

# Groton Daily Independent

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**The Groton Area School District  
will open 2 hours late on  
Thursday, January 6, 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 C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and varsity.

### Saturday, Jan. 8

**CANCELLED:** Groton Robotics Tournament

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.

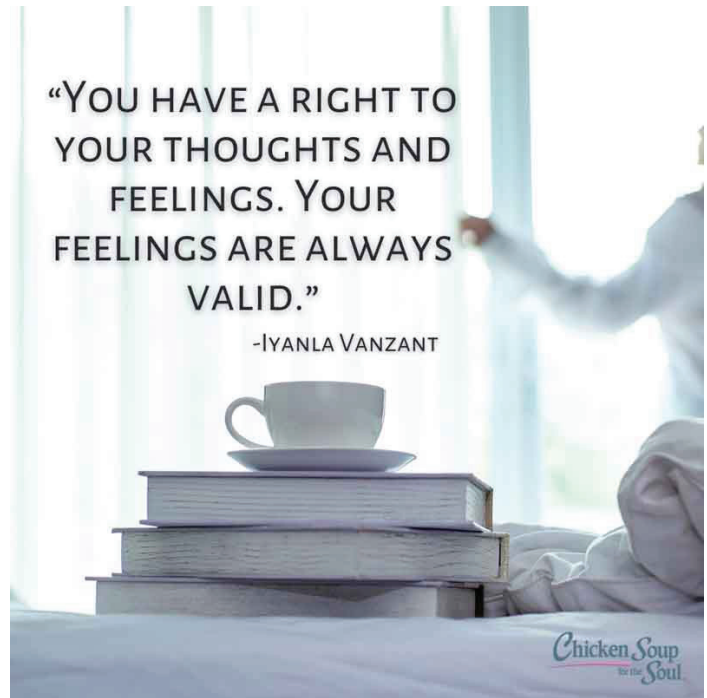
7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

### Tuesday, Jan. 11

5 p.m.: 7th/8th grade basketball game with Wau-bay-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**



“YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO  
YOUR THOUGHTS AND  
FEELINGS. YOUR  
FEELINGS ARE ALWAYS  
VALID.”

-IYANLA VANZANT

## Coming up on GDILIVE.COM

Today: Wrestling Tri-angular in Groton, 6 p.m.

Friday: Janice Bahr Funeral, 2 p.m.; GBB hosts Sisseton (JV and Varsity to be livestreamed)

Saturday: James Marx Funeral, 10:30 a.m.; GBB vs. Platte-Geddes at Redfield Classic, 3:30 p.m.

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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## #503 in a series Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

It's been a large couple of days; it's difficult to know even where to start. I guess this is one place: We've ticked up two more millions of cases since we last talked, hitting 56 million on Monday and 57 million on Tuesday. Each of those took about a day. Here's where we stand:

April 28, 2020 – 1 million – 98 days  
June 11 – 2 million – 44 days  
July 8 – 3 million – 27 days  
July 23 – 4 million – 15 days  
August 9 – 5 million – 17 days  
August 31 – 6 million – 22 days  
September 24 – 7 million – 24 days  
October 15 – 8 million – 21 days  
October 29 – 9 million – 14 days  
November 8 – 10 million – 10 days  
November 15 – 11 million – 7 days  
November 21 – 12 million – 6 days  
November 27 – 13 million – 6 days  
December 3 – 14 million – 6 days  
December 7 – 15 million – 4 days  
December 12 – 16 million – 5 days  
December 17 – 17 million – 5 days  
December 21 – 18 million – 4 days  
December 26 – 19 million – 5 days  
December 31 – 20 million – 5 days  
January 5 – 21 million – 5 days  
January 9 – 22 million – 4 days  
January 13 – 23 million – 4 days  
January 18 – 24 million – 5 days  
January 23 – 25 million – 5 days  
January 30 – 26 million – 7 days  
February 7 – 27 million – 8 days  
February 19 – 28 million – 12 days  
March 7 – 29 million – 16 days  
March 24 – 30 million – 17 days  
April 8 – 31 million – 15 days  
April 24 – 32 million – 16 days  
May 18 – 33 million – 23 days  
July 16 – 34 million – 59 days  
July 31 – 35 million – 15 days  
August 11 – 36 million – 11 days  
August 17 – 37 million – 6 days  
August 23 – 38 million – 6 days  
August 30 – 39 million – 7 days  
September 5 – 40 million – 6 days  
September 12 – 41 million – 7 days  
September 18 – 42 million – 6 days  
September 27 – 43 million – 9 days

October 6 – 44 million – 9 days  
October 18 – 45 million – 12 days  
November 1 – 46 million – 14 days  
November 13 – 47 million – 12 days  
November 24 – 48 million – 11 days  
December 4 – 49 million – 10 days  
December 13 – 50 million – 9 days  
December 20 – 51 million – 7 days  
December 25 – 52 million – 5 days  
December 28 – 53 million – 3 days  
December 30 – 54 million – 2 days  
January 2 – 55 million – 3 days  
January 3 – 56 million – 1 day  
January 4 – 57 million – 1 day

That means, of course, we've had some hellish counts the past few days. We went over a daily count of one million for the first—and I sincerely hope the only—time in this pandemic on Monday, having added 1,003,869 since Sunday. Now some of this was undoubtedly delayed reporting from the holiday weekend, but that's still pretty damned startling. We then added another 900,513 new cases yesterday and 704,369 today. Our seven-day new-case averages are growing apace as well; we're now at 585,535. I suppose we should be glad we didn't hit another million today, but we surely will tomorrow; we stand now at 57,745,899. No other country in the world has at any point in the pandemic posted numbers remotely approaching these, including all the ones with far larger populations. We are a world leader for sure.

It becomes clearer what's going on when we take a look at the Omicron variant as a proportion of total cases in the US, going back to its beginning, which was, believe it or not, just over a month ago. Here those are: For the week ending 12-4-21, Omicron cases were 0.6 percent of our total; for the week ending 12-11-21, they were 8 percent; for the week ending 12-18-21, they were 37.9 percent; for the week ending 12-25-21, they were 77.0 percent; and

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for the week ending 1-1-22, they were 95.4 percent. A variant that transmissible—capable of this kind of growth—is fully able to create the kinds of case numbers we’re seeing in an environment where most of us are blowing the whole thing off as we are doing here.

