

Groton Daily Independent

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**The Groton Area School District
will open 2 hours late on
Wednesday, January 5, 2022.
There is no 8:30 AM preschool.
OST will be open at 7:00 AM.**

UpComing Events

Thursday, Jan. 6

6 p.m.: Wrestling Tri-angular at Groton with Redfield and Webster

Friday, Jan. 7

Penguin Classic Debate on-line

5 p.m.: Junior High Wrestling at Milbank

Girls Basketball hosts Sisseton with JV at 6 p.m. and varsity to follow

Saturday, Jan. 8

Groton Robotics Tournament, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Penguin Classic Debate on-line

Girls Basketball Classic at Redfield. Groton Area vs. Platte-Geddes at 3:30

Monday, Jan. 10

Boys' Basketball hosts Webster Area. C game starts at 5 p.m. with JV and Varsity to follow.

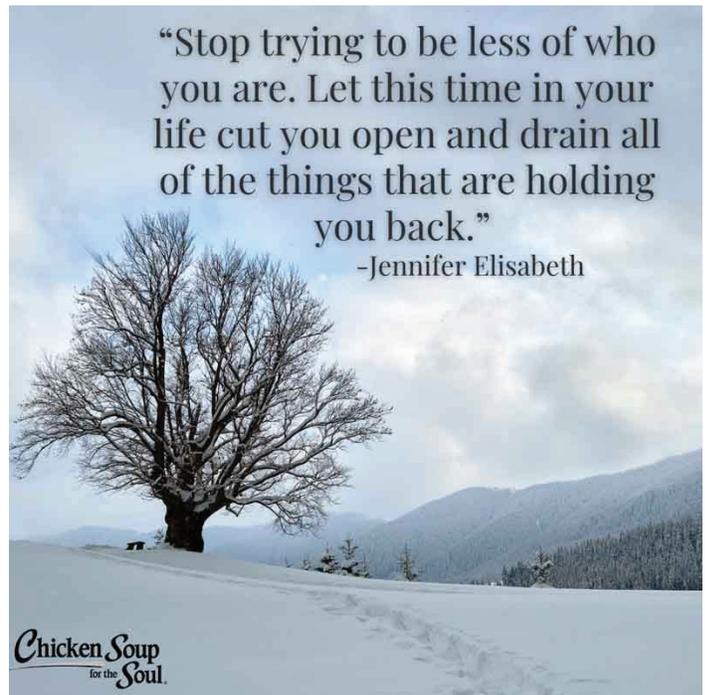
7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 11

5 p.m.: 7th/8th grade basketball game with Wauabay-Summit at Waubay. Single game so they may play extra quarters.

6 p.m.: Girls' Basketball hosts Aberdeen Christian. JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

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



“Stop trying to be less of who you are. Let this time in your life cut you open and drain all of the things that are holding you back.”

-Jennifer Elisabeth

Thursday, Jan. 13

Boys' Basketball at Aberdeen Roncalli. at Elementary Gym: 7th grade game at 4 p.m., 8th grade game at 5 p.m. at Roncalli High School: C game at 5 p.m. followed by junior varsity and varsity.

Friday, Jan. 14

Silver Bowl Debate at Sioux Falls

No School - Faculty In-Service at Warner School

6 p.m.: Girls' Basketball hosts Aberdeen Roncalli. JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

Saturday, Jan. 15

Silver Bowl Debate at Sioux Falls

Boys Basketball Classic at Redfield. Groton Area vs. Deubrook at 7:30

10 a.m.: Junior High boys basketball jamboree in Groton with Aberdeen Christian, Tiospa Zina and Webster Area.

10 a.m.: Wrestling at Potter County (Gettysburg) Invitational.

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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Time to change out your old cell phone

Do you have an old cell phone? If so, this may affect you.

Mobile carriers are shutting down their 3G networks, which rely on older technology, to make room for more advanced network services, including 5G.

As a result of this older cell phones will be unable to make ore receive calls and texts, including 911 calls.

Please consult with your mobile provider for the most up to date information and get ahead of the issue so you're not caught without a way to call 911 or make a call.

Four positions coming up on city council

The Groton City Council met Tuesday night for a brief meeting.

One of the items on the agenda include establishing the election date and revealing which positions are up for election this year. The election date is April 12. Terms are up Mayor Scott Hanlon for a three-year term, David Blackmun for councilman in Ward 1, Brian Bahr for councilman in Ward 2 and Kristie Fliehs for councilman in Ward 3. Bahr was a strong yes for running again. Blackmun said he was leaning toward no. Fliehs said her job has given her more responsibilities so she may not have the time to devote to the council right now.

The council adopted the Brown County Hazard Mitigation Plan and approved the contract for the city's liability and property insurance with the South Dakota Public Assurance Alliance.

The list of employees and volunteers was also presented and approved, which is an annual motion to make sure employees and volunteers are covered under the city's insurance policy.

Girls and boys teams beat Warner

Groton Area's girls basketball team posted a 38-21 win over Warner. The game was part of a double header at Warner.

Groton Area led at the quarter stops at 12-8, 22-12 and 27-14. Alyssa Thaler led the Tigers with 17 points while Gracie Traphagen had 11, Jaedyn Penning had three and adding two points each were Sydney Leicht, Kennedy Hansen and Allyssa Locke.

Meanwhile the boys defeated Warner, 48-26. Warner had the opening basket and that was it. From there, the Tigers took over and took a 12-4 lead at the end of the first quarter behind Kaden Kurtz's eight first quarter points. Groton Area took a 17-11 lead at half time and a 30-21 lead at the end of the third quarter. Kurtz made three three-pointers on the night and led the Tigers with 17 points. Lane Tietz made two three-pointers and had 11 points, Jacob Zak had 10 points which included four of four free throws, Jayden Zak had eight points with two three-pointers and Tate Larson had two points.

The boys junior varsity team won, 27-19.

Conde National League

Jan. 3 Team Standings: Pirates 13, Mets 10, Giants 8, Cubs 7, Braves 5, Tigers 5

Men's High Games: Chad Furney 198, 187; Tony Waage 192; Topper Tastad 184

Men's High Series: Chad Furney 562, Tony Waage 490, Austin Schuelke 475

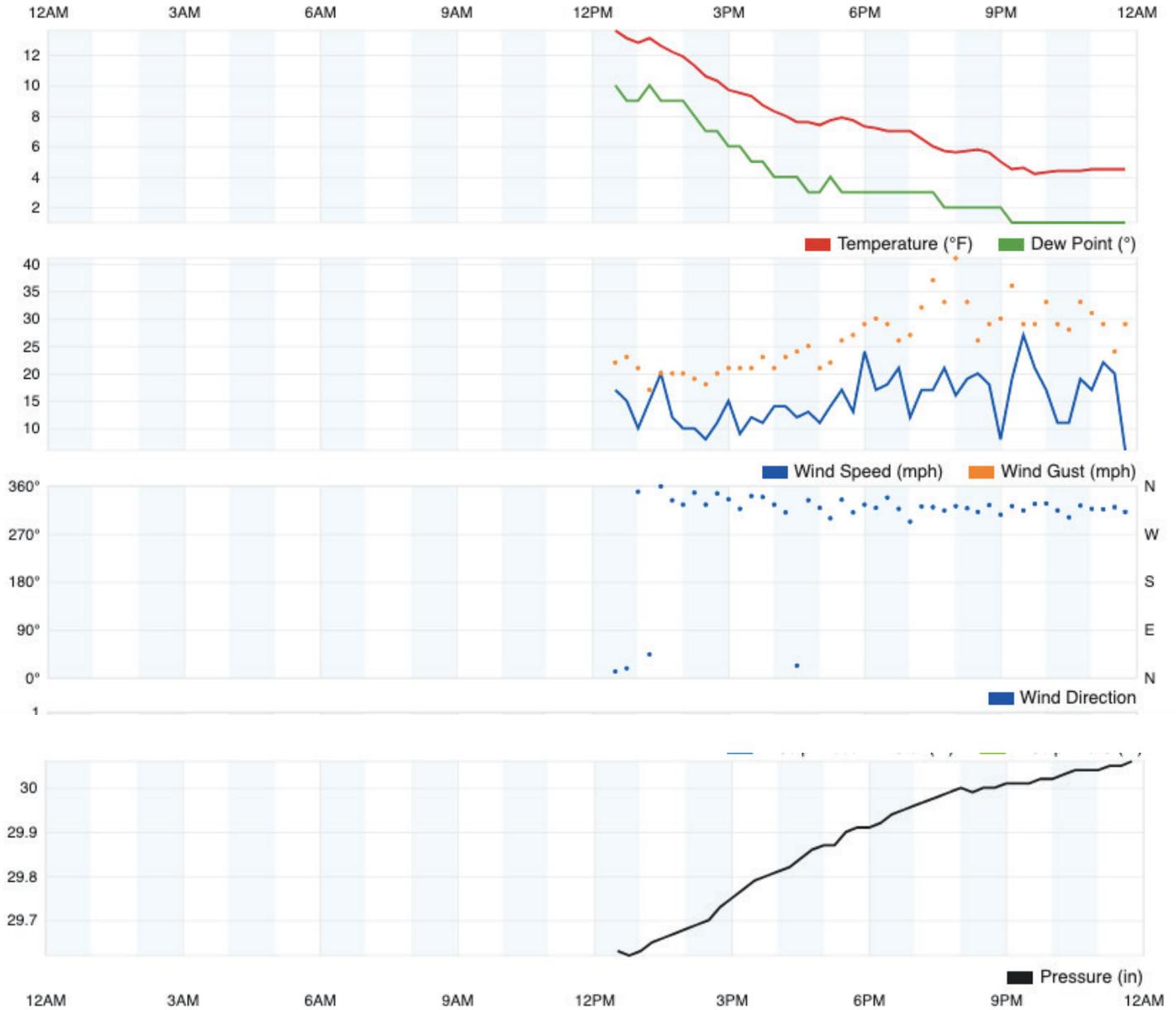
Women's High Games: Vickie Kramp 178, Joyce Walter 172, Sam Bahr 171

Women's High Series: Vickie Kramp 468, Sam Bahr 446, Joyce Walter 438

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wind Chill Advisory

Today



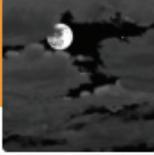
40%

Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow

High: 1 °F ↓

Wind Chill Warning

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: -17 °F

Thursday



Cold

High: -13 °F

Thursday Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: -18 °F

Friday



Mostly Cloudy

High: 18 °F



Wind Chills

January 5, 2022
3:52 AM

Timeline of Wind Chills expected through Friday morning (degrees fahrenheit)

	1/5 Wed						1/6 Thu						1/7 Fri						
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm
Aberdeen	-25	-25	-23	-22	-26	-27	-29	-33	-36	-36	-31	-25	-26	-28	-28	-26	-26	-22	-12
Britton	-27	-28	-27	-28	-31	-30	-32	-34	-37	-37	-35	-32	-34	-34	-32	-32	-31	-25	-17
Eagle Butte	-38	-37	-34	-30	-34	-37	-39	-39	-40	-37	-28	-24	-26	-27	-25	-23	-21	-17	-6
Eureka	-33	-32	-28	-30	-33	-34	-37	-41	-43	-42	-38	-29	-29	-30	-31	-32	-32	-28	-19
Gettysburg	-37	-33	-31	-29	-32	-35	-36	-39	-39	-37	-30	-21	-24	-26	-27	-27	-25	-21	-10
Kennebec	-32	-29	-24	-23	-27	-28	-30	-32	-33	-31	-23	-14	-20	-21	-20	-18	-16	-12	2
McIntosh	-39	-39	-35	-31	-36	-40	-41	-43	-43	-43	-33	-28	-28	-30	-30	-28	-28	-25	-15
Milbank	-25	-25	-25	-26	-29	-30	-30	-31	-33	-33	-30	-27	-26	-16	-27	-30	-30	-26	-16
Miller	-30	-28	-22	-24	-28	-30	-32	-35	-36	-34	-26	-18	-21	-24	-24	-23	-22	-17	-6
Mobridge	-28	-28	-25	-22	-26	-26	-28	-31	-31	-30	-24	-17	-21	-23	-23	-24	-24	-18	-7
Murdo	-34	-33	-28	-26	-30	-34	-35	-35	-35	-35	-24	-17	-21	-22	-20	-17	-13	-9	6
Pierre	-28	-28	-24	-21	-24	-26	-28	-29	-29	-27	-20	-13	-18	-20	-19	-17	-16	-11	1
Redfield	-27	-26	-22	-22	-28	-29	-31	-33	-35	-34	-28	-19	-25	-26	-25	-24	-24	-21	-10
Sisseton	-26	-26	-26	-26	-30	-30	-31	-32	-34	-33	-32	-30	-31	-31	-31	-32	-32	-29	-22
Watertown	-27	-28	-27	-26	-28	-31	-31	-34	-35	-35	-33	-28	-15	-15	-25	-26	-26	-23	-15
Wheaton	-25	-28	-29	-28	-31	-33	-34	-34	-36	-35	-33	-32	-33	-33	-33	-36	-36	-35	-26

Lowest Wind Chills
-35 to near -45 degrees
Thursday morning

(lowest near the North Dakota/
South Dakota border)



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Very Cold!!! Wind chills will fall to -35 to near -45 degrees Thursday morning (lowest near the North Dakota/South Dakota border). Frostbite could occur in 30 minutes or less through Friday morning, and in less than 10 minutes Thursday morning.

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Today in Weather History

January 5, 1994: A low-pressure system traveled from the Dakotas, across southern Minnesota, and to the Great Lakes Region, from the late morning of the 5th, through the early evening of the 7th. By the early evening hours on the 7th, up to three and one-half feet of snow had fallen along the higher terrain of Lake Superior. The storm also produced heavy snow across parts of central Minnesota. Six inches or more occurred across much of central Minnesota. In west-central Minnesota, Wheaton and Artichoke Lake received 5 inches, with 6 inches at Browns Valley.

January 5, 2012: Numerous record high temperatures were broken across central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota throughout the week. Some of the records were broken by as much as 12 to 17 degrees and held 80 to 90 years. Aberdeen surpassed their record high for January by 3 degrees with 63 degrees on Thursday, January 5th. Kennebec tied their all-time record high for January with 70 degrees on January 5th.

1880: Snow began falling in Seattle, Washington, and would continue for much of the week. When it was over, more than 5 feet of snow was recorded.

1884: One of only two days in history during which the temperature at Louisville, Kentucky, never rose above zero. The low was 20 degrees below, with a high of 1 below zero.

1888: Snowfall amounts of 3.5 to 5 inches fell over Sacramento, California. The heaviest snow in recent history was two inches on February 4-5th in 1976.

1892: From the History of Fayetteville, Georgia, "Another traumatic event occurred in Fayetteville on the evening of January 5, 1892, about six o'clock in the evening. A terrible tornado or cyclone struck the town of Fayetteville just as many had sat down for dinner. The storm killed three people and injured many more as its raging force destroyed numerous residences, outbuildings, and structures, including the academy, as well as killing abundant livestock. The event was written about as far away as Savannah."

1962: Two tornadoes, about 100 yards apart and each making paths about 100 yards wide, followed parallel paths from southeast to northwest through the edge of the Crestview, Florida's residential area. These tornadoes killed one and injured 30 others.

1835 - It was a record cold morning in the eastern U.S. The mercury at the Yale Campus in New Haven CT plunged to 23 degrees below zero, and reached 40 below in the Berkshire Hills of Connecticut. (David Ludlum)

1904 - Bitterly cold air gripped the northeastern U.S. Morning lows of -42 degrees at Smethport PA and -34 at River Vale NJ established state records. (The Weather Channel)

1913 - The temperature at the east portal to Strawberry Tunnel reached 50 degrees below zero to tie the record established at Woodruff on February 6, 1899. (David Ludlum)

1982 - A three day rainstorm in the San Francisco area finally came to an end. Marin County and Cruz County were drenched with up to 25 inches of rain, and the Sierra Nevada Range was buried under four to eight feet of snow. The storm claimed at least 36 lives, and caused more than 300 million dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1987 - A massive winter storm spread heavy snow from the southwestern U.S. into the Rockies. In Utah, the Alta ski resort reported a storm total of 42 inches of snow. Winds gusted to 64 mph at Albuquerque NM. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms helped produce heavy snow in the Lower Great Lakes Region. Snow fell at the rate of four to five inches per hour, and snowfall totals ranged up to 69 inches at Highmarket NY. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A strong Pacific cold front produced heavy snow and high winds in Nevada. Winds gusted to 80 mph north of Reno, while up to two feet of snow blanketed the Lake Tahoe ski area. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in the Central Gulf Coast Region. New Orleans, LA, was drenched with 4.05 inches of rain in 24 hours. An overnight storm blanketed the mountains of northern Utah with up to eleven inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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WAITING FOR WISDOM

"You know," he said stroking his beard, "I have a problem learning from my past sins."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Most people say they learn from previous experiences - including sins."

"Well," he said with confidence, "I can prove them all wrong."

"How can you do that?" I asked.

"Well," he said, stroking his beard once again. "It's easy. Have you ever committed the same sin twice?"

"Unfortunately, I have," I replied.

And before I could explain what I was talking about, he said with great confidence, "I rest my case."

Repeating the same sin more than once is common in the lives of many Christians. Others often lose sight of what living the Christian life is all about and are not even aware of sinning. Some become careless about their responsibility to live in obedience to God's laws and are unconcerned about their lifestyle. We forget that we are accountable to God for everything we have and do. Perhaps it would be helpful if we took some time to do an inventory of the sins we know we frequently commit. To reflect on our past and its problems may keep us close to God and avoid repeating our sins!

The children of Israel had this problem. Listen to the Psalmist: "But they soon forgot what He had done and did not wait for His counsel." If we focus on the great things God has done for us, and if we seek His counsel and wait for His guidance, we can avoid repeating our sins.

Prayer: Lord, we want to live a life that honors You and is free from sin. Our habits and misconceptions often derail our efforts. May we look to You for Your guidance. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But they soon forgot what He had done and did not wait for His counsel. Psalm 106:13

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2021 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

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- Colored \$42.60/6 months
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News from the Associated Press

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. December 28, 2021.

Editorial: New CDC Protocols: Is Now The Right Time?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) picked a curious moment to ease up on its recommendations for the isolation of people infected with COVID-19.

On Monday, the CDC announced it has shortened the recommended isolation time for people with COVID-19 from 10 days to five days if they don't exhibit any symptoms — and a test is not required. Additionally, they are advised to wear a mask around others for at least five more days beyond that.

The recommended quarantine time for vaccinated people exposed to the virus has also been reduced to five days

The moment to announce these alterations for what are already confusing guidelines is striking since COVID's omicron variant is surging around many parts of the country. (Given our pandemic history, this is likely a preview of coming attractions for this area.)

However, officials said they are making the changes in part BECAUSE of the surge in the new variant.

"Not all of those cases are going to be severe. In fact, many are going to be asymptomatic," CDC Director Rochelle Walensky told The Associated Press. "We want to make sure there is a mechanism by which we can safely continue to keep society functioning while following the science."

The social media reaction from health experts to the CDC recommendations has been extremely mixed.

For instance, Dr. Lean Wen, who is a CNN analyst, tweeted that the modification is necessary "to prevent collapse of critical infrastructure. The US will soon surpass our previous peak of infections & could top 1 million new cases a day."

However, Dr. Eric Fiegl-Ding, an epidemiologist, health economist and a senior fellow with a Federation of American Scientists (and who, by the way, was raised in South Dakota), criticized the recommendations, saying, "... this lackadaisical pandemic management approach will only PROLONG the pandemic and worsen the transmission and hospital system crisis longer!" He also questions (and rightly so, sadly) the reliability of the honor system, which would trust people to decide for themselves when they are well enough to return to work.

While understanding the need for the CDC to adapt to changing science, this decision at this time does seem nervously questionable, especially given that the variant now marching around the globe and across the U.S. has only been on our radar for a little more than a month. While early indications suggest that omicron infections may not be as severe as past COVID waves, there are still segments of the population that are susceptible to the variant — including younger people, who are seeing their infection numbers rise.

And while keeping businesses and infrastructure — including health care facilities — up and running is certainly important, it's also essential to get a handle on the surge and contain its impact.

Their best way to do that is to proceed on the side of caution, and that still includes getting vaccinated and masking up in public situations when you cannot socially distance. And it should also embrace the most conservative measures to keep the spread of the variant in check.

The CDC may ultimately be proven wise in this approach, but at this juncture, with a new surge on the rise, it doesn't seem like a good time to gamble on that possibility.

END

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Alcester-Hudson 44, Avon 43

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Andes Central/Dakota Christian 53, Gregory 47
Arlington 48, Madison 35
Bon Homme 58, Parker 56
Bridgewater-Emery 45, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 35
Burke 42, Lyman 39
Centerville 67, Marty Indian 44
Chadron, Neb. 45, Hot Springs 15
Corsica/Stickney 65, Platte-Geddes 24
Custer 53, Sturgis Brown 44
Dakota Valley 65, Sergeant Bluff-Luton, Iowa 59
Dell Rapids 45, McCook Central/Montrose 41
Douglas 50, Todd County 48
Garretson 57, Dell Rapids St. Mary 47
Groton Area 38, Warner 21
Highmore 52, Stanley County 22
James Valley Christian 52, Sunshine Bible Academy 14
Lake Preston 45, Hitchcock-Tulare 44
Miller 44, Wolsey-Wessington 41
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 47, Lennox 22
Parkston 49, Hanson 45
Rapid City Christian 69, Lead-Deadwood 20
Rapid City Stevens 62, Spearfish 52
Red Cloud 72, Pine Ridge 25
Scotland 42, Gayville-Volin 41, OT
Sioux Falls Lincoln 47, Pierre 46
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 72, Brookings 33
Sully Buttes 59, Philip 41
Tea Area 54, Vermillion 44
Tri-Valley 51, Baltic 34
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 61, White Lake 47
Wagner 50, Sioux Falls Christian 40
Watertown 43, Brandon Valley 35
West Central 71, Elk Point-Jefferson 26
Winner 63, Chamberlain 42
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Aberdeen Roncalli vs. Milbank, ppd.
DeSmet vs. Clark/Willow Lake, ppd.
Flandreau vs. Castlewood, ppd.
Flasher, N.D. vs. Lemmon, ppd. to Jan 13th.
Hamlin vs. Florence/Henry, ppd.
Timber Lake vs. Faith, ppd.

