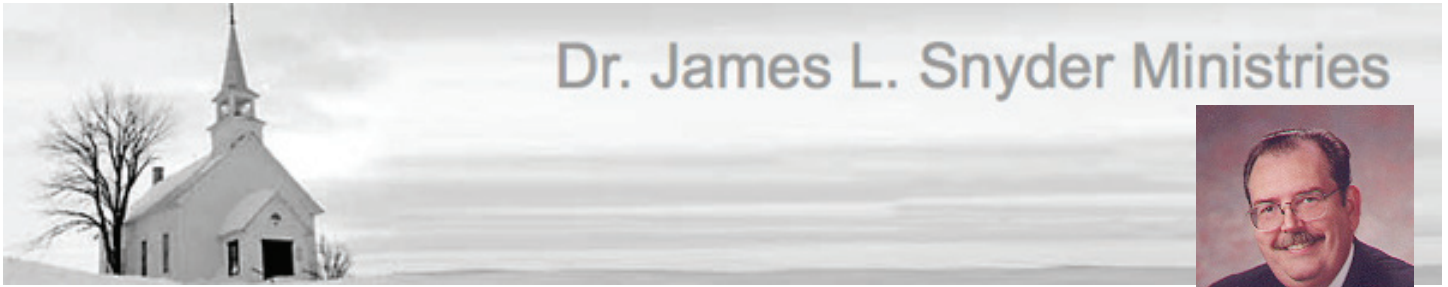
We recognize our diverse energy resources and make full use of them. For example, most of the state's electricity supply is generated by renewables. South Dakota did not issue any government dictates to accomplish that.

We also recognize that our citizens rely on fossil fuels to heat their homes, to travel to work, and to grow crops from-seed-to-sale at the market.

That is why I have fought the Biden Administration's attack on our energy sector and will continue to fight for South Dakota. I will fight for your jobs, fight to grow our industries, and fight for responsible management of our natural resources.

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Hey, This Is My Story!



I am just now concluding that narcissism is a virus that has infected everybody in the world that is breathing air. I even apply this to my own life with a great deal of regret.

Nobody wants to admit they have narcissistic leanings in their life. And yet, if you listen to them, and even listen to yourself, you will see it. I did not know how aggravating it was, but I was to learn pretty soon.

Recently I had a heart attack and had a stent put in one of my arteries, the widow make her. It was this experience that showed me the level of narcissism in my own life.

When anybody would call me and ask how I was, I would mention that I recently had a heart attack and had a stent inserted in one of my arteries. Before I can even get to the end of that sentence, the person on the other end of the line will say, "Oh, a couple of years ago, I had a heart attack and had two stents put in." And then they would go on and on and on about their condition and experience.

When I thought we had come to the end of that conversation, they then mentioned, "And I have a cousin who had a heart attack and had several stents put in him I can't remember how many." Then, we're all down another rabbit trail. I sure would like to catch that rabbit.

Coming to the end of this conversation, I said, "Well, I hope you're doing well." To which I got the reply, "Thank You, I appreciate that."

Hanging up the phone, I thought a bit that the person on the other end of the phone did not allow me to tell my story.

For me, this heart attack was quite an experience that I never expected to experience. I know my father had several heart attacks, but I never assumed he had willed it to me. It's during these times that you think seriously about dying.

I have been tempted to spread the rumor that I won the million-dollar lottery for the week. Once that got out, I would get all kinds of calls to hear my million dollars' story. But, of course, I know that they would want to be put on my Christmas list.

The discouraging point is nobody wanted to know the story of my heart attack. My heart attack was an opportunity for them to brag, or so it seemed, about their heart attack or their uncle's heart attack or somebody else's.

After going through a heart attack why do I want to hear about someone else's heart attack and how they got through it.

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Of course, that is my narcissism coming to the surface. I want everything to be about me and center on my life. I'm not sure what to do or how to deal with this narcissistic virus that seems to be penetrating my life.

I don't think I will bring this up with my doctor the next time I visit him. I suspect he would send me to his psychology friend, and I certainly don't want that kind of examination. I don't think I could pass.

The one thing I have learned about this narcissistic virus is that there comes a point where it explodes. I didn't know that before, but I found out just recently.

Another friend called and asked about me, and I said I just had a heart attack and had a stent implanted in my artery. Again, before I could get to the end of that sentence, they began explaining how they also had a heart attack several years ago, and they had four stents put in. Then they went on and on about their heart attack and how it changed their life, and what they did to keep from having another one.

I don't know what triggered my explosion, but all of a sudden, I heard myself saying, "Hey, stop right there. This is my heart attack, not yours. This is my story, not yours."

Then without hesitating, I went into my story in every detail I could think of at the time. I only wished I had recorded it so I could know what I actually said.

Just before I hung up, the person on the other end said, "Well, I'll be praying for you, and I hope you get better." Then there was that infamous "click." And the conversation was over.

I hung up the phone and turned around only to see the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage staring at me with one of her "stares," and I heard her say, "What in the world did you just say?"

At that moment, I knew I was in for some trouble, so I said, "I'm not sure; what did I say?"

I knew she would tell me what I said, so I didn't need a recording of it. But I kind of lost control because of that narcissistic virus that has infected me.

A verse of Scripture came to my mind at this time. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

Probably the hardest thing in this verse is when Jesus says "Let him deny himself." My narcissistic virus fights against that all the time.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: How are bird populations faring in the U.S. and around the world? What are some ways to help them?
-- Mark Johnson, Butte, MT

Not surprisingly, given the myriad environmental threats they are facing, bird numbers continue to decline rapidly today across North America and beyond. Researchers at Cornell's Lab of Ornithology and Canada's National Wildlife Research Centre found in a 2019 analysis that wild bird populations in the continental U.S. and Canada have declined by 29 percent—or a total net loss of around three billion birds—since 1970. Their landmark study is the first ever to perform a comprehensive assessment of wild bird net population changes across the continent.

The study found that population decline was not limited to a few species but a wide range of species across every biome (a large naturally occurring community of flora and fauna occupying a major habitat). Population loss in each biome ranged from Grassland bird populations suffering the greatest loss at 53 percent to eastern forest birds with the lowest loss at 17 percent. Researchers also found that common birds from just 12 families, such as blackbirds, sparrows and finches, account for over 90 percent—or over 2.5 billion birds—of total population decline. Experts believe that habitat loss due to agricultural development and intensification is most likely the driving factor.

Amid this concerning data, hope remains for the birds of our world. Over the past few years, organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, the National Audubon Society, and the California Waterfowl Association have collaborated to conserve waterfowl habitat (though critics point out that in some cases it is motivated by the self-fulfilling desire to provide more targets for their hunter members). Under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, these organizations have raised billions of dollars in funds to restore and preserve waterfowl habitat, especially wetlands.

Readers can also help protect birds by taking a few simple actions. An easy one is to install window screens or eliminate window reflections with film or paint. (A 2014 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Smithsonian study found that between 365 million and one billion birds die each year across the U.S. as a result of window strikes.) If you're a cat owner, another way to cut down on bird kills is to keep Fluffy from roaming freely outside. The U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative estimates that our pet felines kill some 2.6 billion birds annually in the U.S. alone.

Yet another way to help our avian friends is to provide shelter and nesting areas in your backyard. Planting native plants (instead of grass) will give both local and migratory birds a reason to hang out. Likewise, avoid synthetic pesticides and fertilizers on your land: They not only indirectly harm birds and the insects they like to eat, but can also poison wildlife directly. Shopping organic at the grocery store is another way to reduce the overall load of pesticides and synthetic fertilizer that birds encounter.

One additional way to be part of the solution is to join the Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, whether you're a beginner birder or expert. From December 14 through January 5, the initiative promotes counting instead of hunting birds, a fun and simple way to get outdoors while also helping to protect your favorite backyard birds. Audubon has been running the count for 122 years, and collates the data collected by its "citizen scientists" into an annual report on the state of the birds across the U.S.



Blackbirds are among the avian species experiencing the greatest amount of population loss across North America as their preferred wetland habitat dries up and is filled in and paved over. Credit:

Skyler Ewing, Pexels.

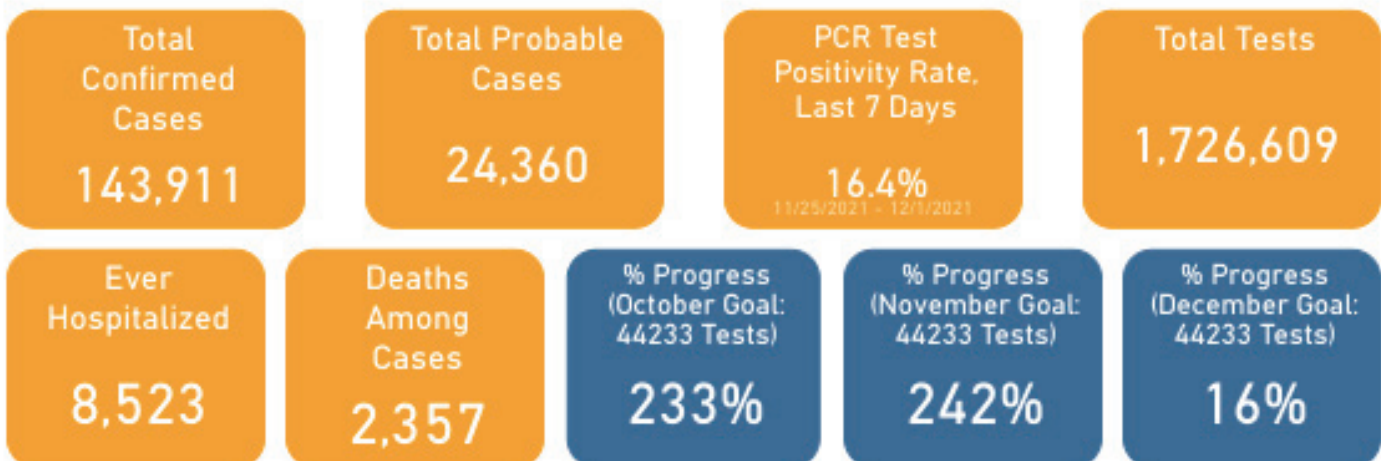
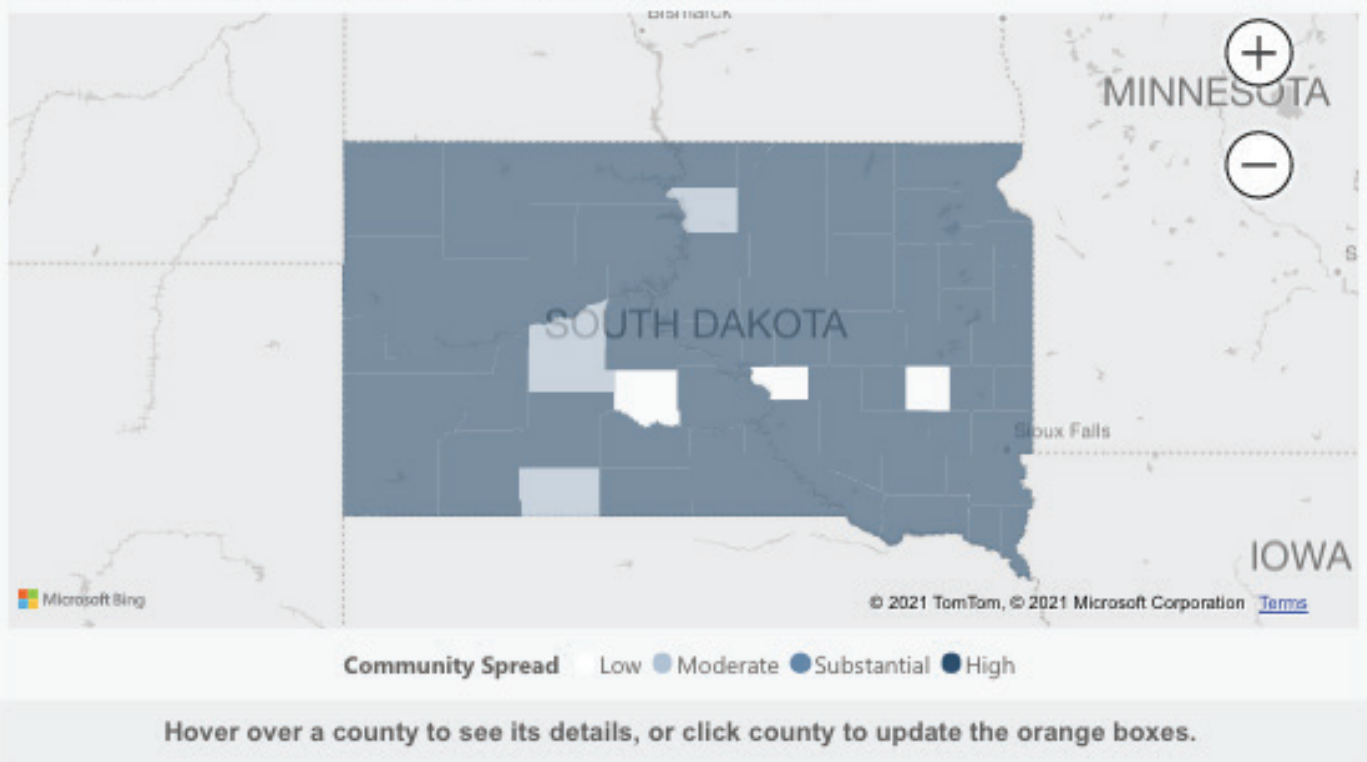
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South Dakota COVID-19 Report



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



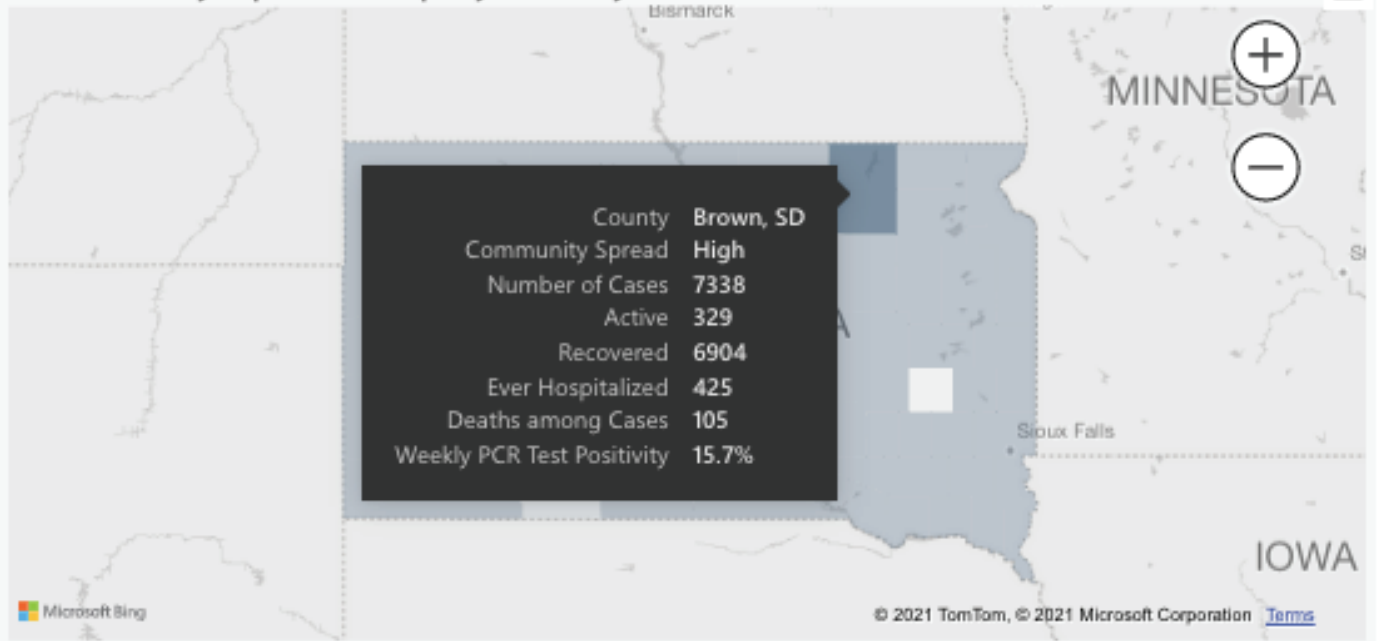
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Brown County COVID-19 Report

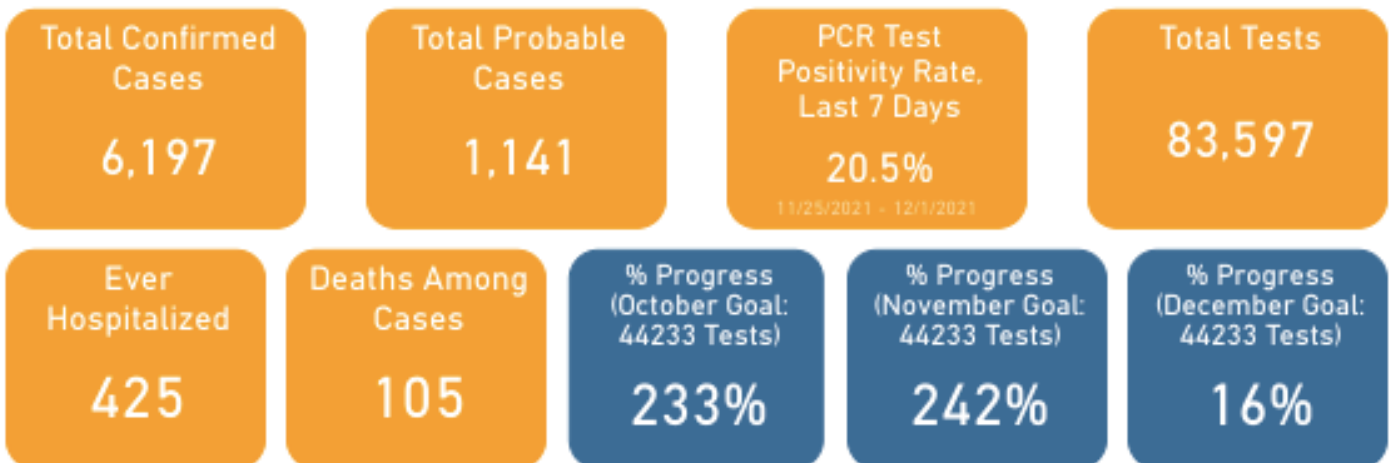


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread Low Moderate Substantial High

Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



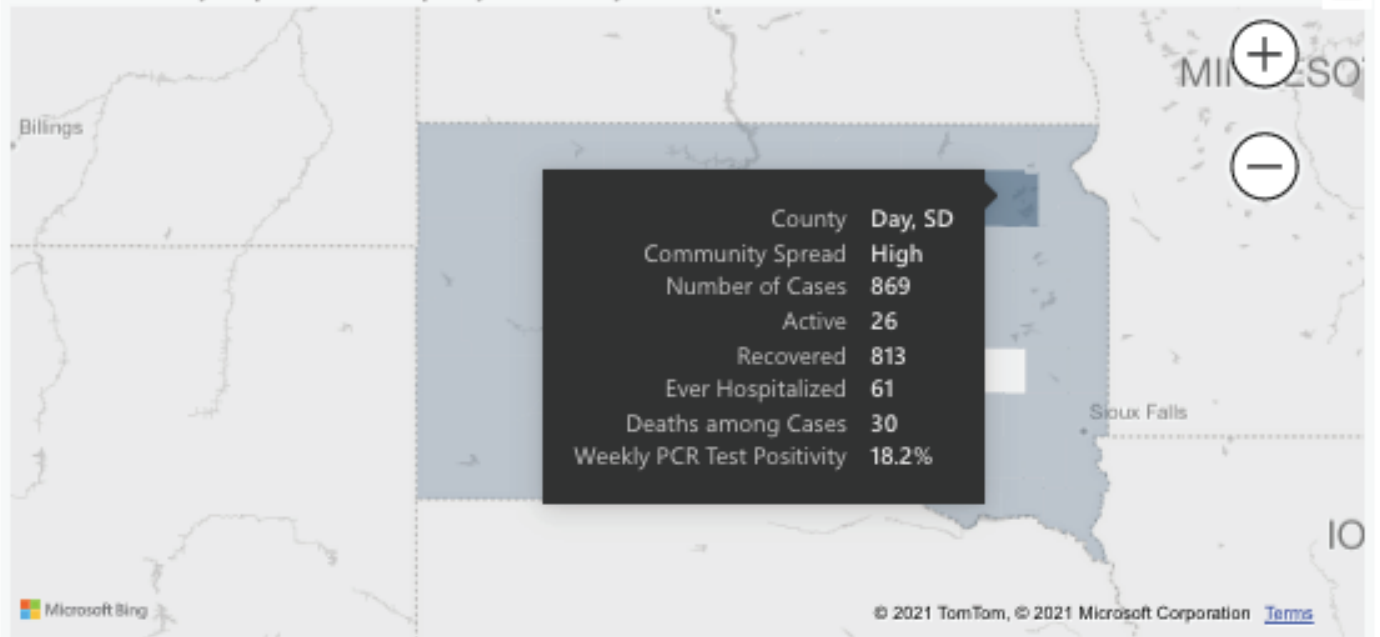
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Day County COVID-19 Report

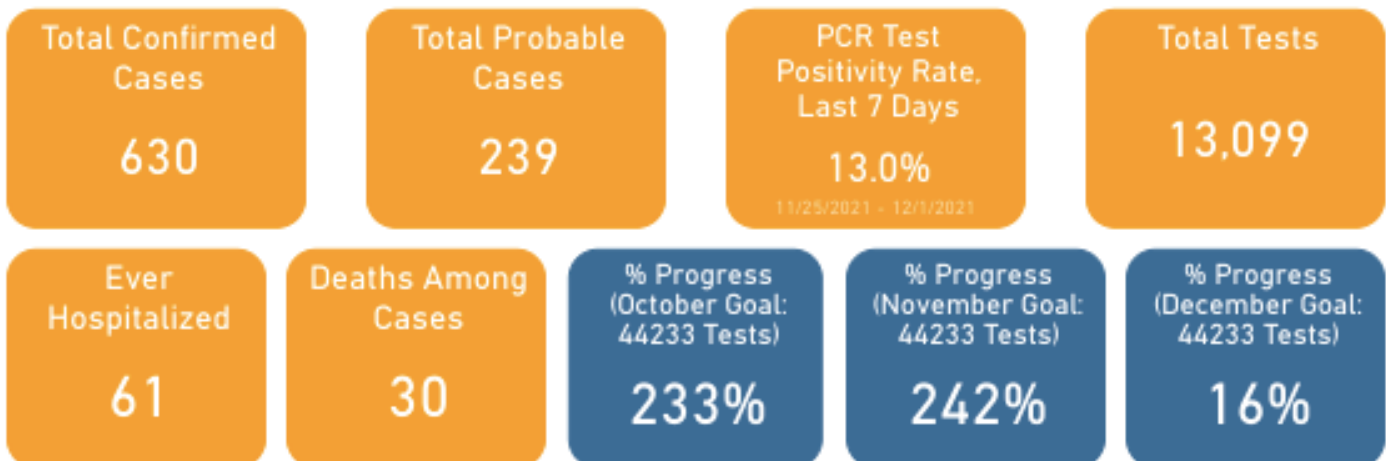


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread: Low Moderate Substantial High

Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Currently Hospitalized	+16	247
Deaths Among Cases	+37	2357
Active Cases		7572
Ever Hospitalized		8523
Recovered Cases		158342
Total Cases		168271

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	88010	1087
Male	80261	1270

VARIANT CASES OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Variant	# of Cases
Delta (B.1.617.2, AY.1-AY.25)	1084
Alpha (B.1.1.7)	176
Gamma (P.1)	3
Beta (B.1.351)	2

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	9843	0
10-19 years	20558	0
20-29 years	28670	11
30-39 years	28021	34
40-49 years	23520	59
50-59 years	22419	162
60-69 years	18782	348
70-79 years	9861	548
80+ years	6597	1195

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian / Pacific Islander	2199	1%
Black	3971	2%
Hispanic	6842	4%
Native American	20053	12%
Other	1741	1%
Unknown	4860	3%
White	128605	76%

Groton Area School District
 Active COVID-19 Cases
 Updated December 3, 2021; 9:34 AM

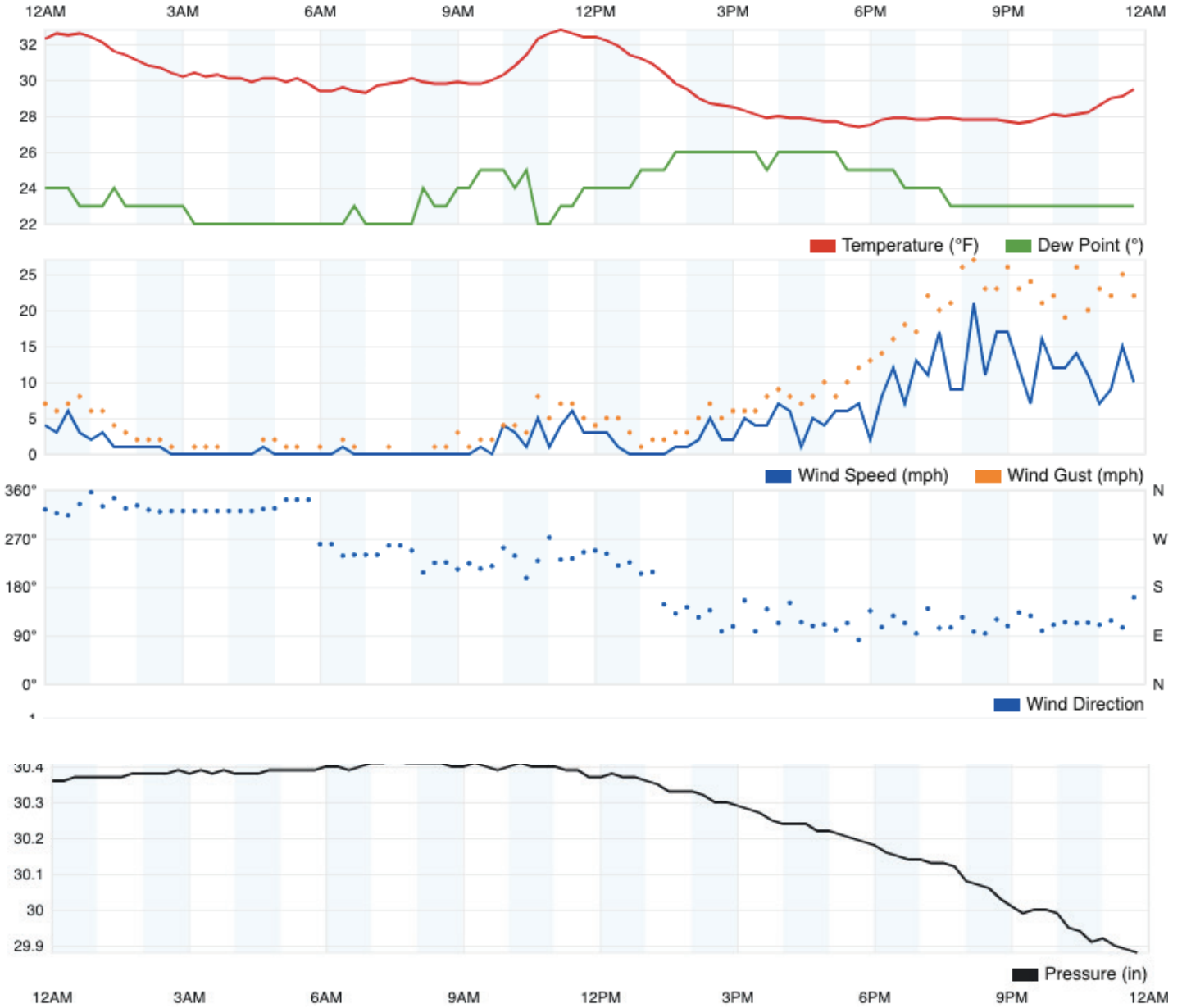
Increase of 4 from last week

J	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	1	1	S	T
K	G										0	1	2	t	o
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0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	5

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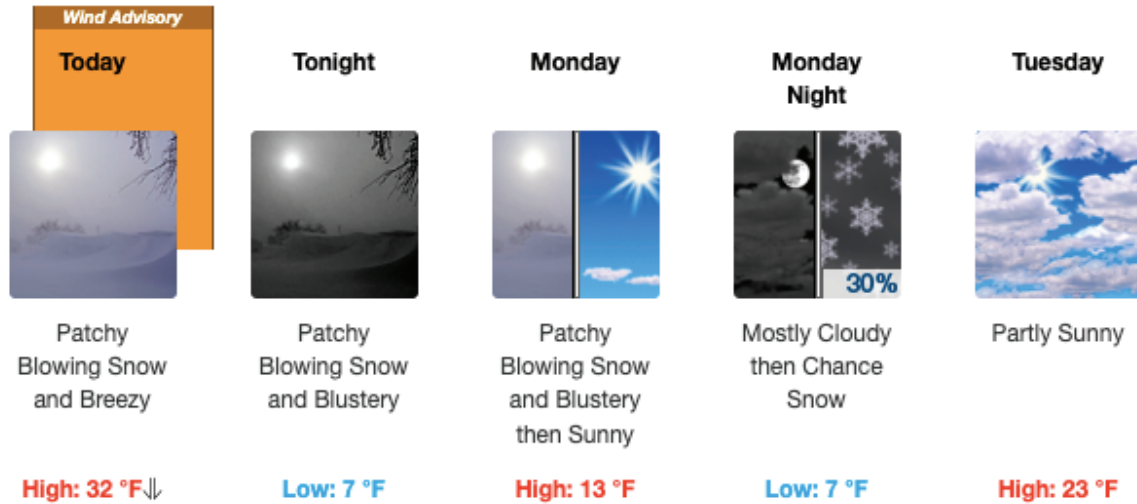
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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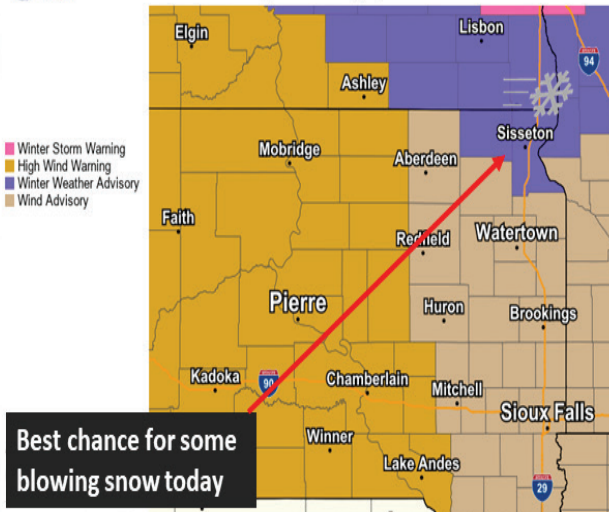
Strong Winds Today

Light Snow / Blowing Snow Possible

National Weather Service Graphic Created
Aberdeen, SD 12/5/2021 4:49 AM

Current Hazards for Today & Evening

Current Watches, Warnings, and Advisories



Maximum Wind Gusts Today - Tonight

	12/5 Sun						12/6 Mon		Maximum	
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am		6am
Aberdeen	26	38	41	40	38	35	33	31	28	41
Britton	28	32	39	40	37	32	29	23	24	40
Eagle Butte	37	51	54	51	41	41	33	32	29	54
Eureka	33	47	51	45	38	38	36	31	29	51
Gettysburg	30	41	45	40	37	37	33	31	29	45
Kennebec	24	44	51	51	41	38	36	31	25	51
McIntosh	44	54	58	52	45	44	36	33	28	58
Milbank	21	35	40	40	40	40	36	33	32	40
Miller	28	44	47	45	38	37	33	31	29	47
Mobridge	31	44	47	41	37	37	33	31	24	47
Murdo	33	47	52	54	44	41	36	32	25	54
Pierre	26	41	45	45	37	38	32	29	23	45
Redfield	23	40	44	41	38	37	32	31	29	44
Sisseton	28	38	44	44	45	40	37	36	32	45
Watertown	20	37	44	41	38	38	36	32	29	44
Wheaton	25	30	35	33	40	43	38	31	26	43

*Table values in mph
**Created: 4 am CST Sun 12/5/2021
***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

What

Generally light snow of 1" or less (locally higher of 1 to 2" over far ne SD & w central MN). Breezy winds becoming strong this afternoon. Strongest gusts up to 45 to 60 mph.

When

Snow: Best this afternoon over far ne SD & w central MN.
Wind: Mid morning & afternoon central SD, Late morning through evening ne SD & w central MN.

Impacts

Slick roadways are possible due to snow. Strong winds may impact high-profile vehicles, and reduce visibilities in areas that received sufficient snowfall.

Strong winds with gusts of 45 to 60 mph can be expected today into this evening. The winds, along with additional light snow of an inch or less, could cause travel issues, especially in northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. Much colder air will move into the area behind this storm system, with highs on Monday in the teens and low 20s.

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Today in Weather History

December 5, 1960: A storm dropped snow on the entire region from the morning of the 4th to the late afternoon of the 5th, with the highest amounts in the western, central and north central parts of South Dakota. Five to 10 inches of snow fell in these areas. The snow, blown by winds of 30 to 40 mph, caused extensive drifting of streets and highways. A brief period of freezing rain preceded the snow and added to hazardous driving conditions on roads. Schools were closed for one to two days, with 27 towns reporting closed schools in the Aberdeen area alone. Telephone and power disruption was widespread in central and north central counties of the state, as poles and wires were broken by a combination of ice, snow, and the wind. The storm produced mostly rain in the extreme eastern counties of South Dakota into west central Minnesota, with a narrow band of freezing rain preceding light snow immediately to the west. No serious automobile accidents or property damage was reported in this area of freezing rain and light snow.

December 5, 1976: Cold Canadian air moved across South Dakota during the day on Sunday, December 5th. High winds gusted to 63 mph at Philip and 55 mph at Rapid City. One to two inches of snow fell over all of South Dakota; however, many counties in the southeast, south central, and east-central parts of the state received amounts varying from three to five inches. After this storm, nighttime temperatures fell to below zero. Snowfall amounts included 2 inches at Pierre, Aberdeen, and Watertown; and 3 inches at Redfield and Clear Lake.

December 5, 1886: A southern storm dumped heavy snow up into far southwest Virginia. The storm dumped 11 inches in Montgomery Alabama and 22.5 inches in Knoxville, TN. It also dropped 25 inches in Rome, Georgia, and 26 inches in Ashville, North Carolina.

1941 - The temperature at Enosburg Falls soared to 72 degrees to establish a state record for Vermont for the month of December. (The Weather Channel)

December 5, 1953: A tornado outbreak occurred over northeastern Louisiana, southeastern Arkansas, and western Mississippi on this day. At least four confirmed tornadoes touched down. The strongest tornado was rated F5 as it destroyed the town of Vicksburg, Mississippi. This tornado first touched down just west of the Mississippi River in East Madison Parish in Louisiana. The tornado crossed the Mississippi River and tore through the downtown area of Vicksburg. On the ground for seven miles, this tornado caused 38 deaths, 270 injuries, and cost an estimated \$25 million in damages in 1953. Estimated cost adjusted for inflation in 2013 Dollars would be over \$200 million. The NWS Office in Jackson, Mississippi has an interactive track map of this event which includes photos and personal accounts.

1987 - Heavy snow blanketed parts of the north central U.S., and freezing drizzle produced a coat of ice up to half an inch thick in northwestern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota. Snowfall totals ranged up to seven inches at Grand Rapids MN, and 12 inches at Seney MI. High winds in the north central U.S. gusted to 63 mph at Pellston MI, and reached 70 mph at Makinaw Bridge MI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - There was only a "flurry" of activity, as for much of the nation winter remained on hold. The cold and snow of winter was primarily confined to the northeastern U.S. Five cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Norfolk NE with a reading of 65 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A warm Pacific storm system brought high winds and heavy rain to western Washington and western Oregon. Up to ten inches of rain deluged the western slopes of the Cascade Mountain Range in Washington State over a three day period, and 500 persons had to be evacuated due to flooding along the Skagit River. Up to five inches of rain drenched northwest Oregon, and winds gusted to 71 mph at Netarts. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A major winter storm impacted parts of the Mid-Atlantic and northeastern United States during the 5th-7th. Snowfall accumulations of one to two feet were common across areas of Pennsylvania northward into New England. Boston, MA received 16.2 inches while Providence, RI had the greatest single snowstorm on record with 17 inches, beating the previous record of 12 inches set December 5-6, 1981. Boston's Logan International Airport was closed briefly on the 7th as heavy snowfall made regular airport operations impossible (AFP).