Hospitalizations are growing rapidly at around 53 percent in 14 days. We’re now at 102,094, not yet at the record numbers we saw mid-January last year, which had us around 142,000, but moving in that direction. I foresee us getting there.

Hospitals are suffering under the burden of this latest surge in cases, but it’s a different kind of thing this time around. They’ve had staff shortages going in, and now the number of workers out sick from the Omicron variant is placing a real strain on resources. Additionally, large numbers of people are showing up in emergency departments asking for testing, which worsens the strain. And approximately two-thirds of patients checking in for other causes are testing positive, requiring isolation, which further stresses the system getting them into isolation even if they do not require Covid-19 care. Eighty-five percent of these people are unvaccinated. Even though patients aren’t as sick or requiring as much support as earlier Covid-19 patients did, the sheer numbers are overwhelming our ability to care for everyone, and there are still plenty on ventilators saying their last good-byes to family. Once again, hospitals are curtailing non-emergency procedures and closing units to free up staff and other resources for Covid-19 patient care. They’re asking patients to go elsewhere for testing and minor symptoms as well as to stay home for everything but true emergencies. We have beds in hallways and make-shift units and emergency rooms with long waiting times. Sherri Dayton, a nurse at Bachus Plainfield Emergency Care Center in Connecticut, told the AP, “We are drowning. We are exhausted.” Hospitals reporting critical staffing shortages are becoming the norm, which endangers all kinds of patients, not just those with Covid-19.

Across the country, 20 percent of hospitals with an ICU say they’re at least 95 percent full; about 25 percent of those beds have a Covid-19 patient in them. Texas Children’s Hospital, the largest children’s hospital in the US, experienced a greater than 400 percent increase in Covid-19 admissions over the past two weeks with 90 percent of recent admissions infected with the Omicron variant. To be clear, while some of those kids came in for another condition and just happened to test positive, pathologist-in-chief, Dr. Jim Versalovic, told CNN, “it’s clear that the majority of cases either have Covid-19 as a primary factor or as a significant contributing factor to their hospitalization.” Versalovic also told CNN, “We have staggering numbers . . . . We shattered prior records.” And some of these kids are very severely ill. This is going to be a problem given 80 percent of eligible children in Houston are unvaccinated; one-third of recent admissions are under 5 and ineligible; but the rest of them could have been vaccinated. Most—nearly all—were not.

Dr. Edith Bracho-Sachez, pediatrician in New York, another place with growing numbers of pediatric cases, told CNN, “We would be foolish to keep minimizing Covid-19 in children at this point in the pandemic.” She added that upper airway complications can be more dangerous for young children than adults: “We cannot treat the airways of children like they are the airways of adults. . . . [W]e know that respiratory viruses can lead to . . . inflammation of the upper airways that does get children in trouble.” So even without pneumonias, these kids could be in trouble.

Deaths numbers are creeping upward although the averages aren’t showing it much yet. The seven-day average is at 1329, but today’s count was 2113. That’s not a great sign if it continues.

The CDC didn’t waste any time on the FDA’s new emergency use authorization (EUA) extension for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. You will recall that it was Monday morning the FDA took three actions in that regard: (1) extend eligibility for a third booster dose to those 12 to 15, (2) decrease the interval between

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second dose and booster from six to five months, and (3) authorize a third dose for immunocompromised children 5 to 11. Bright and early on Tuesday, the CDC signed off on the second and third points above—decreasing the interval before boosting and permitting a third dose for the immunocompromised. They decided to defer the other question to their Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which met this afternoon.

Children 12 to 15, a group of about 17 million people in the US, first became eligible for vaccination in May, and close to nine million of them have been vaccinated; around five million of those are at least five months past their initial series by now. The ACIP discussed, received presentations, and then voted 13-1 to extend the EUA to boosters for 12- to 17-year-olds who are five months or more post initial vaccination. I want to note that that “no” vote was not from someone opposed to extending booster eligibility to this age group; she said she supports the extension, but is concerned this recommendation would distract from getting initial doses to the unvaccinated. Other Committee members mentioned concerns that only a minority of children are being vaccinated and the lack of other prevention measures. One of the factors influencing this decision was US data showing symptomatic illness and hospitalizations are from seven to 11 times higher in unvaccinated than vaccinated adolescents. There was even greater concern expressed at the potential for infected children to transmit this virus to elderly grandparents and caretakers with terrible consequences and “absolutely crushing” impact on the child, according to Dr. Camille Kotton of Massachusetts General Hospital. These decisions also rested on Israel’s data on vaccinating adolescents and adults; these showed dramatically reduced infection rates in the age group. While it is not pleasant to be always playing catch-up, it is helpful to have the benefit of someone else’s experience. This includes safety data which were available from both the US and Israel, showing no significant safety concerns with a booster. Myocarditis, which has been the primary safety concern in vaccinating young people, has been rare and mild and about one-third less likely with a booster than with the initial series of vaccination doses—only two cases, both mild and now fully recovered, seen in Israel after 41,600 booster doses. Committee members also noted the devastating effects of infection on immunocompromised and vulnerable patients, with myocarditis a significant risk. The Committee also upgraded their earlier permission for boosters to 16- and 17-year-olds to a stronger recommendation so that they are now recommending everyone from 12- to 17-year-olds who is eligible not only may, but “should” receive boosters. Members were clear that our soaring case numbers played a role in this decision. The CDC director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, signed off on these recommendations tonight; at this point, the booster doses are available to this age group. I would expect vaccinations to commence some time tomorrow in many places, certainly by Friday in others.

Seems to me that the CDC is splitting hairs a bit these days. They are not yet changing the definition of fully-vaccinated to include a booster dose, but they are bringing in a new definition: up-to-date with vaccinations. This category means the person has received three doses of mRNA vaccines or a second dose for Janssen/Johnson & Johnson recipients. I think they’re edging ever closer to a new definition for fully-vaccinated. I also understand the reluctance to redefine this given the huge number of Americans who have still not seen fit to vaccinate at all. With the persistent resistance we are encountering to protecting oneself and society by being vaccinated, it’s probably not realistic to bother with definitions at all. I am weary of the resistance.