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=
Alcester-Hudson 44, Avon 43
Brandon Valley 58, Watertown 53
Bridgewater-Emery 48, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 34
Burke 56, Jones County 36
Centerville 67, Marty Indian 44
Chadron, Neb. 50, Hot Springs 44
Custer 55, Sturgis Brown 52, 2OT

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Dakota Valley 62, Sergeant Bluff-Luton, Iowa 45
Dell Rapids St. Mary 33, Garretson 25
Elk Point-Jefferson 64, Canistota 35
Elkton-Lake Benton 48, Estelline/Hendricks 46
Gayville-Volin 55, Scotland 49
Gregory 61, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 36
Groton Area 48, Warner 26
Hanson 43, Parkston 37
Harrisburg 68, Mitchell 59
Hitchcock-Tulare 55, Lake Preston 48
Irene-Wakonda 64, Freeman 39
James Valley Christian 75, Sunshine Bible Academy 23
Lennox 60, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 46
New Underwood 44, Edgemont 34
Oelrichs 52, Hay Springs, Neb. 46
Parker 56, Bon Homme 43
Potter County 71, Mobridge-Pollock 51
Rapid City Stevens 68, Spearfish 53
Sioux Falls Christian 63, Sioux Falls Jefferson 52
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 73, Brookings 26
St. Thomas More 49, Belle Fourche 39
Stanley County 49, Highmore-Harrold 28
Tea Area 68, Vermillion 55
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 67, Kimball/White Lake 41
Winner 42, Chamberlain 26
Wolsey-Wessington 61, Miller 27
Yankton 70, Huron 49
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Florence/Henry vs. Hamlin, ppd.
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland vs. Freeman Academy/Marion, ppd.

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined
PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:
Mega Millions
04-06-16-21-22, Mega Ball: 1, Megaplier: 3
(four, six, sixteen, twenty-one, twenty-two; Mega Ball: one; Megaplier: three)
Estimated jackpot: \$244 million
Powerball
Estimated jackpot: \$575 million

Man points gun at pawn shop worker, then tries to sell it

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police in Sioux Falls have arrested a man after he allegedly pointed a gun at a pawn shop employee and then tried to sell the weapon.

The Argus Leader reported two men walked into the pawn shop Monday afternoon. Police spokesman Sam Clemens said one of them, a 31-year-old from Ocheyedan, Iowa, pulled out a revolver that was still in its holster. The trigger was exposed, however, and the man pointed it at the worker and asked for money.

He then put the weapon down and tried to sell it. They couldn't reach a deal and the man left with the gun.

The employee called police. The two men returned while officers were in the shop and the man who pulled out the gun was arrested.

The gun wasn't loaded and no one was hurt, Clemens said.

Marijuana debate on the table again in legislative session

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Debate on marijuana will be on the table again as state lawmakers gather for the 2022 legislative session in South Dakota this month.

So far, more than two dozen of 38 posted proposed bills for the session deal with medical and recreational marijuana. It's the second session for legislators since South Dakota voters approved both medical and recreational marijuana in the 2020 election.

The passage of recreational marijuana was legally challenged by Gov. Kristi Noem and was ultimately struck down by the state Supreme Court 4-1. Though the Republican governor opposed marijuana legalization as a social ill, her administration's arguments in court centered on technical violations to the state constitution.

South Dakota's medical marijuana program continues to move forward in the state. The first state-issued medical marijuana card was issued to a Day County resident in November. Cities and counties have begun approving licenses for medical marijuana dispensaries, but no cultivation licenses have been granted by the state. More than 20 proposed bills look to revise or repeal specific provisions involving medical cannabis, KELO-TV reported.

Proposed legislation known as Senate Bill 3 would legalize recreational possession of one ounce or less of marijuana by a person 21 or older and reduce other penalties for possession of marijuana by a person 21 or older. Currently, possession of two ounces or less is a class 1 misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and up to \$2,000 in fines.

The bill also lays out penalties for people under 21 who use marijuana or marijuana products.

Virginia officials defend response to snowy gridlock on I-95

By SARAH RANKIN and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A winter storm that started as rain — meaning roads couldn't be pretreated — followed by an unusually heavy snowfall and plunging temperatures resulted in the stranding of hundreds of motorists along a stretch of one of the nation's biggest interstate highways, Virginia officials said, as they defended their response to the gridlock.

There were no reported deaths or injuries from the calamity on Interstate 95, but plenty of outrage from motorists, some of whom were stranded overnight Monday into Tuesday, posting pleas for help on social media.

"We all need to be clear that this was an incredibly unusual event," Gov. Ralph Northam said at a news conference, adding that he could understand drivers' "frustration and fear."

Problems began Monday morning, when a truck jackknifed on Interstate 95 between Richmond and Washington, triggering a swift chain reaction as other vehicles lost control, state police said.

They mounted throughout the day as snow fell at a rate of up to 2 inches an hour, said Marcie Parker, a Virginia Department of Transportation engineer leading the effort to clear the interstate.

"That was entirely too much for us to keep up with," she told reporters. "Consequently, with the amount of traffic that we had on the interstate, the trucks and the cars couldn't make it up and down the hills because we had too much snow and ice out there."

Lanes in both directions eventually became blocked across an approximately 40-mile stretch of I-95 north of Richmond. As hours passed and night fell, motorists posted messages on social media about running out of fuel, food and water.

Prime Inc. truck driver Emily Slaughter said she was driving from New Jersey to Georgia to deliver veg-

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etables to a FedEx facility and became stranded for five hours on the southbound side of I-95. She said everything on the road was fine until she hit Virginia.

"All of a sudden you could no longer see lines. It got a little scary there," she said.

Slaughter said she soon came to a stop and she found out about the disabled vehicles on the radio and over social media.

"People were saying, 'we're running out of gas' or 'our kids are hungry,'" she said.

Meera Rao and her husband, Raghavendra, were driving home from visiting their daughter in North Carolina when they got stuck Monday evening. They were only 100 feet past an exit but could not move for roughly 16 hours.

"Not one police (officer) came in the 16 hours we were stuck," she said. "No one came. It was just shocking. Being in the most advanced country in the world, no one knew how to even clear one lane for all of us to get out of that mess?"

Northam defended his decision not to activate the Virginia National Guard or declare a state of emergency.

He said the issue facing state crews was not a lack of manpower but the difficulty of getting workers and equipment through the snow and ice to where they needed to be. And he said a state of emergency, which would typically be declared hours or days before an event to create extra flexibility in responding, would have done no good.

Up to 11 inches of snow fell in the area during Monday's blizzard, according to the National Weather Service, and state police had warned people to avoid driving unless absolutely necessary, especially as colder nighttime temperatures set in.

Because the storm began with rain, crews could not pretreat the roads because the salt or chemicals would have washed away, officials said. Some traffic cameras were also knocked out by power outages. And Parker said the position of the traffic backups in relation to the interstate's express lanes meant they were not of much use to clear the logjams.

Crews worked throughout the day to clear the roadway, and traffic spilled out onto secondary roads, causing additional delays.

It took until around 8:30 p.m. Tuesday for the Virginia Department of Transportation to reopen the interstate. Authorities had announced earlier in the evening that all stranded motorists had made it off the highway, and road crews then focused on removing the remaining abandoned vehicles and making sure the entire stretch was plowed.

Officials never provided an estimate of the number of vehicles that tied up in the jam. Photos showed they numbered in the hundreds, if not thousands.

The storm also left passengers on an Amtrak train stranded in Virginia. Amtrak's Crescent left New Orleans on Sunday on its way to New York and got stuck near Lynchburg on Monday morning, when downed trees blocked the tracks.

Passenger Sean Thornton told AP that Amtrak provided food, but toilets were overflowing and passengers were furious. Amtrak planned for the train to complete its trip once the tracks are clear.

Kelly Hannon, a spokeswoman for the transportation department, apologized to motorists for the I-95 logjam and said the department would take an "exhaustive look" at the incident.

Marvin Romero, who was driving home from a family vacation in South Florida with his daughters, ages 10 and 8, took a rather optimistic view of the situation, despite spending 20 hours and a long, anxious night in the car.

"To me, I see it as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. How many people can actually say that they stepped on I-95, or they slept on I-95?" he said. "It's hopefully a story that I can tell my grandkids one day."

Associated Press writers Matthew Barakat in Falls Church, Virginia; Bryan Gallion in Roseland, New Jersey; Michael Kunzelman in College Park, Maryland; Ben Finley in Norfolk, Virginia; and Julie Walker in New York contributed to this report.

Governor to pardon Plessy, of 'separate but equal' ruling

By JANET McCONNAUGHEY Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Louisiana's governor planned to posthumously pardon Homer Plessy on Wednesday, more than a century after the Black man was arrested in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow a Jim Crow law creating "whites-only" train cars.

The Plessy v Ferguson case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ushered in a half-century of laws calling for "separate but equal" accommodations that kept Black people in segregated schools, housing, theaters and other venues.

Gov. John Bel Edwards scheduled the pardon ceremony for a spot near where Plessy was arrested in 1892 for breaking a Louisiana law requiring Black people to ride in cars that the law described as "equal but separate" from those for white customers. The date is close to the 125th anniversary of Plessy's guilty plea in New Orleans.

Relatives of both Plessy and the judge who convicted him were expected to attend.

It spotlights New Orleans as the cradle of the civil rights movement, said Keith Plessy, whose great-great-grandfather was Plessy's cousin — Homer Plessy had no children.

"Hopefully, this will give some relief to generations who have suffered under discriminatory laws," said Phoebe Ferguson, the judge's great-great-granddaughter.

The state Board of Pardons recommended the pardon on Nov. 12 for Plessy, who was a 30-year-old shoemaker when he boarded the train car as a member of a small civil rights group hoping to overturn the law.

Instead, the 1896 ruling solidified whites-only spaces in public accommodations until a later Supreme Court unanimously overturned it in Brown v Board of Education in 1954. Both cases argued that segregation laws violated the 14th Amendment's right to equal protection.

In Plessy, Justice Henry Billings Brown wrote for the 7-1 majority: "Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts or to abolish distinctions based upon physical differences."

Justice John Harlan, the dissenter, wrote that he believed the ruling "will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott Case."

That 1857 decision said no Black person who had been enslaved or was descended from a slave could ever become a U.S. citizen. It was overturned by the 13th and 14th Amendments, passed in 1865 and 1866.

Plessy lacked the business, political and educational accomplishments of most other members of the group trying to strike down the segregation law, Keith Weldon Medley wrote in the book "We As Free-men: Plessy v. Ferguson." But his light skin — court papers described him as someone whose "one eighth African blood" was "not discernable" — positioned him for the train car protest.

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

Five blocks of the street where he was arrested, renamed Homer Plessy Way in 2018, runs through the campus of the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, where the ceremony was to be held outdoors for COVID-19 safety.

Eight months after the ruling in his case, Plessy pleaded guilty on Jan. 11, 1897. He was fined \$25 at a time when 25 cents would buy a pound of round steak and 10 pounds of potatoes. He died in 1925 with the conviction on his record.

Relatives of Plessy and John Howard Ferguson, the judge who oversaw his case in Orleans Parish Criminal District Court, became friends decades later and formed a nonprofit that advocates for civil rights education.

'Substitute camera' sketches Ghislaine Maxwell trial beats

By MALLIKA SEN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As Ghislaine Maxwell strode into the courtroom for the first day of her sex-trafficking trial, no photographer was allowed to catch it. Courtroom artist Elizabeth Williams, however, was at the ready and before the hour was up, the curtain-raising scene was transmitted to news outlets around the

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world.

Cameras are generally prohibited in federal court. And unlike disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein — also drawn by Williams but much photographed going to and from his sex-abuse trial — Maxwell was still jailed during her trial, ferried each way out of sight from the press and public.

"I'm basically the substitute camera," Williams said, emphasizing that she's "not using artistic license to move anything around."

Williams has been the public's eyes in courtrooms since 1980 and has drawn for The Associated Press since 2004, though the typical flurry of courthouse activity slowed during the coronavirus pandemic. Maxwell's was the first full trial Williams covered from the courtroom itself in the pandemic era, coming right on the heels of R. Kelly's own sex-trafficking trial over in Brooklyn federal court.

There, the judge had barred media from the courtroom, so Williams was forced to draw the R&B singer and witnesses off monitors in an overflow room, where she said everything was blurry and "the judge's head was the size of a dime." At the Manhattan federal courthouse, in contrast, Williams was seated close enough to Maxwell to hear her speak French to her siblings.

Williams has had to hone her news judgment to keep apprised of the moments that will become indelible images. And the sketches are just that, indelible — there's no room for an eraser in the "whole huge bag of art supplies" she toted into court. She uses brushes, pens and high-quality pastels and estimates she throws out as many as half the sketches she starts.

Over the course of Maxwell's monthlong trial, which ended with last week's conviction, Williams says she produced around 100 sketches of witness testimony, attorney arguments, jurors, the judge, spectators and, above all, the defendant herself.

"It's great when you can draw a trial a lot, because the more you can draw somebody, the better you're going to get at drawing them," Williams said, adding that Maxwell "kept a pretty cool persona" that necessitated close study.

Jeffrey Epstein, by contrast, was "incredibly fidgety." Williams drew Epstein, the ex-boyfriend-turned-employer of Maxwell, at his unsuccessful bail hearings before his 2019 jailhouse suicide.

Here, Williams takes the AP through her sketchpad, coloring in the key moments of Maxwell's trial with her behind-the-scenes observations:

ARTISTS BECOME SUBJECT

Williams prefers a wall between herself and subjects: "I don't like to become friendly with anybody I'm drawing. I'm looking at them as they're a news story to me and I want them to stay that way."

Maxwell breached that divide, attracting some attention for drawing the courtroom artists themselves. A meta sketch by Reuters artist Jane Rosenberg of Maxwell drawing her even went viral.

Williams said Maxwell was keenly aware of the artists, but it wasn't initially clear what exactly the defendant was up to on her own pad of paper. Even once Williams discovered the defendant was drawing the artists, she stayed on her side of the divide, doing her own sketch of Maxwell at work but unbothered.

"I was like, 'OK, that's fine. Do what you want to. But it's not going to affect anything I do,'" Williams said.

Williams said Maxwell would occasionally purposefully pose, something that actually served the artist's purposes.

"It's much more captivating to have somebody, they're looking right at the camera, or they're looking right at the artist, and so people looking at the drawing are seeing somebody looking right at them," Williams said.

The dynamic continued through the last day of the trial, when Maxwell seemed buoyed by a jury note hours before the verdict.

"There's this question from the jury about — they wanted the defense testimony of these defense witnesses. And she's sitting around her chair, and then sometimes she would do this — not very often — but she did it again: She started posing for us," Williams said. "I was like, 'OK! All right. If that's what she wants!' And that was the picture of the day other than the fact that she got, you know, convicted."

FACELESS ACCUSERS

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The prosecution's case revolved around four accusers, three who testified under pseudonyms or using just first names — Jane, Kate and Carolyn. The courtroom artists were instructed not to draw likenesses, which, for Williams, meant avoiding facial features.

To capture the often emotional testimony, Williams looked elsewhere: "Everybody's faces are shaped differently. Some faces are more angular, some people's faces are more round. Jane's face was certainly rounder than Kate. And Carolyn's face was more square."

The hands are another key, she said.

Jane wasn't that animated while testifying about how Epstein grabbed her, Williams said.

"But she used her hands in such a way," Williams said. "And I've really practiced drawing hands a lot. I mean, you got to be able to draw hands, you have to, especially when you're drawing a witness where you can't draw the face, you've got to rely on the hands."

Carolyn's hands were particularly eye-catching.

"She had all these rings on her fingers and very manicured nails, and very kind of reddish hair. And I thought to myself, you know, if she puts her hand up to her face, money shot there, because that's going to tell you more about her even than her face could," Williams said.

ALERT THE PRESS

A courtroom artist has to stay alert for big moments, even when a witness might not seem like a headliner.

An FBI analyst's testimony yielded one of the more bizarre images from the trial, as prosecutors displayed a photograph the analyst had found that appeared to show Maxwell massaging Epstein's foot with her breasts.

Williams knew that was her shot, so much so that she had no time to gauge Maxwell's reaction.

"I have to tell you the truth. When I saw that, I was so focused on getting it down, I thought, I can't, I couldn't focus on her. I had to focus on drawing this thing," she said.

The photographs were shown for what seemed like a maximum of seven seconds, "meaning I'm drawing like the wind."

A government official sitting in front of Williams even turned around at one point, she said, to commend the way she captured that scene.

THE DEFENSE SQUAD

Maxwell constantly communicated with her lawyers and engaged in daily displays of physical affection with them.

"Oh my God. Hug fest. All those attorneys got hugs," Williams said. "I've never seen anything like it."

Williams said she did notice Maxwell start to get slightly more agitated as the trial wore on, but her stoicism returned when the verdict was read.

"She put her hand up to kind of her head and her lawyer put his hand on her back," Williams said. "And that was it. That was it. There was no other reaction."

That day, there were no hugs for the attorneys as she was ushered out.

FROM LOCKUP TO RUNWAY

Williams began her career as a trained fashion illustrator.

"So Maxwell is right up my alley," she said. "Whenever she walked into court, with the two U.S. marshals, she always made an entrance like she was walking down a runway, I swear to God."

Williams said the British socialite made her presence apparent in the way she held herself, arms back, "her swagger, swaying a little bit."

Her exits could also leave an impression, including her final one as she strode out of the courtroom after the verdict.

"But then when they walked her out, after the verdict, it wasn't just walking out with those two marshals who brought her in. It was her and then two other big guys," Williams said, commenting on the contrast between the lithe Maxwell and the burly men. "It was such a theme. And she was walking ahead of them. It was stunning. It was stunning. It was like just, what a finality to the whole thing."

Hong Kong bans flights, imposes other COVID-19 restrictions

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong authorities announced a two-week ban on flights from the United States and seven other countries and held 2,500 passengers on a cruise ship for coronavirus testing Wednesday as the city attempted to stem an emerging omicron outbreak.

The two-week ban on passenger flights from Australia, Canada, France, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Britain and the United States will take effect Sunday and continue until Jan. 21.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam also announced that restaurant dining will be forbidden after 6 p.m. for two weeks starting Friday. Game arcades, bars and beauty salons must also close during that period.

"We have to contain the pandemic to ensure that there will not be a major outbreak in the community again," Lam said at a news conference, adding that the city is "on the verge" of another surge.

The measures came as new omicron clusters have emerged over the past week, many linked to several Cathay Pacific crew members who broke isolation rules and dined at restaurants and bars in the city before testing positive.

Hong Kong has reported 114 omicron variant cases as of Tuesday, with most being imported. On Tuesday, it reported its first untraceable case in nearly three months, which authorities said was likely caused by the omicron variant.

Hong Kong officials have moved swiftly to block the spread of the variant, locking down residential buildings where people have tested positive and mass-testing thousands of people.

That includes about 2,500 passengers who were being held Wednesday on a cruise ship in Hong Kong for coronavirus tests, after health authorities said nine passengers were linked to an omicron cluster and ordered the ship to turn back.

Authorities forced the Royal Caribbean's Spectrum of the Seas ship, which departed Sunday on a "cruise to nowhere," to return a day early on Wednesday, according to a government statement.

The ship returned to Hong Kong on Wednesday morning and passengers were held onboard for most of the day while they awaited testing.

One passenger, Claudy Wong, said Royal Caribbean had tried its best to follow pandemic regulations.

"The pandemic has gone on for so long, actually passengers like us who board the cruise are already prepared for such situations to happen," Wong said.

Royal Caribbean said in a statement that the nine guests were immediately isolated and all tested negative, and that the company was working closely with authorities to comply with epidemic prevention policies and regulations.

It said guests who were on the affected ship would receive a 25% refund on their cruise fare. The ship's next sailing on Thursday was also canceled because the crew must undergo testing, and those guests will receive a full refund.

The city has reported a total of 12,690 confirmed coronavirus infections as of Tuesday, including 213 deaths.

In Israel, omicron drives records, zigzag policy, 4th shots

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel opened to tourists for the first time in nearly two years. After just a month, it slammed shut. Now the omicron variant has set a widely-expected record for new infections in the country, which will once again crack open on Sunday — but only to travelers from certain nations.

The back-and-forth has created whiplash for many Israelis. Even in the relatively small, wealthy Mideast nation - an early global leader against the coronavirus pandemic - the omicron variant is outpacing the government's ability to make and execute clear pandemic public policy. What once was a straightforward regimen of vaccines, testing, contact tracing and distancing for the nation of 9.4 million has splintered into

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a zigzag of rules that seem to change every few days.

The confusion here, on everything from tourism to testing, quarantines, masks and school policy, offers a glimpse of the pandemic puzzle facing governments worldwide as the omicron variant burns through the population. Someday, the World Health Organization will declare the pandemic over. But in the meantime, leaders are weighing how much illness, isolation and death people are willing to risk.

In Israel as elsewhere, what's clear is that the ultra-contagious omicron variant has pushed the fight against COVID-19 into a messier phase of rules governed by a key assumption: Large portions of the public will contract the omicron version, which is more contagious but appears to cause less severe illness and death, especially among vaccinated people. But vaccinated people are catching the variant too, driving a surge fed in part by gatherings over the winter holidays.

On Wednesday, the government reported a record for the pandemic in Israel, with 11,978 new infections a day earlier. That beats the previous high of 11,345 infections in a single day set on Sept. 2 during the delta variant wave.

"There is no control of the omicron wave," said Sharon Alroy-Preis, the Health Ministry's top public health official on Israel's Channel 13 this week.

"Probably no one is protected from infection," said Jonathan Halevy, president of Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem on Tuesday.

The new goal is to protect society's most vulnerable people without another national lockdown — the red line Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and the country's 7-month-old government are laboring to avoid.

"It's a different ballgame altogether," Bennett said during a press conference Sunday as he warned that the number of daily infections is expected to soar to new records in the coming weeks.

"We must keep our eye on the ball if we want to continue engaging and working with an open country as much as possible," he added.

In everyday life, that's meant a morass of confusion as Bennett and the coalition government he leads struggle to agree on rules and communicate their decisions to the public.

"Education Ministry Leaves Principals to Contend With COVID-19 Chaos Alone," blared a headline in the Haaretz daily Tuesday. A lack of national guidance, the story said, is forcing some school principals to decide on their own whether to hold classes in person, remotely or some combination.