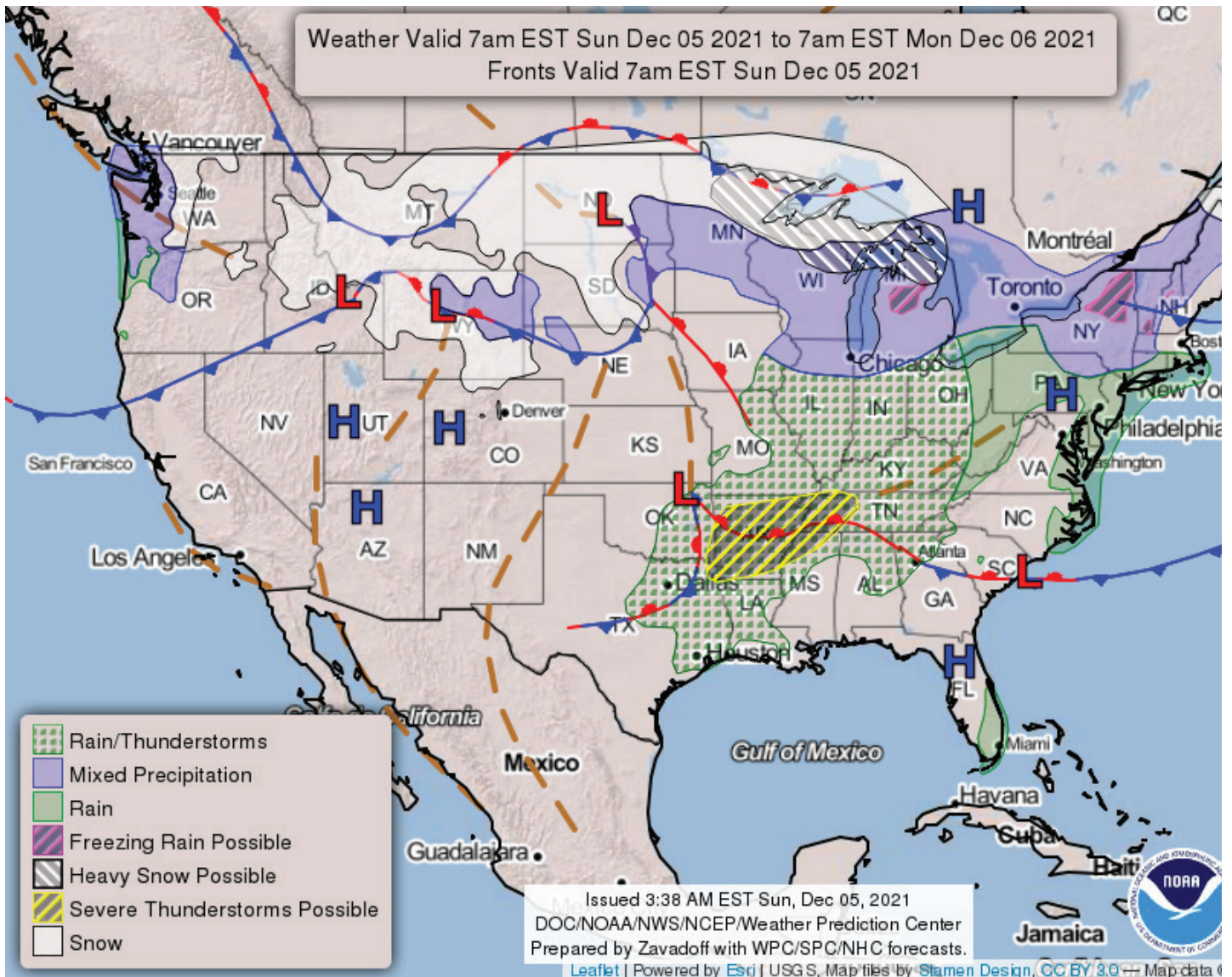
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 32.8 °F at 11:15 AM
Low Temp: 27.4 °F at 5:45 PM
Wind: 27 mph at 8:15 PM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 57° in 1939
Record Low: -25° in 2005
Average High: 33°F
Average Low: 11°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.10
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.06
Average Precip to date: 21.31
Precip Year to Date: 19.92
Sunset Tonight: 4:51:20 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:56:05 AM



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HOW TO GAIN UNDERSTANDING

James the Fifth of Scotland ruled his subjects quite differently than other rulers did. Historians say that he would often lay aside his royal robes, put on the clothes of an ordinary man, work as they worked and live as they lived. His disguise allowed him to move freely among his people without being recognized.

He did this, we are told, to gain an understanding of their needs and problems, sorrows and difficulties. Then, when he returned to his throne, he would have a clearer insight of his subjects and was better able to rule over them with compassion and care.

That is what Jesus, the King of kings, did. He laid aside His glory. Paul writing of this said, "Though he was God, He did not demand and cling to His right as God. He made himself nothing, He took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form!"

It is common for most of us to be selfish and express our pride by "demanding our rights!" We want what we think is "rightfully" ours for any number of reasons. We believe that we have earned something or deserve something and therefore demand something!

But not Jesus. He laid aside every right that was rightfully His in order to serve others. As His followers, we are to live as He lived. We must develop an attitude of love and humility, and willingly and sacrificially, serve others as our Lord did!

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, for becoming like one of us and for going through everything that we go through. Knowing this enables us to know You do care. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 2:5-8 I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

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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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News from the Associated Press

Davis, S. Dakota St. eliminate No. 4 seed Sac State, 24-19

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Isaiah Davis had 19 carries for 108 yards and two touchdowns, Pierre Strong added 73 yards rushing and a score, and South Dakota State beat No. 4 seed Sacramento State 24-19 on Saturday night in the second round of the FCS playoffs.

Un-seeded South Dakota State (10-3), ranked No. 11 in the most recent FCS coaches poll, plays No. 5 seed Villanova in next weekend's quarterfinals.

The Hornets (9-3) had their program-record eight-game win streak snapped.

After Sacramento State (9-3) went three-and-out on the game's opening drive, Chris Oladokun hit Jadon Janke for a 29-yard game on third-and-3 before Strong capped an eight-play, 73-yard drive with a 5-yard touchdown run and the Jackrabbits led the rest of the way.

Cole Frahm kicked a 45-yard field goal to make it 10-0 late in the first quarter and Davis capped a seven-play 88 yard drive with a 7-yard touchdown run about 5 minutes into the second quarter. The Hornets moved to the SDSU 35 before Cade Terveer picked off a pass at the 23 and returned it 4 yards and Davis added a 6-yard scoring run to make it 24-0 with 1:43 to play in the first half.

Kyle Sentkowski sandwiched field goals of 44 — as time in the second quarter expired — and 48 yards early in the fourth around a 3-yard touchdown pass from Jake Dunniway to Pierre Williams. Back-up quarterback Asher O'Hara threw a 1-yard TD pass to Isaiah Gable to cap the scoring with 2:33 to play.

Sacramento State — which did not play the spring season due to the COVID-19 pandemic — made its first FCS playoff appearance in 2019. The Hornets earned first-round byes and lost in the second round each year.

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-football> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25.
Sign up for the AP's college football newsletter: <https://apnews.com/cfbtop25>

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

08-21-23-24-29

(eight, twenty-one, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-nine)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

08-23-26-34-50, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 5

(eight, twenty-three, twenty-six, thirty-four, fifty; Star Ball: seven; ASB: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$4.83 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$122 million

Powerball

10-40-45-56-67, Powerball: 2, Power Play: 2

(ten, forty, forty-five, fifty-six, sixty-seven; Powerball: two; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$278 million

Officer-involved shooting in Sioux Falls deemed justified

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The fatal shooting of a man in Sioux Falls has been deemed to be a justified use of deadly force, according to South Dakota's Division of Criminal Investigation.

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Elwood Dwyer, 52, was shot and killed by police on Oct. 28 after an hour-long standoff following a domestic situation where three people arrived at a hospital with stab wounds

One victim, a 70-year-old man, died of his wounds on Nov. 9.

Police have not identified any of the victims, but said all three were known to Dwyer.

Dwyer's autopsy confirmed he had been shot five times in the chest, right arm and left arm, the Argus Leader reported. Dwyer tested positive for amphetamine, methamphetamine and stimulants.

The Attorney General's Office reported "reasonable officers present at the scene utilized deadly force in a situation that was tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving," in their justification of the deadly shooting.

Avalanche in Austria kills 3 skiers, injures 2

BERLIN (AP) — Three skiers have been killed and two injured in an avalanche in central Austria, authorities said Sunday. The victims included a rising young motorbike racer.

They were part of a group of 11 skiers, eight of whom were hit by a roughly 200-meter (655-foot) wide slab of snow as they ascended a slope during a ski tour on Saturday in the Tweng area, in Salzburg province.

Three of the skiers were buried by the avalanche, while another two were partly buried and able to free themselves, regional police said in a statement. Rescuers were able to locate two of the others with the help of their search devices; one was already dead and the other later died at a hospital in Klagenfurt.

The third buried skier wasn't carrying a search device. His body was located about four hours after the avalanche and recovered.

The victims were Austrian men, two of them aged 19 and the other 24. The two injured skiers were taken to a local hospital.

The KTM team said that 19-year-old Rene Hofer, a junior motocross world and European champion, was among the dead, the Austria Press Agency reported.

Smoldering debris, mud hinder Indonesia volcano rescue

By NINIEK KARMINI and AGOES BASOEKI Associated Press

LUMAJANG, Indonesia (AP) — Rescuers were sifting through smoldering debris and thick mud in search of survivors a day after the highest volcano on Java island erupted with fury, killing at least 14 people with searing gas and ash.

Mount Semeru in Lumajang district in East Java province spewed thick columns of ash more than 12,000 meters (40,000 feet) into the sky in a sudden eruption Saturday triggered by heavy rains. Villages and nearby towns were blanketed and several hamlets buried under tons of mud from volcanic debris.

Flows of hot gas and lava traveled up to 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) to a nearby river at least twice on Saturday and three times on Sunday with a smaller distance of up to 2 kilometers (1 1/2 miles), according to Indonesia's Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation Agency.

Authorities warned the thousands of people who fled the volcano's wrath not to return during Sunday's lull in activity. But some were desperate to check on livestock and possessions left behind. In several areas, everything — from the thinnest tree branch to couches and chairs inside homes — was caked with ash.

"There's no life there ... trees, farms, houses are scorched, everything is covered in heavy gray ash," said Haryadi Purnomo of East Java's search and rescue agency. He said that several other areas were virtually untouched.

Search and rescue efforts were temporary suspended on Sunday afternoon because of fears that hot ash and debris could tumble down from the crater due to heavy rains. On Saturday, a torrent of mud destroyed the main bridge connecting Lumajang and the neighboring district of Malang, as well as a smaller bridge, said Thoriqul Haq, the district chief in Lumajang.

The eruption eased pressure that had been building under a lava dome perched on the crater. But experts warned that the dome could still further collapse, causing an avalanche of the blistering gas and debris trapped beneath it.

A thunderstorm and days of rain, which eroded and partly collapsed the dome atop the 3,676-meter

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(12,060-foot) Semeru, triggered the eruption, said Eko Budi Lelono, who heads the geological survey center. Semeru, the stratovolcano in shape of a cone, is also known as Mahameru, meaning "The Great Mountain" in Sanskrit. It has erupted many times over the last 200 years. Still, as with other volcanoes — it is one of 129 under watch in Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago — more than 62,000 people call Sumeru's fertile slopes home. It last erupted in January, with no casualties.

Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 270 million people, is prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity because it sits along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," a horseshoe-shaped series of fault lines. Currently 54% of the country's population live on Java, the country's most densely populated area.

Officials said earlier they had hoped they could avoid casualties by closely monitoring the volcano.

National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said 56 people had been hospitalized, mostly with burns injuries. He said rescuers were still searching for nine residents of Curah Kobokan village.

More than 900 villagers streamed into makeshift emergency shelters after Saturday's powerful eruption, but many others defied official warnings and chose to remain in their homes, saying they had to tend to their livestock and protect their property, said Purnomo.

"We'll do everything we can to evacuate them by preparing trucks and motorbikes for them to flee at any time," he said.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo said he instructed his Cabinet ministers and disaster and military officials to coordinate the response.

Karmini reported from Jakarta, Indonesia.

Both sides planning for new state-by-state abortion fight

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Supreme Court weighs the future of the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, a resurgent anti-abortion movement is looking to press its advantage in state-by-state battles while abortion-rights supporters prepare to play defense.

Both sides seem to be operating on the assumption that a court reshaped by former President Donald Trump will either overturn or seriously weaken Roe.

"We have a storm to weather," said Elizabeth Nash, state policy analyst for the Guttmacher Institute, a research organization that supports abortion rights. "We have to weather the storm so that in the future — five, 10, 15 years from now — we're talking about how we managed to repeal all these abortion bans."

The institute estimates that as many as 26 states would institute some sort of abortion-access restrictions within a year, if permitted by the court. At least 12 states have "trigger bans" on the books, with restrictions that would kick in automatically if the justices overturn or weaken federal protections on abortion access.

The current case before the court, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, concerns a Mississippi law that bans abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Roe v. Wade, which was reaffirmed in a subsequent 1992 ruling in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, allows states to regulate but not ban abortion up until the point of fetal viability, at roughly 24 weeks.

The fate of the Mississippi case won't be known for months, but based on opening arguments, Roe appears to be in peril. All six of the court's conservative justices, including Trump appointees Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barret, indicated they would uphold the Mississippi law.

"There's no doubt that what we heard from the Supreme Court was incredibly disturbing," said Ianthe Metzger, director of state media campaigns for the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, one of the most prominent advocates of abortion access rights. "It wasn't really surprising but it was alarming."

Susan Arnall, director of outreach for the anti-abortion Right to Life League, said she was particularly encouraged by Justice Samuel Alito's emphasis on the concept of "viability" for the fetus as a guiding principle on when to ban the termination of a pregnancy. She predicts that modern advancements in medicine will continue to shrink the window in which a fetus is not viable, opening the door to a host of medically intricate state-level debates.

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"Viability is something that is subject to medical science," Arnall said. "It's going to get intensely legal and intensely medical. It's going to be a battle of lawyers and doctors."

Both sides seem to have been preparing for this moment for years, particularly with Trump having installed more than 200 federal judges and three Supreme Court justices during his presidency. Pro-abortion-access groups donated \$8 million in 2018 and more than \$10 million in 2020, according to Open Secrets, a nonpartisan group that tracks political spending.

Those numbers outpace the public contributions of anti-abortion groups, which donated \$2.6 million in 2018 and \$6.3 million in 2020, according to Open Secrets. But the complexity of the network of nonprofits and "dark money" funds makes it difficult to produce a full accounting of the money flows.

While Washington is the primary current battleground, many leaders of the conservative movement are treating the judicial battle as won and Roe's demise as an inevitability. The next battleground will be a shifting cat-and-mouse fight in state legislatures and in next year's elections across the country.

"People are realizing that seven months from now, we'll probably be dealing with this on a state level," said Brian Burch, president of CatholicVote. "This will become much more prominent in state electoral races, especially governor's races."

Legislatures in many Republican-led states are poised for action depending on the Supreme Court's ruling. On Wednesday, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals vacated previous rulings that had blocked a Tennessee law that included banning abortions once a fetal heartbeat is detected — about six weeks — and ordered a rehearing by the full court.

"The battle has been happening in the statehouses for decades and it's going to intensify," Nash said.

The Supreme Court's ruling is expected around June, almost guaranteeing that the issue will dominate next fall's congressional elections as well as state-level races from coast to coast.

"That's perfect timing, just ahead of the midterms," said Arnall of the Right to Life League.

The ruling could set off a flurry of activity concerning medicinal abortions — a medical option that didn't exist when Roe became law. "Day after" pills were approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2000, with restrictions that included requiring an in-person clinic visit before someone could be prescribed the two-pill regimen and a ban on sending them through the mail.

Those restrictions were relaxed during the coronavirus pandemic. Women seeking the pills can now receive them in the mail after a long-distance consultation with a doctor and they don't need to visit a clinic. The FDA is scheduled to review that stance soon but either way, those policies are expected to come under immediate attack by Republican-held statehouses.

"Medicinal abortions will be very high on the agenda." Nash said. "This is the new frontier."

Texas, which has enacted a law effectively banning most surgical abortions after six weeks, has a new restriction that makes it a felony to provide the medical abortion pills after seven weeks of pregnancy and criminalizes sending the medication through the mail.

"A coordinated disinformation campaign by anti-choice, anti-freedom politicians and activists has again allowed Texas to push care out of reach — particularly for those already marginalized by our health care system," NARAL Pro Choice President Mimi Timmaraju said in a statement. "There is no end to the cruel measures anti-choice extremists will push in their quest for power and control."

Despite the historic setbacks, proponents of abortion access claim they are prepared for the state-by-state fight and are devising multiple ways to help women seeking abortions travel to states where they can receive them. Metzger, of Planned Parenthood, predicted that the renewed threat will spark a massive wave of public support for abortion rights.

"There's no doubt that (abortion opponents) have been playing a 40-year game," Metzger said. "For us, it's just continuing to sound the alarm. People are seeing that the threat is very real. This is not a rhetorical argument anymore."

Shipwreck of civilization: Pope comforts migrants on Lesbos

By NICOLE WINFIELD, TRISHA THOMAS and DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

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LESBOS, Greece (AP) — Pope Francis returned Sunday to the Greek island of Lesbos to offer comfort to migrants at a refugee camp and blast what he said was the indifference and self-interest shown by Europe “that condemns to death those on the fringes.”

“Please, let us stop this shipwreck of civilization!” Francis said at the Mavrovouni camp, a cluster of white U.N. containers on the edge of the sea lined by barbed wire fencing and draped with laundry hanging from lines.

Arriving at the camp, a maskless Francis took his time walking along the barricades, patting children and babies on the head and posing for selfies. He gave a “thumbs up” after he was serenaded by African women singing a song of welcome.

It was Francis’ second trip to Lesbos in five years and he lamented that little had changed since 2016, when Lesbos was at the heart of a massive wave of migration to Europe and Francis brought 12 Syrian Muslim refugees home with him aboard the papal plane.

That concrete gesture of solidarity had raised hopes among the current residents of the Lesbos camp, many of whom have given birth to children here while waiting for their asylum claims to be processed and saw in Francis’ visit a chance at finally getting out.

“It is a grace for us that the pope is coming here. We have a lot of problems here as refugees, a lot of suffering,” said Enice Kiaku from Congo, whose 2-year-old son on her lap was born on Lesbos. But like little Guilain, she has no identity documents and is stuck.

“The arrival of the pope here makes us feel blessed because we hope the pope will take us with him because here we suffer,” Kiaku said as she waited in a tent for the pope to arrive.

But no papal transfers were announced this time around, though during the first leg of Francis’ trip in Cyprus, the Vatican announced that 12 migrants who had crossed over from the breakaway Turkish Cypriot north would be relocated to Italy in the coming weeks. Cypriot officials said a total of 50 would eventually be sent.

Francis’ five-day trip to Cyprus and Greece has been dominated by the migrant issue and Francis’ call for European countries to stop building walls, stoking fears and shutting out “those in greater need who knock at our door.”

“I ask every man and woman, all of us, to overcome the paralysis of fear, the indifference that kills, the cynical disregard that nonchalantly condemns to death those on the fringes!” he said. “Let us stop ignoring reality, stop constantly shifting responsibility, stop passing off the issue of migration to others, as if it mattered to no one and was only a pointless burden to be shouldered by somebody else!”

He denounced that the Mediterranean Sea, “the cradle of so many civilizations,” had become a vast cemetery where smuggling boats packed with desperate people sink. “Let us not let our sea (mare nostrum) be transformed into a desolate sea of death (mare mortuum),” he said.