I hear a lot about test availability these days. It appears those supplies should be loosening up: The White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator, Jeff Zients, explained in a news briefing Wednesday that test production has roughly quadrupled since November as a number of new tests have received EUA from the FDA. The federal government has purchased 500 million of these and will soon be shipping them around the country for use by folks who do not have health insurance; Zients said deliveries should begin within a week or so. It appears there will be a website where free tests can be ordered; I’ll update

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when I know more. Meanwhile federal testing centers are opening in six states: the District Columbia, Pennsylvania, Maine, Maryland, Nevada, Delaware, Texas, and Washington; these join centers already established in New York and New Jersey. Federal programs appear to be moving pretty fast, so stay tuned for details. A new rule requiring your health insurance to reimburse you for test kits is also about to go into effect; Zeints says this will happen starting next week. I think it would be wise to save your receipts until we figure out how this program is going to work. One more thing I've been hearing about is that some of the already available test kits have recently shown a pretty radical increase in price at two large retail chains, Walgreens and Walmart. In case you were wondering what's up with that, there was a contract with the government to supply those at cost for a three-month period, and it turns out the three months just ran out before the holidays. One of the retailers left the prices alone through the holiday but has now raised their price too. For now, I am still getting stories from folks who hear of a supply at one or another store in their towns and rush to be first to buy; these things are frequently selling out fast.

One more thing to do with home tests is this: reporting. Public health experts are encouraging you to report your positive tests to your physician and to health officials. That's going to be the only practical way to get a handle on overall case numbers and on cases in various demographic groups, in vaccinated and unvaccinated people, and on case clusters. It also provides you the opportunity to discuss with a professional your risk factors and whether you need to seek treatment to prevent the development of more severe disease. I have heard from residents of some states, my own included, that public health officials are not seeking or accepting these reports. I want to emphasize that I have not confirmed this—and if anyone here knows for sure of a state that does not accept them, I'll appreciate a heads-up so I can try to track it down. It would be unfortunate if this is happening; pretending cases don't exist doesn't make them go away.

Additionally, we've had hints that maybe antigen tests are not as good for detecting the Omicron variant as PCR tests. We've always known antigen tests were weaker, but this looks to be a larger problem. A small study, not yet peer-reviewed, done by a group of US researchers at the University of Washington, the Yale School of Public Health, and other institutions, not yet peer-reviewed, gives indications that the Abbott BinaxNow and the Quidel QuickVue are failing to detect infections with the Omicron variant, even when the patient is carrying a heavy viral load. That is a problem if these results bear out with larger groups. It seems nasal-swab-based rapid tests are not consonant with the results of saliva-based PCR tests; it took an average of three days for a positive test to show up in PCR-confirmed positive people when using the antigen tests. We are not sure whether the problem is the sensitivity of the antigen tests or a deficiency of nasal swab specimens. "People should not ignore high risk exposures. They should not ignore symptoms," said microbiologist at the Yale School for Public Health, Anne Wyllie, a co-author of the study. You can't let test results be your only guide.

I've also received some questions about another new variant, this one B.1.640.2 which was first uploaded to a database for variants on November 4. Because it is not yet considered a Variant of Interest (VOI) or Variant of Concern (VOC), it doesn't have a Greek letter name yet; I gather the researchers are calling it IHU after the research institute in Marseille, France that identified it. The variant was first detected in France in October in a specimen from a traveler who'd recently come from Cameroon, Africa; that was followed by the identification of a 12-case cluster in the area. Interest picked up when it was discovered the variant carries 46 mutations, an unusually high number, much like we see in Omicron, and in "an atypical combination." There's one we've seen before (N501Y) which is known to be associated with greater spread in the body and another (E484K, the "eek" mutation we've discussed before), which is considered an escape mutation that might assist the variant in evading human antibody responses. The mutations are under study, but I haven't seen any information on what sorts of clinical effects these might be expected to have, and with so few cases (see below), there isn't much data to work with. A paper on the

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first cluster of cases posted in preprint, so not yet peer-reviewed, says, "It is too early to speculate on virological, epidemiological or clinical features of this I.H.U. variant based on these 12 cases." A research team at the Marseille branch of IHU is working now on viral neutralization assays by anti-spike antibodies from convalescent and vaccinated individuals, but that work is apparently not yet complete.

We also don't really have any idea where this one originated; the fact that the index case was returning from Cameroon doesn't lead logically to a conclusion that this is the origin, although a low-vaccination country like Cameroon (2.4 percent fully vaccinated) is just the sort of place where variants tend to show up. No one's getting too worked up about this so far, and it increasingly looks as though there isn't going to be much reason to do so. Despite monitoring, only about 20 cases have showed up to date, even though the variant has had ample opportunity to take off in the population. Compare it with the Omicron variant which wasn't uploaded to the database until November 23 and has already been detected in 128 countries, causing huge surges in case numbers in a whole lot of countries. If this one could compete successfully, most experts expect we'd have seen more cases by now. So no one's ignoring this one, but it has given us no reason to worry too much either. The greater concern is that every infected host is sort of a R&D lab for viral variants, and with the exploding, screaming, hair-on-fire numbers of cases we're seeing at present, that's a ton of R&D in a short time. You never know where the next one's coming from or when. That should freak us all out a little.

We do have a little bit more information about what's behind what looks very much like a milder course of infection in vaccinated patients with breakthrough Covid-19. Work done at the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, posted as preprint, so not yet peer-reviewed, is showing that 70 to 80 percent of the CD4 and CD8 T-cell response is maintained against the Omicron variant despite the number of mutations in this variant. These responses kick in later than existing antibodies get into the act, so it is possible that the reason we're seeing more breakthroughs is that these early antibody responses are falling short, even as T-cell responses are revving up to prevent progression to severe disease in most people with existing immunity. They are seeing in hospitalized patients that there are "comparable T cell responses to ancestral spike [original wild-type virus], nucleocapsid and membrane proteins to those found in patients hospitalized in previous waves dominated by the ancestral, Beta or Delta variants. T cells induced by older versions of the virus are cross-recognizing Omicron, and this is a very good thing.