Bennett at the press conference argued the government was staying agile in the face of the more challenging variant. This included a government decision, after some back-and-forth, to give a fourth vaccination to the immunocompromised and people at least age 60. Israel is believed to be the first country in the world to offer segments of its population a second booster shot.

On Tuesday, Bennett announced that a preliminary study at Sheba Medical Center found the fourth jab produced a five-fold increase in antibodies in the blood. Israel also is on the cusp of making available drugs that could help people in at-risk groups avoid severe infections.

"Most ministries are working together now better than they were under the old government," led by divisive former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said Dr. Nadav Davidovich, who heads Ben-Gurion University's school of public health and sits on the national advisory committee on coronavirus.

So the government's decision, for example, to shutter Israel's borders in late November bought time to raise the country's vaccination rates, which rose toward the middle and end of the month. It also allowed hospitals to prepare for a likely wave of illness.

The vaccinated population has been steadily on the rise, but is limited in part by ultra-Orthodox Jews and some Arabs who have been slow to roll up their sleeves. About 63% of people in Israel have been vaccinated twice, while around 46% have received three jabs.

Our World in Data ranks Israel 17th in the world for vaccination rates, behind other wealthy nations like the United Arab Emirates and the United States — and just ahead of archrival Iran. Back in June, Israel was No. 1 on the list.

But it's been clear for days that a new wave has arrived. Government data showed new infections in Israel spiking to 10,815 on Monday, some 7,000 more than a week earlier. Severe illnesses have stayed mostly constant for several months and daily deaths from coronavirus have not exceeded two since Dec.

13, government records show.

Still, the process remains messy and confusing given the variant's fast-moving spread.

On Wednesday in the shadow of the record-setting spike of infections, there was more change. Israel's health minister announced that the demand for testing was slowing the results and recommended more at-home rapid testing to ease the burden.

Quarantines that two weeks ago were required of anyone who might have been exposed to the virus are being scaled back in order to prevent the economy from grinding to a halt.

Contact tracing has become more complicated given the shortage of tests.

Israel's list of countries whose tourists are banned has been scaled back, with the Health Ministry on Monday recommending that Canada, France, South Africa, Hungary, Nigeria, Spain and Portugal be removed.

Travel to and from the United States and United Kingdom remains forbidden.

There's been considerable hand-wringing over any suggestion of "herd immunity" — when enough people have either been vaccinated or recovered from a past infection to stop the virus' uncontrolled spread.

Israel's health chief, Nachman Ash, said the fourth shot could be offered to more Israelis, but it's not certain whether it could be rolled out quickly enough.

"The price of herd immunity is very many infections, and that may end up happening," Ash told Radio 103FM on Sunday. "But we don't want to reach it by means of infections."

—
Associated Press writer Tia Goldenberg contributed to this story.

North Korea fires ballistic missile, in 1st test in 2 months

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea fired a ballistic missile into the sea on Wednesday, the U.S. military said, its first such launch in about two months and a signal it isn't interested in rejoining denuclearization talks anytime soon and would rather focus on boosting its weapons arsenal.

The launch came after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to further strengthen his military capability — without disclosing any new policies toward the United States or South Korea — at a high-profile ruling party conference last week.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said the ballistic missile launch "highlights the destabilizing impact of (North Korea's) illicit weapons program" but didn't pose an immediate threat to U.S. territory or its allies. It said in a statement that the U.S. commitment to the defense of its allies, South Korea and Japan, remains "ironclad."

South Korea's military said a suspected ballistic missile fired from North Korea's mountainous northern Jagang province flew toward its eastern waters. Defense Minister Suh Wook said the launch is seen as part of North Korea's military buildup, but that South Korea is analyzing whether it had any political intention.

In an emergency video conference, members of South Korea's presidential national security team expressed concerns about the launch and said resuming talks with North Korea is important to resolve tensions, according to the presidential Blue House.

The Japanese Defense Ministry also detected the North Korean launch. "We find it truly regrettable that North Korea has continued to fire missiles since last year," Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters.

China, North Korea's most important ally, maintained an even-handed response to the launch, with Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin calling for dialogue and saying "all parties concerned should keep in mind the big picture (and) be cautious with their words and actions."

Last fall, North Korea carried out a spate of weapons tests in what experts called an attempt to apply more pressure on its rivals to accept it as a nuclear power in hopes of winning relief from economic sanctions. The tests included a submarine-launched ballistic missile and a developmental hypersonic missile. Since artillery firing drills in early November, North Korea had halted testing activities until Wednesday's launch.

The Biden administration has repeatedly said it is open to resuming nuclear diplomacy with North Korea

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"anywhere and at any time" without preconditions. North Korea has so far rebuffed such overtures, saying U.S. hostility remains unchanged.

Outgoing South Korean President Moon Jae-in said in his New Year's address Tuesday that he would continue to seek ways to restore ties with North Korea and promote peace on the Korean Peninsula until his single five-year term ends in May. He has recently pushed for a symbolic declaration to end the 1950-53 Korean War as a way to reduce animosity.

U.S.-led diplomacy aimed at convincing North Korea to abandon its nuclear program collapsed in 2019 due to differences over how much sanctions relief should be given North Korea in return for limited denuclearization steps. Kim has since threatened to enlarge his nuclear arsenal, though his country's economy has suffered major setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, persistent U.S.-led sanctions and his government's mismanagement.

"Rather than expressing willingness for denuclearization talks or interest in an end-of-war declaration, North Korea is signaling that neither the omicron variant nor domestic food shortages will stop its aggressive missile development," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

Kim Dong-yub, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said North Korea might have tested a hypersonic missile or a nuclear-capable KN-23 missile with a highly maneuverable and lower-trajectory flight. He said North Korea would likely move forward with its military buildup.

During last week's plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party, Kim repeated his vow to boost his country's military capacity and ordered the production of more powerful, sophisticated weapons systems. State media reports on the meeting said North Korea set forth "tactical directions" for external relations, including with South Korea, but didn't elaborate. The reports made no mention of the United States.

Kim marked 10 years in power last month. Since assuming control after his father and longtime ruler Kim Jong Il's death in December 2011, Kim Jong Un has established absolute power at home and staged an unusually large number of weapons tests as part of efforts to build nuclear-tipped missiles capable of reaching the American mainland.

During Kim's rule, North Korea has conducted 62 rounds of ballistic missile tests, compared with nine rounds during his grandfather and state founder Kim Il Sung's 46-year rule, and 22 rounds during Kim Jong Il's 17-year rule, according to South Korean and U.S. figures. Four of North Korea's six nuclear tests and its three intercontinental ballistic missile launches all occurred under Kim Jong Un's rule.

Associated Press writer Yuri Kageyama in Tokyo contributed to this report.

China reports major drop in virus cases in locked-down Xi'an

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China on Wednesday reported a major drop in COVID-19 infections in the northern city of Xi'an, which has been under a tight lockdown for the past two weeks that has sharply disrupted the lives of its 13 million residents.

The National Health Commission announced just 35 new cases in Xi'an, home to the famed Terracotta Warriors statues along with major industries, down from 95 the day before.

Health officials said they have basically achieved the goal of halting community transmission because the new cases were among people already quarantined.

The decline has continued since daily new cases topped 100, which had prompted officials to retain and in some cases tighten restrictions on people leaving their homes.

Xi'an has reported more than 1,600 cases but no deaths in its latest surge. That's a small number compared to outbreaks in other countries, a sign that China's "zero tolerance" strategy of quarantining every case, mass testing and trying to block new infections from abroad has helped it contain major outbreaks.

The lockdowns, however, are far more stringent than anything seen in the West, and have exacted a tremendous toll on the economy and disrupted the lives of millions of people.

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News of people in Xi'an seeking urgent medical care who have been turned away at hospitals for not having current COVID-19 test results have spread online.

They included a pregnant woman who felt pains in her stomach on New Year's Day but was not allowed into a hospital, according to a post by the woman's niece that was shared widely on social media.

The woman waited outside the hospital on a pink plastic stool until she started bleeding. In a video taken by her husband which was circulated widely, a pool of blood was visible by her feet.

She was finally let into the hospital after medical workers saw the blood, but the fetus was already dead, the post said.

The AP was not able to independently verify the video. The woman's niece did not respond to messages left on her social media accounts.

Authorities told Phoenix News that they are investigating the case.

Another city, Yuzhou in Henan province, was also placed under lockdown over the weekend after the discovery of three asymptomatic cases.

Only emergency vehicles are allowed on the roads, classes have been suspended and businesses catering to the public have closed for all but essential needs in the city of 1.17 million.

The province of Henan reported two new asymptomatic cases on Wednesday, although it wasn't clear if they were in Yuzhou. Several other cities in the province have ordered mass testing, shut public venues and restricted or suspended intercity travel, despite only small numbers of cases being detected.

With the Beijing Olympics beginning Feb. 4, China is doubling down on measures to prevent any new outbreak that could affect the proceedings.

People are being told to travel in and out of Beijing only if they absolutely need to and hotels have largely stopped taking new reservations. Athletes, officials and journalists are entering an "anti-pandemic" bubble as soon as they arrive and will remain within it until the Feb. 4-20 Winter Games are over.

No fans from outside China will be permitted and most spectators are expected to come from schools, government offices and the military rather than the general public.

Underscoring the importance of the event, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Olympic sites around the capital on Tuesday, including the main media center.

"Staging major international sporting events such as the Winter Olympics will be an opportunity to enhance the influence of Chinese culture, the reach of news reporting and the nation's soft power," Xi was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua News Agency.

Outbreak concerns added to controversies that have dogged the Olympics over China's human rights record, with the U.S. and close allies announcing a diplomatic boycott. Xi is seeking to be appointed to a third five-year term as leader this year and is eager to avoid any development that could tarnish his reputation.

China has vaccinated nearly 85% of its population, according to Our World in Data. The shots have helped reduce the severity of disease, although Chinese vaccines are considered less effective than those used elsewhere.

Some residents of Xi'an have been complaining of food shortages, prompting officials to defend their measures and pledge to ensure adequate supplies. Some residents are receiving free food packages, while others are still scrambling to find where they can purchase groceries online.

Officials haven't given a specific date for the lifting of the lockdown.

At least two district Communist Party officials in Xi'an have been sacked for failing to control the outbreak, and a third, the head of the city's big data management bureau, Liu Jun, has been suspended, Xinhua reported Wednesday.

That came after the city's health code system that monitors movements and vaccinations crashed on Dec. 20 due to high traffic as case numbers were rising, Xinhua said.

China has reported a total of 102,932 cases nationwide, with its death toll remaining steady at 4,636.

This story has been corrected to show the population of Yuzhou is 1.17 million, not 1.7 million.

'We were trapped': Trauma of Jan. 6 lingers for lawmakers

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Long after most other lawmakers had been rushed to safety, they were on the hard marble floor, ducking for cover.

Trapped in the gallery of the House, occupying balcony seats off-limits to the public because of COVID-19, roughly three dozen House Democrats were the last ones to leave the chamber on Jan. 6, bearing witness as the certification of a presidential election gave way to a violent insurrection.

As danger neared, and as the rioters were trying to break down the doors, they called their families. They scrambled for makeshift weapons and mentally prepared themselves to fight. Many thought they might die.

"When I looked up, I had this realization that we were trapped," said Rep. Jason Crow, D-Colo., a former Army Ranger who served three tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. "They had evacuated the House floor first. And they forgot about us."

Bound together by circumstance, sharing a trauma uniquely their own, the lawmakers were both the witnesses and the victims of an unprecedented assault on American democracy. Along with a small number of staffers and members of the media, they remained in the chamber as Capitol Police strained to hold back the surging, shouting mob of supporters of then-President Donald Trump.

The lawmakers were finally taken to safety roughly an hour after the siege began.

Interviewed by The Associated Press before this week's anniversary of the attack, 10 of the House members who were in the gallery talked of being deeply shaken by their experience, recalling viscerally the sights and sounds amid the chaos.

Vividly they remember the loud, hornetlike buzz of their gas masks. The explosive crack of tear gas in the hallways outside. The screams of officers telling them to stay down. The thunderous beating on the doors below. Glass shattering as the rioters punched through a window pane. The knobs rattling ominously on the locked doors just a few feet behind them.

And most indelibly, the loud clap of a gunshot, reverberating across the cavernous chamber.

"I've heard a lot of gunshots in my time, and it was very clear what that was," Crow said. "I knew that things had severely escalated."

The shot was fired by Officer Michael Byrd and killed Ashli Babbitt, a Trump supporter from California who was trying to crawl through the broken window of a door that leads to the House chamber. Both the Justice Department and Capitol Police investigated the shooting and declined to file charges.

While the gunshot dispersed some of the violent mob, the lawmakers ducking in the gallery believed the worst was just beginning.

"I think all of us, myself included, had images of a mass-shooting event," said Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., who posted video updates on Twitter as the chaos unfolded. "It was terrifying in the moment."

Rep. Mike Quigley, D-Ill., said he could tell the gunshot had come from the back of the chamber, in the Speaker's Lobby just outside, and not from the main doors on the opposite side where they could see rioters trying to break through. In that moment he realized why they couldn't leave — they were surrounded. "It was in stages that you realized the severity," he said.

Their terror was compounded by knowledge of what the mob was after: stopping Congress from certifying the Electoral College votes that would make Joe Biden the 46th president of the United States. Mike Pence, as is customary for the vice president, had been presiding over the ceremony in the House chamber where lawmakers were gathered to hear the certified results from all 50 U.S. states and the territories.

Trump had other ideas.

Spouting lies about election fraud that were refuted by his own Justice Department, Trump pressured Pence to reject the electors — a move that would have bucked the Constitution and thrown the House, and potentially the country, into chaos. Pence refused to do so, but Trump held a rally in Washington before the vote-counting began, telling hundreds of supporters at the Ellipse to "fight like hell."

Members of the mob chanted "Hang Mike Pence" as they forced their way into the Capitol, brutally

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overpowering police who stood in their way. Dozens were injured, some seriously, and four officers who were there that day later took their own lives.

Rep. Val Demings, D-Fla., was among those sheltering in the gallery. She tried to remain calm, drawing on what she learned as chief of the Orlando police. But she also felt powerless, lacking a gun or any of the other weapons she always had on the beat.

She shuddered when police said there had been a "breach" of the building.

"That is probably the word that I will remember about that day for the rest of my life more than any other," Demings said. "I knew that meant that the police had somehow lost the line. And I also know, having been a former police officer, that they would have done everything in their power to hold that line to protect us."

She says she told a colleague sheltering with her in the gallery: "Just remember, we're on the right side of history. If we all die today, another group will come in and certify those ballots."

Congress reconvened that night, certifying Biden's election victory before sunrise.

In the days after the attack, many of the lawmakers who were in the gallery started connecting on a text message chain. It quickly evolved into therapeutic group sessions and even potluck gatherings where they tried to make sense of it all.

They dubbed themselves "the gallery group," and the name stuck.

The Democrats were social distancing in the balcony as they waited to speak on the floor at the invitation of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and those interviewed said they don't recall any Republicans sheltering alongside them. GOP Rep. Kelly Armstrong of North Dakota was in the gallery at the beginning of the insurrection and recounted the ordeal to a local news outlet that evening. But he declined to be interviewed. A handful of other Republicans, including Reps. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma and Troy Nehls of Texas, helped police barricade the door below.

Some of the Democrats who sheltered in the gallery are planning to spend time together at the Capitol this week, not only to remember their own experiences and honor those who protected them but also to reflect on the country's narrow escape from a coup.

"We were the last people in the chamber," said Rep. Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey, a former Navy helicopter pilot. "I think we saw the whole thing play out in a way that is very different from anybody else on the Hill."

Rep. Pramila Jayapal of Washington state helped organize the first virtual session the Sunday after the insurrection. She received multiple texts from colleagues after she spoke up on a Democratic caucus call about what the group went through and how they felt forgotten.

"It ended up being a three-hour Zoom," Jayapal says. "It was deeply personal. People shared a lot of things about what they were going through. There were a lot of tears. There was a lot of anger. There was a lot of, you know, just how could this be? How could we be in America and have this happen in our Capitol?"

Many of the members went on to seek therapy. Some were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress, their struggles exacerbated by the raw tensions on Capitol Hill and an increasing number of death threats. Others said they have been more traumatized by the growing tendency among Republican lawmakers, and some in the public, to downplay or ignore the violence than they were by the attack itself.

Lawmakers said the gallery group has been a refuge through it all.

"I think it really saved my mental health," says Rep. Norma Torres, D-Calif. "It just seemed like every time somebody posted something, we were all awake, no matter what time of day or night, and we were all responding to each other. So that was really powerful."

Rep. Annie Kuster, who sought treatment for post-traumatic stress, says the gallery group connects almost daily on the text message chain, which moved to an encrypted app after some members raised security concerns. "Sometimes it's to get a ride to a vote. Sometimes it's, 'Who's cooking, and can you bring a bottle of wine to a dinner together?' And sometimes it's talking about our treatment for trauma and how we can preserve our democracy."

Kuster, D-N.H., was one of the first to be let out of the gallery on Jan. 6, escaping through the doors

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along with three other members just before the remaining lawmakers were locked inside. When Kuster's group reached the hallway, a group of rioters was rushing toward them.

"We ducked into the elevator," Kuster said. "And I said to this incredible policeman — I said, oh, my God, what if the elevator doors open, and they kill us? And I will never forget this moment ... he said, 'Ma'am, I am here to protect you.' And he was there to protect our democracy."

For those still in the gallery, fear was escalating. Crow was tending to Rep. Susan Wild, D-Pa., who was in distress after talking to a family member, while also communicating with Mullin on the floor below as he helped barricade the door. Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester, D-Del., was shouting a prayer for peace and healing. Jayapal, who had knee replacement surgery just a few weeks earlier and was using a cane, was trying to figure out how she would escape if she had to run. She held hands with some of her female colleagues crouching beside her.

Eventually, Capitol Police determined the upstairs area was clear, even as insurrectionists kept trying to break through the doors below. The lawmakers and others were rushed out of the chamber and down a warren of staircases and hallways. When they left, they could see police officers holding five or six rioters flat on the ground, guns pointed at their heads.

The rioters were just inches from the doors of the gallery.

Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., says he has tried not to dwell on what happened. But he still has searing images in his mind, including watching police drag heavy furniture in front of the main doors to the House floor as the rioters tried to beat them down.

As a member of the House Intelligence Committee, Himes says he spends a lot of time in high-security spaces — and before Jan. 6, he had assumed the Capitol was one of them.

"It was as though you were watching water flow uphill," Himes said. "Something that you imagined was impossible is happening right in front of your eyes."

Kuster says that one of the most traumatic things for her was not being able to see what was happening outside the chamber. They could only hear "the noises of the threat — the pounding on the door, the shouting in the hallways."

When she made it home two days later, she watched hours of video from the insurrection, including harrowing footage from the police battles outside the building. It only compounded the trauma.

"I remember my husband coming in, and I was just sobbing," Kuster said. "And he was holding me, saying, 'I don't know if this is the best thing for you to see.'"

"But we have to — we have to acknowledge the reality of what happened that day. And what's challenging for us is that we are both victims and witnesses to the crime on our country."

With salty language, Macron berates France's unvaccinated

By JOHN LEICESTER and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron has provoked outcries in parliament and protests from election rivals by using a vulgarity to describe his strategy for pressuring vaccine refusers to get coronavirus jabs.

Macron used the French word "emmerder," rooted in the French word for "crap" and meaning to rile or to bug, in an interview published by French newspaper Le Parisien on Tuesday night. The president made the explosive remark as lawmakers are heatedly debating new measures that would allow only the vaccinated to enjoy leisure activities such as eating out.

"The unvaccinated, I really want to bug them. And so we will continue doing so, to the end. That's the strategy," Le Parisien quoted the French leader as saying in a sit-down interview at the presidential Elysee Palace with a panel of its readers.

His use of earthy language more commonly heard at the counters of French cafés further complicated the already difficult passage in parliament of the government's planned new vaccine pass. Lawmakers debated into early Wednesday morning before their discussions were again suspended, disrupted by the furor over Macron's remarks.

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The vaccine pass will exclude unvaccinated individuals from places such as restaurants, cinemas, theaters, museums and sports arenas. The pass will also be required on inter-regional trains and buses, and on domestic flights.

Opposition lawmakers protested audibly in the National Assembly chamber as Macron's health minister, Olivier Veran, sought to defend the president's choice of words.

Veran said Macron's interview demonstrated his "intention, above all, to protect the population."

Critics accused Macron of behavior unbecoming a president and of targeting the unvaccinated to win support from the 90% of French adults who are fully vaccinated. Opposition lawmaker Sébastien Jumel said Macron "deliberately chose to add hysteria to the debate."

Macron is facing reelection in April.

Far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, who opposed the vaccine pass proposal, said the president wants "to wage war against a portion of the French."

Another far-right candidate, Eric Zemmour, accused Macron of "cruelty." On the far left, presidential candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon asked: "Is the president in control of what he says?"

Macron's supporters suggested the president simply expressed out loud what some vaccinated people already think about the non-vaccinated, in a country with bitter divides over the issue.

France reported a record-smashing 271,686 daily virus cases Tuesday as omicron infections race across the country, burdening hospital staff and threatening to disrupt transportation, schools and other services.

Macron's government is straining to avoid a new economically damaging lockdown that could hurt his reelection prospects. Ministers are instead trying to rush the vaccine pass bill through parliament in hopes that it will be enough to keep hospitals from becoming overwhelmed.

More than 20,000 people are hospitalized with COVID-19 in France, a number that has been rising steadily for weeks but not as sharply as the country's infection rates.

COVID-19 patients fill more than 72% of France's intensive care unit ICU beds, and its once-renowned health care system is again showing signs of strain. Most virus patients in ICUs are not vaccinated against the coronavirus, though 77% of the French population has had at least two doses.

Leicester reported from Le Pecq, France.

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

'We have to be there': AP photographer recalls Capitol siege

By J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Capitol was under siege. By Americans.

It was Jan. 6, 2021, on Capitol Hill in Washington, and Associated Press photographer J. Scott Applewhite was in the middle of it all — and was the eyes of the world in some respects. His camera recorded images that we are still gazing at today.

Here, he remembers some moments that stood out to him — moments that, so many months later, he is still processing as a photojournalist and as an American.

"The Capitol has been breached!" the Capitol Police officer shouted to lawmakers. Tear gas was in the Rotunda. "Get out your escape hoods and prepare to evacuate!" the officer said.