Sitting before him in a tent at the water’s edge was Greek President Katerina Sakellaropoulou, EU Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas and would-be refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq and Congo, among other countries.

Addressing the pope, Sakellaropoulou strongly defended Greece’s response to the needs of migrants and thanked Francis for showing his support with his presence.

“It is the strong message of hope and responsibility that is conveyed from Lesbos to the international community,” she said.

The camp, where tents were only recently replaced with containers, is actually a temporary holding center pending the construction on the island of a “closed controlled facility,” essentially a detention camp. These new camps, which are funded by the European Union, are already running on three other Greek islands, Samos, Leros and Kos.

Francis listened intently as one of the camp’s residents, Christian Tango Mukaya, a Congolese father of three, thanked him for his show of solidarity and appeal to Europe to let refugees in. Mukaya lost track of his wife and their third child in their journey and is hoping his visibility with the pope might reunite them.

“We always have this hope that one day we may all be together again. That the family can be together

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again," he told The Associated Press on the eve of Francis' arrival.

"We hope that the pope coming can bring change. Change," he said. "Regarding our condition, we would like a better life. We plead with the pope to help us, to speak on our behalf to Europe, to help us."

Francis' visit to Lesbos was the highlight of his five-day trip, recalling his 2016 visit with the Orthodox leadership when he wept at the plight of asylum-seekers packed into a camp that eventually burned down last year.

More than 1 million people, many fleeing war in Iraq and Syria, crossed from Turkey into Greece during 2015 and 2016, with Lesbos the busiest Greek crossing point. The flow may have ebbed in Lesbos, but it hasn't stopped and anti-migrant sentiment in Greece and beyond has only hardened in the ensuing years, with the latest flashpoint on the EU's Polish border with Belarus.

Greece has recently built a steel wall along a section of the Greek-Turkish land border and is intercepting boats transporting migrants from the Turkish side. It denies allegations that it is carrying out summary deportations of migrants reaching Greek territory but human rights groups say numerous such pushbacks have occurred.

Ahead of Sunday's stop by Francis, human rights groups have stepped up their criticism of Greece's treatment of migrants and of tougher migration policies among the EU's 27 members.

Amnesty International said new EU-funded detention camps on Greek islands were in violation of Athens' commitments to provide international protection to those in need.

"Under international and EU law, asylum-seekers should only be detained as a matter of last resort," Amnesty said. "As we feared, Greek authorities are hiding behind the legally ambiguous concept of so-called closed-controlled centers to illegally deprive asylum-seekers of their liberty."

The rights group asked Greece "to urgently withdraw this decision and lift the restrictions."

Greek Migration Affairs Minister Notis Mitarachi defended Greece's response in a statement Sunday, saying it had "selflessly" responded to the crisis in 2015 and was continuing to provide asylum-seekers with protection. But it demanded the EU do more to help front-line countries like Greece that bear a disproportionate burden while "those who exploit fellow human beings are rewarded."

Gatopoulos contributed from Athens, Greece.

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Israel urges hard line against Iran at nuclear talks

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Sunday urged world powers to take a hard line against Iran in negotiations aimed at reviving an international nuclear deal, as his top defense and intelligence officials headed to Washington to discuss the flailing talks.

Israel has been watching with concern as world powers sit down with Iran in Vienna in hopes of restoring the tattered 2015 deal. Iran last week struck a hard line as talks resumed, suggesting everything discussed in previous rounds of diplomacy could be renegotiated. Continued Iranian advances in its atomic program have further raised the stakes.

The original deal, spearheaded by then-President Barack Obama, gave Iran much-needed relief from crippling economic sanctions in exchange for curbs on its nuclear activities. But then-President Donald Trump, with strong encouragement from Israel, withdrew from the deal in 2018, causing it to unravel.

Last week's talks in Vienna resumed after a more than five-month hiatus and were the first in which Iran's new hard-line government participated.

European and American negotiators expressed disappointment with Iran's positions and questioned whether the talks would succeed.

Israel has long opposed the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, known as the JCPOA, saying it didn't go far enough to halt the country's nuclear program and doesn't address what it sees as hostile Iranian military

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activity across the region.

Prominent voices in Israel are now indicating the U.S. withdrawal, especially without a contingency plan for Iran's continuously developing nuclear plan, was a blunder. But Israel's new government has maintained a similar position to that of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — rejecting a return to the original deal and calling for diplomacy to be accompanied by military pressure on Iran.

"I call on every country negotiating with Iran in Vienna to take a strong line and make it clear to Iran that they cannot enrich uranium and negotiate at the same time," Bennett told his Cabinet on Sunday. "Iran must begin to pay a price for its violations."

After the deal's collapse, Iran stepped up its nuclear activities. Iran now enriches small amounts of uranium up to 60% purity — a short step from weapons-grade levels of 90%. Iran also spins advanced centrifuges barred by the accord, and its uranium stockpile now far exceeds the accord's limits.

For now, Iran is showing no signs of backing down. Its chief negotiator, Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani, suggested over the weekend that Iran plans to give a third list of demands to his counterparts. These would include proposed reparations after two pages worth of demands last week.

"Any sanctions in violation and not consistent with the (deal) should be removed immediately," Bagheri Kani told Al-Jazeera. "All the sanctions which have been imposed or re-imposed under the so-called maximum pressure campaign of the United States should be removed immediately."

While Iran's new hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi campaigned on getting sanctions lifted, there's a sense that his negotiators now are waging their own maximum-pressure campaign.

Last week, the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog confirmed that Iran has begun enriching uranium up to 20% purity at its underground facility at Fordo — a site the deal banned from conducting any enrichment.

And over the weekend, Iran said it had tested a surface-to-air missile defense system near its Natanz nuclear facility. Late Saturday, people leaving nearby saw a light in the sky and heard a loud explosion.

"Any threat from the enemies will be met with a decisive and firm response," state TV quoted Lt. Cmdr. Ali Moazeni as saying.

President Joe Biden has said America is willing to re-enter the deal, though the U.S. is not a direct participant in the latest round of talks due to Washington's withdrawal. Instead, U.S. negotiators were in a nearby location and briefed by the other participants — including three European powers, China and Russia.

Although Israel is not a party to the negotiations, it has made a point of keeping up lines of communication with its American and European allies during the talks, which are set to resume this week.

Israeli spy chief David Barnea headed to Washington late Saturday on a previously unannounced trip and Defense Minister Benny Gantz leaves Wednesday for meetings with his U.S. counterpart Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Foreign Minister Yair Lapid was in London and Paris last week to discuss the talks with Israel's European allies.

Bennett said Israel was using the time between rounds to convince the Americans to "use a different toolkit" against Iran's nuclear program, without elaborating. Israel and the U.S. are widely believed to have carried out covert operations against Iranian nuclear personnel and infrastructure in a bid to sabotage the program.

The current Israeli government objects to a return to the 2015 deal, urging instead an accord that addresses other Iranian military behavior, such as its missile program and support for anti-Israel militant groups like Lebanon's Hezbollah. Israel also supports a "credible" military threat against Iran as leverage.

A senior State Department official said negotiators expected Iran to "show seriousness" at the talks. He said that even Russia and China, important trading outlets for Iran which have traditionally taken a softer line in their relations with the country, left the talks last week concerned about the prospects for a deal.

"Every day that goes by is a day where we come closer to the conclusion that they don't have in mind a return to the JCPOA in short order," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to brief reporters on the U.S. assessment. He said Iran could be using the talks as a cover for continuing to build up the nuclear program, which it could then use as leverage.

European negotiators also expressed frustration with the Iranians. Senior diplomats from Germany, Britain

and France said Iran has “fast-forwarded its nuclear program” and “backtracked on diplomatic progress.” “Unclear how these new gaps can be closed in a realistic timeframe on the basis of Iranian drafts,” they said.

Iran maintains its atomic program is peaceful. However, U.S. intelligence agencies and international inspectors say Iran had an organized nuclear weapons program up until 2003. Nonproliferation experts fear any brinkmanship could push Iran toward even more extreme measures to try to force the West to lift sanctions.

Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran; Ellen Knickmeyer in Washington and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed reporting.

Israeli police questioned on Palestinian attacker’s shooting

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel’s Justice Ministry said Sunday that two police officers were brought in for questioning following the shooting death of a Palestinian who had stabbed an Israeli man in east Jerusalem.

Israeli police released surveillance video in which the attacker can be seen Saturday stabbing the ultra-Orthodox Jewish man and then trying to stab a Border Police officer before being shot and falling to the ground. Police identified the attacker as a 25-year-old from Salfit, in the occupied West Bank. Police could later be seen carrying the body away on a stretcher.

A widely circulated video shot by a bystander appeared to show an officer from Israel’s paramilitary Border Police shooting the attacker when he was already lying on the ground, and another appeared to show police with guns drawn preventing medics from reaching him, prompting calls for an investigation into possible excessive use of force.

The shooting drew comparisons to a 2016 incident in which an Israeli soldier was caught on camera shooting a wounded Palestinian attacker who was lying on the ground.

The Justice Ministry’s police investigations unit said the police officers were questioned shortly after the incident and released without conditions.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett reiterated his support for the officers’ actions at a meeting of his Cabinet on Sunday.

“The officers acted outstandingly, exactly as is required from fighters in an operational situation like this,” he said. “They deserve all of our support and appreciation for preventing murder and acting with operational quick-wittedness within fractions of a second.”

The incident happened near Damascus Gate just outside Jerusalem’s Old City, a tense and crowded area that is often the scene of demonstrations and clashes.

The Old City is in east Jerusalem, which Israel captured in the 1967 war along with the West Bank and Gaza. Israel annexed east Jerusalem in a move not recognized internationally and considers the entire city its capital. The Palestinians want east Jerusalem to be the capital of their future state, to include the West Bank and Gaza.

There have been dozens of attacks in recent years in and around the Old City, nearly all carried out by individual Palestinians with no known links to armed groups.

Palestinians and Israeli rights groups say security forces sometimes use excessive force in response to attacks, killing suspected assailants who could have been arrested or who posed no immediate threat to security forces.

Rights groups also say Israel rarely holds members of its security forces accountable for the deadly shootings of Palestinians. Investigations often end with no charges or lenient sentences, and in many cases witnesses are not summoned for questioning.

Israel says its security forces make every effort to avoid harming civilians and that it investigates alleged abuses.

In the widely publicized 2016 case, Israeli soldier Elor Azaria was caught on camera shooting a wounded

Palestinian attacker who was lying on the ground. Azaria later served two-thirds of a 14-month sentence after being convicted of reckless manslaughter.

His case sharply divided Israelis. The military pushed for his prosecution, saying he violated its code of ethics, while many Israelis, particularly on the nationalist right, defended his actions.

In a more recent case, a Border Police officer was charged with reckless manslaughter in the deadly shooting of an autistic Palestinian man in Jerusalem's Old City last year.

The indictment came just over a year after the shooting of Eyad Hallaq, whose family has criticized Israel's investigation into the killing and called for much tougher charges. The shooting has drawn comparisons to the police killing of George Floyd in the United States.

From Serbia, Afghan boxers seek refuge, careers in West

By JOVANA GEC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — They practiced in secret and struggled to get to an international tournament in Europe. Now, members of the Afghan national boxing team are seeking refuge in the West, hoping to continue both their careers and their lives without danger or fear.

The Afghan boxers, their coach and a top boxing federation official remained in Serbia after the AIBA World Boxing Championships finished in early November, saying they could face retribution from the Taliban if they returned home.

"When the Taliban regime came to Afghanistan, everything became changed," Waheedullah Hameedi, the secretary general of Afghanistan's boxing federation, said. "It was difficult to come for a world championship during the new regime, the new government."

The team has contacted several foreign embassies about securing humanitarian visas and asylum protection. Some European Union nations have turned them down, but the 11-member group has not given up hope of finding a safe haven.

Tens of thousands of Afghans, including athletes, have fled the country since troops from the United States and other foreign nations pulled out in August and the Taliban took over. Hameedi said the Taliban do not approve of boxing, and team members stand little chance of pursuing their careers freely in Afghanistan.

"As you know, the situation in Afghanistan is very tough, very bad," he said, speaking in English. "They (Taliban) didn't allow in first days to continue the boxing and open the gym. Everyone was afraid to go anywhere for boxing or for anything else."

Hameedi's father, a previous secretary general of the Afghan Boxing Federation, was gunned down in 2019 by unknown assailants. After the national team participated in the Asian Boxing Championships in Dubai in May, Hameedi was determined to take his boxers to Serbia for the world championships in late October.

Boxing was banned in Afghanistan during the Taliban's previous rule in 1996-2001. While its leaders have sought to portray themselves as more tolerant this time around, Hameedi insisted the officials and boxers have faced threats and feared for their safety.

"Boxing is 'haram' for them (Taliban,) something in Islam that is illegal for them," he said.

Ahead of the trip to Serbia, the boxers trained at hidden locations and tried to stay under the radar, hiding their plan to compete in the international tournament, Hameedi said. They managed to get visas to go to Iran, and once in Tehran they applied for visas at the Serbian Embassy before rushing on to Belgrade, he said.

The 11 Afghan boxers competed in Serbia as part of a 14-member "fair chance" team sponsored by the International Boxing Association for refugees and other athletes who had to flee their countries, said Hameedi.

The group's Serbian visas have since expired. Hameedi said friends and relatives warned them not to return to Afghanistan. While thousands of migrants and refugees arrive in Serbia, most do so planning to continue on to countries in Western Europe where it is easier to find jobs and make a living.

"We hope we will receive visas as soon as possible so there is no problem in Serbia," Hameedi said. "We can leave easily to some safe country and their future will be granted."

Hameedi said he, the coach and the nine boxers who still are with them in Serbia do not want to cross borders illegally to reach Western Europe, but neither have they applied for asylum in the Balkan nation.

Attorney Marko Stambuk, who works with the Belgrade Center for Human Rights, said the Afghan boxers contacted the organization and have been informed about their options for seeking asylum in Serbia.

Stambuk acknowledged that the boxers fear the return to Afghanistan because of the Taliban policies and a generally volatile situation. They are "aware of their rights and obligations (in Serbia), and now they are thinking of what to do next," he said.

Amid the uncertainty, the boxers have continued training in local gyms. Hasibullah Malikzadah, 20, said he is afraid to go back to Afghanistan and wants to continue boxing somewhere else.

"I want to be good champion," and a role model for children around the world, he said after a practice session. "I really want this. I really have a good dream."

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Death toll rises to 13 in Indonesia volcano eruption

By AGOES BASOEKI Associated Press

LUMAJANG, Indonesia (AP) — The death toll following the eruption of the highest volcano on Indonesia's most densely populated island of Java has risen to 13, with seven people still missing, officials said Sunday as smoldering debris and thick mud hampered search efforts.

Mount Semeru in Lumajang district in East Java province spewed thick columns of ash more than 12,000 meters (40,000 feet) into the sky, and searing gas and lava flowed down its slopes after a sudden eruption Saturday triggered by heavy rains. Several villages were blanketed with falling ash.

A thunderstorm and days of rain, which eroded and finally collapsed the lava dome atop the 3,676-meter (12,060-foot) Semeru, triggered the eruption, said Eko Budi Lelono, who heads the geological survey center.

He said flows of searing gas and lava traveled up to 800 meters (2,624 feet) to a nearby river at least twice on Saturday. People were advised to stay 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) from the crater's mouth, the agency said.

"Thick columns of ash have turned several villages to darkness," said Lumajang district head Thoriqul Haq. Several hundred people were moved to temporary shelters or left for other safe areas, he said, adding that a power blackout hampered the evacuation.

The debris and lava mixed with rainfall formed thick mud that destroyed the main bridge connecting Lumajang and the neighboring district of Malang, as well as a smaller bridge, Haq said.

Despite an increase in activity since Wednesday, Semeru's alert status had remained at the third highest of four levels since it began erupting last year, and Indonesia's Volcanology Center for Geological Hazard Mitigation did not raise it this week, Lelono said.

National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said at least 13 villagers died from severe burns and 57 were hospitalized, including 16 in critical condition with burn injuries. He said rescuers were still searching for seven residents and sand miners along a river in Curah Kobokan village who were reported missing.

Entire houses in the village were damaged by volcanic debris and more than 900 people fled to temporary government shelters, Muhari said.

Liswanto, the head of Semeru's monitoring post, said his office had informed the community and the miners that hot ash could tumble down from Semeru's crater at any time, after sensors picked up increased activity in the past week.

But some residents who fled to a government shelter near Lumajang district's head office said authorities did not convey any information to them about the volcano's activities.

"Suddenly everything went dark, the bright afternoon turned into night. A rumbling sound and heat forced us to run to the mosque," said Fatmah, a resident who fled to the shelter from Curah Kobokan, about 5

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kilometers (3 miles) from the crater. "It was a far stronger eruption than in January."

Transportation Ministry spokesperson Adita Irawati said her office issued a notice Saturday for all airlines to avoid routes near the volcano. She said flight operations are still running as scheduled and that authorities will continue to monitor the situation. The Darwin Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre said the spread of volcanic ash from Mount Semeru was detected to the southwest moving at a speed of 50 knots.

Television reports showed people screaming and running under a huge ash cloud, their faces wet from rain mixed with volcanic dust. The last time Semeru erupted, in January, there were no casualties.

Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 270 million people, is prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity because it sits along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," a horseshoe-shaped series of fault lines.

No shortage of sanction options if Russia invades Ukraine

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration has plenty of options to make good on its pledge to hit Russia financially if President Vladimir Putin invades Ukraine, from sanctions targeting Putin's associates to cutting Russia off from the financial system that sends money flowing around the world.

The United States and European allies have made no public mention of any plans to respond militarily themselves if Putin sends troops massed along the border into Ukraine, a former Soviet republic with close historical and cultural ties to Russia but now eager to ally with NATO and the West.

Instead, payback could be all about the money.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken this week promised financial pain — "high impact economic measures that we've refrained from taking in the past." President Joe Biden on Friday said the U.S. had developed the "most comprehensive and meaningful set of initiatives to make it very, very difficult for Mr. Putin."

The United States over the past decade already has put a range of sanctions in place against Russian entities and individuals, many of them over Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea and its support for armed separatists in eastern Ukraine in 2014. U.S. sanctions also have sought to punish Russia for election interference, malicious cyber activities and human rights abuses.

Since 2014, the West also has helped Ukraine build up its military. So while Putin denies any intention of launching an offensive, his troops would face a Ukrainian army much more capable of putting up a fight.

The sanctions now imposed on Russians include asset freezes, bans on doing business with U.S. companies and denial of entry to the United States. But in seeking to punish Russia, the West over the years has weighed even bigger financial penalties.

That includes the so-called nuclear option: blocking Russia from the Belgium-based SWIFT system of financial payments that moves money among thousands of banks around the world.

The European Parliament this year approved a nonbinding resolution calling for that step if Russia does invade Ukraine.