The other paper is under peer review right now at a Nature Portfolio Journal and has been posted in preview. This one comes from a team spread across the US and Japan which had a look at experimental infections in transgenic (human ACE2-expressing) mice and hamsters. Indications are that Omicron infection is more likely to attack the upper respiratory tract and less likely to attack the lungs. The researchers determined that viral loads in the noses of hamsters and mice experimentally infected were as high as with any other variant, but that the viral loads in lungs were much lower, which means lung damage will also be correspondingly less. We talked about this study a couple of weeks ago in my Update #496 posted December 18 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/5431513513531677>. Researchers at the University of Hong Kong had similar results seeing faster viral replication outside the lungs than in them. We are seeing lower rates of hospitalization and ICU utilization with Omicron infections; we are also seeing much higher rates of reinfection for individuals with prior infections.

The CDC has tweaked its isolation/quarantine guidelines. Here is the current state of those guidelines for those with normal (not compromised) immune systems and not with severe disease:

Exposure is defined as "[c]ontact with someone infected with SARS-CoV-2 . . . in a way that increases the likelihood of getting infected." A close contact is "[s]omeone who was less than 6 feet away from an

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infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period." I'm going to say that, while this is still the official definition, I don't think you have 15 minutes with Omicron.

No symptoms and (1) Fully vaccinated and boosted adult, (2) fully vaccinated child, or (3) confirmed Covid-19 in the past 90 days: No quarantine needed if exposed. Wear well-fitting mask for 10 days from last contact. Get tested at least 5 days after last contact. If that test is positive, follow guidelines below.

No symptoms and (1) fully-vaccinated, but not boosted adult, (2) not fully vaccinated, or (3) not vaccinated: Quarantine if exposed for 5 days after last contact + wear well-fitting mask for 5 additional days. Do not go places where you cannot mask, for example, restaurants, and do not eat around others. Test at 5 days: If negative, may leave home, but wear well-fitting mask to day 10. If positive, isolate at least 5 days from date of test as long as asymptomatic; if symptoms develop after the positive test, the 5-day clock restarts with the first day of symptoms as Day 0. Avoid people who are at high risk for severe disease.

Symptoms – irrespective of vaccination status or known exposure: Get tested and isolate until you have results. Separate from others at home in specific "sick room or area" and wear well-fitting mask when around others. If test is positive, isolate for at least 5 full days from date of positive test (until fever-free for 24 hours without medication and other symptoms have improved) + wear well-fitted mask for additional days to a total of 10 days. If you do not test, follow isolation guidelines for those with positive tests. If you are unable to wear a mask, isolate for a full 10 days. Do not travel when in isolation. Do not go to places where you cannot wear a mask and do not eat around others. Avoid people at risk for severe disease.

I know a lot of people are mad at the CDC for relaxing these guidelines, shortening quarantine and isolation periods, but they are based on pretty sound science which indicates this variant has a shortened incubation period and the greatest likelihood of transmission occurs early in infection. Honestly, we have people running around, willy-nilly, living the 2019 life anyhow, so if we can get the people mentioned in the guidelines to do even this bare minimum, we'll be money ahead. There is also a real concern with keeping society running—not so our evil overlords can make billions of dollars (which is one objection I see from many critics), but so that our food supply-chain and health care and transportation that we rely on to keep people alive don't shut down. I think these guidelines represent a pretty solid balancing act amidst all these very important considerations, and I've been as much of a precautions hawk as anyone through this. I'm also very tired of people hollering "No fair!" and "That's not what you said yesterday!" every time guidance changes. We all need to grow up and realize the current state of knowledge is very fluid even two years in, and so guidance is going to shift as well to reflect that changing state, as well as shifting considerations in society. None of this is easy, and oversimplifying things based on one limited view of the situation doesn't really move us forward.

Under the heading of travel disruptions, there's more trouble in paradise for cruisers. An 11-day cruise embarking from Miami returned to port after less than two days due to sick crew, and another cruise was canceled pretty much at the last minute for the same reasons. Eight more US cruises have been canceled as well. I don't expect this will be the last of this sort of thing. There are 92 ships cruising in US waters, and every single one of them has passengers who have tested positive on board. There are another 18 ships in US waters with crew only, and two are being investigated for cases while three more of them have reported cases. Here's another industry battered by the vicissitudes of this virus.

In case you're still worried—and by the numbers two-thirds of pregnant people are—a new CDC study shows vaccination does not increase the risk of premature birth or low birth weight. The study looked at over 46,000 pregnant people, 10,000 of whom were vaccinated while pregnant between December,

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2020, and July, 2021. There was no difference in rate or premature birth between vaccinated, partially-vaccinated, and unvaccinated people. There was also no difference in the rate of babies born small for gestational age. Given the risk of death for pregnant people with severe Covid-19 is increased by 70 percent over non-pregnant people and risk of admission to a Covid-19 unit is doubled, it looks like an easy call to be vaccinated. We'll just add this to the growing evidence that vaccination before or during pregnancy is the smart move.

And that's it for tonight. Stay safe. We'll talk in a few days.