Glass was breaking in the main door to the chamber of the House of Representatives — the very door where you see the president enter for the State of the Union address. Quickly, the police and a few lawmakers grabbed benches and cabinets and barricaded the door.

From the officers came loud commands: Evacuate. Now. Stragglers were not tolerated — members of Congress, staffers, journalists, all.

But the move to safety was not immediate. Because they didn't know what was on the other side of the door.

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You could hear the growl of the mob just outside. In the chamber, the officers were focused, their guns aimed. And I was trained on the door as well — with a telephoto zoom.

I was pretty sure I was right where I was supposed to be. I kept my lens focused on that reinforced door. Then: There was an eye, trying to see inside — the face of one of the rioters wearing a Trump hat. What he did not see were the guns aiming inches from his face.

I kept steady and held tight on that spot.

When the breach of the Capitol was announced and evacuation began, it was a chaotic and uncertain process. Evacuate to where? The mob was on the other side of the doors.

Eventually, the officers announced that tear gas had been deployed in the nearby Rotunda. All were instructed to don escape hoods that were stashed under the seats. That was part of the preparedness in the wake of 9/11. I didn't put one on because I needed to see to use my camera.

After the evacuation order came, AP photographer Andy Harnik lingered and took many important images: lawmakers taking cover, and Capitol Police holding rioters at gunpoint.

Andy and I were both in the balcony that overlooks the House chamber. Andy had been on a side where some members of Congress were watching and the police presence was plentiful. I had been on the opposite side with about 30 reporters and photographers. The officers eventually pushed everyone out.

Andy must have been among the last. He said the final frame he shot in the chamber was one of me sitting alone in the House press gallery. Andy caught the terror in the faces of elected members of Congress as they dived for cover. When police rushed the members out, Andy kept his camera up, capturing rioters held at gunpoint by tactical officers outside the chamber.

The Capitol is where I work every day, and I am a familiar face to most police. When those on the chamber floor shouted up at me to get out, I told them I was fine and refused to leave. This is what we do: We stay and report.

One got more belligerent until another officer, a special agent in the protection division who guards the leadership, intervened. He shouted over, "Scotty's OK!" Two words is all it took (that and the obvious — they had their hands full with a mob on the other side of door).

The officer, in plain clothes, was Lt. Michael Byrd. Moments later, outside the House chamber, he shot and killed protester Ashli Babbitt as she climbed through a broken window of a barricaded door leading to the Speaker's Lobby.

From that point on, I was the only journalist and the only person remaining in the balcony to witness the standoff in the House chamber.

When the mob began to break the glass in the door, I could barely see the face of one of the rioters. The cops and a new congressman with a law enforcement background tried to de-escalate the situation even as guns were pointed at the hole in the glass.

The room was pretty dark. I was looking through a long zoom lens usually used outdoors for shooting sports or wildlife. I had brought it along for a little extra reach — closeups of faces and details during Electoral College voting, which is normally illuminated with TV lights.

The siege at the chamber door lasted about 45 minutes, until tactical units moved the intruders away. I was then able to move around the balcony above the House floor to record the deserted room and the debris. The gavel used by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi sat on the dais, surrounded by discarded emergency escape hoods and debris.

After the lawmakers and press evacuated, those doors were secured. For another two hours, I was locked in. Then an FBI tactical team swept through and threw me out of the building.

The joint session of the House and Senate resumed about 9 p.m. Andy Harnik and I persevered through the night and finished about 3 a.m. I went back to my office in the Senate Dirksen building, ate some soup and slept from 5 to 7 a.m. Then we started the next day's coverage.

The news went on, as it always does.

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People have given me a lot of applause in the past year for what I did on Jan. 6, 2021, for the photos I took, for refusing to leave during the final evacuation. But I want to make one thing clear: I was simply doing my job. As were many of my colleagues.

AP photographers John Minchillo and Julio Cortez suffered the brunt of the riot as they bravely threw themselves between the mob and the police. Manny Ceneta maneuvered his way around the Senate side of the Capitol to capture Trump supporters as they were stopped outside the chamber. Freelancer Jose Luis Magana took the photos of demonstrators scaling the wall of the west side of the Capitol. Jacquelyn Martin and Carolyn Kaster were also at the Trump rally and the march to the hill.

I was working directly with Washington photo editor Jon Elswick, who expedited my photos to the wire. Jon was patient with me because I was sending lots of pictures in a short time. This is usually not good form; we normally use judgment and discretion in how many we send in a short time so that the photo desk isn't overwhelmed.

In this case, I told Jon I was going to move as much as I could. Why? My previous experience in conflict zones and working around the military and police reminded me that my cameras might be destroyed by the mob or my disks confiscated by police. The ability to transmit from the camera ensured that the AP — and the world — would get the photos.

The fact is, I never really came face to face with the mob, except through a telephoto lens. And it really did take every one of us to record this story. Most of us in the Capitol that day — Getty, Reuters, AFP and others — couldn't move around without interference from the mob or the Capitol Police. Each of us covered what we could.

The result, if you will, was like a mosaic — views from different photographers all around the Capitol that composed a more complete picture.

I've witnessed plenty of violence and upheavals before, coups and revolutions, when I was doing conflict coverage abroad, but I am still shocked to experience it here. It was Americans attacking America.

What I saw, and what my camera captured, during the standoff at the House chamber a year ago was this: a place where a line was drawn — with courage, duty and guns.

And though they ultimately failed, in a very real way the rioters succeeded. It was an hour of anarchy, with an unchecked mob bringing one of the country's most sacred ceremonies — and the peaceful transfer of power — to a screeching, scary halt.

I often think about what might have happened if Pelosi had not called the Electoral College back immediately. Postponing a few days might have seemed the normal thing, but that didn't happen. The rioters had mostly escaped the police. Donald Trump was still in the White House for two more weeks. Jan. 6 was one of the longest days in our short American history. Imagine how long 14 more days might have been.

I've been at this a while, and I've learned: Some moments are hard to look at and some are hard to look away from. But whatever the moment might be, the job of the photojournalist — the responsibility — is to show people what they can't see on their own.

To do that, we have to be there.

EDITOR'S NOTE — J. Scott Applewhite is a longtime Associated Press photographer in Washington who has covered seven administrations since 1981. He marked his 40th anniversary with the AP the day before the Capitol attack.

Recalling Jan. 6: A national day of infamy, half remembered

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Beneath a pale winter light and the glare of television cameras, it seemed hard not to see the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol riot for what it was. The violent storming of the Capitol by Donald Trump supporters bent on upending the election of Joe Biden was as clear as day: democracy under siege, live-streamed in real time.

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Yet a year later, when it comes to a where-were-you moment in U.S. history, there is far from national consensus.

A Quinnipiac poll found that 93% of Democrats considered it an attack on the government, but only 29% of Republicans agreed. In a recent CBS-YouGov poll, 85% of Democrats called the riot an "insurrection" while only 21% of GOP voters did. Republicans (56%) were more likely to explain the rioters as "defending freedom." A poll by The Associated Press and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that about 4 in 10 Republicans recall the attack — in which five people died — as violent, while 9 in 10 Democrats do.

Such a disparity in memory may be inevitable in our hyper-polarized politics, but it's striking given the stark clarity of Jan. 6 at the time and in its immediate aftermath. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said then that "the president bears responsibility" for the attacks. Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., then the majority leader, said: "They tried to disrupt our democracy. They failed."

But since that day, separate versions — one factual, one fanciful — have taken hold. The Capitol riot — the violent culmination of a bid to delegitimize the 2020 election and block its certification — has morphed into a partisan "Rashomon," the classic Japanese film about a slaying told from varying and conflicting points of view. Indeed, the act of remembering can be a highly mercurial thing — particularly when deep-seated political views are involved.

"We keep using terms like post-factual, but it almost feels like there's this national psychosis or amnesia about what happened a year ago," says Charles Sykes, the former conservative Wisconsin radio host and founder of the website The Bulwark. "It's not just that we're two nations. It's as if we live on two different reality planets when it comes to the memory of Jan. 6."

Nations remember the way people do: imperfectly. Neuroscientist Lisa Genova, author of "Remember: The Science of Memory and the Art of Forgetting," describes how even the most searing memories are edited each time they're revisited. An original memory is replaced with a 2.0 version, a 3.0 version and beyond.

"Outside influences can sneak in every time we revisit and recall a memory for what happened. So for these collective memories, we have a lot of chances to revisit them," says Genova. "Depending on your political point of view, the news channels you watch, what this meant to you, this memory is going to have a different slant based on the story that you tell yourself."

And a lot of people have been working hard to chip away at the memory of Jan. 6. Rep. Andrew S. Clyde, R-Ga., has described the siege as like "a normal tourist visit." Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., has claimed the rioters were leftist militants "masquerading as Trump supporters." Trump has continued to insist that the election — Biden won by a wide margin, with scant evidence of fraud — was the real insurrection.

Fox News host Tucker Carlson has attempted to frame the Capitol attack as a "false flag" operation, orchestrated by the FBI. Carlson created a series on the riot that aired on Fox News' subscription streaming service.

To counter such misrepresentations, other documentary projects have tried to capture Jan. 6 in rigorous, methodical detail. Jamie Roberts' HBO documentary "Four Hours at the Capitol" was motivated in part to firmly establish a visual chronology of that day, with the rampage following Trump's incitement to his followers to "fight like hell."

Roberts interviewed witnesses and participants. Some of those in the mob praised his film only to later complain after seeing Carlson's series.

"I had people who were in the film texting me saying: 'Why the hell didn't you put that in your film? You're liars,'" Roberts says. "What I was hoping with the project was to put some very hard and fast facts together with people who can tell the story from a witness perspective. But for some people, it's still not going to reach them."

Alexander Keyssar, a professor of history and social policy at Harvard and author of "Why Do We Still Have the Electoral College?", believes a full-fledged investigative commission, like the one that followed the Sept. 11 attacks, might have fostered more national consensus on Jan. 6. In May, Senate Republicans used their filibuster power to block the creation of such a commission. (A House committee is to soon

make public some of the findings from its six-month investigation.)

Instead, many Trump supporters have adopted the former president's denial over the 2020 election. In the last year, Republicans have passed dozens of laws in 19 states to restrict voting. More election battles loom in the 2022 midterms and beyond.

"It's obviously dangerous because it becomes precedent," Keyssar says of the Capitol riot. "It has become a prism through which events are viewed. The prism for a large segment of Republican adherents is that you can't trust the outcome of elections. If you can't trust the outcome of elections, that will be true in the future as well. It becomes, as the great historian Bernard Bailyn once said, 'a grammar of thought.'"

Instead of receding into the past as an anomalous threat to the heart of American democracy, the history of the Capitol riot is yet to be fully written. Some projects are ongoing. To tell the story of Jan. 6, the Capitol Historical Society is creating an oral history. Some of the stories — like those of staffers who have since quit government and returned home — are particularly haunting for the society's president, Jane L. Campbell.

Meanwhile, the Capitol remains closed to the public. Where tours once regularly paraded, now only those with an appointment may enter.

"When people say 'Oh, it's never been this bad,' well, we did have a civil war. That was bad. That was truly bad," Campbell says. "But during the Civil War, Lincoln made a decision to finish the dome of the Capitol. We tell that story a hundred times over."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

US pushes unity on Ukraine ahead of key Russia meetings

By MATTHEW LEE and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a display of unity, the Biden administration and its European allies are beginning a series of meetings aimed at showing Russia that an invasion of Ukraine would be met with a forceful response.

Using virtually identical language, the U.S. and its European allies have several times in the past month issued joint and individual messages advising Russian President Vladimir Putin that his country will face "massive consequences" and "severe costs" if he goes ahead with further military intervention in Ukraine.

Yet the severity of the response hinges largely on Germany, Europe's biggest economy and a diplomatic heavyweight within the 27-nation European Union. Potential actions — be they economic, diplomatic or political — will top the agenda in talks in Washington on Wednesday between Secretary of State Antony Blinken and new German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

The Blinken-Baerbock meeting will follow a telephone call last week between President Joe Biden and Putin, a conversation Sunday between Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and a group discussion Tuesday among Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan and his counterparts from the five Nordic nations.

It will precede a flurry of meetings involving NATO foreign ministers, senior U.S. and Russian officials, the NATO-Russia Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe set for next week.

Baerbock, the top diplomat in the first German government in 16 years not headed by Angela Merkel, has struck a tougher tone on Russia than her predecessor. She has warned that Moscow will pay a "high political and economic price" if it makes any militaristic moves against Ukraine.

Ahead of her trip to Washington, Baerbock underlined the importance of the trans-Atlantic alliance and its basis in common values and respecting international law. She said Germany is "determined to act together to defend the peaceful order in Europe," with particular attention to Russia.

"With regard to Russia, the common message of the European and American governments is clear. Russian actions come with a clear price tag (and) the only way out of the crisis is through dialogue," she said.

"We have made this very clear time and again to the Russian government in recent days and weeks," she said. "We're now going into a decisive phase, in which there will be important talks at various levels."

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And even though the formats of the talks vary, our message as trans-Atlantic partners to the government in Moscow is always the same.”

Western officials have hinted at any number of economically crippling sanctions that could be imposed should Russia act. Those include near total cutoff from the international financial system and steps toward greater NATO integration with non-allied European nations.

As the Biden administration moves to build international consensus around a set of possible punitive measures, Germany is clearly the linchpin. Securing its support will be key to both messaging and implementation of whatever is decided.

Germany’s business ties with Russia could provide leverage, but they could also prove a hindrance for forging a united front toward Moscow. Despite strong criticism from the U.S., the center-left government of new Chancellor Olaf Scholz hasn’t shown itself willing to block the start of natural gas deliveries through a newly built pipeline linking Russia and Germany — a move that would hurt both countries.

Germany has adopted a less confrontational stance toward Russia compared with many other European nations. Under Merkel, it persuaded the Biden administration last year not to impose sanctions on the company building the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that many believe will leave Europe beholden to Russia for energy and Ukraine more vulnerable.

Nord Stream 2 is a topic of major concern in Washington and Congress is expected to take up two bills related to it and other Russia sanctions next week, just as the meetings in Europe are happening. A GOP bill would automatically impose Nord Stream sanctions, while a Democratic version would impose a wider range of penalties on Russia should it invade Ukraine.

Both Democratic and Republican lawmakers in Washington have blamed Nord Stream 2 for increasing Russia’s leverage over Germany and limiting what Berlin would be willing to do in response to a new invasion. Germany, like much of the European Union, is heavily reliant on Russian natural gas.

“In order for sanctions to be effective, they have to be effective in the dollar and the euro,” said Rep. Mike Waltz, a Republican from Florida who visited Ukraine in December along with other U.S. lawmakers.

The new pipeline is “giving Putin a checkmate over Western Europe” and limiting Germany’s engagement on sanctions and other preemptive measures that lawmakers from both parties want, Waltz said.

“I don’t see how they trade their energy security for taking a strong stand for Ukraine, and it puts Ukrainians and it puts Eastern Europeans, our allies, and NATO for that matter in a very precarious position,” he said.

Rep. Seth Moulton, a Massachusetts Democrat who also joined the lawmakers’ trip to Ukraine, said he believed the U.S. might be able to supply energy to Germany if it is cut off from importing Russian gas.

“My sense is Germany is waking up to this,” Moulton said. “They are starting to realize how serious this threat is and the leverage that Putin has potentially over them and other countries in Western Europe.”

Jordans reported from Berlin. Nomaan Merchant in Washington contributed to this report.

Biden urges concern but not alarm in US as omicron rises

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden urged concern but not alarm as the United States set records for daily reported COVID-19 cases and his administration struggled to ease concerns about testing shortages, school closures and other disruptions caused by the omicron variant.

In remarks Tuesday before a meeting with his COVID-19 response team at the White House, Biden aimed to convey his administration’s urgency in addressing omicron and convince wary Americans that the current situation bears little resemblance to the onset of the pandemic or last year’s deadly winter. The president emphasized that vaccines, booster shots and therapeutic drugs have lessened the danger for the overwhelming majority of Americans who are fully vaccinated.

“You can still get COVID, but it’s highly unlikely, very unlikely, that you’ll become seriously ill,” Biden said of vaccinated people.

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"There's no excuse, there's no excuse for anyone being unvaccinated," he added. "This continues to be a pandemic of the unvaccinated." He also encouraged Americans, including newly eligible teenagers 12 to 15, to get a booster dose of the vaccines for maximum protection.

Compared with last year, more Americans are employed, most kids are in classrooms, and instances of death and serious illness are down — precipitously so among the vaccinated.

"We're in a very different place than we were a year ago," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki when asked if the country had lost control of the virus.

Still, over the past several weeks Americans have seen dire warnings about hospitals reaching capacity amid staffing shortages, thousands of holiday flight cancellations in part because crews were ill or in quarantine, and intermittent reports of school closures because of the more-transmissible variant.

On a conference call with governors, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Biden's top COVID-19 science adviser, said Americans "should not be complacent" even though initial data shows the omicron variant to produce less severe disease than earlier strains. But, he said, the number of people getting infected by omicron "might overwhelm the positive impact of reduced severity" and "severely stress our hospitals"

While most schools across the country remain open, Biden took aim at those that have closed, saying he believes they have the money for testing and other safety measures. "I believe schools should remain open," he said.

The president also announced that the U.S. is doubling its order for an anti-viral pill produced by Pfizer that was recently authorized by the FDA to prevent serious illness and death from COVID-19. That means 20 million doses, with the first 10 million pills to be delivered by June.

A senior administration official said that combined with other therapies, such as monoclonal antibodies and convalescent plasma, 4 million treatments that are effective against the omicron variant would be available by the end of January.

The pills are "a game changer and have the potential to dramatically alter the impact of COVID-19, the impact it's had on this country and our people," Biden said.

Biden is under pressure to ease a nationwide shortages of tests that people are using to determine whether they or their family members are infected. Long lines and chaotic scenes over the holidays marred the administration's image as having the pandemic in hand.

"On testing, I know this remains frustrating. Believe me it's frustrating to me, but we're making improvements," Biden said.

In a reversal, the White House announced last month that it would make 500 million rapid antigen tests available free to requesting Americans, but it will be weeks, if not months, before those tests are widely available. The administration notes those tests are on top of existing supply of rapid tests and that even a small increase will help ease some of the shortages. Additionally, private insurers will be required to cover the cost of at-home tests starting later this month.

Test manufacturers have until Tuesday night to respond to the government's contract request, and the first awards are expected to be made this week, Psaki said. The administration is still developing a system for Americans to order the tests as well as a means to ship them to people's homes.

Pressed when the first tests would reach Americans, Psaki said, "I don't have an update on that at this point in time."

In a letter Monday, GOP Sens. Richard Burr and Roy Blunt, the top Republicans on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and a Senate Appropriations subcommittee on health, respectively, pressed the Department of Health and Human Services for answers on how the administration was working to address nationwide testing shortages.

"With over \$82.6 billion specifically appropriated for testing, and flexibility within the department to allocate additional funds from COVID-19 supplemental bills or annual appropriations if necessary, it is unclear to us why we are facing such dire circumstances now," they wrote. "It does not appear to be because of lack of funding, but a more fundamental lack of strategy and a failure to anticipate future testing needs by the administration."

White House officials have noted that the spike in testing demand is driven not just by omicron, but by people seeking to travel safely during the holidays and return to school after, and that the shortages are global in nature.

"Turns out, Omicron is driving a spike in demand for testing...everywhere," tweeted Ben Wakana, the deputy director of strategic communications & engagement for the White House's COVID-19 response team, highlighting similar shortages in the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville in Washington and Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington, contributed to this report.

Colorado fire evacuation aided by daylight, access to roads

By THOMAS PEIPERT and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A late-season wildfire pushed by hurricane-force winds tore through two densely populated Denver suburbs and seemed destined to leave a trail of deaths. Yet, only two people are unaccounted for out of some 35,000 forced from their homes.

It's a remarkably low number of possible casualties, according to disaster experts and authorities, all the more so because a public alert system did not reach everyone and the wintertime blaze caught many people off-guard.

Several factors broke in favor of the evacuees: The blaze came during daylight and over the holidays when many were at home, in mostly affluent neighborhoods where most people have easy access to vehicles. It also might have helped that the area has seasoned emergency management personnel who have worked other recent wildfires, major floods in 2013 and a supermarket mass shooting last March.

"In terms of the big picture it's a really miraculous evacuation," said Thomas Cova, a University of Utah professor who researches emergency management and wildfire evacuations. "So close to a populated areas ... spot fires everywhere and 100-mile-per-hour winds — I think it's incredible that's there's only two people missing."

Colorado Gov. Jared Polis said the fire that destroyed almost 1,000 homes and damaged hundreds more stands as a warning: "When you get a pre-evac or evacuation notice, hop to it."

Officials have not said exactly how many people were contacted through the emergency system, which sends a recorded alert or text to phones. The alert undoubtedly saved lives, but some residents affected by the fire complained in the aftermath that they never received it.

Neil Noble, who fled his Louisville home Thursday, said the first he heard of the fire was from a FedEx delivery driver who knocked on his door to drop off a package. After setting out for an errand and seeing gridlocked traffic as the smoke plume grew, he decided to leave with his three teenage children.

"I've talked to dozens of people, even those whose houses burned down, and nobody seems to have received any kind of notification," he said.

Alerts went out to people with landlines because their numbers are automatically enrolled in the system and those with cellphones and VoIP phones who enrolled online, Boulder County Sheriff Joe Pelle said. He also noted that people with landlines might not have received the evacuation order because those very lines had been burned by the fire.

According to Everbridge, the company that created the notification system, more than half of households in the country rely entirely on cellphones and don't have landlines.

Noble, who does not have a landline and didn't know he had to sign up for the alerts on his cellphone, said it would be an uphill battle to get tens of thousands of people to manually sign up for the service, causing unnecessary risk.

"We were fortunate enough it happened in the daytime, you know. You could see the plume getting worse and worse," he said. "At night this would have been deadly with this lack of communication."

Past fires have shown that wildfire alert system subscription rates can be as low as 30% to 40%, Cova said. But not every household needs to receive an emergency alert for it to be effective, since people will quickly share the news with their neighbors and friends, he said.

The Boulder County fire ignited shortly after 11 a.m. on Dec. 30, when schools were closed and many people were either home from work or working from home due to the pandemic. That avoided a scenario in which anxious parents scrambled to find their children rather than flee immediately, said Lori Peek, director of the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Most people in the suburban neighborhoods that burned likely had access to a vehicle, a contrast with other disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, where a quarter of New Orleans' population had no personal transportation, said Peek, who lives and works just miles from the burned area.