When the U.S. successfully pressured SWIFT to disconnect Iranian banks over Iran's nuclear program, the country lost almost half of its oil export revenue and a third of its foreign trade, said Maria Shagina, an expert on sanctions and energy politics affiliated with the Carnegie Moscow Center think tank.

The impact on Russia's economy would be "equally devastating," Shagina writes. Russia depends on its oil and natural gas exports for more than one-third of its federal revenues, and depends on SWIFT to make the petrodollars flow.

Russia has worked since 2014 to insulate its domestic financial systems from such a cutoff. A SWIFT cutoff would cause indirect pain for Western economies as well.

John Herbst, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine and career diplomat, said Friday he believed that while "SWIFT is not off the table, it would be a last resort."

The Biden administration earlier this year further limited Russia's ability to borrow money by banning U.S. financial institutions from buying Russian government bonds directly from state institutions. But the sanctions didn't target the secondary market, leaving this as a possible next step.

Other possible tools and targets, Herbst noted: financial sanctions targeting people close to Putin and

their families; and more sanctions on Russian banks and on Russia's vital energy sector.

More omicron detected as hospitals strain under delta surge

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

New York announced three more cases of the omicron variant of the coronavirus Saturday, bringing the number of state cases linked to the new variant to eight.

"The omicron variant is here, and as anticipated we are seeing the beginning of community spread," state Health Commissioner Mary Bassett said in a news release.

The number of states finding the variant is growing as well, with Massachusetts, Connecticut and Washington state announcing their first cases Saturday, a day after New Jersey, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Maryland reported their first confirmed cases. Missouri reported its first presumed case Friday.

The variant also has been detected in Nebraska, Minnesota, California, Hawaii, Colorado and Utah.

In New York, seven of the cases have been found in New York City, once a global epicenter of the pandemic, and the other in Suffolk County.

The arrival of omicron comes as hospitals statewide continue to strain under a surge in coronavirus cases, most traced to the delta variant, along with staffing shortages.

The number of people testing positive statewide each day for the virus has doubled in the last 30 days.

Gov. Kathy Hochul in recent days has authorized the Health Department to limit nonessential, non-urgent procedures at hospitals close to running out of beds and deployed National Guard teams to relieve healthcare workers at facilities dealing with staffing issues and surging caseloads.

Fifteen members of the National Guard arrived at Monroe Community Hospital in Rochester on Saturday, WROC reported. Lt. Gov. Brian Benjamin said Wednesday the state would send 13 National Guard teams to the western New York county, where County Executive Adam Bello has declared a state of emergency.

New York's omicron cases so far appear to be unrelated, Hochul said. One of the known cases involved a man from Minnesota who was among 50,000 people who attended a three-day anime festival in New York City in November. Authorities have urged anyone who attended the conference to get tested for COVID-19 and wear a mask in public.

Much remains unknown about omicron, including whether it is more contagious, as some health authorities suspect, whether it can thwart vaccines and whether it makes people as sick as the original strain.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont on Saturday reported his state's first confirmed case of the variant, saying it may also be linked to the New York City anime convention. The case involves a vaccinated Hartford-area man in his 60s who has a family member who attended the convention. The family member, who is also vaccinated, developed symptoms that have since resolved, Lamont's office said.

In Washington state, three cases of the omicron variant were confirmed Saturday — one each in Thurston, Pierce and King counties, state health officials said. They noted the investigation is still early, and details were not yet known on the travel histories of the patients, two men and a woman who range from 20 to 39 years old.

A Massachusetts woman in her 20s who had traveled out of state is the first known case of the variant detected in her state, the Department of Public Health announced Saturday. The unidentified woman — a resident of Middlesex County — is fully vaccinated and has experienced mild symptoms.

A woman who recently traveled from South Africa became both New Jersey and Georgia's first confirmed case after seeking care for moderate symptoms at an emergency room. The fully vaccinated Georgia resident was in her home state for two days between arriving from South Africa and traveling onward to New Jersey, health officials in both states said.

Maryland's first three cases of the omicron variant were found in the Baltimore metropolitan region and include two people from the same household, authorities said. One of the two is a vaccinated person who recently traveled to South Africa. The third case, detected in a vaccinated person with no recent travel history, is unrelated.

In Pennsylvania, a man in his 30s from Philadelphia became that state's first case. The Philadelphia

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Department of Public Health did not immediately say whether the man was vaccinated against COVID-19 or if he had been traveling.

Missouri's presumed first case involves someone who recently traveled within the U.S., according to state health officials, who did not provide additional details about the St. Louis resident. The St. Louis Health Department said it was awaiting confirmation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Case counts in California, Nebraska and Colorado grew Friday.

Five cases in Northern California were linked to a wedding in Wisconsin late last month, public health officials said. One of the individuals had recently returned from traveling internationally, according to the Alameda County Department of Public Health.

Health officials confirmed six new cases of the variant in southeastern Nebraska. State health officials said the state's first case likely stemmed from one of the six who recently traveled to Nigeria and returned on Nov. 23.

Colorado detected the state's second case of the omicron variant just a day after the state's first confirmed case, officials said Friday.

"We knew the omicron variant was coming and we expect to see more cases. But let me be clear: We are not defenseless," Hochul said. "We have the tools to help prevent the spread of this deadly virus: Get your vaccine, get your booster, and wear your mask."

Meanwhile, 10 people aboard a Norwegian Cruise Line ship approaching New Orleans have tested positive for COVID-19, officials said Saturday night. The Norwegian Breakaway departed the city Nov. 28 and was due to return this weekend after making stops in Belize, Honduras and Mexico in recent days, Louisiana's health agency said. More than 3,200 people are on board. Officials did not immediately say whether the passengers had been tested for virus variants.

Associated Press writers Steve LeBlanc in Boston and Michelle Price in New York contributed to this report.

Playoff bound: Bama rolls No. 1 Georgia 41-24 for SEC title

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Underdog is an unusual role for Alabama.

Turns out, it suits the Crimson Tide just fine.

Now, Nick Saban's team is in a much more familiar position: getting ready to play for another national title.

Bryce Young carved up the nation's top-rated defense, throwing for three touchdowns and running for another as the fourth-ranked Crimson Tide rolled over No. 1 Georgia 41-24 in the Southeastern Conference championship game Saturday.

The stunning result will likely send both powerhouse programs to the four-team College Football Playoff.

For Alabama, it would be the seventh appearance in the eight-year history of this postseason format, but this might be the most unlikely one of all given the way the Tide struggled late in the regular season.

Saban made sure his players heard all the skeptics.

"You guys gave us a lot of positive rat poison," the coach quipped to reporters. "The rat poison you usually give us is fatal. But the rat poison you put out there this week was yummy."

No one lapped it up more than Young, who set SEC championship records with 421 yards passing and 461 yards total offense.

"He played great tonight," Saban said. "He's played great for us all year long."

Coming off a surprisingly difficult, four-overtime win over Auburn and already saddled with a loss, the Tide knew they needed a victory to ensure a return to the playoff.

No problem.

The reigning national champions gave Saban a chance to add to his record seven titles — six of them coming since he arrived in Tuscaloosa in 2007 to lead a storied program that has become perhaps the greatest dynasty in college football history.

"The resiliency they've shown all year makes this so special," Saban said. "Winning the game as we did

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last week, playing a game today to a level that most people probably didn't expect, I'm really proud of this bunch. They've shown tremendous ability to overcome adversity all year long."

Georgia (12-1, No. 1 CFP) cruised through the regular season, barely challenged and a unanimous choice as the nation's No. 1 team for the past two months. The Bulldogs boasted a fearsome defensive unit that had allowed only 6.9 points a game.

Young made that vaunted defense look like a scout team, earning game MVP honors, bolstering his Heisman Trophy chances and moving on to an even bigger game on the final day of 2021.

"He's soooo good at avoiding the rush," Georgia coach Kirby Smart said. "He buys time with his mobility and makes plays downfield. Give him credit. He did a tremendous job."

The playoff field will be announced Sunday, with the semifinals set for the Orange and Cotton bowls on Dec. 31.

Alabama (12-1, No. 3 CFP) had six offensive scoring drives — five covering at least 75 yards, the other 62 — and finished with a staggering 536 yards against a team that was giving up just under 231 per game.

The Tide's defense wasn't too shabby, either, essentially sealing the victory with Jordan Battle's 42-yard interception return to the end zone with about 12 minutes remaining.

Georgia's Stetson Bennett threw for 340 yards and three touchdowns, but he also had two crucial picks. Freshman Brock Bowers made 10 catches for 139 yards.

This one will be remembered for Alabama's dismantling of the Georgia defense, which had not allowed more than 17 points in a game during the perfect regular season.

"We didn't play our best game," linebacker Nakobe Dean said. "We've got a lot to work on."

After falling into a 10-0 hole on the first play of the second quarter, Alabama outscored the Bulldogs 41-14 the rest of the way. Not even a knee injury that knocked top receiver John Metchie out of the game just before halftime — and likely ended his season — could sidetrack the Tide.

Jameson Williams more than picked up the slack for his injured teammate, finishing with 184 yards on seven receptions and two touchdowns. Metchie had six catches for 97 yards and a TD before his injury.

Young set the tone during a dominant second quarter, guiding four straight scoring drives — three of them for touchdowns — to give the Tide a 24-17 lead at the break.

The quarterback set an SEC championship game record for first-half passing yards with 286, sparked by a 67-yard touchdown pass to Williams — the longest play the Bulldogs have given up this season.

Young was just getting warmed up.

He zipped one to Metchie for a 13-yard score, drove the Tide into position for Will Reichard's 33-yard field goal, and capped off his brilliant quarter by running 13 yards for a TD with just 26 seconds left in the half.

In a single quarter of football, Alabama put up more points on Georgia than any team had all year, also becoming the first to score more than two TDs in a game against the Bulldogs.

During the regular season, Georgia allowed only 29 points — in all 12 games combined — in the first half.

Alabama took the second half kickoff and quickly added to its lead. Williams hauled in another long scoring pass from Young, this one covering 55 yards.

"He's elite at the getting the ball to his playmakers," Smart said.

MENTOR VS MENTEE

Smart, a former defensive coordinator at Alabama, continues to be stymied by his former boss.

Smart dropped to 0-4 against Saban, with three of those losses coming in huge games at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta.

During the 2017 season, Alabama beat the Bulldogs in overtime in the national championship game. The next year, the Tide prevailed in another classic to capture the SEC championship.

And now, yet another setback for Smart with the conference title on the line.

THE TAKEAWAY

Georgia: This could be a devastating blow to the psyche of a team that had looked unbeatable most the season. Smart will need to do the best coaching job of his career over the new few weeks to restore the Bulldogs' confidence.

Alabama: Few gave the Tide much of a chance after their lackluster showing in the Iron Bowl, but the

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offensive line looked like an entirely different unit against Georgia's massive front. Young had plenty of time to throw, and he took advantage of it. "All the success we've had this year starts up front," Young said. "They did an amazing job. They really stepped up to the plate."

UP NEXT

Depending on the playoff seedings, the SEC behemoths could be headed for a rematch in the semifinals. It would be the second time the league has placed two teams in the playoff, the other coming in 2017 when Alabama beat Georgia in that overtime thriller.

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Biden, Putin set video call Tuesday as Ukraine tensions grow

By DASHA LITVINOVA, AAMER MADHANI and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin will speak in a video call Tuesday, the White House and Kremlin said, as tensions between the United States and Russia escalate over a Russian troop buildup on the Ukrainian border that's seen as a sign of a potential invasion.

Biden will press U.S. concerns about Russian military activities on the border and "reaffirm the United States' support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Saturday, confirming the planned call after first word came from Moscow.

Putin will come to the call with concerns of his own and intends to express Russia's opposition to any move to admit Ukraine into the NATO military alliance. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "the presidents will decide themselves" how long their talk will last.

The last known call between the leaders was in July, when Biden pressed Putin to rein in Russia-based criminal hacking gangs launching ransomware attacks against the United States. Biden said the U.S. would take any necessary steps to protect critical infrastructure from such attacks.

Ransomware attacks have continued since then, though perhaps none has been as alarming as the one from May that targeted a major fuel pipeline and resulted in days of gas shortages in parts of the U.S.

Russia is more adamant than ever that the U.S. guarantees that Ukraine will not be admitted to the NATO military alliance. But NATO's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, said this past week that Russia has no say in expansion plans by other countries or the alliance. Numerous former U.S. and NATO diplomats say any such Russian demand to Biden would be a nonstarter.

U.S. intelligence officials, meanwhile, have determined that Russia has massed about 70,000 troops near its border with Ukraine and has begun planning for a possible invasion as soon as early next year, according to a Biden administration official who was not authorized to discuss that finding publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The risks for Putin of going through with such an invasion would be enormous.

U.S. officials and former American diplomats say while the Russian president is clearly laying the groundwork for a possible invasion, Ukraine's military is better armed and prepared today than in the past, and that sanctions threatened by the West would do serious damage to the Russian economy.

"What I am doing is putting together what I believe to be, will be, the most comprehensive and meaningful set of initiatives to make it very, very difficult for Mr. Putin to go ahead and do what people are worried he may do," Biden said Friday.

Ukrainian officials have said Russia could invade next month. Ukraine's defense minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said the number of Russian troops near Ukraine and in Russia-annexed Crimea is estimated at 94,300, and warned that a "large-scale escalation" is possible in January.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, recently charged that a group of Russians and Ukrainians

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planned to attempt a coup in his country and that the plotters tried to enlist the help of Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov.

Russia and Akhmetov have denied that any plot is underway, but the Russians have become more explicit recently in their warnings to Ukraine and the United States.

Biden is also expected to speak with Zelenskyy in the coming week, according to a person close to the Ukrainian leader. This person was not authorized to comment publicly before the announcement of the call and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Kremlin said Friday that Putin, during his call with Biden, would seek binding guarantees precluding NATO's expansion to Ukraine. Biden tried to head off the demand in comments to reporters Friday before leaving for a weekend stay at Camp David.

"I don't accept anyone's red line," Biden said.

Psaki said in a brief statement Saturday that Biden and Putin will discuss a range of topics in the U.S.-Russia relationship, "including strategic stability, cyber, and regional issues."

She said Friday that the administration would coordinate with European allies if it moved forward with sanctions. She alluded to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula that had been under Ukraine's control since 1954. Russia has also backed separatists in eastern Ukraine in a 7-year conflict that has cost over 14,000 lives.

"We know what President Putin has done in the past," Psaki said. "We see that he is putting in place the capacity to take action in short order."

U.S.-Russia relations have been rocky since Biden took office.

His administration has imposed sanctions against Russian targets and called out Putin for the Kremlin's interference in U.S. elections, cyberactivity against American companies and the treatment of opposition figure Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned last year and later imprisoned.

When Putin and Biden met in Geneva in June, Biden warned that if Russia crossed certain red lines — including going after major American infrastructure — his administration would respond and "the consequences of that would be devastating."

Madhani and Long reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Ellen Knickmeyer and Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

CNN fires Chris Cuomo for helping brother deal with scandal

By DAVID BAUDER and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — CNN fired anchor Chris Cuomo on Saturday less than a week after new information emerged about how he assisted his brother, former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, as the politician faced sexual harassment allegations earlier this year.

The network had suspended its prime-time host on Tuesday to investigate his conduct, after New York's attorney general released details showing he was more involved than previously known in helping to strategize and reach out to other journalists as his brother fought to keep his job.

CNN hired a law firm for that review, which it would not identify. The lawyers recommended Chris Cuomo's termination and CNN chief Jeff Zucker informed the anchor of the decision on Saturday.

"It goes without saying that these decisions are not easy, and there are a lot of complex factors involved," Zucker said in an email to CNN staff on Saturday.

The network said that "while in the process of that review, additional information has come to light." CNN would not discuss that information, or characterize whether it had anything to do with his brother.

Cuomo issued a statement on Twitter calling the decision disappointing.

"This is not how I want my time at CNN to end but I have already told you why and how I helped my brother. So let me now say as disappointing as this is, I could not be more proud of the team at Cuomo Prime Time and the work we did," he said.

Even with the firing, CNN said it will continue to investigate Cuomo's conduct "as appropriate."

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A year ago the two sons of the late New York Gov. Mario Cuomo were flying high: Andrew as a three-term governor praised initially in many circles for his handling of the pandemic, Chris as the top-rated personality on CNN. Now they're both out of work.

As women came forward accusing former Gov. Andrew Cuomo of sexual harassment, his brother, despite being a CNN anchor, pressed sources for information on the accusers and reported back to the governor's staff on what he was learning.

He was active in helping craft their response to the charges, according to emails and a transcript of his testimony to investigators working for state Attorney General Letitia James. Her office found Andrew Cuomo sexually harassed at least 11 women; the former governor resigned in August to avoid a likely impeachment trial.

Chris Cuomo and CNN have been under fire for months about their anchor's conduct. When it first came to light in May that the anchor had been talking to his brother's advisers, the network acknowledged that he had broken its rules but, as CNN said in a statement upon his suspension earlier this week, "we also appreciated the unique position he was in and understood his need to put family first and job second."

The transcripts released by James this week revealed considerably more detail about Cuomo's involvement — conduct CNN executives admitted was a surprise even to them.

While Cuomo has said he never tried to influence CNN's own coverage of his brother, he told investigators for James about his calls to other journalists to find out what information they had about some of his accusers.

That seemed to conflict with an on-air statement Cuomo gave on CNN following his brother's resignation in August. Cuomo had said that "I never made calls to the press about my brother's situation."

Cuomo also said that he never "attacked, nor encouraged anyone to attack any woman who came forward" with accusations against his brother. According to email transcripts released this week, Cuomo wrote to aides that "I have a lead" on one of the accusers, although it was not clear what he meant.

Things moved quickly this week following the release of the transcripts. CNN took him off the air on Tuesday and suspended him indefinitely before the firing on Saturday.

It was clearly a painful decision for Zucker, who installed Cuomo as a morning show host shortly after taking over at CNN in 2013, then later moved him to prime time. Until this week, he had backed Cuomo despite criticism. "Cuomo Prime Time" had been the network's highest-rated show this year, airing at the 9 p.m. Eastern hour between shows by Anderson Cooper and Don Lemon.

The firing leaves a significant hole in the network's schedule. One former rival is becoming a free agent soon: Brian Williams recently announced he was leaving MSNBC, where he had anchored a nightly news hour, when his contract ends with the end of the year.

There was always a potential of conflict with one Cuomo brother as governor and another as a journalist. But since Chris Cuomo joined CNN, it was always made clear that he would not cover anything that involved his brother.

That changed with the COVID-19 pandemic, when the governor appeared on his brother's show several times, trading familial banter that entertained viewers but raised ethical red flags. They were then halted.

A veteran TV executive, Shelley Ross, wrote a column for The New York Times in September saying Chris Cuomo had groped her at a party 16 years ago, when they both worked for ABC News. Cuomo told the newspaper that "I apologized to her then, and I meant it."

Third party to probe Oxford High's actions ahead of shooting

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — A third party will investigate events at Oxford High School that occurred before a school shooting that left four students dead and six other students and a teacher wounded, the Michigan district's superintendent said Saturday.