## Sun Dogs are out!

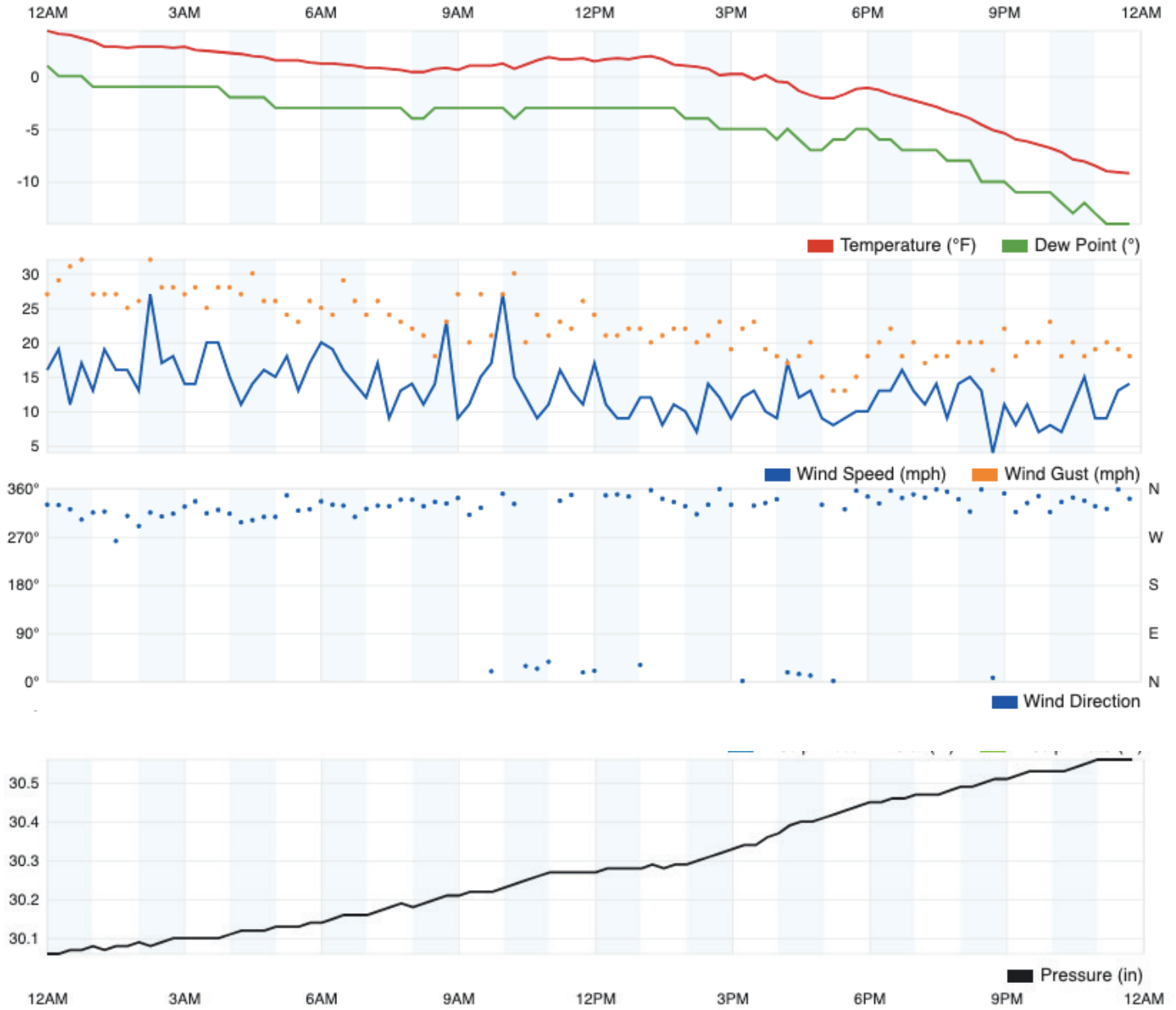
**If you thought it was going to be a warm winter, guess again. The Sun Dogs are out in full force and you know what that means. Frigid air is here. Sub zero readings have been recorded with Thursday's high reaching only to a minus eight and lows Thursday night to a negative 18. Bundle up and stay warm!** (Photo by Julianna Kosel)



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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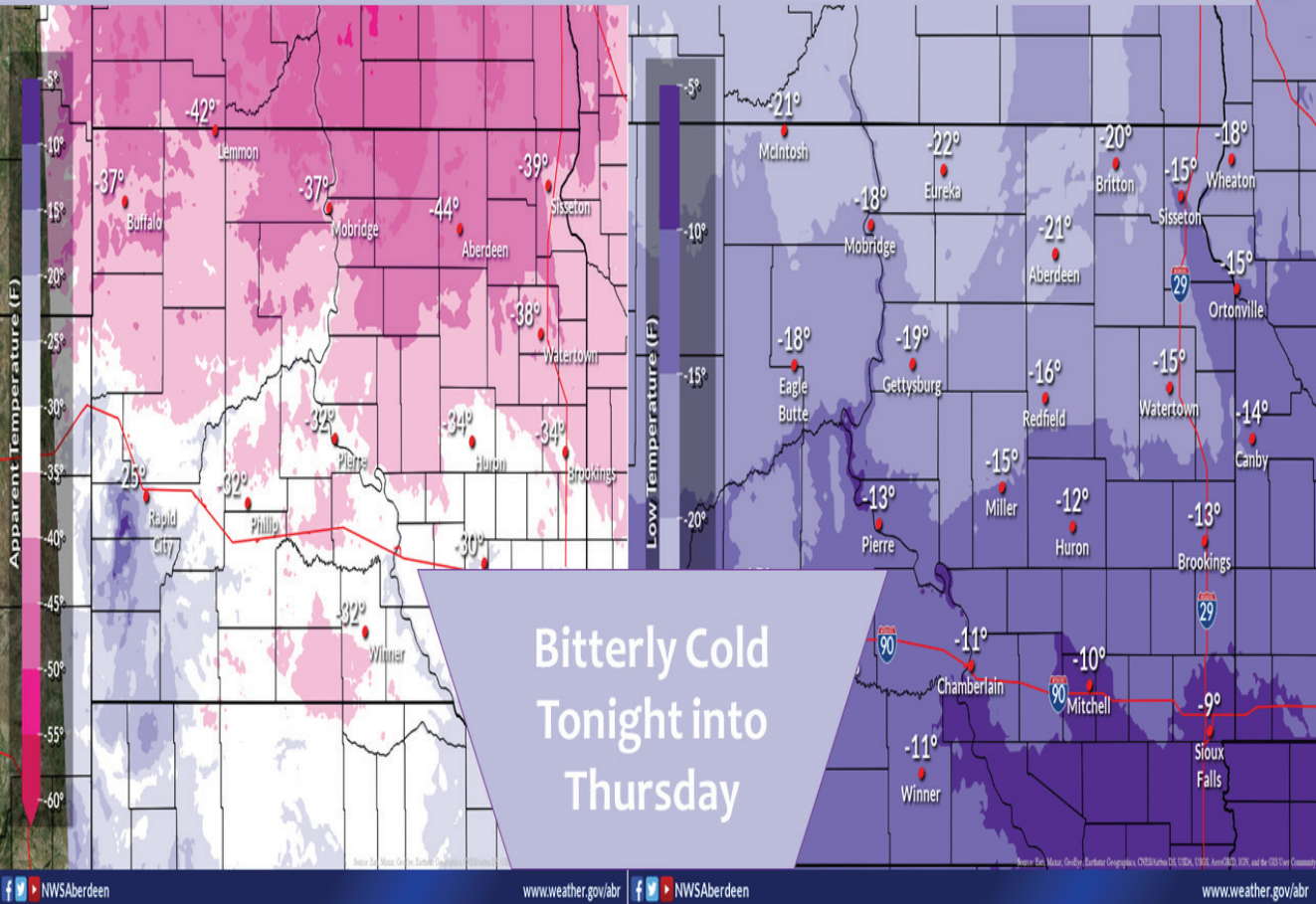
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**Wind Chill Warning**

Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
				
Cold	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Mostly Cloudy and Breezy	Patchy Blowing Snow and Breezy	Mostly Sunny then Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery
High: -14 °F	Low: -22 °F	High: 19 °F	Low: 10 °F	High: 29 °F

## Minimum Windchill Tonight

## Overnight Low



A brutally cold night on top for the region. #sdwx #mnwx

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## Today in Weather History

January 6, 1962: Snow, high winds, sub-zero temperatures, and near blizzard conditions caused hazardous driving conditions across the area from the 6th into the 9th. Snowfall of generally 2 to 6 inches with winds of 30 to 40 mph caused widespread low visibilities along with drifts up to 4 foot high across central and northeast South Dakota.

January 6, 2010: A strong Alberta Clipper system tracked southeast through the northern plains on Tuesday night, January 5th through Thursday, January 7th. Sufficient Pacific moisture interacted with bitter cold Arctic air surging south from Canada, resulting in widespread snowfall over northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts ranged from 6 to 11 inches. The snow began across northeastern South Dakota in the late evening of the 5th into the early morning hours of the 6th. Many schools closed on the 6th and the 7th. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches in Andover and Doland; 7 inches in Britton, Sisseton, and near Milbank; 8 inches in Aberdeen, Bryant, and near Summit; 9 inches at Wilmot and Castlewood; 10 inches in Clear Lake and 11 inches at Watertown.

January 6, 2014: The coldest air in recent history moved into the region during the early morning hours of the 5th and continued into the afternoon hours of the 6th. The combination of sub-zero temperatures with north winds produced dangerously cold wind chills from 40 below to around 55 degrees below zero. Winds gusted to over 40 mph at times. Several area activities were canceled, as well as many schools on Monday the 6th. Some of the coldest wind chills include; 56 below in Summit; 55 below near Hillhead; 54 below in Brandt and Webster; 53 below in Clear Lake; 52 below in Herreid; 51 below in Leola; 50 below in Watertown, Sisseton, Bowdle, and McIntosh.

1880 - Seattle, WA, was in the midst of their worst snowstorm of record. Hundreds of barns were destroyed, and transportation was brought to a standstill, as the storm left the city buried under four feet of snow. (David Ludlum)

1884 - The temperature dipped to one degree below zero at Atlanta, GA. It marked the final day of a severe arctic outbreak in the South and Midwest. (David Ludlum)

1886: The "Great Blizzard of 1886" struck the Midwest with high winds, subzero temperatures, and heavy snowfall. These conditions caused as many as 100 deaths, and 80% of the cattle in Kansas perished.

1987 - A storm moving across the western U.S. spread heavy snow into the Central Rockies. Casper WY received 14 inches of snow in 24 hours, a January record for that location. Big Piney WY reported 17 inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - It was a bad day for chickens. Heavy snow in Arkansas, with totals ranging up to 16 inches at Heber Springs, claimed the lives of 3.5 million chickens, and snow and ice up to three inches thick claimed the lives of another 1.75 million chickens in north central Texas. Up to 18 inches of snow blanketed Oklahoma, with Oklahoma City reporting a record 12 inches of snow in 24 hours. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A "bonafide blizzard" ripped through south central and southeastern Idaho. Strong winds, gusting to 60 mph at the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, whipped the snow into drifts five feet high, and produced wind chill readings as cold as 35 degrees below zero. The blizzard prompted an Idaho Falls air controller to remark that "the snow is blowing so hard you can't see the fog".(National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Rain and gale force winds prevailed along the Northern Pacific Coast. Winds at Astoria OR gusted to 65 mph. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed over Florida. Five cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Miami with a reading of 86 degrees. The hot spot in the nation was West Palm Beach with a high of 87 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

1996: A severe nor'easter paralyzed the East Coast from January 6 to the 8. In Washington D.C., this storm is also known as the "Great Furlough Storm" because it occurred during the 1996 federal government shutdown. Snowfall amounts from this event include 47 inches in Big Meadows, Virginia; 30.7" in Philadelphia; 27.8" in Newark; 24.6" at the Dulles International Airport; 24.2" in Trenton; 24" in Providence; 22.5" in Baltimore; 18.2" in Boston; 17.1" in D.C.; and 9.6" in Pittsburgh.