And while the emergency notification system didn't reach everyone, Boulder-area residents have seen enough fires along the Front Range communities at the foot of the Rocky Mountains to react quickly when smoke appears on the horizon, she said. Sharpening that awareness of danger is a growing understanding that climate change is making wildfires worse even as subdivisions creep deeper into fire-prone areas.

"I think one of the shifts that is going to follow this fire is that people are going to start thinking, 'Am I at risk? I thought I was safe, living in a suburban area,'" she said. "I don't think it's a bad thing to question that. Anything that can help people to get more prepared for the hazards we face is a good thing."

Cova credited local officials for not hesitating to order evacuations once the fire began to spread.

"If we had evacuation speed records, this would be up there in the top 10," he said. "I don't think anybody dropped the ball."

He contrasted the Colorado response with California's 2018 Camp Fire that killed 85 people and destroyed the town of Paradise. The evacuation order for Paradise came after the fire already was in town and there was only one remaining route out of the community.

Boulder County Commissioner Matt Jones, who was forced from his Louisville home, credited all of the law enforcement agencies and fire departments that converged on the area from across the state to help with the evacuation.

"It was phenomenal. It saved homes. I have no doubt about it," he said.

But he also pointed to an important factor that can't be quantified — common decency.

"There are a couple of things I realized when I was driving away from our home," he said. "One was the patience and grace of all the people getting evacuated. People were kind, polite, letting people in because they were all getting out. And that's part of the reason I think so many people did well getting out."

Brown reported from Billings, Montana.

Drivers fret about food and fuel while stranded on highway

By SARAH RANKIN and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — There was no food, water or sleep for Susan Phalen as she spent a frigid night inside her car stopped on Interstate 95 in Virginia. Meera Rao and her husband were only 100 feet past an exit but were unable to move for 16 hours.

Sen. Tim Kaine was on his way to Washington when a seemingly simple commute stretched into a 21-hour ordeal that became "a kind of survival project."

They were among hundreds of people who got stranded on the East Coast's main north-south highway in freezing temperatures after a winter storm snarled traffic and left some drivers stuck in place for as much as a full day.

The problems began Monday morning when a truck jackknifed on I-95, triggering a chain reaction as other vehicles lost control, state police said. Eventually lanes in both directions became blocked across a 40-mile stretch of the highway between Richmond and the nation's capital at a time when snow was falling around 2 inches an hour.

Hundreds of motorists spent the night in their vehicles, worrying about a lack of food, fuel and water as temperatures fell into the teens. One family reported that they went more than 18 hours without eating.

There were no reports of serious injuries or deaths, but there was plenty of anger among drivers.

"No one came. It was just shocking," said Rao, who was traveling home to Burtonsville, Maryland, after visiting her daughter in North Carolina when she got stuck Monday evening. "Being in the most advanced

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country in the world, no one knew how to even clear one lane for all of us to get out of that mess?"

It took until Tuesday evening around 8:30 p.m. for the Virginia Department of Transportation to reopen the interstate. Authorities had announced earlier in the evening that all stranded motorists had made it off the highway. Transportation officials then oversaw the removal of remaining abandoned vehicles and making sure the entire stretch was plowed.

As stranded motorists waited in their cars, many posted desperate messages on social media. Between midnight and 3 a.m. Tuesday, traffic came to a complete standstill, state officials said.

Gov. Ralph Northam said his team responded through the night by sending emergency messages to connect drivers with help and working with local officials to set up warming shelters as needed. Officials told reporters crews were helping distribute food, water and fuel.

Rao said they stopped their car engine at least 30 times to conserve gas and ran the heat just enough to get warm. They had some potato chips, nuts and apples to eat, but Rao did not want to drink any bottled water because she had a sprained ankle and did not think she could reach a makeshift restroom.

Finally, around midmorning Tuesday, a tow truck driver appeared and cleared away snow, allowing the Raos and other cars back up and take the exit.

"He was a messenger from God," Rao said. "I literally was in tears."

People who were stranded and their families lashed out at Northam on Twitter, asking why the Virginia National Guard was not deployed.

Northam said in an interview that he opted not to request National Guard help because the issue facing state crews was not a lack of manpower but the difficulty of getting workers and equipment through the snow and ice to where they needed to be. He said that effort was complicated by the disabled vehicles, freezing temperatures and ice.

The affected section of the interstate was not pretreated because heavy rain preceded the snow, which fell at times as fast as 2 inches an hour, said Marcie Parker, a state Department of Transportation engineer.

"That was entirely too much for us to keep up with," she said.

The storm also left passengers on an Amtrak train stranded in Virginia. Amtrak's Crescent left New Orleans on Sunday on its way to New York and got stuck near Lynchburg on Monday morning, when downed trees blocked the tracks.

Passenger Sean Thornton told AP that Amtrak provided food, but toilets were overflowing and passengers were furious. Amtrak planned for the train to complete its trip once the tracks are clear.

Up to 11 inches of snow fell in the area during Monday's blizzard, according to the National Weather Service, and state police had warned people to avoid driving unless absolutely necessary, especially as colder nighttime temperatures set in.

Compounding the challenges, traffic cameras went offline as much of central Virginia lost power in the storm, the transportation department said.

Kaine left his home in Richmond for his usual two-hour commute to the U.S. Capitol after Monday's snowstorm, expecting to preside over the Senate on Tuesday morning. Instead, he spent the night alone in his car on I-95.

The Democrat told Washington radio station WTOP that he worried about all the families with children or elderly passengers who were running out of fuel and food. But Kaine also described a camaraderie as strangers connected along the highway, including a Connecticut family who walked up and down lines of stopped cars, sharing a bag of oranges they had planned to bring home from a Florida vacation.

"I've never seen anything like it," Kaine said. "I will never forget this."

Phelan's planned one-hour drive from her parents' house turned into a 16-hour nightmare. She said at some point during the gridlock, she thought she might have to start knocking on windows asking other drivers for water. But she, too, witnessed acts of kindness among the stranded drivers, saying "everybody was helping everybody."

Kelly Hannon, a spokeswoman for the transportation department, apologized to motorists and said the department would take an "exhaustive look" at the incident.

Kunzelman reported from College Park, Maryland. Associated Press writers Denise Lavoie in Richmond, Matthew Barakat in Falls Church, Virginia; Bryan Gallion in Roseland, New Jersey; and Julie Walker in New York also contributed to this report.

Family stranded in Virginia: 'It's not getting any better'

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

By 1 p.m. Tuesday, morale was plummeting for Jennifer Travis, her husband and their 12-year-old daughter. They were down to half a bottle of water and no snacks. Their last meal had been at a Denny's at 7 p.m. Monday. They hadn't slept and were dressed for sunny Florida, not the frigid snowstorm in Virginia that had stranded them in their rented Chevy Tahoe for more than 18 hours.

"It's getting hard because it's not getting any better," said Travis, 42, her voice cracking as she sat on traffic-clogged U.S. Route 17 near Fredericksburg. "They keep saying help is coming. But it's not coming. Nobody's directing traffic. Nobody's at the stoplight saying 'OK, you go, go, go, go, go, go.' It's every man for themselves right now. And that sucks."

Travis and her family were among hundreds of motorists who waited desperately for help Tuesday after the winter storm snarled traffic and left some drivers stranded for nearly 24 hours along an impassable stretch of Interstate 95 south of the nation's capital. Even after motorists escaped I-95, many like Travis got stuck on side roads for several more hours.

Problems began Monday morning when a truck jackknifed on I-95, triggering a swift chain reaction as other vehicles lost control, state police said. Lanes in both directions became blocked on a 40-mile (64-kilometer) stretch of the interstate, the main north-south highway along the East Coast. As hours passed and night fell, motorists posted messages on social media about running out of fuel, food and water.

"Haven't had breakfast," Travis said Tuesday afternoon. "Haven't had lunch. Haven't had snacks. I've got a growing 12-year-old girl. I'm sure she's getting hungry."

The family was on vacation in Florida, visiting Universal Studios in Orlando for New Year's. Their flight home was canceled Sunday and then again Monday. So they rented the Tahoe and planned to drive straight home to Sterling, in northern Virginia, where Travis owns a marketing company.

It was a smooth drive for about 11 hours. But in Virginia, traffic began to back up on I-95 near Stafford. They decided to get on U.S. Route 1, which runs parallel.

Then, for some reason, Travis said Google Maps rerouted them back on to I-95, which appeared clear.

"Within 10 to 15 minutes, we were in bumper-to-bumper traffic," Travis said. "It was just stacked-up cars."

In the ensuing hours, the family took stretch breaks outside, where Travis said the temperature fell to 19 degrees. They turned the Tahoe on and off and cracked the windows to try not to inhale too much carbon monoxide. They played Harry Potter trivia, Marvel trivia and tried to stay calm. But they grew increasingly frustrated.

"The only time we ever saw anybody official was a fire and rescue crew," Travis said. "But I just think they were trying to find somebody because they weren't walking up to cars asking if we were OK. We never saw police cars. We never saw state troopers."

Travis eventually saw a message on Twitter from Gov. Ralph Northam that said help was coming.

"Nobody's helping us," Travis said. "We are stuck and how are you going to get people to us?"

The family was at a standstill on I-95 from about 1:30 a.m. to about 9 a.m.

"And then finally plow crews were coming out, and they were getting stuck on the road with us because they couldn't get around all of the broken down cars," Travis said. "And then other cars would come up behind the plow truck so that they could follow behind them."

After fleeing I-95, the family was soon stuck again, this time on Route 17.

"They basically shuffled all of these cars off the highway and now have congested all the side roads," Travis said. "The side roads haven't been plowed. There are trees down, powerlines down. Cars are skidding."

Travis added: "Why weren't the roads salted? (Gov. Northam) knew that a snow storm was coming. You

knew that historically Virginia doesn't do well. You have 15 days left in office and then you're out. You are still responsible to your constituents."

As she waited, Travis talked to the rental car company about having to pay for another day. She coordinated with the family's dog sitter about feeding their elderly cats and looking after their snake, which requires different types of light throughout the day.

One of their dogs, a Rhodesian ridgeback named Finn, has separation anxiety.

"And I know that when he sees me, we're going to be attached at the hip for a week," Travis said.

Eventually, the cars on Route 17 began to move. And the family charted a way north, "taking calculated risks with backroads."

"I said about 1,000 Hail Marys because there were so many trees that were dangling from power lines," Travis said.

They stopped at a firehouse to use the restroom for the first time and got some better driving directions. By 3:30 p.m., they were a little more than an hour from home.

They still hadn't eaten.

"I've seen cows. I've seen horses. No grocery stores yet," Travis said. "We're just trying to drive as fast and as safely as we can to get home and just eat something."

COVID case counts may be losing importance amid omicron

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

The explosive increase in U.S. coronavirus case counts is raising alarm, but some experts believe the focus should instead be on COVID-19 hospital admissions. And those aren't climbing as fast.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, for one, said Sunday on ABC that with many infections causing few or no symptoms, "it is much more relevant to focus on the hospitalizations as opposed to the total number of cases." Other experts argue that case counts still have value.

As the super-contagious omicron variant rages across the U.S., new COVID-19 cases per day have more than tripled over the past two weeks, reaching a record-shattering average of 480,000. Schools, hospitals and airlines are struggling as infected workers go into isolation.

Meanwhile, hospital admissions averaged 14,800 per day last week, up 63% from the week before, but still short of the peak of 16,500 per day a year ago, when the vast majority of the U.S. was unvaccinated. Deaths have been stable over the past two weeks at an average of about 1,200 per day, well below the all-time high of 3,400 last January.

Public health experts suspect that those numbers, taken together, reflect the vaccine's continued effectiveness at preventing serious illness, even against omicron, as well as the possibility that the variant does not make most people as sick as earlier versions.

Omicron accounted for 95% of new coronavirus infections in the U.S. last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Tuesday, in another indication of how astonishingly fast the variant has spread since it was first detected in South Africa in late November.

Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr, director of ICAP, a global health center at Columbia University, said the case count does not appear to be the most important number now.

Instead, she said, the U.S. at this stage of the pandemic should be "shifting our focus, especially in an era of vaccination, to really focus on preventing illness, disability and death, and therefore counting those."

Daily case counts and their ups and downs have been one of the most closely watched barometers during the outbreak and have been a reliable early warning sign of severe disease and death in previous coronavirus waves.

But they have long been considered an imperfect measure, in part because they consist primarily of laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19, not the actual number of infections out there, which is almost certainly many times higher.

The daily case counts are also subject to wild swings. The number of new cases recorded on Monday topped an unprecedented 1 million, a figure that may reflect cases that had been held up by reporting

delays over the holiday weekend. The seven-day rolling average is considered more reliable.

Now, the value of the daily case count is being called into question as never before.

For one thing, the skyrocketing increase reflects, at least in part, an omicron-induced stampede among many Americans to get tested before holiday gatherings, and new testing requirements at workplaces and at restaurants, theaters and other sites.

Also, the true number of infections is probably much higher than the case count because the results of the at-home tests that Americans are rushing to use are not added to the official tally, and because long waits have discouraged some people from lining up to get swabbed.

But also, case numbers seem to yield a less useful picture of the pandemic amid the spread of omicron, which is causing lots of infections but so far does not appear to be as severe in its effects.

Case counts have lost relevance, said Andrew Noymer, a public health professor at the University of California, Irvine.

"Hospitalizations are where the rubber meets the road," Noymer said. "It's a more objective measure." He added: "If I had to choose one metric, I would choose the hospitalization data."

Even hospital numbers aren't a perfect reflection of disease severity because they include patients admitted for other health problems who happen to test positive for the coronavirus.

Keeping track of COVID-19 admissions can tell doctors something about the seriousness of the virus and also the capacity of hospitals to deal with the crisis. That, in turn, can help health leaders determine where to shift equipment and other resources.

Still, health experts are not prepared to do away with case counts.

"We should not abandon looking at case numbers," said Dr. Eric Topol, head of the Scripps Research Translational Institute, "but it is important to acknowledge we're seeing only a portion of the actual number of cases."

Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle, said that for each new infection detected, the U.S. is missing two cases. But he said tracking the number of positive test results is still important as omicron makes its way across the land.

Case numbers can point to future hot spots and indicate whether a wave of infection has peaked, Mokdad said.

Also, case counts will continue to be important to people who are vulnerable because of age or health reasons and need a sense of the virus' spread in their communities so they can make decisions about precautions, he said. Hospitals, schools and businesses need to plan for absences.

"To give up on knowing if cases are going up or down, it's flying blind. How can we as a country not know the epidemic curve for infection?" Mokdad said.

If testing has lost its relevance, he said, it is because the U.S. never developed a way to consistently and reliably monitor infections.

"It's not acceptable to cover failure by changing the rules," he said.

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Man free after 37 years due to 'sex for lies' false witness

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A Philadelphia man was freed from prison Tuesday after 37 years in a case marred by detectives who allegedly offered a witness sex and drugs at police headquarters in 1983 in exchange for false testimony.

The trial witness was charged with perjury just days after Willie Stokes was convicted of murder in 1984. But Stokes didn't learn about that perjury plea until 2015, decades into a life sentence.

Stokes, 61, walked out of a state prison near Philadelphia eager to get a hug from his mother and a corned beef hoagie. His mother was too nervous to come after several earlier disappointments, so he

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greeted other family members instead.

"Today is a tremendous day. We're all very thankful," said his lawyer, Michael Diamondstein. "However, it's also a sad day, because it reminds us of how lawless, unfair and unjust Philadelphia law enforcement was for so long."

Both detectives who allegedly offered witness Franklin Lee a sex-for-lies deal to help them close a 1980 murder case are now deceased. Lee was in custody on unrelated rape and murder charges at the time, and said he was also promised a light sentence.

"I fell weak and went along with the offer," Lee told a federal judge in November, recalling his testimony at a May 1984 preliminary hearing when he claimed Stokes, a neighborhood friend, had confessed to killing a man during a dice game named Leslie Campbell.

Lee recanted the story at Stokes' murder trial in August 1984, but Stokes was nonetheless convicted and sent to prison for life. Days later, Philadelphia prosecutors charged Lee with perjury — not over his trial testimony, but over the initial testimony he'd given at the preliminary hearing. Lee pleaded guilty, admitting he'd made up the confession, and was sentenced to a maximum seven-year prison term.

"The homicide prosecutors that used Franklin Lee's testimony to convict Willie Stokes then prosecuted Franklin Lee for lying on Willie Stokes. And they never told Willie Stokes," Diamondstein argued at the November hearing in federal court.

Stokes' mother, now elderly, has been planning for his homecoming as his appeals gained traction, only to face repeated setbacks, she told The Philadelphia Inquirer, which first reported on the case.

But Lee's mother also played a role early on.

In federal court testimony last November, Lee said his girlfriend — who detectives summoned to have sex with him at police headquarters back in 1983 and who was allowed to bring marijuana and a few dozen opioid pills — told his mother about the deal he'd struck.

His mother told the woman not to go down to the station again. Instead, police secured him a sex worker the next time, Lee said.

"Once I talked to my mother, she told me, 'I didn't raise you like that, to lie on a man because you got yourself in a jam,'" Lee testified, according to the transcript. "She said, 'I couldn't care if they give you 1,000 years. Go in there and tell the truth.' And that's what I did."

One surviving prosecutor, now in private practice, did not immediately return messages seeking comment Tuesday. However, he has given a statement saying he doesn't remember either case, according to court files.

Philadelphia police offered no immediate comment on the case.

The U.S. magistrate who heard the appeal called the omission an "egregious violation of (Stokes') constitutional rights," and a U.S. district judge agreed, overturning the conviction last week.

As for Lee, he ended up serving 35 years on the rape, murder and perjury charges. He got out of prison two years ago and now works as an assembly line supervisor.

He apologized to Stokes in court "for the problem I caused."

"I'm going to take his tears to indicate he's accepting the apology," U.S. Magistrate Judge Carol Sandra Moore Wells said.

Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, whose office has championed about two dozen exoneration cases, supports Stokes but has not yet formally decided whether to retry him. That decision should come before a scheduled Jan. 26 hearing in state court, a spokesperson said.

___ Follow Maryclaire Dale on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/Maryclairedale>

Jan. 6 panel seeks interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House panel investigating the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection on Tuesday requested an interview with Fox News personality Sean Hannity, one of former President Donald Trump's closest allies in the media, as the committee continues to widen its scope.

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In a letter to Hannity, Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, Democratic chairman of the panel, said the panel wants to question him regarding his communications with former President Donald Trump, former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and others in Trump's orbit in the days surrounding the insurrection.

A Fox News spokesperson declined to comment on the request. Jay Sekulow, Hannity's lawyer, told The Associated Press Tuesday night that they are reviewing the committee's letter and "will respond as appropriate."

In his letter, Thompson said: "The Select Committee has immense respect for the First Amendment to our Constitution, freedom of the press, and the rights of Americans to express their political opinions freely. For that reason, we do not intend to seek information from you regarding your broadcasts on radio or television, your public reporting or commentary, or your political views regarding any candidate for office."

However, the chairman said, the committee also has a responsibility to investigate the dozens of text messages it has in its possession, from Dec. 31, 2020, to Jan. 20, 2021, and is focused on communications between Hannity, Trump and Meadows regarding the outcome of the 2020 presidential election and Trump's failed efforts to contest it.

One specific December 2020 text from Hannity to Meadows highlighted in the letter reads: "We can't lose the entire WH counsels office. I do NOT see January 6 happening the way he is being told. After the 6 th. (sic) He should announce will lead the nationwide effort to reform voting integrity. Go to FI and watch Joe mess up daily. Stay engaged. When he speaks people will listen."

The letter to Hannity also highlights texts from the night before the insurrection, including one in which Hannity said he was "very worried about the next 48 hours" and another to Meadows in which he wrote, "Pence pressure. WH counsel will leave." The letter says it appears from other text messages that Hannity may have spoken directly with Trump on Jan. 5 regarding planning for the following day.

Hannity had previously criticized the violence that took place last Jan. 6. But he's also been sharply critical of the committee and its work, saying on the air Dec. 13 after his texts were revealed: "We've been telling you that this is a waste of your time and money. They have a predetermined outcome."

He also complained about committee member Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., publicizing his texts. "Do we believe in privacy in this country? Apparently not."

The request is the first by the nine-member panel to a member of the media and opens a new door for the investigation as it widens its scope to any and all people who were in contact with the former president and his inner circle in the time surrounding the attack.

The committee says the extraordinary trove of material it has collected — 35,000 pages of records so far, including texts, emails and phone records from people close to Trump — is fleshing out critical details of the worst attack on the Capitol in two centuries, which played out on live television.

As the House prepares to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the attack Thursday, the panel, which commenced its work last summer, has already interviewed around 300 people and issued subpoenas to more than 40 as it seeks to create a comprehensive record of the Jan. 6 attack and the events leading up to it.

Thompson said about 90% of the witnesses called by the committee have cooperated despite the defiance of high-profile Trump allies like Meadows and Steve Bannon. Lawmakers said they have been effective at gathering information from other sources in part because they share a unity of purpose rarely seen in a congressional investigation.

AP Media Writer David Bauder in New York and Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington contributed to this report.

CDC posts rationale for shorter isolation, quarantine

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday explained the scientific rationale for shortening its COVID-19 isolation and quarantine recommendations, and clarified that the

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guidance applies to kids as well as adults.

The CDC also maintained that, for people who catch COVID-19, testing is not required to emerge from five days of isolation — despite hints from other federal officials that the agency was reconsidering that.

The agency announced the changes last week, halving the isolation time for Americans who catch the coronavirus and have no symptoms or only brief illnesses. Isolation should only end if a person has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and if other symptoms are resolving, the CDC added.

It similarly shortened the time that close contacts need to quarantine, from 10 days to five.

CDC officials previously said the changes were in keeping with evidence that people with the coronavirus are most infectious in the two days before and three days after symptoms develop.

Some experts have questioned how the new recommendations were crafted and why they were changed amid a spike in cases driven largely by the highly contagious omicron variant. Some also expressed dismay that the guidelines allowed people to leave isolation without getting tested to see if they were still infectious.

On Tuesday, the CDC posted documents designed to address those — and other — questions about the latest recommendations. The new guidance applies to school children as well as adults, the CDC said, responding to questions raised by school leaders around the country.