Oxford Community Schools Superintendent Tim Throne said in a statement that he called for the outside investigation because parents have asked questions about "the school's version of events leading up to

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the shooting." He also elaborated on interactions with the student leading up to the shooting.

"It's critically important to the victims, our staff and our entire community that a full and transparent accounting be made," Throne said.

His comments came after a news conference Friday by Oakland County Prosecutor Karen McDonald that detailed numerous warning signs from the student charged in the shooting: His search for gun ammunition on a cellphone, and a drawing that showed a bullet with the words "blood everywhere" above a person who appears to have been shot along with "my life is useless" and "the world is dead."

On Tuesday at the school, roughly 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of Detroit, the student was sent back to the classroom after a school meeting with his parents. Three hours later the shooting occurred.

"The school should have been responsible to relay that to the sheriff's office. It looks like this could have been prevented," Robert Jordan, founder and director of St. Louis-based Protecting Our Students, said Friday. "People died because of those mistakes."

In addition to Jordan, parents of students slain in a 2018 school shooting in Florida say police should have been alerted before Tuesday's rampage.

The suspect in the Oxford High shooting, Ethan Crumbley, 15, is now charged as an adult with murder, terrorism and other crimes.

On Friday, prosecutors charged his parents, James and Jennifer Crumbley, with four counts each of involuntary manslaughter. They pleaded not guilty on Saturday and a judge imposed a combined \$1 million bond.

The 9mm semi-automatic pistol used in the shooting was bought at a local gun shop on Black Friday by James Crumbley as an early Christmas present for his son, authorities said.

School officials became concerned about the younger Crumbley on Monday, a day before the shooting, when a teacher saw him searching for ammunition on his phone, McDonald told reporters.

On Tuesday, a teacher found a note on Ethan's desk and took a photo. It was a drawing of a gun pointing at the words, "The thoughts won't stop. Help me," McDonald said.

There also was a drawing of a bullet, she said, with words above it: "Blood everywhere." Between the gun and the bullet was a person who appeared to have been shot twice and is bleeding, she said. "My life is useless" and "The world is dead" also were written.

Ethan Crumbley and both his parents met with school officials at 10 a.m. Tuesday. His parents left, and Ethan went back to his classes with his backpack, where investigators believe he stashed the gun. Authorities were not notified, something that county Sheriff Michael Bouchard said he wishes would have been done.

By 1 p.m. Tuesday, the school erupted in gunshots, chaos and bloodshed.

"The school had the responsibility to be doing an immediate threat assessment on the student and bringing into that conversation the sworn police officer and law enforcement," said Lori Alhadeff, whose 14-year-old daughter, Alyssa, was one of 17 students slain in 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland, Florida.

About five weeks before the Stoneman Douglas shooting, an FBI tip line received a call saying former student Nikolas Cruz had bought guns and planned to "slip into a school and start shooting the place up."

That information was never forwarded to the FBI. Cruz, who had been expelled from the school a year earlier and had a long history of emotional and behavioral problems, never was contacted.

Now 23, Cruz pleaded guilty in October to 17 counts of first-degree murder.

"We have to take these threats seriously," Alhadeff said.

But looking at such an issue after the fact raises other questions, said Christopher Smith, professor of Law and Public Policy at Michigan State University and chair of the Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence.

You have to consider whether the "teacher and school officials specifically have in their training that you need to report all these things," Smith said.

In a video message to the community Thursday night, Throne acknowledged the meeting of Crumbley, the parents and school officials. Throne offered no details but said that "no discipline was warranted."

In his statement Saturday, Throne elaborated on the events of Tuesday morning, saying the student was taken to the guidance counselor's office where he claimed the drawing was part of a video game he was

designing and that he planned to pursue video game design as a career. He worked on homework while waiting for his parents as counselors watched him.

"At no time did counselors believe the student might harm others based on his behavior, responses and demeanor, which appeared calm," Throne said.

"While both of his parents were present, counselors asked specific probing questions regarding the potential for self-harm or harm to others," Throne said, adding counseling was recommended for him, and his parents were notified that they had 48 hours to seek it. "When the parents were asked to take their son home for the day, they flatly refused and left without their son, apparently to return to work."

He said that the student had no prior disciplinary infractions so he was allowed to return to the classroom instead of being "sent home to an empty house."

Michigan parents found in building; bond set at \$500K apiece

By KATHLEEN FOODY and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — A judge imposed a combined \$1 million bond Saturday for the parents of the Michigan teen charged with killing four students at Oxford High School, hours after police said they were caught hiding in a Detroit commercial building.

James and Jennifer Crumbley entered not guilty pleas to each of the four involuntary manslaughter counts against them during a hearing held on Zoom. Jennifer Crumbley sobbed and struggled to respond to the judge's questions at times and James Crumbley shook his head when a prosecutor said their son had full access to the gun used in the killings.

Judge Julie Nicholson assigned bond of \$500,000 apiece to each of the parents and required GPS monitoring if they pay to be released, agreeing with prosecutors that they posed a flight risk.

Defense attorneys for the Crumbleys still argued Saturday that they never intended to flee and had made plans to meet their lawyers early that morning. Attorney Shannon Smith accused prosecutors of "cherry picking" facts to release publicly, including that accusation that their teenage son had unrestricted access to the handgun prosecutors say his father purchased for him days before the shooting.

"Our clients are just as devastated as everyone else," Smith said, adding that the gun "was locked." She didn't provide more detail during Saturday's hearing.

Oakland County Prosecutor Karen McDonald's office filed involuntary manslaughter charges against the Crumbleys on Friday, accusing them of failing to intervene on the day of the tragedy despite being confronted with a drawing and chilling message — "blood everywhere" — that was found at the boy's desk. They could each face up to 15 years in prison, according to a spokeswoman for McDonald's office.

The Crumbleys committed "egregious" acts, from buying a gun on Black Friday and making it available to Ethan Crumbley to resisting his removal from school when they were summoned a few hours before the shooting, McDonald said Friday.

Authorities had been looking for the couple since Friday afternoon. Late Friday, U.S. Marshals announced a reward of up to \$10,000 each for information leading to their arrests.

Smith, the Crumbleys' attorney, had said Friday that the pair left town earlier in the week "for their own safety" and would be returning to Oxford to face charges.

During Saturday's hearing, Smith said they were in touch by phone and text on Friday evening and blamed prosecutors for failing to communicate with her and fellow defense attorney Mariell Lehman.

"Our clients were absolutely going to turn themselves in; it was just a matter of logistics," she said.

But McDonald said on Saturday that the couple took \$4,000 out of an ATM on Friday morning in Rochester Hills, not far from the courthouse where they should have appeared that afternoon.

"These are not people that we can be assured will return to court on their own," she said.

A Detroit business owner spotted a car tied to the Crumbleys in his parking lot late Friday, Oakland County Undersheriff Michael McCabe said in a statement. A woman seen near the vehicle ran away when the business owner called 911, McCabe said. The couple was later located and arrested by Detroit police.

Detroit Police Chief James E. White said the couple "were aided in getting into the building," and that a

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person who helped them may also face charges.

On Friday, McDonald offered the most precise account so far of the events that led to the shooting at Oxford High School, roughly 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of Detroit.

Ethan Crumbley, 15, emerged from a bathroom with a gun, shooting students in the hallway, investigators said. He's charged as an adult with murder, terrorism and other crimes.

Under Michigan law, the involuntary manslaughter charge filed against the parents can be pursued if authorities believe someone contributed to a situation where there was a high chance of harm or death.

Parents in the U.S. are rarely charged in school shootings involving their children, even as most minors get guns from a parent or relative's house, according to experts.

School officials became concerned about the younger Crumbley on Monday, a day before the shooting, when a teacher saw him searching for ammunition on his phone, McDonald said.

Jennifer Crumbley was contacted and subsequently told her son in a text message: "Lol. I'm not mad at you. You have to learn not to get caught," according to the prosecutor.

On Tuesday, a teacher found a note on Ethan's desk and took a photo. It was a drawing of a gun pointing at the words, "The thoughts won't stop. Help me," McDonald said.

There also was a drawing of a bullet, she said, with words above it: "Blood everywhere."

Between the gun and the bullet was a person who appeared to have been shot twice and is bleeding. He also wrote, "My life is useless" and "The world is dead," according to the prosecutor.

The school quickly had a meeting with Ethan and his parents, who were told to get him into counseling within 48 hours, McDonald said.

The Crumbleys failed to ask their son about the gun or check his backpack and "resisted the idea of their son leaving the school at that time," McDonald said.

Instead, the teen returned to class and the shooting subsequently occurred.

In a written statement released Saturday, Oxford Community Schools Superintendent Tim Throne for the first time detailed the school's response to Crumbley's behavior. At the first meeting with a counselor and a staff member, Crumbley said shooting sports were a hobby for his family, Throne said.

During the second meeting with guidance counselors, Crumbley claimed the drawings were part of a video game design and said he wanted to pursue a career in that field, the letter said. According to guidance counselors, Crumbley was calm and worked on homework while staff tried to reach his parents and they traveled to the school.

The parents did not notify counselors that they had purchased a gun for their son recently during that meeting, Thorne said.

"Given the fact that the child had no prior disciplinary infractions, the decision was made he would be returned to the classroom rather than sent home to an empty house," he said.

The prosecutor, McDonald, also previously argued that Crumbley's parents should have told counselors their son had access to a gun when they were called in for a meeting about his behavior.

Jennifer Crumbley texted her son after the shooting, saying, "Ethan, don't do it," she said on Friday.

James Crumbley called 911 to say that a gun was missing from their home and that Ethan might be the shooter. The gun had been kept in an unlocked drawer in the parents' bedroom, McDonald said.

Ethan accompanied his father for the gun purchase on Nov. 26 and posted photos of the firearm on social media, saying, "Just got my new beauty today," McDonald said.

Over the long Thanksgiving weekend, Jennifer Crumbley wrote on social media that it is a "mom and son day testing out his new Christmas present," the prosecutor said.

Asked at a news conference if the father could be charged for purchasing the gun for the son, McDonald said that would be the decision of federal authorities.

McDonald was asked about the decision to keep Crumbley in school.

"Of course, he shouldn't have gone back to that classroom. ... I believe that is a universal position. I'm not going to chastise or attack, but yeah," she said.

Asked if school officials may potentially be charged, McDonald said: "The investigation's ongoing."

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Foody reported from Chicago Associated Press journalists Ed White and Mike Householder in Detroit; David Eggert in Lansing, Mich., and John O'Connor in Springfield, Ill., also contributed to this report.

Edward Shames, last 'Band of Brothers' officer, dies at 99

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — Edward Shames, a World War II veteran who was the last surviving officer of "Easy Company," which inspired the HBO miniseries and book "Band of Brothers," has died. He was 99.

An obituary posted by the Holomon-Brown Funeral Home & Crematory said Shames, of Norfolk, Virginia, died peacefully at his home on Friday.

Shames was involved in some of the most important battles of World War II. During the war, he was a member of the renowned Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division.

"He made his first combat jump into Normandy on D-Day as part of Operation Overlord. He volunteered for Operation Pegasus and then fought with Easy Company in Operation Market Garden and the Battle of the Bulge in Bastogne," according to the obituary.

Shames was the first member of the 101st to enter Dachau concentration camp, just days after its liberation.

"When Germany surrendered, Ed and his men of Easy Company entered Hitler's Eagle's Nest where Ed managed to acquire a few bottles of cognac, a label indicating they were 'for the Fuhrer's use only.' Later, he would use the cognac to toast his oldest son's Bar Mitzvah," the obituary said.

After the war, Shames worked for the National Security Agency as an expert on Middle East affairs. He also served in the U.S. Army Reserve Division and later retired as a colonel.

Easy Company was the subject of Stephen Ambrose's 1992 book, "Band of Brothers," upon which the HBO miniseries was based. The 2001 miniseries, created by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg, followed Easy Company from its training in Georgia in 1942 all the way to the war's end in 1945. Shames was portrayed by British actor Joseph May.

Shames is survived by his sons Douglas and Steven, four grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

A graveside service will be held at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Norfolk, Virginia, on Sunday morning, the funeral home said.

This story has been edited to correct the name of D-Day operation, Operation Overlord, not Overload.

Penobscots don't want ancestors' scalping to be whitewashed

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Most Americans know about atrocities endured by Native Americans after the arrival of European settlers: wars, disease, stolen land. But they aren't always taught the extent of the indiscriminate killings.

Members of the Penobscot Nation in Maine have produced an educational film addressing how European settlers scalped — killed — Indigenous people during the British colonial era, spurred for decades by cash bounties and with the government's blessing.

"It was genocide," said Dawn Neptune Adams, one of the three Penobscot Nation members featured in the film, called "Bounty."

She said the point of the effort isn't to make any Americans feel defensive or blamed. The filmmakers say they simply want to ensure this history isn't whitewashed by promoting a fuller understanding of the nation's past.

At the heart of the project is a chilling declaration by Spencer Phips, lieutenant governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay.

Issued in November 1755, it gave "His Majesty's Subjects" license to kill Penobscots for "this entire month." The reward was about \$12,000 in today's dollars for the scalp of a man, and half that for a woman's scalp. The amount was slightly less for a child. Settlers who killed Indigenous people were sometimes rewarded

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with land, in addition to money, expanding settlers' reach while displacing tribes from their ancestral lands. The declaration is familiar to many Penobscots because a copy of the document was displayed at the tribal offices at Indian Island, Maine.

"If every American knew the whole history of this country, even the dark and uncomfortable parts, it would help us to get along better and to understand each other better," said Maulian Dana, who co-directed the film with Neptune Adams.

Both Europeans and Native Americans engaged in scalping, but English colonists greatly expanded the practice when the government sanctioned the effort with bounties, the filmmakers said.

The first known colonial scalping order is from 1675. That's just a few short decades after the first Thanksgiving in 1621, when Pilgrims gathered with Wampanoag people for a harvest celebration, said Chris Newell, who is Passamaquoddy and wrote "If You Lived During the Plimoth Thanksgiving."

All told, there were more than 70 bounty proclamations encouraging white colonists to kill tribal members in what's now New England, and another 50 government-sanctioned proclamations elsewhere across the country, the filmmakers' research found. Colonial governments paid out bounties for scalps of at least 375 Indigenous people across New England between 1675 to 1760, they said.

Emerson Baker, a Salem State University professor who specializes in New England history, called the tribal education effort "a powerful course correction."

"Most people realize that Native Americans were here first and that the colonists did their best to remove them from the land. They just have no idea of the extremes that it took," Baker said. "Pretty much any Native American man, woman or child was considered fair game at times, and sometimes by the government."

Collaborating with the Massachusetts-based Upstander Project, the filmmakers released "Bounty" in November during National Native American Heritage Month.

Neptune Adams and Dana, along with Tim Shay and their families, were filmed at the Old State House in Boston. It's the same location where Lt. Gov. Phips' scalping order was signed.

In "Bounty," the three participants describe having nightmares of Penobscots being chased through the woods, and discuss the dehumanization and massacre of their people.

"When you learn about a people's humanity, that affects how you treat my kids, how you vote on public policy, how you may view my people," Dana said.

Accompanying the short video is a 200-page study guide aimed at teachers. Several school districts, including Portland Public Schools in Maine's largest city, are purchasing licenses for the video and plan to use the study guides to assist instruction.

In Portland, the scalp bounties will be included as one element in a curriculum that will bring the school district into compliance with a 2001 law requiring students to be taught Wabanaki Studies focusing on Native Americans in Maine, said Fiona Hopper, social studies teacher leader and Wabanaki studies coordinator.

"Students and teachers will see in 'Bounty' the ongoing endurance and resistance of Penobscot Nation citizens," Hopper said.

Follow David Sharp on Twitter at https://twitter.com/David_Sharp_AP

In democracy's birthplace, pope warns of populist threats

By NICOLE WINFIELD and DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Pope Francis warned Saturday that the "easy answers" of populism and authoritarianism are threatening democracy in Europe and called for fresh dedication to promoting the common good rather than narrow, nationalist interests.

Arriving in Greece, the birthplace of democracy, Francis used a speech to Greek political and cultural leaders to warn Europe at large about the threats facing the continent. He said only robust multilateralism can address the pressing issues of the day, from protecting the environment to fighting the pandemic and poverty.

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"Politics needs this, in order to put common needs ahead of private interests," Francis said. "Yet we cannot avoid noting with concern how today, and not only in Europe, we are witnessing a retreat from democracy."

Francis, who lived through Argentina's populist Peronist era as well as its military dictatorship, has frequently warned about the threat of authoritarianism and populism and the danger it poses to the European Union and democracy itself.

He didn't name any specific countries or leaders during his speech. The EU, however, is locked in a feud with members Poland and Hungary over rule-of-law issues, with Warsaw insisting that Polish law takes precedence over EU policies and regulations.

Coincidentally, on the same day Francis warned about the populist threat to Europe, right-wing populist leaders met in Warsaw and declared they will work more closely together to defend their sovereignty at the European Parliament.

Outside the bloc, populist leaders in Brazil and the administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump pressed nationalist policies on the environment that contrasted sharply with Francis' call to care for "our common home."

Opening the second leg of his five-day trip to Cyprus and Greece, Francis recalled that it was in Greece, according to Aristotle, that man became conscious of being a "political animal" and a member of a community of fellow citizens.

"Here, democracy was born," Francis told Greek President Katerina Sakellaropoulou. "That cradle, thousands of years later, was to become a house, a great house of democratic peoples. I am speaking of the European Union and the dream of peace and fraternity that it represents for so many peoples."

That dream is at risk amid the economic upheaval and other disruptions of the pandemic that can breed nationalist sentiments and make authoritarianism seem "compelling and populism's easy answers appear attractive," Francis said.

"The remedy is not to be found in an obsessive quest for popularity, in a thirst for visibility, in a flurry of unrealistic promises ... but in good politics," he said.

Francis praised the "necessary vaccination campaign" promoted by governments to tame the coronavirus. He referenced another Greek doctor-philosopher — Hippocrates — in response to vaccine skeptics and virus deniers, who count many religious conservatives among them. Francis cited the Hippocratic oath to not only do what is best for the sick, but to "abstain from whatever is harmful and offensive to others," especially the elderly.

Greece's president echoed the sentiment. "The virus spreads and mutates, helped by the irrational denial of reality and inequalities in our societies," Sakellaropoulou said.

Greece is grappling with its highest level of coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic, with deaths approaching record levels. A quarter of the country's adults remain unvaccinated, and Parliament recently approved a vaccine mandate for people over age 60.

Francis' trip has been clouded by the Dec. 2 death of the Vatican's ambassador to the European Union, Archbishop Aldo Giordano, among several prelates who tested positive for COVID-19 after celebrating Francis' final Mass in Slovakia in September. The Vatican's EU embassy insisted that Giordano caught the virus days earlier during a European bishops' meeting in Hungary.