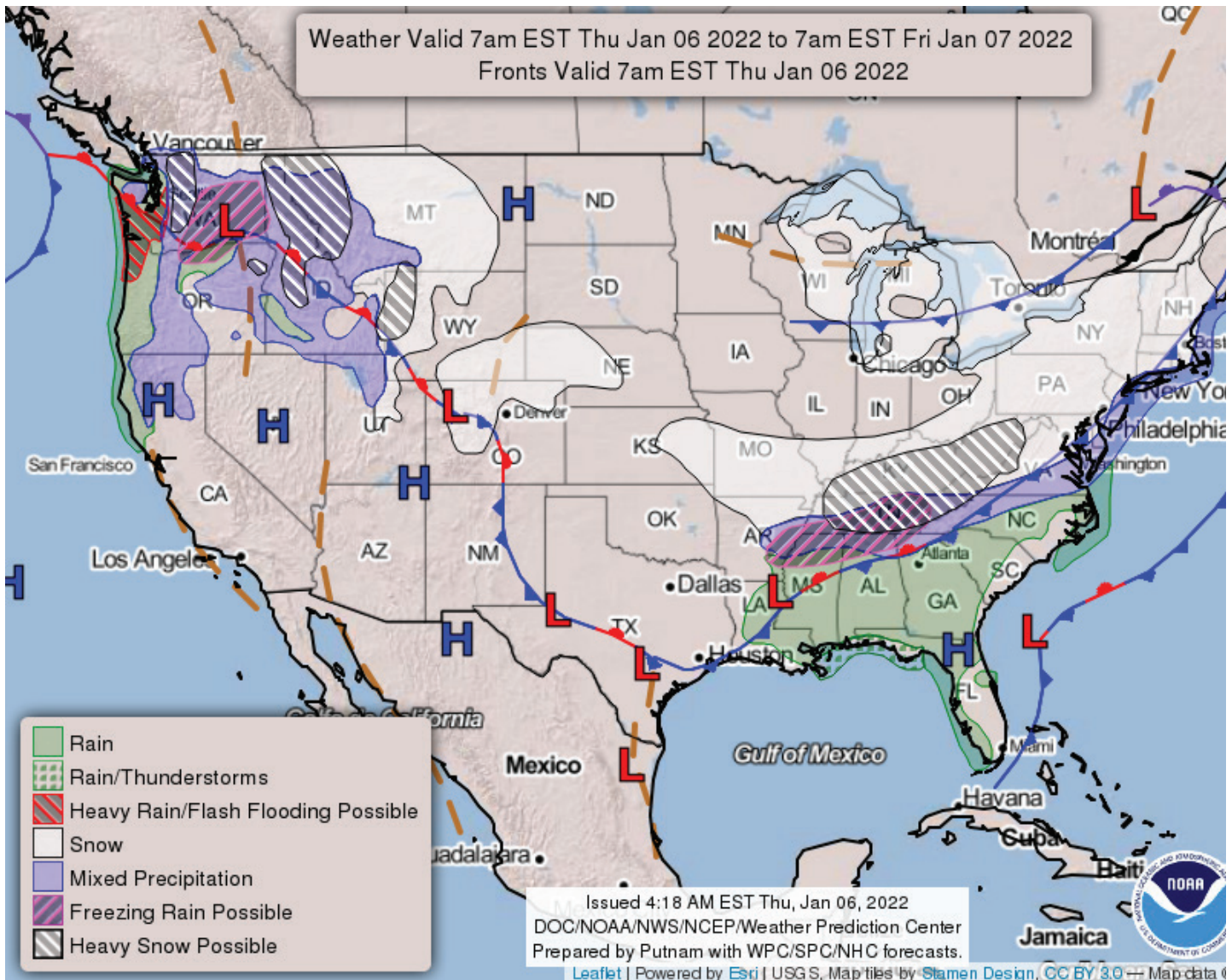
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 4 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Low Temp: -9 °F at 11:52 PM**  
**Wind: 34 mph at 1:21 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

**Record High: 49 in 2012**  
**Record Low: -30° in 1909**  
**Average High: 24°F**  
**Average Low: 3°F**  
**Average Precip in Jan.: 0.13**  
**Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 0.13**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.00**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:06:39 PM**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:09:49 AM**



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## TRY IT - IT MAY SURPRISE YOU

An atheist confronted a young believer in a park and began to ridicule him for his faith in God. He dared the Christian to refute any of his arguments that he believed disproved the God of believers.

Quietly, another Christian, who had been watching the exchange between the atheist and the Christian, stepped forward and stood next to the young believer.

He did not say a word as he took an orange from his pocket and started to peel it. "What are you doing, fool? If you have something to say, then say it. Otherwise let 'the believer' defend his faith."

After he finished peeling the orange, he asked the atheist, "Tell me, is this orange sweet or sour?" Angrily the skeptic shouted and waved his fist and said, "How should I know. I haven't tried it."

"Then," said the Christian, "you would be wise to stop criticizing the Word of God until you've tried it."

Major General Lew Wallace is the author of *Ben Hur*, the most influential Christian novel of the nineteenth century. At one time in his life, he was considered to be an atheist. However, in answer to that statement, he wrote: "As a result of my own personal research and many years of study, I became convinced that Jesus Christ was not only the Savior of the world, but that He was my Savior, too, and being thus convinced, I wrote *Ben Hur*."

"Whosoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord," wrote the Psalmist.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for Your Word that no one can destroy or diminish. Our history shows Your faithfulness and love.

Scripture For Today: Whosoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord. Psalm 107:43

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## 2021 Community Events

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

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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) \_ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

05-06-09-10-27

(five, six, nine, ten, twenty-seven)

Estimated jackpot: \$41,000

Lotto America

01-04-17-45-50, Star Ball: 6, ASB: 3

(one, four, seventeen, forty-five, fifty; Star Ball: six; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$5.84 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$278 million

Powerball

06-14-25-33-46, Powerball: 17, Power Play: 2

(six, fourteen, twenty-five, thirty-three, forty-six; Powerball: seventeen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$630 million

### Trial set for in slaying of brother, pregnant sister-in-law

MILBANK, S.D. (AP) — A Milbank man will face trial this summer on charges of killing his brother and pregnant sister-in-law.

Brent Hanson, 57, appeared court Tuesday where Third Judicial Circuit Judge Dawn Elshere set a jury trial to begin Aug. 11.

According to police, Hanson hit his brother, Clyde Hanson, in the head with a baseball bat Dec. 12 at a residential property they both owned, but where they lived in separate spaces.

Jessica Hanson, who was nine months pregnant, returned home the following morning and the defendant struck her in the head with a machete, according to court documents.

The couple's bodies were found Dec. 15 after police were called to do a welfare check. Officers say they found Jessica's body under a blue tarp and Clyde's body behind sheetrock in an unfinished portion of the home. Their 3-year-old child was found sleeping and unharmed.