In laying out the scientific basis for the revisions, the agency said more than 100 studies from 17 countries indicate that most transmission happens early in an infection. The CDC acknowledged the data come from research done when delta and other pre-omicron variants were causing the most infections. But the agency also pointed to limited, early data from the U.S. and South Korea that suggests the time between exposure and the appearance of symptoms may be shorter for omicron than for earlier variants.

The CDC also took up the question of why it didn't call for a negative test before people emerge from isolation.

On Sunday, Dr. Anthony Fauci — the White House's top medical adviser — said the CDC was considering including the negative test as part of its guidance.

The agency said lab tests can show positive results long after someone stops being contagious, and that a negative at-home test may not necessarily indicate there is no threat. That's why, the agency said, it was recommending that people wear masks everywhere for the five days after isolation ends.

It did offer tips for those who have access to the tests and want to check themselves before leaving isolation.

Dr. Eric Topol, the head of the Scripps Research Translational Institute, accused the agency of furthering confusion. He agreed that it is appropriate to shorten isolation time, but only with testing.

"We do need to come up with a strategy that limits isolation time, but we don't want it to be one that's adding to the spread of the virus and unwittingly leading to the virus circulating," he said.

Yale University's Dr. Howard Forman said the updated recommendations were communicated poorly last week, but he also applauded the CDC for trying to be more nimble while dealing with limited science, a short supply of tests and an intensifying wave of infections.

Under the previous isolation and quarantine recommendations, "it was obvious that ... society was literally going to be disrupted. If you expected people to comply with those (old) rules, you might as well have a lockdown," said Forman, a radiologist who teaches public health policy.

The agency acknowledged people weren't following the longer recommendations: Research suggests only 25% to 30% of people were isolating for a full 10 days under the older guidance, the CDC said.

The CDC also suggests that people exposed to the virus quarantine for five days, unless they have gotten booster shots or recently received their initial vaccine doses. The agency said anyone exposed — regardless of vaccination status — should get tested five days later, if possible.

Associated Press writer Carla K. Johnson contributed to this report.

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Biden urges concern but not alarm in US as omicron rises

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden urged concern but not alarm Tuesday as the United States set records for daily reported COVID-19 cases and his administration struggled to ease concerns about testing shortages, school closures and other disruptions caused by the omicron variant.

In remarks before a meeting with his COVID-19 response team at the White House, Biden aimed to convey his administration's urgency in addressing omicron and convince wary Americans that the current situation bears little resemblance to the onset of the pandemic or last year's deadly winter. The president emphasized that vaccines, booster shots and therapeutic drugs have lessened the danger for the overwhelming majority of Americans who are fully vaccinated.

"You can still get COVID, but it's highly unlikely, very unlikely, that you'll become seriously ill," Biden said of vaccinated people.

"There's no excuse, there's no excuse for anyone being unvaccinated," he added. "This continues to be a pandemic of the unvaccinated." He also encouraged Americans, including newly eligible teenagers 12 to 15, to get a booster dose of the vaccines for maximum protection.

Compared with last year, more Americans are employed, most kids are in classrooms, and instances of death and serious illness are down — precipitously so among the vaccinated.

"We're in a very different place than we were a year ago," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki when asked if the country had lost control of the virus.

Still, over the past several weeks Americans have seen dire warnings about hospitals reaching capacity amid staffing shortages, thousands of holiday flight cancellations in part because crews were ill or in quarantine, and intermittent reports of school closures because of the more-transmissible variant.

On a conference call with governors, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Biden's top COVID-19 science adviser, said Americans "should not be complacent" even though initial data shows the omicron variant to produce less severe disease than earlier strains. But, he said, the number of people getting infected by omicron "might overwhelm the positive impact of reduced severity" and "severely stress our hospitals"

While most schools across the country remain open, Biden took aim at those that have closed, saying he believes they have the money for testing and other safety measures. "I believe schools should remain open," he said.

The president also announced that the U.S. is doubling its order for an anti-viral pill produced by Pfizer that was recently authorized by the FDA to prevent serious illness and death from COVID-19. That means 20 million doses, with the first 10 million pills to be delivered by June.

A senior administration official said that combined with other therapies, such as monoclonal antibodies and convalescent plasma, 4 million treatments that are effective against the omicron variant would be available by the end of January.

The pills are "a game changer and have the potential to dramatically alter the impact of COVID-19, the impact it's had on this country and our people," Biden said.

Biden is under pressure to ease a nationwide shortages of tests that people are using to determine whether they or their family members are infected. Long lines and chaotic scenes over the holidays marred the administration's image as having the pandemic in hand.

"On testing, I know this remains frustrating. Believe me it's frustrating to me, but we're making improvements," Biden said.

In a reversal, the White House announced last month that it would make 500 million rapid antigen tests available free to requesting Americans, but it will be weeks, if not months, before those tests are widely available. The administration notes those tests are on top of existing supply of rapid tests and that even a small increase will help ease some of the shortages. Additionally, private insurers will be required to cover the cost of at-home tests starting later this month.

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Test manufacturers have until Tuesday night to respond to the government's contract request, and the first awards are expected to be made this week, Psaki said. The administration is still developing a system for Americans to order the tests as well as a means to ship them to people's homes.

Pressed when the first tests would reach Americans, Psaki said, "I don't have an update on that at this point in time."

In a letter Monday, GOP Sens. Richard Burr and Roy Blunt, the top Republicans on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and a Senate Appropriations subcommittee on health, respectively, pressed the Department of Health and Human Services for answers on how the administration was working to address nationwide testing shortages.

"With over \$82.6 billion specifically appropriated for testing, and flexibility within the department to allocate additional funds from COVID-19 supplemental bills or annual appropriations if necessary, it is unclear to us why we are facing such dire circumstances now," they wrote. "It does not appear to be because of lack of funding, but a more fundamental lack of strategy and a failure to anticipate future testing needs by the administration."

White House officials have noted that the spike in testing demand is driven not just by omicron, but by people seeking to travel safely during the holidays and return to school after, and that the shortages are global in nature.

"Turns out, Omicron is driving a spike in demand for testing...everywhere," tweeted Ben Wakana, the deputy director of strategic communications & engagement for the White House's COVID-19 response team, highlighting similar shortages in the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville in Washington and Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington contributed to this report.

Biden says deal with telecoms avoids flight disruptions

By DAVID KOENIG and TALI ARBEL Associated Press

AT&T and Verizon have agreed to delay the launch of a new slice of 5G service by two weeks after airlines and the nation's aviation regulator complained about potential interference with systems on board planes.

President Joe Biden said the agreement reached Monday will help avoid further disrupting flights that bad weather and the surging coronavirus have already delayed and canceled by the thousands over the past several days.

The telecom giants agreed to delay Wednesday's planned launch of the new C-Band strand of 5G, which promises faster speeds for customers, in order to implement changes around airports. They still dismiss concerns that it could negatively affect aviation equipment.

The companies already postponed the C-Band rollout by a month when, over the weekend, they rejected a request by Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and the head of the Federal Aviation Administration to delay the launch again.

Under Monday's agreement, the companies also agreed to reduce the power of their new networks near major airports for six months. That will give the FAA more time to study potential interference with aviation.

"This agreement ensures that there will be no disruptions to air operations over the next two weeks and puts us on track to substantially reduce disruptions to air operations when AT&T and Verizon launch 5G on January 19th," Biden said in a statement Tuesday.

Here's a look at what happened and what comes next for wireless customers and air travelers.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE NEW SERVICE FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES?

So far, 5G service from AT&T and Verizon has not been very different from existing 4G service for most customers. The new segment of radio frequencies called C-Band, a "mid-band" spectrum, could mean faster signals over wide areas for many customers. T-Mobile already has huge swaths of mid-band spectrum.

Over the past few years, wireless carriers have spent tens of billions of dollars to license spectrum from the government and roll out 5G service. However, their plan to use C-Band ran into fierce opposition from

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airlines and aviation groups.

WHAT DID THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY SAY ABOUT THE NEW 5G SERVICE?

U.S. airlines say wireless use of the C-Band segment of the spectrum could interfere with altimeters, radio devices that measures a plane's height above the ground. The trade group Airlines for America said airlines could be forced to cancel or divert thousands of flights as a safety measure.

WHOSE SIDE IS THE GOVERNMENT ON?

Both.

The Federal Communications Commission, which runs the auctions of radio spectrum, determined that C-Band could be used safely in the vicinity of air traffic. The FCC in 2020 set a buffer between the 5G band and the spectrum that planes use to resolve any safety concerns.

But Buttigieg and FAA Administrator Stephen Dickson, whose agency is responsible for aviation safety, saw a potential problem. On Friday, they asked AT&T and Verizon to hold off activating C-Band 5G near an undetermined number of "priority airports" while the FAA conducted further study.

HOW DID AT&T AND VERIZON RESPOND?

They dismissed the concerns. The wireless industry trade group CTIA notes that about 40 countries have deployed the C-Band strand of 5G without reports of harmful interference with aviation equipment.

But AT&T CEO John Stankey and Verizon CEO Hans Vestberg did offer to reduce the power of their 5G networks near airports, as France has done.

"The laws of physics are the same in the United States and France," Stankey and Vestberg said in a letter Sunday to Buttigieg and Dickson. "If U.S. airlines are permitted to operate flights every day in France, then the same operating conditions should allow them to do so in the United States."

Although they took steps to soothe the federal officials, the telecoms are still bickering with airlines, which have canceled more than 10,000 U.S. flights since Christmas Eve because of bad weather and labor shortages caused by COVID-19.

"While the airline industry faces many challenges, 5G is not one of them," Vestberg said in a company memo Tuesday.

HOW MANY PLANES DOES THIS AFFECT?

Under the agreement, the FAA will conduct a survey to find out. The FAA will allow planes with accurate, reliable altimeters to operate around high-power 5G. But planes with older altimeters will not be allowed to make landings under low-visibility conditions.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS?

The two-week postponement will give the FAA and the companies time to implement the agreement.

AT&T and Verizon will be allowed to launch C-Band service this month under already-granted FCC licenses. The airlines have until Friday to give the companies a list of up to 50 airports where they believe the power of C-Band service should be reduced through July 5.

Until July, the telecoms will talk to the FAA and airlines about potential long-term measures regarding 5G service near airports. However, under terms of the agreement with the FAA, AT&T and Verizon will have sole power to decide if any changes in service will be made.

"We felt that it was the right thing to do for the flying public, which includes our customers and all of us, to give the FAA a little time to work out its issues with the aviation community and therefore avoid further inconveniencing passengers with additional flight delays," Vestberg said in his memo.

Nicholas Calio, president of the airline trade group, was more muted in his comments about the agreement, although he thanked federal officials for reaching the deal with AT&T and Verizon.

"Safety is and always will be the top priority of U.S. airlines. We will continue to work with all stakeholders to help ensure that new 5G service can coexist with aviation safely," Calio said.

The FAA issued a brief statement about the two-week delay, saying it looks forward "to using the additional time and space to reduce flight disruptions associated with this 5G deployment."

Will Elizabeth Holmes' conviction sober up Silicon Valley?

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By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — The fraud conviction of former Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes could do more than just send a once-celebrated ex-billionaire to prison. In theory, it could also deliver a sobering message to a Silicon Valley culture that often gets lost in its own hubris and swagger.

Will it? Don't hold your breath.

For that change to happen, entrepreneurs would have to dial down their own hype, which could mean losing potential investors to louder startups with fewer qualms. Meanwhile, venture capitalists and other startup investors — always on the lookout for the next big windfall — would need to get a lot more skeptical about the ambitious pitches they're hearing, despite the Valley's decades-long habit of throwing money at a variety of sketchy startup ideas. Most fail, but the rare successes can more than make up for a passel of losers.

"I think it will generate some more caution among entrepreneurs, but for the most part, human nature being what it is, there is still going to be a tendency to exaggerate, especially when you know you might not get funded if you don't," said Richard Greenfield, a lawyer who represents investors in startups.

"And I don't think it will change many investors' attitudes," he added. "People are still going to want to reach for the moon."

Holmes got slapped down hard for going overboard with her relentless sales pitch while running Theranos, a blood-testing startup she founded as a 19-year-old college dropout in 2002.

A jury found her guilty on Monday of duping investors into believing that Theranos had developed a revolutionary medical device that could detect a multitude of diseases and conditions from a few drops of blood. She could face up to 20 years in prison for each of those four convictions, although legal experts say she is unlikely to receive the maximum sentence. The jury also acquitted Holmes of four felony charges accusing her of trying to defraud patients that paid for Theranos blood tests.

Federal prosecutors depicted Holmes as a charlatan obsessed with fame and fortune. In seven days on the witness stand, she cast herself as a visionary trailblazer in male-dominated Silicon Valley who was also a young woman emotionally and sexually abused by her former lover and business partner, Sunny Balwani.

The trial also laid bare the pitfalls of one of the go-to moves of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs — conveying a boundless optimism regardless of whether it's warranted, known as "fake it 'til you make it." That ethos helped hatch groundbreaking companies such as Google, Netflix, Facebook, and Apple — the latter co-founded by one of Holmes' heroes, Steve Jobs.

As soon as Holmes was indicted in 2018, the U.S. Justice Department made it clear they hoped to use her case as a prod that would jolt Silicon Valley — not to mention Big Tech companies that continue to extend their dominance in everyday life — back to reality.

"They wanted to send a message," said Carl Tobias, a law professor at the University of Richmond who followed the Holmes trial. "Now we shall see whether it's enough to change some of the risky behavior we have been seeing for years."

Few expect the Holmes conviction to lower the wattage on the brash promises and bold exaggerations that have become a routine part of the tech industry's innovation hustle.

The Holmes verdict "will send a message to CEOs that there are consequences in overstepping the bounds," suggested Ellen Kreitzberg, a Santa Clara University law professor who attended the trial. On the other hand, she said, "investors are still going to want to make more money on a promising idea. They will always go in for the golden ring."

The bold dream Holmes pursued when she founded Theranos had become a nightmare by the time she was indicted on felony charges in 2018.

She set out to create a less painful, more convenient and cheaper way to scan for hundreds of diseases and other health problems using just a few drops of blood instead of filling vials with blood for each test. She aimed to upend an industry dominated by giant testing companies such as Quest Diagnostics and Labcorp, starting with setting up "mini-labs" in Walgreens and Safeway stores across the U.S. that would use a small Theranos device called the Edison to run faster, less intrusive blood tests.

The concept — and the way Holmes presented it — enthralled wealthy investors eager to buy an early

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stake in a game-changing company. It helped Theranos raise more than \$900 million from savvy billionaires such as media mogul Rupert Murdoch and software magnate Larry Ellison, as well as well-to-do families such as the Waltons of Walmart and the DeVos clan behind Amway.

"Some people like to throw money at things and have too much unfounded optimism, and Elizabeth Holmes took full advantage of that," Greenfield said.

Holmes also wooed a well-connected board that included two former U.S. secretaries of state, Henry Kissinger and the late George Shultz; two former secretaries of defense, Gen. James Mattis and William Perry; former Sen. Sam Nunn; and former Wells Fargo CEO Richard Kovacevich. She charmed former President Bill Clinton in an on-stage presentation and impressed then-Vice President Joe Biden, who effusively praised her during a 2015 tour of a Theranos lab.

But investors and board members were both surprised to learn that Theranos' blood-testing technology kept producing misleading results. Evidence showed that Theranos took great pains to conceal that fact, including forcing patients to undergo regular blood draws instead of the promised finger sticks and secretly testing those samples with conventional technology.

Evidence presented at the trial also showed that Holmes lied about purported deals that Theranos had reached with big drug companies such as Pfizer and the U.S. military.

The deception backfired in 2015 after a series of explosive articles in The Wall Street Journal and a regulatory audit of Theranos uncovered potentially dangerous flaws in the company's technology, leading to its eventual collapse.

During her testimony, Holmes occasionally expressed contrition for the way she handled a variety of issues. But she also often avoided answering pointed questions, saying she had forgotten the circumstance surrounding key events spotlighted by the prosecution. She insisted she never stopped believing that Theranos was on the verge of refining its technology.

"Let's face it: Silicon Valley is based on dreams," Greenfield said. "And you need people to keep stoking the fire to help keep those dreams alive."

Associated Press Business Writer Marcy Gordon contributed to this story from Washington.

TV host Seth Meyers contracts COVID-19, show dark this week

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — This week's remaining episodes of "Late Night with Seth Meyers" have been scrapped after the host tested positive for COVID-19.

Meyers tweeted Tuesday about his positive result but said he felt fine, thanking the vaccine and a booster shot. He hosted an original broadcast on Monday.

NBC has canceled the four shows scheduled from Tuesday to Friday. "Tune in next Monday to see what cool location we will try and pass off as a studio!" Meyers tweeted.

"Late Night with Seth Meyers" is just the latest TV show to grapple with the new surge in the pandemic. "Saturday Night Live" had to scramble to broadcast a new show last month without a live audience and with taped sketches. Fellow TV host Jimmy Fallon also revealed a positive COVID-19 result right before Christmas, despite being fully vaccinated.

Other stars who've recently tested positive include Hugh Jackman, Whoopi Goldberg, Debra Messing and LL Cool J. On Tuesday, a COVID-19 diagnosis forced Lupita Nyong'o to cancel virtual interviews for her new movie "The 355."

Prince Andrew effort to toss sex assault suit hits roadblock

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A judge was mostly dismissive Tuesday of arguments by a lawyer for Prince Andrew who wants to win fast rejection of a lawsuit filed by a woman who says she was sexually trafficked to the royal by the millionaire Jeffrey Epstein when she was 17.

U.S. District Judge Lewis A. Kaplan did not immediately rule at the end of a video conference, but he

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made clear that he was not leaning Andrew's way as he rejected much of the reasoning offered by the prince's attorney, Andrew Brettler, who said the case "should absolutely be dismissed."

Kaplan repeatedly shot down Brettler's arguments or disputed them with other reasoning.

"So what?" Kaplan responded to one argument.

To another, he said: "I understand you are asserting that, but it doesn't mean it's correct."

And to another: "Mr. Brettler, I understand your point. It just isn't the law."

When the hearing concluded, Kaplan promised a ruling soon and said he appreciated the "arguments and the passion." The judge directed that the exchange of potential evidence in the case was to proceed as scheduled.

Virginia Giuffre sued the prince in August, saying she was coerced into sexual encounters with the prince in 2001 by Epstein and his longtime companion, Ghislaine Maxwell.

Attorney David Boies, representing Giuffre, argued against dismissal of the lawsuit.

Epstein, 66, killed himself in a Manhattan jail cell in 2019 while awaiting a sex trafficking trial, while Maxwell, 60, was convicted last week of sex trafficking and conspiracy charges in federal court in New York. Giuffre's allegations against Andrew were not a part of either criminal case.

The prince has strenuously denied Giuffre's allegations.

During Tuesday's arguments, Kaplan rejected Brettler's assertion that Giuffre's claims were too vague and that she failed to "articulate what happened to her at the hands of Prince Andrew."

In the lawsuit and in interviews, Giuffre has said she was sexually abused by Andrew at Maxwell's London home, at Epstein's New York mansion and his estate in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The judge read aloud a portion of the lawsuit in which Giuffre alleged "involuntary sexual intercourse."

"There isn't any doubt what that means," Kaplan said.

When Brettler continued his claim that the lawsuit lacked sufficient facts to be allowed to proceed toward trial, Kaplan reminded him that a judge is required to accept the assertions in a lawsuit as true at this stage of the case.

During much of a hearing that lasted over an hour, Brettler argued that the prince is protected from being sued by a 2009 settlement agreement between Epstein and Giuffre. The agreement, under which Epstein paid Giuffre \$500,000, was unsealed and became publicly available Monday.

Under that deal, Giuffre agreed to release her claims against "potential defendants," but the judge repeatedly disagreed with Brettler's argument that wording prevented her from suing the prince.

Kaplan noted that there could be many interpretations of what constituted a potential defendant, and that the only parties who would know exactly what was intended were Giuffre and Epstein.

"This is an example where the word 'potential' is the use of a word to which you or I cannot find any meaning at all," the judge said.

He also noted that the sealing of the terms of the settlement deal for a dozen years meant that anyone the parties might have intended to be protected against future lawsuits by Giuffre would never have known, since they couldn't see it.

And Kaplan said that if Epstein's lawyers wanted to prevent Giuffre from suing any person or entity involved in any way in sexual activity with Epstein or others, "it would have been easy to say it."

The judge also appeared dismissive of other claims by Brettler, including one involving the constitutionality of New York's decision to temporarily allow people sexually abused as children to file lawsuits past the usual deadline for legal action.

Elizabeth Holmes saga still has some loose ends to resolve

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — A jury has ended the suspense surrounding the fraud trial of former Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes by finding her guilty on four of the 11 charges facing her, but some issues in the legal drama remain unresolved. Here's a look at some of the most pressing questions.

PRISON BOUND

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The general consensus is that Holmes almost certainly will be sent to prison, although it's difficult to predict for how long. Technically, she could be sentenced to a maximum of 20 years in federal prison for each of the four felony convictions, but experts doubt that will happen.

Former federal prosecutor Neema Rahmani believes Holmes, 37, will be sentenced to at least 10 years in prison unless she can win an appeal to overturn the guilty verdicts. Holmes was convicted for duping Theranos investors and conspiring to commit fraud against them.

An appeal also seems certain, especially because the jury acquitted Holmes on four counts alleging she had also defrauded and conspired against patients who paid for Theranos blood tests that didn't work as advertised.

"Mixed jury verdicts are definitely the kind of thing you want to bring to an appellate court," said Matthew Barhoma, a Los Angeles attorney who specializes in appeals. "You want to use that mixed result to say the jury didn't understand the information presented to them, and there's an argument to be made that the evidence was insufficient for a conviction."

Holmes declined to answer questions from reporters after she left court Monday following the verdicts.

U.S. District Judge Edward Davila, who presided over the complex trial in San Jose, California, indicated it will probably be several months before he sentences Holmes. Until then, she will remain free on bail, although she will now likely to have to offer some sort of property or cash as security to discourage from trying to flee.

The freedom will allow her to spend more time with her infant son, who was born shortly before the trial began in September.

Davila is also expected to declare a mistrial on three fraud charges that deadlocked the jury.

WHAT ABOUT SUNNY?

Initially, there was relatively little interest in Theranos' longtime chief operating officer, Ramesh "Sunny" Balwani. Until, that is, Holmes heaped much of the blame for the company's scandalous downfall on his alleged attempts to control her and his alleged mismanagement of the company's blood-testing labs.