Francis' visit to Cyprus and Greece also has focused on the plight of migrants as Europe hardens its border control policies. On Sunday he is returning to the Aegean Sea island of Lesbos, which he visited five years ago to meet with migrants at a detention camp.

In Athens, Francis is also met with Archbishop Ieronymos, the head of Greece's Orthodox Church.

In 2001, Pope John Paul II became the first Catholic leader to visit Greece in more than 1,200 years and he used the occasion to beg forgiveness for the sins "by action or omission" of Catholics against Orthodox over the centuries. Francis' visit 20 years later sought to further mend Catholic-Orthodox ties, still wounded by the Great Schism that divided Christianity.

Ieronymos told Francis on Saturday that he shared the pope's vision to forge strong ties to face global

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challenges like the migration crisis and climate change.

"If the world community, the leaders of powerful states, and international organizations do not take bold decisions, the ever-threatening presence of vulnerable refugee women and children will continue to grow globally," Ieronymos warned.

An elderly Orthodox priest heckled Francis as he arrived at Ieronymos' residence, shouting: "Pope you are a heretic!" before police hustled him away.

Francis has accelerated inter-faith initiatives, as the two churches attempt to shift from centuries of competition and mistrust toward collaboration. Orthodox churches are also seeking alliances amid a deepening dispute over the independence of the Ukrainian church, which was historically governed by the Russian Orthodox Church.

"I think the presence of the pope in Greece and Cyprus signals a return to the normal relationship that we should have ... so that we can move toward what is most important of all: the unity of the Christian world," Ioannis Panagiotopoulos, an associate professor of divinity and church history at Athens University, told The Associated Press.

The pope's visit ends Monday.

Theodora Tongas in Athens contributed. ____ Follow Winfield at <https://twitter.com/nwinfield> and Gatopoulos at <https://twitter.com/dgatopoulos>

UK tightens travel testing rules amid omicron concerns

LONDON (AP) — Britain's government tightened travel restrictions Saturday amid concerns about the spread of the omicron coronavirus variant, saying all travelers arriving in England will need to take a COVID-19 test before they board their flight.

Health Secretary Sajid Javid said the new rules will apply from 4 a.m. London time Tuesday.

"In light of the most recent data, we are taking further action to slow the incursion of the omicron variant," he said in a tweet.

Javid also added Nigeria to the U.K.'s travel "red list," which means that arrivals from there will be banned except for U.K. and Irish residents, and those travellers must isolate in designated quarantine facilities. He said there was a "significant number" of omicron cases linked to travel with Nigeria, with 27 cases recorded in England.

Karen Dee, the chief executive of the Airport Operators Association, said the new measures will be a "major deterrent" to travel, just as airports and the travel industry were hoping for a small uplift over the festive season.

"This is a devastating blow for aviation and tourism," she said

Authorities recorded another 42,848 confirmed coronavirus cases in the U.K. as of Saturday, with 127 more deaths. With over 145,000 COVID-19 deaths in the pandemic, Britain has the second-highest virus death toll in Europe after Russia.

Follow all AP stories about the pandemic at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

Trump media partner says it has lined up \$1B in capital

PALM BEACH, Florida (AP) — Donald Trump's new social media company and its special purpose acquisition company partner say the partner has agreements for \$1 billion in capital from institutional investors.

The former president launched his new company, Trump Media & Technology Group, in October. He unveiled plans for a new messaging app called "Truth Social" to rival Twitter and the other social media platforms that banned him following the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

TMTG's plan is to become a publicly listed company through a merger with the publicly traded Digital World Acquisition Corp., a special purpose acquisition company whose sole purpose is to acquire a private company and take it public.

The institutional investors were not identified in a press release issued Saturday by Trump Media and Digital World. The money would come from "a diverse group" of investors after the two companies are combined, it said.

Digital World said in the release that the \$1 billion is above the \$293 million (minus expenses) that it may invest.

"I am confident that TMTG can effectively deploy this capital to accelerate and strengthen the execution of its business, including by continuing to attract top talent, hire top technology providers, and roll out significant advertising and business development campaigns," Digital World CEO Patrick Orlando said in the release.

Trump is listed as chair of TMTG. He will get tens of millions in special bonus shares if the combined company performs well, handing the former president possibly billions of dollars in paper wealth.

France to work with Saudis to resolve crisis with Lebanon

By AYA BATRAWY and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — France's president and Saudi Arabia's crown prince held a joint phone call with Lebanon's prime minister during Emmanuel Macron's visit to the kingdom on Saturday, in a significant gesture amid an unprecedented crisis between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.

During the calls with Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Macron said France and Saudi Arabia expressed their commitment to Lebanon, despite Saudi Arabia's uneasiness with Iran's sway over the small Mediterranean country.

Macron did not, however, say whether punitive measures targeting Lebanon by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations will be revoked. The kingdom withdrew its ambassador from Lebanon last month, with several Gulf states taking similar action to protest their frustration with Iran-backed Hezbollah's domination of Lebanese politics. Riyadh also banned imports from Lebanon.

The Lebanese information minister whose comments sparked the crisis resigned Friday, paving the way for the French leader to start dialogue with Saudi Arabia. Minister George Kordahi had criticized the Saudi-led war in Yemen against Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Kordahi, backed by Hezbollah, had refused to resign for weeks, prolonging the crisis that affected hundreds of Lebanese businesses.

Hezbollah has been blamed for the recent paralysis that has plagued the Lebanese government following the group's disapproval over the course of the investigation into a deadly blast at Beirut's main port last year. Hezbollah has demanded the lead judge in the investigation be removed.

Macron said during the call that he and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman relayed "a clear message Saudi Arabia and France want to be fully committed."

"We want to commit ourselves to supporting the Lebanese people and therefore do everything possible to ensure that trade and economic reopening can take place," Macron told reporters in remarks before departing the kingdom.

"We also want the (Lebanese) government to be able to work in a normal way and therefore to meet as soon as possible, and to carry out useful reforms," he added.

It was the first call between Mikati, who took office in September, and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, a traditional ally of Lebanon. Mikati said the call with the French and Saudi leaders "is an important step" toward restoring historic relations with Riyadh.

The French president indicated that France and Saudi Arabia will work together to offer essential, humanitarian assistance to Lebanon, which is facing an unprecedented slew of economic crises brought on by failures in government and pervasive corruption.

It marked another intervention by Macron to try and aid Lebanon, a nation that was once a French protectorate. It also marked the first call between the Saudi crown prince and Lebanon's prime minister since Najib Mikati took office in September.

Macron, 43, has consistently kept a line of communication open with the 36-year-old heir to the Saudi throne, including during times of international controversy. Most notably, the French president's intervention was seen as key in 2017 in assisting Lebanon's then-Prime Minister Saad Hariri to leave Saudi Arabia

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after allegedly being compelled to resign from his post during a visit to the Saudi capital, Riyadh.

He acknowledged that relationship with the kingdom, saying that a large part of the future of the Gulf region is playing out in Saudi Arabia with its overwhelmingly youthful population in a country of over 30 million people. He noted Saudi Arabia's demographic, economic, historical and religious weight, saying for these reasons "dialogue with Saudi Arabia is a necessity."

Macron's visit to Saudi Arabia was the final step in a two-day tour of three Gulf states. Concerns over Iran's nuclear program, the multiple crises in Lebanon and the ongoing war in Yemen were aired in the meetings.

Earlier in the day, Macron was in Qatar, where he praised the tiny Gulf state's role in assisting with evacuation efforts of European citizens out of Afghanistan following the Taliban's takeover of the country over the summer.

He said France and other EU countries are thinking about "having a common site to several European countries where our ambassadors or chargés d'affaires can be present" in Afghanistan. He stressed this would not signal political recognition or political dialogue with the Taliban.

In Saudi Arabia, Macron met the crown prince in the Red Sea city of Jiddah, where the kingdom is in the midst of hosting its first ever Formula One race and a pop concert by Justin Bieber, despite calls by rights groups for a boycott. It's the latest push by the young crown prince to showcase the social reforms he's ushered in and been hailed for. Simultaneously, though, the prince has also spearheaded a pervasive crackdown on human rights activists and critics, culminating in the killing of Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi in late 2018 in Turkey, an operation that stained the prince's reputation abroad.

Throughout his visit to the Gulf, Macron's meetings also focused on the revived talks regarding Iran's nuclear deal with world powers, of which France is a party to. France, Germany and the United Kingdom have signaled the 2015 nuclear agreement — with minor tweaks — is the way forward with Iran. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia had opposed the negotiated deal with Iran, though both have since held talks with Tehran to cool tensions.

During Macron's visit to the UAE on Friday, France announced the UAE is buying 80 upgraded Rafale warplanes in a deal worth 16 billion euros (\$18 billion) that represents the largest-ever French weapons contract for export. The deal faced criticism by human rights groups concerned about the UAE's involvement in the war in Yemen.

El Deeb reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Masha Macpherson and Sylvie Corbet contributed from Paris.

US drugstores squeezed by vaccine demand, staff shortages

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

A rush of vaccine-seeking customers and staff shortages are squeezing drugstores around the U.S., leading to frazzled workers and temporary pharmacy closures.

Drugstores are normally busy this time of year with flu shots and other vaccines, but now pharmacists are doling out a growing number of COVID-19 shots and giving coronavirus tests.

The push for shots is expected to grow more intense as President Joe Biden urges vaccinated Americans to get booster shots to combat the emerging omicron variant. The White House said Thursday that more than two in three COVID-19 vaccinations are happening at local pharmacies.

And pharmacists worry another job might soon be added to their to-do list: If regulators approve antiviral pills from drugmakers Merck and Pfizer to treat COVID-19, pharmacists may be able to diagnose infections and then prescribe pills to customers.

"There's crazy increased demand on pharmacies right now," said Theresa Tolle, an independent pharmacist who has seen COVID-19 vaccine demand quadruple since the summer at her Sebastian, Florida, store.

Pharmacists say demand for COVID-19 vaccines started picking up over the summer as the delta variant spread rapidly. Booster shots and the expansion of vaccine eligibility to include children have since stoked it.

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On top of that workload and routine prescriptions, many drugstores also have been asking pharmacists to counsel patients more generally on their health or about chronic conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure.

Pharmacies also have been handling more phone calls from customers with questions about vaccines or COVID-19 tests, noted Justin Wilson, who owns three independent pharmacies in Oklahoma.

"We're all working a lot harder than we did before, but we're doing everything we can to take care of people," Wilson said, adding that he has not had to temporarily close any of his pharmacies or limit hours so far.

Tolle said she was lucky to hire a pharmacy resident just before the delta surge arrived. The new employee was supposed to focus mostly on diabetes programs but has largely been relegated to vaccine duty.

Tolle said her Bay Street Pharmacy is now giving about 80 COVID-19 vaccines a day, up from 20 before the delta wave.

"God's timing worked out well for me," she said. "We would not have gotten through without having that additional person here."

Others haven't been as fortunate. A CVS Health store on the northeast side of Indianapolis shuttered its pharmacy in the middle of the afternoon Thursday due to staffing issues. A sign taped to the metal gate over the closed pharmacy counter also told customers that the pharmacy will soon start closing for a half hour each afternoon so the pharmacist can have a lunch break.

Such temporary closures have ebbed and flowed in pockets around the country throughout the pandemic, but they have grown more acute in recent months, said Anne Burns, a vice president with the American Pharmacists Association.

Pharmacies all need minimum staffing to operate safely, and they sometimes have to close temporarily if they fall below those levels.

Burns said many pharmacies already had relatively thin staffing levels heading into the pandemic, and a wave of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians left after the virus hit.

"There is a lot of stress and burnout for individuals who have been going at this since March of 2020," she said.

CVS Health spokesman T.J. Crawford said he couldn't comment on the circumstances for one store. But he said his company continues "to manage through a workforce shortage that isn't unique to CVS Health."

Rival drugstore chain Walgreens also has adjusted pharmacy hours "in a limited number of stores," spokesman Fraser Engerman said.

Both companies are hiring. CVS Health says it has hired 23,000 employees from a push it started in September. About half of that total was pharmacy technicians, who can deliver vaccines.

As companies scramble to hire or keep staff, Burns and Tolle worry about adding even more responsibilities like diagnosing and treating COVID-19.

Tolle noted that it is not clear yet how pharmacists will be reimbursed for the time they take to diagnose and prescribe. That will have to be clarified, especially if cases surge again and drugstores need to add even more workers to help.

"We want to be able to help our communities," she said. "I don't know how pharmacies are going to manage it."

Sherri Brown, a city employee in Omaha, Nebraska, was searching for a vaccine booster dose, but two nearby pharmacies didn't have appointments available and a third didn't have the brand she wanted. She wound up getting a shot at a county-run clinic on Friday.

"I just wanted to protect myself," said Brown, who suffered through two weeks of coughing, headaches and fatigue when she caught the virus in January, before she was vaccinated. "I guess I'm encouraged to see that people are taking this more seriously."

Grant Schulte in Omaha, Nebraska, contributed to this story. Follow Tom Murphy on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thpmurphy>

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Merkel: Virus death toll 'so bitter because it is avoidable'

BERLIN (AP) — Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday made what is likely her final appeal before leaving office next week for Germans to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Merkel gave what is expected to be her last weekly video message two days after federal and state leaders decided on a series of measures meant to break a wave of coronavirus infections.

The measures include excluding unvaccinated people across the country from nonessential stores, restaurants and sports and cultural venues. In a longer-term move, parliament will consider a general vaccine mandate.

At least 68.9% of Germans are fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, short of the government's aim of a minimum 75% vaccination rate. The number of unvaccinated residents has been blamed as a key factor in a surge of new virus cases in recent weeks.

Official figures suggest that the infection rate may now be stabilizing, but at too high a level.

The national disease control center on Saturday reported 64,510 new daily cases and a 7-day infection rate of 442.7 new cases per 100,000 residents. Another 378 deaths in 24 hours brought Germany's total in the pandemic to 102,946.

"Every one of them leaves behind families or friends, stunned, speechless and helpless," Merkel said in her video message. "This is so bitter because it is avoidable. With the effective and safe vaccines, we have the key to this in our hands."

She renewed a plea to Germans to take the virus seriously, adding that the new omicron variant "appears to be even more contagious than the previous ones."

"Get vaccinated, no matter whether it's a first vaccination or a booster," Merkel said. "Every vaccination helps."

Merkel is expected to leave office on Wednesday and be replaced by Olaf Scholz of the center-left Social Democratic Party, who is currently vice chancellor. Scholz said Saturday that his government's "most important first task" is to "fight the corona pandemic with all the strength that we have."

"There would be a different situation now if just a few more citizens had also made the decision to get vaccinated," he said at a convention of the Social Democrats. "We must again make a whole new effort, set in motion a whole new campaign" to get more shots in arms, Scholz said.

Senior members of the party denounced a Friday evening protest outside the home of Saxony state's health minister, Petra Koepping, a Social Democrat. About 30 people gathered with torches and placards outside the home in the eastern town of Grimma.

The demonstrators chanted against coronavirus policies before fleeing in cars when police arrived.

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

EXPLAINER: Stuck jet stream, La Nina causing weird weather

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

America's winter wonderland is starting out this season as anything but traditional.

The calendar says December but for much of the country temperatures beckon for sandals. Umbrellas, if not arks, are needed in the Pacific Northwest, while in the Rockies snow shovels are gathering cobwebs.

Meteorologists attribute the latest batch of record-shattering weather extremes to a stuck jet stream and the effects of a La Nina weather pattern from cooling waters in the equatorial Pacific.

It's still fall astronomically, but winter starts Dec. 1 for meteorologists. This year, no one told the weather that.

On Thursday, 65 weather stations across the nation set record high temperature marks for Dec. 2, in-

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cluding Springfield, Missouri, hitting 75 degrees Fahrenheit (24 Celsius) and Roanoke, Virginia 72 degrees Fahrenheit (22 Celsius). Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Billings, Montana, broke long-time heat records by 6 degrees.

Parts of Canada and Montana have seen their highest December records in recorded history. On Friday, parts of South Carolina and Georgia hit record highs.

In Washington state, Seattle, Bellingham and Quillayute all set 90-day fall records for rainfall. Bellingham was doused by nearly two feet (60 centimeters) of rain. The Olympic and Cascade mountains got hit harder, with more than 50 inches (127 centimeters) in three months, according to the National Weather Service. Forks, Washington, received more rain in 90 days than Las Vegas gets in 13 years.

On top of that, there is a blizzard warning on Hawaii's Big Island summits with up to 12 inches (30.5 centimeters) of snow expected and wind gusts of more than 100 miles per hour (161 kilometers per hour).

Meantime, snow's gone missing in Colorado. Before this year, the latest first measurable snowfall on record in Denver was Nov. 21, way back in 1934. There's a slight possibility of snow Monday night, according to the weather service. Yet, with no snow since April 22, this is the third longest stretch the city has gone without it.

One big factor: The jet stream — the river of air that moves weather from west to east on a rollercoaster-like path — has just been stuck. That means low pressure on one part of the stream is bringing rain to the Pacific Northwest, while high pressure hovering over about two-thirds of the nation produces dry and warmer weather, said Brian Hurley, a senior meteorologist at the weather service's Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland.

If the jet stream moves more or bends differently, rain and other extreme weather won't be as concentrated, Hurley said.

This is a typical weather pattern with a natural La Nina weather oscillation, he said. The flip side of El Nino, a La Nina is a cooling of parts of the central Pacific Ocean that changes weather patterns across the globe. La Ninas tend to bring more rain to the Pacific Northwest and make the South drier and warmer.

These bouts of extreme weather happen more frequently as the world warms, said meteorologist Jeff Masters, founder of Weather Underground who now works at Yale Climate Connections. But scientists haven't done the required study to attribute these events to human-caused climate change.

In Boulder, Colorado, meteorologist Bob Henson enjoyed a rare December bike ride on Thursday.

Still, "there's a lot of angst about the lack of snow," he said. "It puts you in a psychic quandary. You enjoy the warm weather while keeping in mind it's not good for Earth to be warming."

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears.

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Le Pen: The right takes step to build 'big European force'

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — European right-wing populist leaders declared Saturday they will cooperate more closely at the European Union's parliament in order to defend the sovereignty of their bloc's 27 member nations.

A statement at the end of the meeting fell short of a declaration to create a new alliance at the European Parliament, an idea that some of the party leaders have sought but that has so far not materialized.

Still, French far-right party leader Marine Le Pen said the meeting was "a key step" toward closer cooperation. It brought together party leaders from more than a dozen nations united in conservative values, nationalism and a sense that the EU is taking powers for itself never given to it in the union's treaties.

"It's a step forward that is very welcome and allows me to be very optimistic about the future," Le Pen said.

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The party leaders agreed to meet at least every two months at the European Parliament, while another meeting is planned in Spain in two months "to continue to move forward on strengthening and creating that big European force," Le Pen said.

Jaroslav Kaczynski, the leader of Poland's nationalist ruling party, hosted the meeting, which was also attended by Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and the leader of Spain's far-right Vox party, Santiago Abascal.