The trial also cast a bright light on the secret love affair that Holmes and Balwani, now 57, had been having for years, unknown to Theranos' board of directors and almost everyone else in the company.

At one point in the seven days she spent on the witness stand, Holmes weepily testified that Balwani had subjected her to years of mental, emotional and sexual abuse and suggested it may have clouded her judgment at times. Balwani's attorney adamantly denied Holmes' accusations, but Balwani never told his side of the story during the trial.

He will get that chance in his own fraud trial scheduled to start next month.

Interest in Balwani's trial will intensify if Holmes takes the stand to testify against him. But her attorneys almost certainly won't allow that in order to protect her likely appeal of her conviction, said Richard Greenfield, a lawyer who represents investors in startups.

OTHER LEGAL ENTANGLEMENTS?

While it's always possible there might be additional civil lawsuits filed against Holmes, there doesn't seem to be much left for would-be litigants to pursue. Theranos is now worthless, and Holmes reached a civil settlement with the Securities and Exchange Commission even before she was indicted on criminal charges.

In addition to imposing a \$500,000 fine on Holmes, the SEC settlement also required her to surrender controlling interest in Theranos. That stake was valued at \$4.5 billion in 2014 before a series of revelations about Theranos' flawed technology caused it all to collapse. Holmes also was barred from becoming an executive or board member of a publicly held company for 10 years,

Manchin wary of changing Senate rules to advance voting bill

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Joe Manchin sounded a skeptical note Tuesday about the prospects of easing the Senate's filibuster rules, raising doubts about whether he will provide crucial support to the Democrats' renewed push for voting legislation they say is needed to protect democracy.

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Manchin told reporters it was his "absolute preference" that Republicans support any changes and he described acting on a purely partisan basis as a "heavy lift." Still, he did not slam the door completely shut, saying he was exploring "the options we have open."

"I think that for us to go it alone, no matter what side does, it ends up coming back at you pretty hard," Manchin said.

Manchin's skepticism comes just one day after Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced the Senate will vote soon on easing the filibuster rules. In a letter Monday to colleagues, Schumer, D-N.Y., said the Senate "must evolve" and will "debate and consider" the rule changes by Jan. 17, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, as the Democrats seek to overcome Republican opposition to their elections law package.

"Let me be clear: January 6th was a symptom of a broader illness — an effort to delegitimize our election process," Schumer wrote, "and the Senate must advance systemic democracy reforms to repair our republic or else the events of that day will not be an aberration — they will be the new norm."

The election and voting rights package has been stalled in the evenly split 50-50 Senate, blocked by a Republican-led filibuster with Democrats unable to mount the 60 votes needed to advance it toward passage.

So far, Democrats have been unable to agree among themselves over potential changes to the Senate rules to reduce the 60-vote hurdle, despite months of private negotiations.

Two holdout Democrats, Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, have tried to warn their party off changes to the Senate rules, arguing that if and when Republicans take majority control of the chamber they would use the lower voting threshold to advance bills Democrats strongly oppose.

President Joe Biden has waded only cautiously into the debate — he's a former longtime senator who largely stands by existing rules but is also under enormous political pressure to break the logjam on the voting legislation.

Voting rights advocates warn that Republican-led states are passing restrictive legislation and trying to install election officials loyal to former President, Donald Trump in ways that could subvert future elections.

Trump urged his followers last Jan. 6 to "fight like hell" for his presidency, and a mob stormed the Capitol trying to stop Congress from certifying the state election tallies for Biden. It was the worst domestic attack on a seat of government in U.S. history.

How the Senate filibuster rules would be changed remains under discussion.

It seems certain that a full-scale end of the filibuster is out of reach for Democrats. Changing the rules would need all 50 votes, and Manchin and Sinema have made it clear they are unwilling to go that far.

Schumer said he has had several discussions with Manchin, and that Manchin was "entertaining" various proposals.

"I don't want to give people the illusion that he said he would be for any of them at this point. It's a long, hard struggle," Schumer said.

Senators are wary of a sweeping overhaul after seeing the fallout that came after Democrats ended the filibuster for some judicial and executive branch nominees. Once Republicans took power, Sen. Mitch McConnell, the GOP leader, did away with the filibuster for Supreme Court nominations — ushering three Trump-picked conservative justices to the high court.

But despite their reluctance on major filibuster changes, Manchin and Sinema both support the election legislation. In fact, Manchin helped craft the latest package in an unsuccessful effort to win Republican support. Now the two Democrats' colleagues are working on ways to change the filibuster so at least this legislation could pass.

Ideas include forcing senators to hold the floor for extended periods, rather than simply raise their filibuster objections — a scene that would have echoes of the 1950s and 1960s when Southern segregationists filibustered civil rights legislation.

Republicans are so worried Democrats will end the filibuster that McConnell has taken other actions to try to keep Manchin and Sinema close so they don't join the rest of their party in making any drastic changes.

"Obviously, yes, we do talk to them, and all indications are that they still believe the Senate as an institution is important and doesn't need to be turned into the House, or put another way, doesn't need to be

broken," McConnell said.

One Republican, Sen. Mike Lee of Utah, argued on Monday that ending the filibuster would turn the Senate into a "Lord of the Flies"-style institution where majority rules, no matter what.

"It is absurd and dangerous to the institution itself," Lee said in a statement. He said Schumer and his "disastrous plan" must be stopped.

US arrests, charges suspect in Haitian president slaying

ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The U.S. government announced Tuesday that it charged one of the main suspects in the killing of Haitian president Jovenel Moïse as it unsealed a complaint that revealed federal authorities had interviewed him several months ago while he was hiding in Jamaica.

Mario Antonio Palacios Palacios, a 43-year-old former Colombian soldier, is charged with conspiracy to commit murder or kidnapping outside the United States and with providing material support resulting in death, knowing or intending that such material support would be used to prepare for or carry out the conspiracy to kill or kidnap.

He appeared at a federal court in Miami on Tuesday afternoon but did not enter a plea. Palacios, who was wearing jeans and a gray T-shirt and had his hands and feet shackled, told the judge he wanted to be appointed an attorney. After responding to questions related to his income and property, including that he owned a house in Cali, Colombia, and received a nearly \$370 army pension, he was granted counsel based on limited income.

Court-appointed attorney Alfredo Izaguirre told U.S. Magistrate Judge Alicia Otazo-Reyes that he recommended Palacios stay in detention because he has no immigration status, relatives or ties to the United States. The judge ordered detention, saying he would be at risk of fleeing.

Palacios is scheduled to appear in court again on Jan. 31. Izaguirre said his client would probably plead not guilty at the preliminary hearing.

A complaint unsealed Tuesday states that Palacios spoke voluntarily with U.S. authorities in October and told them that he was hired to travel to Haiti to provide security and participate in an alleged operation to arrest the president. He said that the initial plan was for co-conspirators to don black hoodies, capture Moïse at the airport in June and take him away by plane. Palacios then said that unnamed co-conspirators told him as early as July 6, a day before the killing, about the plan to assassinate Moïse.

Palacios was arrested in Jamaica in October and was scheduled to fly to his native Colombia on Monday. However, Interpol notified Palacios during a stopover in Panama that the U.S. government was extraditing him, said Gen. Jorge Luis Vargas, director of Colombia's police.

He said that Colombia, Jamaica and the U.S. were in touch to coordinate the deportation and extradition of Palacios to the U.S.

The U.S. Department of Justice said in a press release that Palacios agreed to travel to the U.S. during his layover in Panama.

Interpol had issued a red alert for Palacios on charges including attempted murder, armed robbery and conspiracy based on a request from the Haitian government.

The office of Haiti's prime minister issued a brief statement, saying only that it wanted justice to prevail in the July 7 assassination of Moïse at his private residence. The office did not reply to additional questions including whether the government was still seeking to charge Palacios or extradite him to Haiti.

Former Haitian Prime Minister Claude Joseph said the U.S. taking custody of Palacios was a step in the right direction, but he urged local authorities to work with the U.S. to extradite him so he can face justice in Haiti.

Palacios was one of more than a dozen former Colombian soldiers accused in the slaying of Moïse. The Colombian government has said that the majority of the ex-soldiers were duped and thought they were on a legitimate mission to provide protection and that only a few knew it was a criminal mission.

More than 40 suspects have been detained, including 19 former Colombian soldiers. Among them is

Palacios, who was a member of Colombia's military for 20 years.

Associated Press reporters Dánica Coto in San Juan, Puerto Rico; Eric Tucker in Washington, D.C.; and Harold Isaac in Port-au-Prince, Haiti contributed to this report.

Why are so many vaccinated people getting COVID-19 lately?

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Why are so many vaccinated people getting COVID-19 lately?

A couple of factors are at play, starting with the emergence of the highly contagious omicron variant. Omicron is more likely to infect people, even if it doesn't make them very sick, and its surge coincided with the holiday travel season in many places.

People might mistakenly think the COVID-19 vaccines will completely block infection, but the shots are mainly designed to prevent severe illness, says Louis Mansky, a virus researcher at the University of Minnesota.

And the vaccines are still doing their job on that front, particularly for people who've gotten boosters.

Two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine still offer strong protection against serious illness from omicron. While those initial doses aren't very good at blocking omicron infection, boosters — particularly with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines — rev up levels of the antibodies to help fend off infection.

Omicron appears to replicate much more efficiently than previous variants. And if infected people have high virus loads, there's a greater likelihood they'll pass it on to others, especially the unvaccinated. Vaccinated people who get the virus are more likely to have mild symptoms, if any, since the shots trigger multiple defenses in your immune system, making it much more difficult for omicron to slip past them all.

Advice for staying safe hasn't changed. Doctors say to wear masks indoors, avoid crowds and get vaccinated and boosted. Even though the shots won't always keep you from catching the virus, they'll make it much more likely you stay alive and out of the hospital.

The AP is answering your questions about the coronavirus in this series. Submit them at: FactCheck@AP.org. Read more here:

Do at-home COVID-19 tests detect the omicron variant?

How can I protect myself from the new omicron variant?

Can your pet get COVID-19?

Former Theranos CEO Holmes convicted of fraud and conspiracy

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — In a case that exposed Silicon Valley's culture of hubris and hype, Elizabeth Holmes was convicted Monday of duping investors into believing her startup Theranos had developed a revolutionary medical device that could detect a multitude of diseases and conditions from a few drops of blood.

A jury convicted Holmes, who was CEO throughout the company's turbulent 15-year history, on three counts of wire fraud and one counts of conspiracy to commit fraud after seven days of deliberation. The 37-year-old was acquitted on four other counts of fraud and conspiracy that alleged she deceived patients who paid for Theranos blood tests, too.

The verdict came after the eight men and four women on the jury spent three months sitting through a complex trial that featured reams of evidence and 32 witnesses — including Holmes herself. She now faces up to 20 years in prison for each count, although legal experts say she is unlikely to receive the maximum sentence.

The jury deadlocked on three remaining charges, which a federal judge anticipates dismissing as part of a mistrial ruling that could come as early as next week. The split verdicts are "a mixed bag for the pros-

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ecution, but it's a loss for Elizabeth Holmes because she is going away to prison for at least a few years," said David Ring, a lawyer who has followed the case closely.

Federal prosecutors depicted Holmes as a charlatan obsessed with fame and fortune. In seven days on the witness stand, she cast herself as a visionary trailblazer in male-dominated Silicon Valley who was emotionally and sexually abused by her former lover and business partner, Sunny Balwani.

The trial also laid bare the pitfalls of a swaggering strategy used by many Silicon Valley entrepreneurs — conveying a boundless optimism regardless of whether it's warranted, known as "fake it 'til you make it." That ethos helped hatch groundbreaking companies such as Google, Netflix, Facebook, and Apple — the latter co-founded by one of Holmes' heroes, Steve Jobs.

Her conviction might lower the wattage — at least temporarily — on the brash promises and bold exaggerations that have become a routine part of the tech industry's innovation hustle.

The trial's outcome "will send a message to CEOs that there are consequences in overstepping the bounds," predicted Ellen Kreitzberg, a Santa Clara University law professor who attended the trial. But she also believes greed will keep hyperbole alive in Silicon Valley.

"Investors are still going to want to make more money on a promising idea," Kreitzberg said. "They will always go in for the golden ring."

Holmes remained seated and expressed no visible emotion as the verdicts were read. She bowed her head several times before the jury was polled by U.S. District Judge Edward Davila. After the judge left the courtroom to meet with jurors individually, Holmes got up to hug her partner, Billy Evans, and her parents before leaving with her lawyers.

During a brief break after the verdict was read, a visibly shaken Evans stepped into the courthouse hallway to get a get drink from a water fountain while apparently trying to compose himself.

Holmes did not respond to questions about the verdicts lobbed at her during a three-block walk from the courthouse to the nearby hotel where she has stayed during jury deliberations.

She was to remain free on bond while awaiting sentencing, which will be determined by the judge. The judge indicated that he is likely to hold off on the sentencing until the completion of a separate trial involving similar fraud charges against Balwani, who was Theranos' chief operating officer from 2009 to 2016. Balwani's trial is scheduled to start next month in the same San Jose courtroom where Holmes' legal saga unfolded.

In a written statement, U.S. Attorney Stephanie Hinds thanked the jury for navigating the case through the pandemic and said Holmes must now be held "culpable" for her crimes.

Although she was convicted of bamboozling investors, Holmes received a reprieve from the jury on the fraud accusations involving patients who submitted to inaccurate blood tests that could have endangered their health.

Ring said the charges related to the patients looked more difficult to prove from the outset because Holmes never directly communicated with them, as she did with investors.

The bold dream Holmes pursued when she founded Theranos in 2003 at the age of 19 had become a nightmare by the time she was indicted on felony charges in 2018.

During that span, Holmes went from an unknown to a Silicon Valley sensation who had amassed a \$4.5 billion fortune on paper to a vilified failure. Her downfall was dissected in documentaries, books, podcasts and will soon be rehashed in a Hulu TV series called "The Dropout" starring Amanda Seyfried in the lead role.

Holmes set out to create a less painful, more convenient and cheaper way to scan for hundreds of diseases and other health problems by taking just a few drops of blood with a finger prick instead of inserting a needle in a vein. She aimed to upend an industry dominated by giant testing companies such as Quest Diagnostics and Labcorp, starting with setting up "mini-labs" in Walgreens and Safeway stores across the U.S. that would use a small Theranos device called the Edison to run faster, less intrusive blood tests.

The concept — and the way Holmes presented it — enthralled wealthy investors eager to buy an early stake in a game-changing company. It helped Theranos raise more than \$900 million from savvy billionaires such as media mogul Rupert Murdoch and software magnate Larry Ellison, as well as well-to-do families

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such as the Waltons of Walmart and the DeVos clan behind Amway.

Holmes also wooed a well-connected board that included two former U.S. secretaries of state, Henry Kissinger and the late George Shultz; two former secretaries of defense, Gen. James Mattis and William Perry; former Sen. Sam Nunn; and former Wells Fargo CEO Richard Kovacevich. She charmed former President Bill Clinton in an on-stage presentation and impressed then-Vice President Joe Biden, who effusively praised her during a 2015 tour of a Theranos lab.

What most people did not know at the time was that Theranos' blood-testing technology kept producing misleading results. That forced patients to undergo regular blood draws instead of the promised finger sticks and led Theranos to secretly test those samples using conventional machines in a traditional laboratory setting. Evidence presented at the trial also showed that Holmes lied about purported deals that Theranos had reached with big drug companies such as Pfizer and the U.S. military.

The deception came to light in 2015 after a series of explosive articles in The Wall Street Journal and a regulatory audit of Theranos uncovered potentially dangerous flaws in the company's technology, leading to its eventual collapse.

During her testimony, Holmes occasionally expressed contrition for her handling of a variety of issues, but she often contended that she had forgotten the circumstance surrounding some of the key events spotlighted by the prosecution. She insisted she never stopped believing that Theranos was on the verge of refining its technology.

Instead, she heaped blame on Balwani, who she secretly lived with while the two were running Theranos.

Holmes testified that Balwani let her down by failing to fix laboratory problems and, in the most dramatic testimony of the trial, alleged that he had turned her into his pawn through a long-running pattern of abuse while exerting control over her diet, sleeping habits and friendships. This all occurred, she said, after she was raped by an unnamed assailant while she was still enrolled at Stanford.

'Our time now': 1st Cambodian American mayor in US sworn in

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — He came to the U.S. as a young refugee, having survived Khmer Rouge's brutal rule. Now, Sokhary Chau is the nation's first Cambodian American mayor.

The 49-year-old city councilor in Lowell, Massachusetts, was unanimously picked by his colleagues to assume the body's top post Monday, in the process also becoming the city's first Asian American mayor.

"God bless America, right? I was a refugee, now I'm mayor of a major city in Massachusetts," Chau said hours after he was officially sworn in. "I don't know if that could happen anywhere else in the world. I'm still trying to absorb it."

Chau, in his inaugural remarks, reflected on his family's perilous escape from Cambodia and the deep immigrant roots in Lowell, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of Boston near the New Hampshire line. It was an early center of America's textile industry, drawing waves of European and Latin American immigrants over generations.

Today, the city of more than 115,000 residents is nearly 25% Asian and home to the nation's second-largest Cambodian community.

"As a proud Cambodian American, I am standing on the shoulders of many immigrants who came before me to build this city," Chau said Monday before a crowd that included his wife and two teenage sons.

Chau recounted how his father, a captain in the Cambodian army, was executed by the communist Khmer Rouge in 1975 during civil war.

His mother, who died late last year, managed to keep her seven children alive for four years, surviving "landmines, jungles, hunger, sickness and uncertainty" to deliver them safely to the U.S., he said.

In an interview later, Chau said he was around 9 years old when his family arrived in Pittsburgh with the help of the Catholic Church. They lived for a time in a convent and embraced Christianity.

They made their way to Lowell's growing Cambodian community in the mid-1980s, where some of his older siblings immediately set to work in local manufacturing operations.

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Chau, however, continued his studies and earned a scholarship to Phillips Academy, an elite boarding school in nearby Andover. He went on to Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he studied economics and political science, also on a scholarship.

Before running for office, Chau said, he worked mostly in financial services, including running a mortgage lending company in Lowell with his wife. He now works for the Social Security Administration.

Chau's election follows the ascendance of new Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, whose parents immigrated to the U.S. from Taiwan. She was sworn in last November as Boston's first woman and first person of color elected to the post.

Chau is also among a growing list of Cambodian American officeholders in Massachusetts that includes two other city councilors, a school committee member and two state lawmakers, all from Lowell, said Vannak Theng, president of the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell.

But while Cambodian Americans served on local boards and state legislatures nationwide, none were elected mayor, according to the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, a nonprofit that helps Asian Pacific Americans pursue public office.

In fact, Long Beach, California, home to the nation's largest Cambodian community, elected its first Cambodian American city councilor only in 2020, the organization noted.

Chau's election also comes on the heels of a federal lawsuit that argued Lowell's election process violated the voting rights of minority residents, who comprise nearly 50% of its population.

A recent settlement in the case led the city to change its electoral system, starting with the 2021 elections. The result was the city's most diverse class of officeholders, said Oren Sellstrom, litigation director at Lawyers for Civil Rights, a Boston group that brought the 2017 suit.

"Just four years ago, the city's elected officials were all white and largely unresponsive to the needs of the city's communities of color," he said.

Chau's role as mayor is largely ceremonial. Lowell's day-to-day operations are handled by a city manager picked by the council, and Chau effectively serves as council president, leading its meetings and also serving as chair of the school committee.

But he believes he can make a difference by ensuring the city workforce, including its police department and school system, better represents its diverse populace.

He also acknowledges his election is significant to the Cambodian diaspora. The community's political dynamics played a role during the lead-up to Monday's vote — his primary rival was a fellow Cambodian American councilor.

Chau says he tries to stay out of "old world politics" and intends to focus on the nuts and bolts of governance. But hopes he can inspire the next generation of Cambodian Americans to step up.

"We can no longer be just victims," Chau said as he closed his inaugural remarks. "It is our time now to be leaders and to succeed."

Washington to reveal new name on Feb. 2; won't be RedWolves

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

Washington's NFL team announced Tuesday it will unveil its new name on Feb. 2 and that it will not be the Wolves or RedWolves.

Commanders, Admirals, Armada, Brigade, Sentinels, Defenders, Red Hogs, Presidents and the status quo "Washington Football Team" were among the other finalists.

"We are on the brink of starting a new chapter, but our history, our legacy cannot be lost along the way," team president Jason Wright said in an episode of the team-produced show "Making the Brand." "Now, more than ever, it's important that we stay connected to our roots. We understand the importance of choosing a meaningful name: one that will anchor the team for the next 90 years and beyond."

Wright said the decision was made not to go with Wolves or RedWolves because of trademarks held by other organizations. Those possibilities were popular among Washington fans.

The new helmets and uniforms will feature the franchise's signature burgundy-and-gold colors, with three stars on the collar and stripes on the shoulders of otherwise plain jerseys. In a "Making the Brand"

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clip showing him getting a look at one of the helmets, coach Ron Rivera said: "I love this. Right on. I think the look's going to be hot."

A trailer teasing the reveal included a "W" logo making an appearance.

The video featured the messages: "Hail to the greats that laid the foundation for our legacy," "Hail to the fans we consider family," "We are and always have been Washington," "We will fight for our community" and "Together we will define our future."

Photos of franchise greats were mixed in with current players meeting with military personnel and fans.

The organization dropped its old name in July 2020 after decades of complaints that it was racist toward Native Americans and recent pressure from team sponsors. The decision was made to be known as the Washington Football Team that season, which stuck around for 2021 while the front office went through a lengthy rebranding process.

"Our journey to a new identity is a marathon, not a sprint," Wright said. "To get it right, we had to take every step of the process seriously, and the destination is a sum of all those parts."

Washington was the first team in the four major North American professional sports leagues to move away from Native American imagery amid a national reckoning on race. Cleveland in Major League Baseball followed suit, adopting the new name Guardians that is now in effect after settling a lawsuit with a roller derby team by the same name.

MLB's Atlanta Braves and the NHL's Chicago Blackhawks have defended keeping their names.

Wright made it clear during the rebranding process that Washington would not use any sort of Native American imagery moving forward. He, Rivera and others have made references to wanting to honor the once-storied franchise's tradition, which includes three Super Bowl championships.

"I just think the heritage and the history of our team is what's so important, and, as fans, I think we're going to rally around that team," Hall of Fame coach Joe Gibbs said. "I'd say probably what's more important about naming the team, it's trying to bring everybody together. ... That's the one thing that we've got going for ourselves is the loyalty that we have for that team."

Washington has not had a lot going on or off the field in recent years. The league fined the team \$10 million after an investigation into workplace conduct, owner Dan Snyder squabbled with minority partners before buying out their shares, the front office took criticism this season for botching late safety Sean Taylor's jersey retirement and over the past 15 years the team has not won a playoff game.

A record 4.5 million Americans quit their jobs in November

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A record 4.5 million American workers quit their jobs in November, a sign of confidence and more evidence that the U.S. job market is bouncing back strongly from last year's coronavirus recession.

The Labor Department also reported Tuesday that employers posted 10.6 million job openings in November, down from 11.1 million in October but still high by historical standards.

Employers hired 6.7 million people in November, up from 6.5 million in October, the Labor Department reported Tuesday in its monthly Jobs Openings and Labor Turnover Survey.

Nick Bunker, research director at the Indeed Hiring Lab, noted that quits were high in the low-wage hotel and restaurant industries. "Lots of quits means stronger worker bargaining power which will likely feed into strong wage gains," he said. "Wage growth was very strong in 2021, and ... we might see more of the same in 2022."

Still, the Labor Department collected the numbers before COVID-19's omicron variant had spread widely in the United States. "While each successive wave of the pandemic caused less economic damage, there is still a risk to the labor market from the current surge of cases," Bunker said.

The job market is rebounding from last year's brief but intense coronavirus recession. When COVID hit, governments ordered lockdowns, consumers stayed home and many businesses closed or cut hours. Employers slashed more than 22 million jobs in March and April 2020, and the unemployment rate rock-

eted to 14.8%.

But massive government spending — and eventually the rollout of vaccines — brought the economy back. Employers have added 18.5 million jobs since April 2020, still leaving the U.S. still 3.9 million jobs short of what it had before the pandemic. The December jobs report, out Friday, is expected to show that the economy generated almost 393,000 more jobs this month, according to a survey by the data firm FactSet.

The unemployment rate has fallen to 4.2%, close to what economists consider full employment.

David Bowie's extensive music catalog is sold to Warner

NEW YORK (AP) — The extensive music catalog of David Bowie, stretching from the late 1960s to just before his death in 2016, has been sold to Warner Chappell Music.

More than 400 songs, among them "Space Oddity," "Ziggy Stardust," "Fame," "Rebel Rebel" and "Let's Dance" on 26 Bowie studio albums released during his lifetime, a posthumous studio album release, *Toy*, two studio albums from *Tin Machine*, as well as tracks released as singles from soundtracks and other projects, are included.

Financial details of the sale were not released. Warner Chapell is the music publishing wing of Warner Music Group Corp. Bruce Springsteen sold his catalog to Sony Music last month for a reported \$500 million. Among others that have sold their catalogs in recent years, either in part or in their entirety, are Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Stevie Nicks.

David Bowie, born David Jones in London in 1947, died in January 2016 after battling cancer for 18 months. As a performer, Bowie had unpredictable range of styles, melding European jadedness with American rhythms and his ever-changing personas and wardrobes. The gaunt and erudite Bowie brought an open theatricality and androgyny to popular music that changed the very meaning of being a rock star. He was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1996.

Last year Warner Music Group reached a deal with the Bowie estate that gave Warner Music licensed worldwide rights to Bowie's recorded music catalog from 1968.

In locked down Chinese city, some complain food hard to get

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Residents of the Chinese city of Xi'an are enduring a strict coronavirus lockdown, with business owners suffering yet more closures and some people complaining of difficulties finding food, despite assurances from authorities that they are able to provide necessities for the 13 million people largely confined to their homes.

Stringent measures to stem outbreaks are common in China, which still maintains a policy of stamping out every COVID-19 case long after many other countries have opted to try to live with the virus. But the lockdown imposed Dec. 23 in Xi'an is one of the harshest in the country since a shutdown in 2020 in and around Wuhan, after the coronavirus was first detected there.

On Tuesday, authorities announced that another city, Yuzhou in Henan province, was placed under lockdown over the weekend after the discovery of just three asymptomatic cases.

The Chinese have largely complied with the tough measures throughout the pandemic, but complaints have cropped up over tough policies, despite the risk of retaliation from Communist authorities. The Xi'an lockdown, however, comes at a particularly sensitive time, as China prepares to hold the Beijing Winter Olympics, which open Feb. 4, and therefore is under especially intense pressure to contain this outbreak.

"Can't leave the building, and it's getting more and more difficult to buy food online," said one resident of Xi'an, who posted on the social media platform Weibo under the name Mu Qingyuani Sayno. The post was from a verified account, but the person did not respond to a request for further comment.

Zhang Canyou, an expert with the State Council's epidemic prevention and control team, conceded that "there may be supply pressure in communities."

But he was quoted by the official Xinhua news agency as also saying: "The government will go all-out to coordinate resources to provide people with daily necessities and medical services."

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The lockdown in Xi'an originally allowed people to leave the house every two days to shop for basic goods, but it has since been tightened, though the rules vary according to the severity of the outbreak in each district. Some people are not allowed to go out at all and must have goods delivered to them. People can only leave the city with special permission.

In recent days, people in Xi'an could be seen shopping at pop-up markets, served by workers in head-to-toe white protective suits. Community volunteers also visited people's homes to ask what they needed.

Yet the strain is beginning to show, with residents increasingly complaining on Weibo of being unable to source necessities. In one widely shared video, guards could be seen attacking a man who had tried to deliver steamed buns to family members. The guards later apologized to the man and were each fined 200 yuan (\$31), according to a Xi'an police statement posted on Weibo.

In an online diary on the popular Weixin site, a Xi'an-based writer said that following an initial wave of panic-buying and the closure of markets, residents soon began searching for food online.

"In this age of material surplus, when everyone is trying to lose weight, finding enough to eat has suddenly become a difficult task," Jiang Xue wrote. A message sent to the account was not immediately returned.

China's "zero tolerance" strategy of quarantining every case, mass testing and trying to block new infections from abroad helped it to contain previous outbreaks. But the lockdowns are far more stringent than anything seen in the West, and they have exacted a tremendous toll on the economy and the lives of millions of people.

The measures often fall into place after just a few cases are identified, as was seen in Yuzhou. Since the rules were imposed there on Sunday, residents have been allowed to return to the city of 1.7 million but are not permitted to leave and must isolate at home. Only emergency vehicles are allowed on city roads. Restaurants, sports facilities, and a wide range of other businesses have been ordered to shut, while markets can only offer basic necessities, an order from the city government said.

Meanwhile, Xi'an, home to the famed Terracotta Army statues along with major industries, has seen more than 1,600 cases in a surge that officials say is driven by the delta variant, which is less infectious than the newer omicron strain, of which China has reported only a handful of cases. Another 95 infections were announced Tuesday.

China has reported a total of 102,841 cases and 4,636 deaths since the pandemic began. While those numbers are relatively small compared to the U.S. and other countries, and likely undercounts as they are everywhere, they do show the persistence of the virus despite the sometimes draconian measures taken by China.

A third round of mass testing has been ordered for Xi'an, which is capable of swabbing 10 million people in just seven hours and processing up to 3 million results in just 12 hours, according to state media.

While Wuhan's health care system was overwhelmed after the pandemic began there in late 2019, China has not reported any shortages of beds or medical equipment and staff in Xi'an. Two dozen special teams have been formed to deal with COVID-19 cases and a pair of hospitals have been set aside to provide other types of care, Xinhua reported.

China has vaccinated nearly 85% of its population, according to Our World in Data. The shots have helped reduce the severity of disease, although Chinese vaccines are considered less effective than used those elsewhere.

In a sign of the pressure authorities are under to curb this outbreak, officials have been put on notice that they will lose their jobs if they don't bring the numbers of new cases down. Already, the top two Communist Party officials in Yanta district, where half the city's cases have been recorded, have been fired, according to a statement from the government of the surrounding province of Shaanxi.

The head of a tourism firm reached by phone said Tuesday that supplies were basically sufficient, but that his business had been suffering since July.

"Now with the lockdown, the effect has been extremely big," said the man, who gave just his surname, Wen, as is common among Chinese.

Qin Huilin, who works at a traditional mutton soup restaurant, said the lockdown brought business to a screeching halt.

"We used to have about a hundred customers every day, but we've had none for more than a dozen days since the lockdown," Qin said by phone. "The impact on our business is significant, but I can go shopping once every few days in supermarkets and there are enough supplies there."

Teachers at culture war front lines with Jan. 6 education

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

MISSION, Kan. (AP) — What students are learning about the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 may depend on where they live.

In a Boston suburb in heavily Democratic Massachusetts, history teacher Justin Voldman said his students will spend the day journaling about what happened and talking about the fragility of democracy.

"I feel really strongly that this needs to be talked about," said Voldman, who teaches history at Natick High School, 15 miles (24 kilometers) west of Boston. As the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, he said "it is fair to draw parallels between what happened on Jan. 6 and the rise of fascism."

Voldman said he feels fortunate: "There are other parts of the country where ... I would be scared to be a teacher."

Liz Wagner, an eighth and ninth grade social studies teacher in a Des Moines suburb of increasingly Republican Iowa, got an email from an administrator last year, warning teachers to be careful in how they framed the discussion.

"I guess I was so, I don't know if naïve is the appropriate word, perhaps exhausted from the pandemic teaching year last year, to understand how controversial this was going to be," she said.

Some students questioned Wagner last year when she referred to what happened as an insurrection. She responded by having them read the dictionary definition for the word. This year, she will probably show students videos of the protest and ask them to write about what the footage shows.

"This is kind of what I have to do to ensure that I'm not upsetting anybody," Wagner said. "Last year I was on the front line of the COVID war, trying to dodge COVID, and now I'm on the front line of the culture war, and I don't want to be there."

With crowds shouting at school board meetings and political action committees investing millions of dollars in races to elect conservative candidates across the country, talking to students about what happened on Jan. 6 is increasingly fraught.

Teachers now are left to decide how — or whether — to instruct their students about the events that sit at the heart of the country's division. And the lessons sometimes vary based on whether they are in a red state or a blue state.

Facing History and Ourselves, a nonprofit that helps teachers with difficult lessons on subjects like the Holocaust, offered tips on how to broach the topic with students in the hours after the riot.

Within 18 hours of publication, it had 100,000 page views — a level of interest that Abby Weiss, who oversees the development of the nonprofit's teaching tools, said was unlike anything the group has seen before.

In the year that has followed, Weiss said, Republican lawmakers and governors in many states have championed legislation to limit the teaching of material that explores how race and racism influence American politics, culture and law.

"Teachers are anxious," she said. "On the face of it, if you read the laws, they're quite vague and, you know, hard to know actually what's permissible and what isn't."

Racial discussions are hard to avoid when discussing the riot because white supremacists were among those descending on the halls of power, said Jinnie Spiegler, director of curriculum and training for the Anti-Defamation League. She said the group is concerned that the insurrection could be used as a recruitment tool and wrote a newly released guide to help teachers and parents combat those radicalization efforts.

"To talk about white supremacy, to talk about white supremacist extremists, to talk about their racist Confederate flag, it's fraught for so many reasons," Spiegler said.

Anton Schulzki, the president of the National Council for the Social Studies, said students are often the

ones bringing up the racial issues. Last year, he was just moments into discussing what happened when one of his honors students at William J. Palmer High School in Colorado Springs said, "You know, if those rioters were all Black, they'd all be arrested by now."

Since then, three conservative school board candidates won seats on the school board where Schulzki teaches, and the district dissolved its equity leadership team. He is covered by a contract that offers academic freedom protections, and has discussed the riot periodically over the past year.

"I do feel," he said, "that there may be some teachers who are going to feel the best thing for me to do is to ignore this because I don't want to put myself in jeopardy because I have my own bills to pay, my own house, to take care of, my own kids to take back and forth to school."

Concerned teachers have been reaching out to the American Federation of Teachers, which last month sued over New Hampshire's new limits on the discussion of systemic racism and other topics.

"What I'm hearing now over and over and over again is that these laws that have been passed in different places are really intended to chill the discussion of current events," said Randi Weingarten, the union's president and a former social studies teacher. "I am very concerned about what it means in terms of the teaching as we get closer and closer to January 6th."

The biggest fear for Paula Davis, a middle school special education teacher in a rural central Indiana district, is that the discussion about what happened could be used by teachers with a political agenda to indoctrinate students. She won't discuss Jan. 6 in her classroom; her focus is math and English.

"I think it's extremely important that any teacher that is addressing that topic does so from an unbiased perspective," said Davis, a regional chapter chair for Moms for Liberty, a group whose members have protested mask and vaccine mandates and critical race theory. "If it cannot be done without bias, then it should not be done."

But there is no way Dylan Huisken will avoid the topic in his middle school classroom in the Missoula, Montana, area town of Bonner. He plans to use the anniversary to teach his students to use their voice constructively by doing things like writing to lawmakers.

"Not addressing the attack," Huisken said, "is to suggest that the civic ideals we teach exist in a vacuum and don't have any real-world application, that civic knowledge is mere trivia."

Jan. 6 attack posed loyalty test for Indiana Rep. Greg Pence

By BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Greg Pence watched the Jan. 6 insurrection unfold from an extraordinary perch. As chants of "Hang Mike Pence" echoed in the Capitol, the Republican congressman from Indiana and his better-known brother were whisked away from the Senate by the Secret Service shortly before a mob of Donald Trump supporters burst in, intent on stopping the vice president from certifying Democrat Joe Biden's win.

Their dramatic escape, caught on security cameras, came minutes after Trump excoriated Mike Pence on Twitter for lacking the "courage" to use his ceremonial post presiding over the certification of the 2020 election to overturn its outcome.

"My brother was being asked to do what we don't do in this country," Greg Pence recounted at a Republican fundraising dinner in his district last July, one of the rare instances he has spoken publicly about the attack. He later added, "I couldn't be prouder."

At the beating heart of the insurrection lies Trump's attempt to pressure his vice president to take the unprecedented step of overturning the election. And few had a better vantage point on the day of the attack than Greg Pence, who watched the certification proceedings from the Senate gallery, then joined his younger brother in a private office off the Senate chamber when chaos broke out. They were evacuated, along with other members of the Pence family, to a secure area, where the vice president worked the phone, pleading for help to clear rioters from the building.

That makes Greg Pence a tantalizing prospective witness for the House Jan. 6 committee, which is investigating the origins of the insurrection that Trump fomented when he urged his supporters to march

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on the Capitol and "fight like hell."

Pence has largely declined to discuss what transpired while he was with his brother that day, other than praising his brother as a hero for standing up to Trump.

His silence serves as powerful evidence of the grip that Trump still holds on his party, which has led many Republicans to dispute the seriousness of the attack and instead perpetuate the lie that Trump was wrongly denied a second term.

Pence declined last month to speak with The Associated Press at the Capitol. A spokesperson did not respond to multiple inquiries seeking comment.

First elected to Congress in 2018, 65-year-old Greg Pence represents a deeply Republican and largely rural district that his brother held for 12 years before he was elected Indiana governor and eventually selected by Trump to become vice president. Unlike his brother, who from a young age was fixated on a career in politics, Greg Pence was always an unlikely congressman.

After graduating from Loyola University in Chicago, he joined the Marines and later fell into a series of petroleum industry jobs. He eventually served as president of Kiel Bros., a Midwest gas station empire his father helped build, a post he resigned from in 2004 after the company filed for bankruptcy and saddled the state of Indiana with more than \$21 million in unpaid environmental cleanup costs, a 2018 Associated Press investigation found.

Pence turned his focus in 2006 to operating antique malls he purchased with his wife, Denise, a business now worth between \$5 million and \$25 million, according to his congressional financial disclosure.

When Mike Pence's former congressional seat opened up in 2018, his brother ran a stealthy campaign. Granting few interviews and ducking debates, he coasted to victory.

"I looked into the mirror and said, 'If not me, who?'" Greg Pence told his hometown newspaper, The Columbus Republic, in a rare interview during the campaign.

But he also expressed deep ambivalence about the job, as well as a lack of conviction that would likely have doomed other candidates.

"What would be my positions, what would be my focus?" he said in a September 2017 interview with the Washington Examiner, a conservative publication, before formally launching his campaign. "I really haven't dug into or formed positions on anything yet."

Since then, Pence has had a muted presence in Congress, where he serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Yet during the Trump administration, he enjoyed rarefied privileges, riding with the president on Air Force One for campaign and administration events where the president name-checked him.

One area in which he has excelled is fundraising, raising far more money than the average first-term member of Congress.

Pence also has enjoyed the trappings of political life, spending over \$49,000 at Trump-owned properties, while paying Trump's pollster \$137,000 during his 2018 race when there was little doubt he would win, campaign finance disclosures show.

Pence and his family also have collected money from his campaign account, including \$18,000 in rent paid to the company he runs with his wife, and \$35,000 paid to his daughter Nicole, a former TV reporter, who advised his 2018 campaign. He has also collected \$57,000 in reimbursements for travel and meals, records show.

For months it was unclear whether the committee would even seek interviews with members of Congress connected to the insurrection, which was viewed as a provocative step. But in late December, the committee announced it wanted to interview Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, a staunch Trump ally, as well as Rep. Scott Perry of Pennsylvania, who leads the hard-line House Freedom Caucus.

So far, Democrats who serve on the committee have been tight-lipped about whether Greg Pence could be called for an interview or asked to submit documents.

"I'm not going to talk about any individual being called," said Rep. Pete Aguilar, a California Democrat on the committee, when asked whether an interview with Pence would be sought.

Pence has repeatedly voted against attempts to shed light on the insurrection, or hold those who urged

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it on accountable. He voted twice against forming a committee to investigate the origins of the attack, calling it "bass-ackwards." He also voted against impeaching Trump.

But perhaps the most significant vote was in the immediate aftermath of the attack.

Hours after emerging from a secure location, Mike Pence gaveled the joint session of Congress back in and presided over the certification of the election, despite Trump's demands.

Greg Pence, meanwhile, joined scores of other Republicans who sided with Trump and cast a vote rejecting the outcome in Pennsylvania, the state that clinched the election for Biden.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 5, the fifth day of 2022. There are 360 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 5, 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed assistance to countries to help them resist Communist aggression in what became known as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

On this date:

In 1896, an Austrian newspaper, Wiener Presse, reported the discovery by German physicist Wilhelm Roentgen (RENT'-gun) of a type of radiation that came to be known as X-rays.

In 1914, auto industrialist Henry Ford announced he was going to pay workers \$5 for an 8-hour day, as opposed to \$2.34 for a 9-hour day. (Employees still worked six days a week; the 5-day work week was instituted in 1926.)

In 1925, Democrat Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming took office as America's first female governor, succeeding her late husband, William, following a special election.

In 1933, construction began on the Golden Gate Bridge. (Work was completed four years later.)

In 1943, educator and scientist George Washington Carver, who was born into slavery, died in Tuskegee, Alabama, at about age 80.

In 1949, in his State of the Union address, President Harry S. Truman labeled his administration the Fair Deal.

In 1953, Samuel Beckett's two-act tragicomedy "Waiting for Godot," considered a classic of the Theater of the Absurd, premiered in Paris.

In 1972, President Richard Nixon announced that he had ordered development of the space shuttle.

In 1994, Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, former speaker of the House of Representatives, died in Boston at age 81.

In 1998, Sonny Bono, the 1960s pop star-turned-politician, was killed when he struck a tree while skiing at the Heavenly Ski Resort on the Nevada-California state line; he was 62.

In 2004, foreigners arriving at U.S. airports were photographed and had their fingerprints scanned in the start of a government effort to keep terrorists out of the country.

In 2011, John Boehner (BAY'-nur) was elected speaker as Republicans regained control of the House of Representatives on the first day of the new Congress.

Ten years ago: Speaking at the Pentagon, President Barack Obama launched a reshaping and shrinking of the military, vowing to preserve U.S. pre-eminence even as the Army and Marine Corps shed troops and the administration considered reducing its arsenal of nuclear weapons. A U.S. Navy destroyer rescued an Iranian fishing boat that had been commandeered by suspected pirates. Jessica Joy Rees, a Southern California girl who had become a nationally recognized face of child cancer with a blog that chronicled her fight against brain tumors, died at age 12.

Five years ago: President-elect Donald Trump, in a series of tweets, urged Republicans and Democrats to "get together" to design a replacement for President Barack Obama's health care law. Friends and family members gathered at the next-door homes of Debbie Reynolds and daughter Carrie Fisher in the Hollywood Hills for an intimate memorial to mourn the late actors.

One year ago: Voters in Georgia turned out for Senate runoff elections that would result in victories

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for Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock and give Democrats control of the Senate; they would hold 50 seats and the tie-breaking vote of Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. A prosecutor in Kenosha, Wisconsin, declined to file charges against a white police officer who shot a Black man, Jacob Blake, in the back in August 2020, leaving Blake paralyzed; the prosecutor said he couldn't disprove Officer Rusten Sheskey's contention that he acted in self-defense because he feared Blake would stab him. Baseball Hall of Famer Hank Aaron, former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young and other civil rights leaders were vaccinated against COVID-19 at the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, hoping to send a message to Black Americans in particular that the shots were safe. DeVonta Smith of Alabama became the first wide receiver to win the Heisman Trophy in 29 seasons.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Robert Duvall is 91. Juan Carlos, former King of Spain, is 84. Singer-musician Athol Guy (The Seekers) is 82. Former talk show host Charlie Rose is 80. Actor-director Diane Keaton is 76. Actor Ted Lange (lanj) is 74. R&B musician George "Funky" Brown (Kool and the Gang) is 73. Rock musician Chris Stein (Blondie) is 72. Former CIA Director George Tenet is 69. Actor Pamela Sue Martin is 69. Actor Clancy Brown is 63. Singer Iris Dement is 61. Actor Suzy Amis is 60. Actor Ricky Paull Goldin is 57. Actor Vinnie Jones is 57. Rock musician Kate Schellenbach (Luscious Jackson) is 56. Actor Joe Flanigan is 55. Talk show host/dancer-choreographer Carrie Ann Inaba is 54. Rock musician Troy Van Leeuwen (Queens of the Stone Age) is 54. Actor Heather Paige Kent is 53. Rock singer Marilyn Manson is 53. Actor Shea Whigham is 53. Actor Derek Cecil is 49. Actor-comedian Jessica Chaffin is 48. Actor Bradley Cooper is 47. Actor January Jones is 44. Actor Brooklyn Sudano is 41. Actor Franz Drameh is 29.