The event Saturday follows a joint declaration by 16 right-wing parties in July and an visit by Le Pen to Budapest in October.

The meeting was also a show of solidarity for the Polish and Hungarian governments from like-minded politicians.

The governments of the two central European nations remain locked in a bitter standoff with the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, which is withholding funds to both countries over democratic backsliding. Warsaw and Budapest argue that the commission is taking a step that never was laid out in any EU treaties.

The statement Saturday said the populists need a model of cooperation to "put a stop to the disturbing idea of creating a Europe governed by a self-appointed elite."

"We reject the arbitrary application of union law, bending or even violating the treaties. Only the sovereign institutions of the states have full democratic legitimacy," it added.

They also lashed out at internal guidelines the Commission had proposed substituting the "Christmas period" with "holiday period." The EU retracted it after a backlash from conservatives and the Vatican.

Citing that incident, the populists said they objected to attempts "to ideologically alter our languages in a way which will detach a human being from their culture and heritage."

Wojciech Przybylski, editor in chief of Visegrad Insight, a policy journal focused on Central Europe, said there is a paradox in a "transnational meeting of nationalist parties." He thinks the event was organized so the party leaders can show their voters "they are not alone."

Both the Hungarian and Polish ruling parties, he noted, are "in deep trouble," with Orban's Fidesz party forced to leave the main group of conservatives at the European Parliament and Poland's governing populists seeing a drop in popularity at home.

"This is essentially a PR stunt," Przybylski said.

The Poles' welcome of Le Pen marks a recent change of heart for Poland's governing conservatives, who had long refused to cooperate with the French presidential candidate due to her warm relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Le Pen's stance has been a taboo in Poland, a country long dominated by Russian and Soviet rule.

"We have as much in common with Ms. Le Pen as with Mr. Putin," Kaczynski remarked in 2017.

As Saturday's meeting opened in a hotel, a small group of protesters outside blew whistles and yelled accusations that the leaders were extremists serving the interests of the Kremlin. The demonstrators held signs saying "Russian pact," and chanted, "Warsaw free from fascism!"

Polish party officials on Saturday defended the meeting with Le Pen, arguing that Europe's mainstream leaders have done much more than Le Pen to help the Kremlin, citing the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which has been supported by outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Contact tracing revs up in some states as omicron reaches US

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

The arrival of the omicron variant of the coronavirus in the U.S. has health officials in some communities reviving contact tracing operations in an attempt to slow and better understand its spread as scientists study how contagious it is and whether it can thwart vaccines.

In New York City, officials quickly reached out to a man who tested positive for the variant and had attended an anime conference at a Manhattan convention center last month along with more than 50,000 people. Five other attendees have also been infected with the coronavirus, though officials don't yet know

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whether it was with the omicron variant.

"As for what we learned about this conference at the Javits Center and these additional cases, our test and trace team is out there immediately working with each individual who was affected to figure out who else they came in contact with. That contact tracing is absolutely crucial," New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

Once a global epicenter of the pandemic, New York has the country's biggest contact tracing effort. The city identified four omicron cases Thursday, and a fifth was discovered in nearby Suffolk County on eastern Long Island.

The variant has been detected in a handful of other states so far, including California, Colorado and Hawaii.

Contact tracers have been busy in Nebraska after six cases of omicron were confirmed Friday. One of the people had recently returned from a visit to Nigeria, and the other five were close contacts of that person.

In Philadelphia, officials were working to track down contacts of a man in his 30s who is Pennsylvania's first resident infected with the variant, the city's Department of Public Health said.

And in Maryland, officials were rushing to trace, quarantine and test close contacts of three people from the Baltimore area who are the first known cases in the state. Two are from the same household, including a vaccinated person who recently traveled to South Africa, and the third has no recent travel history and is unrelated to the other two.

Dr. Marcus Plescia, chief medical officer of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, said "more and more" contact tracing efforts are expected in the coming days, in part because of the uncertainty about how effective vaccines and treatments like monoclonal antibodies will be against omicron.

Contact tracing is a vital tool in the pandemic response, allowing health departments to notify people who had close contact with an infected person and slow the progression of COVID-19.

"Contact tracing can give us information about how it's spreading and hopefully break chains of transmission to stop clusters and outbreaks, or at least delay them until we know more and understand what our next steps need to be," said Crystal Watson, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health.

While much is still unknown about the variant, early reports are raising alarms. New COVID-19 cases in South Africa, which first alerted the world to omicron last week, have burgeoned from about 200 a day in mid-November to more than 16,000 on Friday.

Some of the U.S. cases involve people who hadn't traveled recently, meaning the variant was likely already circulating domestically in some parts of the country.

In New York, the three-day anime festival in November is presenting a staffing challenge for tracers due to the large number of attendees. The one known omicron infection involved a man from Minnesota.

Officials cautioned against linking the other five coronavirus cases directly to the event.

"The really important point here is that's five cases from a denominator of tens of thousands of people at this conference. And furthermore, we've not established any sort of link between those five cases and widespread transmission at the conference," said Ted Long, executive director of the NYC Test & Trace Corps, which runs the city's contact tracing program.

Proof of vaccination was necessary for admission, as mandated by city law, and masks were also required.

Officials said they had reached all 36,500 convention attendees, vendors and exhibitors for whom they had contact information, via email, text message or phone call. But they decided it wasn't necessary to contact every single attendee since the infected man did not appear to have close contacts based in New York.

In Minnesota, meanwhile, officials are investigating "a circle of contacts" for the man believed to have been infected at the conference, said Kris Ehresmann, the state's infectious disease director.

"Part of the reason we did indicate where he had been — the anime convention in New York — is because there were so many people that attended that event. It would not be possible for him or really anyone to identify everyone that they were potentially in contact with," Ehresmann said.

Amid the surge of the delta variant, health investigators across the U.S. became overwhelmed and scaled back contact tracing operations, finding it nearly impossible to keep up with the deluge of new infections,

administer vaccines and also do tracing at the same time.

Many health officials ultimately focused on exposures at schools or potential super-spreader incidents where large numbers of people were at risk of exposure.

Dr. William Schaffner, a professor of infectious diseases at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, expects that will ultimately happen with omicron.

"Contact tracing and sequencing will allow us to paint with a broad brush," Schaffner said. "But we won't be able to track it down to each and every case, and at a given point, when you know it is here and spreading, why do we need to do that?"

Associated Press writer Dave Kolpack contributed from Fargo, North Dakota.

2nd Stacey Abrams governor bid sees new tests, intrigues

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Stacey Abrams announced a long-awaited second run for Georgia governor this week, but with Democrats facing a sour national environment and Republican Gov. Brian Kemp facing challenges within his own party, the 2022 campaign will look different from 2018.

Abrams' narrow loss, highlighted by her claims that Kemp used his prior post as secretary of state to unfairly push voters away, vaulted her to national stardom in a year when Democrats nationwide capitalized on then-President Donald Trump's unpopularity.

Abrams' contention that Georgia could be dragged into the Democratic column by focusing on registering and mobilizing infrequent Democratic-leaning voters was validated in 2020, when Joe Biden won Georgia by about 12,000 votes and in 2021, when Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock won runoffs to deliver control of the U.S. Senate to Democrats.

But the political tide appears to be running against Biden and other Democrats, with low approval ratings in polls and losses in Virginia elections.

"The environment for Democrats is wretched," said Brian Robinson, who advises Republican candidates in Georgia. "These are terrible dynamics for Stacey Abrams, and she wants to be president and not governor. If she loses twice, she's toast. She's taking a gamble — a big gamble."

The Georgia voters who might change their minds are mostly college-educated suburbanites. But Democrats argue most Georgia voters are fixed in their partisan preferences, and the key is getting your side to vote. Abrams and her supporters argue that outreach and a focus on issues will be more important than national headwinds.

"What I saw in 2020 and 2021 is that when people are reached out to, when we talk to them and we meet them where they are, they will vote and they will turn out," Abrams told WXIA-TV Thursday.

Nse Ufot, CEO of the New Georgia Project, a voter mobilization group Abrams founded, pointed to gains by Black and more liberal candidates in some Georgia municipal elections this year, although more conservative candidates prevailed in some Atlanta suburbs. Those elections are nonpartisan, although party affiliations are often widely known.

"The truth of the matter," Ufot said, is the elections proved "Virginia is not Georgia."

Part of Democrats' case is that Georgia's population growth is being driven by nonwhite residents, bringing the state to the cusp of becoming majority nonwhite in the 2020 census. That's partly a story of African American growth, but also driven by rapidly increasing residents of Latino and Asian descent.

"What's different is Georgia is on a demographic and partisan trajectory, that over the last 10 years has moved the state toward Democrats," Robinson said.

But Republicans also will be trying to maximize their turnout, especially among exurban and rural white residents, and Emory University political scientist Andra Gillespie said a Democratic advantage is not certain in Georgia.

"There's going to be times when Republicans win elections and Democrats win elections," she said.

Gillespie said it's inescapable that the Georgia governor's race will be "nationalized because of the polar-

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ized moment that we're in politically."

Abrams wants to swing the spotlight to Kemp's record, arguing his failure to expand Medicaid to cover more low-income adults and his opposition to COVID-19 restrictions prove he doesn't have the best interest of Georgians at heart.

"We have a current governor who has failed the people of Georgia, that as the pandemic has raged, he has left behind too many communities, that he seems to ignore the real pain that's hurting families and hurting areas of the state, and that he seems to be focused on those who agree with him," Abrams told WXIA-TV.

But Kemp is more than ready to fight on that ground, betting that his record on COVID-19, a low unemployment rate and big pay raises for teachers will appeal to the voters he needs.

"That's what we're going to remind people about, is that record," Kemp told reporters Thursday. "That's what I'm going to be running on."

Unlike in 2018, Abrams has no declared opposition and is likely to cruise to the Democratic nomination in a May primary. But Kemp is under siege by Trump and his supporters who believe the governor didn't do enough to overturn Biden's 2020 victory in Georgia. Republican Vernon Jones is already among those challenging Kemp, but he faces the more serious threat that Republican former Sen. David Perdue might enter the race.

Kemp and his supporters are making clear that they will fight Perdue if necessary and that a bitter primary could pave Abrams' way to victory.

"So anybody else that wants to get in the race, you would have to ask them why, why are they going to do that? Kemp said Thursday. "Do they not like how great our economy is?"

Democrats are eagerly hoping the Republican Party can't bind up its wounds over Trump's baseless claims that he was cheated out of Georgia's electoral votes.

"I don't know what their mess is going to be," Abrams spokesperson Seth Bringman said. "I know our side is going to be unified, and I know that matters."

For Kemp, though, Abrams' entry is a chance to call the GOP to his side.

"I think it's a rallying point for Republicans because we know that this is just not the Georgia radicals that we're going to be facing," Kemp said. "It's going to be the Hollywood crowd and everybody else is going to flood money in here."

Follow Jeff Amy on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/jeffamy>.

EXPLAINER: How unusual to charge parents in school shooting?

By ED WHITE Associated Press

Guns used in U.S. school shootings have often come from the homes of young perpetrators, but parents are rarely charged for the violence that occurs, experts say.

That's what makes the case against Ethan Crumbley's parents uncommon, following the fatal shooting of four students at Oxford High School in southeastern Michigan. Oakland County prosecutor Karen McDonald said Jennifer and James Crumbley ignored opportunities to intervene, just a few hours before the bloodshed.

They're charged with four counts of involuntary manslaughter, while Ethan, 15, is charged as an adult with murder, terrorism and other crimes.

The Crumbley parents were taken into custody early Saturday and later appeared in court where a judge set a \$500,000 bond for each after they entered not guilty pleas. Their attorneys said they would fight the charges.

Here's a look at the issues facing the parents:

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE GUN?

The semi-automatic handgun used in the shooting Tuesday was purchased by James Crumbley on Nov. 26 while his son stood by at the shop, according to investigators.

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Over the Thanksgiving weekend, Jennifer Crumbley referred to it on social media as a "Christmas present" for her son, and Ethan posted a picture of it on social media, calling it his "new beauty," McDonald said.

With some very limited exceptions, minors in Michigan aren't allowed to possess guns. But there is no Michigan law that requires owners to keep guns locked away from kids.

"So many states do. There's 23 states plus Washington, D.C., that have some form of a secure storage law," Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel said.

During the court appearance Saturday, attorney Shannon Smith said the gun used was locked, but she did not say how their son got it.

WILL INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER BE TOUGH TO PROVE?

"It's an unusual charge to bring," said Eve Brensike Primus, who teaches criminal procedure at University of Michigan law school.

Police said Ethan Crumbley emerged from a bathroom and started shooting other students in the hallway at Oxford High. A few hours earlier, he and his parents had met with school officials. A teacher had found a drawing on his desk with a gun pointing at the words, "The thoughts won't stop. Help me," according to the prosecutor.

Ethan, who had no disciplinary record, was told to get counseling but was allowed to stay in school. His backpack was not checked for a weapon, McDonald said.

Primus said authorities must show gross negligence by the parents and causation, or the act of causing something.

"The prosecutor is going to need facts to support the argument that these parents really knew there was a risk that their son would take a gun and shoot people dead," she said. "Not just that their son was troubled in some way. This is a homicide charge that carries years in prison. This is not a small charge."

In 2000, a Flint-area man pleaded no contest to involuntary manslaughter after a 6-year-old boy who was living with him found a gun in a shoebox and killed a classmate.

WHY AREN'T PARENTS CHARGED MORE OFTEN?

A 2019 assessment by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security found that guns came from the home of a parent or close relative in 76% of school attacks where firearms were used. In about half, the firearms were easily accessible.

But laws aimed at restricting gun access are not always enforced and vary in strength, experts say.

"Our laws haven't really adapted to the reality of school shootings, and the closest we have are these child access prevention laws," said Kris Brown, president of the Brady gun control advocacy group

In 2020, the mother of an Indiana teen was placed on probation for failing to remove guns from her home after her mentally ill son threatened to kill students. He fired shots inside his school in 2018. No one was injured but the boy killed himself.

In Washington state, the father of a boy who killed four students at a high school in 2014 was convicted of illegally possessing firearms. He was not charged for the shooting, although one of his guns was used.

AP reporter Sophia Tareen in Chicago contributed to this story.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 5, the 339th day of 2021. There are 26 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 5, 1933, national Prohibition came to an end as Utah became the 36th state to ratify the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, repealing the 18th Amendment.

On this date:

In 1791, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died in Vienna, Austria, at age 35.

In 1792, George Washington was reelected president; John Adams was reelected vice president.

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In 1848, President James K. Polk triggered the Gold Rush of '49 by confirming that gold had been discovered in California.

In 1932, German physicist Albert Einstein was granted a visa, making it possible for him to travel to the United States.

In 1952, the Great Smog of London descended on the British capital; the unusually thick fog, which contained toxic pollutants, lasted five days and was blamed for causing thousands of deaths.

In 1955, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merged to form the AFL-CIO under its first president, George Meany.

In 1984, the action comedy "Beverly Hills Cop," starring Eddie Murphy, was released by Paramount Pictures.

In 2002, Strom Thurmond, the oldest and (until Robert Byrd overtook him) longest-serving senator in history, celebrated his 100th birthday on Capitol Hill. (In toasting the South Carolina lawmaker, Senate Republican leader Trent Lott seemed to express nostalgia for Thurmond's segregationist past; the resulting political firestorm prompted Lott to resign his leadership position.)

In 2003, the two makers of flu shots in the United States, Chiron and Aventis Pasteur, announced they had run out of vaccine and would not be able to meet a surge in demand.

In 2009, a jury in Perugia, Italy convicted American student Amanda Knox and her former Italian boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito (rah-fy-EHL'-ay soh-LEH'-chee-toh), of murdering Knox's British roommate, Meredith Kercher, and sentenced them to long prison terms. (After a series of back-and-forth rulings, Knox and Sollecito were definitively acquitted in 2015 by Italy's highest court.)

In 2013, Nelson Mandela, the anti-apartheid leader who became South Africa's first Black president, died at age 95.

In 2018, former President George H.W. Bush was mourned at a memorial service at Washington National Cathedral attended by President Donald Trump and former Presidents Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter along with their spouses; former president George W. Bush was among the speakers, eulogizing his dad as "the brightest of a thousand points of light."

Ten years ago: The cash-strapped U.S. Postal Service announced \$3 billion in reductions, with cuts to first-class mail service by the spring of 2012 and elimination of more than 250 processing centers. The NHL opted for a bold realignment plan giving the league four conferences instead of six divisions and guaranteeing home-and-home series among all teams.

Five years ago: President-elect Donald Trump chose retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson to be secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. A South Carolina judge declared a mistrial after a jury deadlocked in the murder trial of a white former police officer, Michael Slager, in the shooting death of a Black motorist, Walter Scott. (The next year, Slager pleaded guilty in federal court to violating Scott's civil rights and prosecutors dropped state murder charges; Slager was sentenced to 20 years in prison.) A judge in Marietta, Georgia, sentenced Justin Ross Harris to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole after a jury found that he intentionally left his 22-month-old son, Cooper, in a hot SUV to die.

One year ago: At a Georgia rally where he urged supporters to turn out for a pair of Republican Senate candidates in a January runoff election, President Donald Trump spread baseless allegations of misconduct in the November voting in Georgia and beyond. Hours before the rally, according to officials with knowledge of the call, Trump asked Georgia Republican Gov. Brian Kemp to order a special legislative session to give him the state's electoral votes, even though Joe Biden had won the majority of the vote; Kemp refused to do so. A college basketball matchup between top-ranked Gonzaga and No. 2 Baylor was canceled less than 90 minutes before tipoff because of two positive COVID-19 tests in the Gonzaga program.

Today's Birthdays: Author Joan Didion is 87. Author Calvin Trillin is 86. Actor Jeroen Krabbe (yeh-ROHN' krah-BAY') is 77. Opera singer Jose Carreras is 75. Musician and singer Jim Messina is 74. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL quarterback Jim Plunkett is 74. World Golf Hall of Famer Lanny Wadkins is 72. Actor Morgan Brittany is 70. Actor Brian Backer is 65. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Art Monk is 64. Country singer Ty England is 58. Rock singer-musician John Rzeznik (REZ'-nihk) (The Goo Goo Dolls)

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is 56. Country singer Gary Allan is 54. Comedian-actor Margaret Cho is 53. Writer-director Morgan J. Freeman is 52. Actor Alex Kapp Horner is 52. Actor Kali Rocha is 50. Rock musician Regina Zernay (Cowboy Mouth) is 49. Actor Paula Patton is 46. Actor Amy Acker is 45. Actor Nick Stahl is 42. Actor Adan Canto is 40. R&B singer Keri Hilson is 39. Actor Gabriel Luna is 39. Actor Frankie Muniz is 36. Actor Ross Bagley is 33. Milwaukee Brewers All-Star outfielder Christian Yelich is 30.