Brent Hanson was arrested a short time later. A grand jury has indicted him on three counts of first-degree murder and three counts of second-degree murder. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges. He's jailed on \$5 million bond.

According to court documents, Hanson told police he "just snapped."

Brent Hanson had a previous scuffle with the couple in July when he was arrested and charged with misdemeanor assault and domestic violence. Hanson allegedly pushed around the couple after an argument over the care of Jessica Hanson's dog.

### 1972 ushered in post-termination era of change for US tribes

By MARK TRAHANT, Indian Country Today undefined

PHOENIX (AP) — Fifty years ago, Standing Rock Sioux writer and activist Vine Deloria Jr. offered this prescription of sorts.

"In the long run, I think we are on our way back at the same time the rest of American society is going down," he said in a 1972 interview. "Almost any book you read today on the social movements analyzes the total disintegration of American society. So I look for American Indians to be the winners in the long



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run. We must recognize it is a long-distance run, and we've got to keep at it."

Of course, all our policy debates today have roots in the past — and 1972 was one of those years when so many Native issues broke through the surface.

This was the year the termination policy of the 1950s came to a jarring end. House Concurrent Resolution 106 in 1953 called for an end to federal services, reservations and "full citizenship" for tribal members. The policy was an economic and human rights disaster. More than 100 tribes were terminated, resulting in the loss of more than 1.3 million acres (526,100 hectares) impacting nearly 12,000 tribal citizens.

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation had elected new leadership that rejected termination and took on more authority. In 1972, the tribes closed lands on the reservation to non-Indians because of "littering and loitering." And it voted to take back law enforcement authority ceded in 1955 to the state.

In Wisconsin, Ada Deer was elected chairman of the board of trustees for Menominee Enterprises Inc. The company had been created under that tribe's termination legislation to control the assets. It was the beginning of the tribe's restoration. The entire Wisconsin congressional delegation signed on to the effort. The process would continue for the next several years and eventually lead to the enactment of the Menominee Restoration Act in 1973.

But the policy of termination was being replaced by self-determination.

Washington Sen. Henry Jackson, a Democrat and chairman of the full Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, proposed tribal self-determination as a policy in 1972. The measure, reflecting priorities from President Richard Nixon's Message to Congress in 1970, would have allowed tribes to contract directly with the Departments of Interior and Health, Education and Welfare to manage federal programs. Jackson said that approach would end the "disproportionate impact" of the federal government on tribal citizens' lives. It took three more years before self-determination became the law of the land.

## SECRET REPORT CALLS FOR NEW URBAN POLICY

On Jan. 15, 1972, representatives from six urban centers gathered in Oakland, California, to send a message that it was long past time for the country to serve urban Native populations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs responded to that conference by saying all federal funds would go to reservations.

John Folster, who was head of the Bay Area Native American Council, said the coalition was not out to fight the BIA, and "we don't want any money directed to the tribes — only other currently unappropriated funds for our own needs."

A couple of months later the National American Indian Council was formed by some 300 delegates representing 58 cities. The council met in Omaha, Nebraska, in March 1972 and called for the extension of federal services "for all Indians regardless of residence."

Lee Cook, Red Lake Ojibwe, president of the National Congress of American Indians, invited the new organization to join a broader coalition on Native issues. Under his leadership, NCAI revised its membership and included Native people living in cities. At one point, it explored the idea of a national framework that included city chapter membership.

In 1972, the Census Bureau estimated that 185,000 citizens of tribal nations lived in urban areas. Today, the Census figures about seven out of 10 Native Americans live in cities, topping more than 1 million people.

Richard LaCourse, Yakama, who was writing for the American Indian Press Association, said a "secret report" by the Interior Department recommended expanding eligibility of BIA services to the urban population.

The report was prepared by BIA leadership at the request of Rep. Julia Butler Hansen, D-Washington, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. It recommended spending \$46 million on urban programs, out of a BIA budget of more than \$1 billion.

However, the Nixon administration's Frank Carlucci wrote Interior to say the "BIA's responsibility does not extend to Indians who have left the reservation." He said there were other federal agencies that could fill that role.

Carlucci had been the head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the very agency he said should be supporting urban Indian programs. That agency spent "a meager \$600,000" on such efforts, according

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to the American Indian Press Association.

## ONE CLEAR PROMISE: AN INDIAN TO LEAD INTERIOR

U.S. Rep. Shirley Chisolm, D-New York, entered the presidential race in January 1972. She was the first African-American woman to run.

Chisolm promised to appoint a Native American to lead the Interior Department as well as involving tribal people in far more decision-making positions.

There were no Native Americans serving in the Congress in 1972, and most of the action in politics in 1972 was at the presidential level. Both the Republicans and Democrats had committees of supporters from tribal communities.

South Dakota Sen. George McGovern promised to elevate the BIA to a White House special office.

McGovern won his first Senate race in 1962 by a margin of 597 in a state with more than 30,000 Native voters. "That victory is being accepted now by his aides as an index of McGovern's indebtedness to his Indian electorate," the American Indian Press Association reported.

At the Democrat's convention in Miami, NCAI President Cook was nominated as a potential running mate for McGovern.

"No group of people, no nation has given so much and received so little as the Indian people and the Indian nation of this country," Cook told delegates.

The party platform called for a rejection of termination and the return of all surplus lands to American Indians.

The ballot for vice president at the Democratic National Convention at one point included more than 70 candidates. McGovern's pick, Missouri Sen. Tom Eagleton, didn't win his spot until early in the morning. He later withdrew from the campaign and was replaced by Sargent Shriver, a former Peace Corps director married to Eunice Kennedy.

The Democrats might have done better with Cook.

Nixon's campaign for reelection focused on the administration's record.

"Our policy, as you know, is firm and unwavering: greater self-determination so that America's Indians can manage their own affairs," the president said in a message to tribal leaders. "We have returned certain lands to Indian people as one proof of our unbending intent that self-determination becomes a reality."

The Nixon campaign appointed 12 coordinators to secure Indian votes, led by Sue Lallmang, Tonawanda Band of Seneca.

The 1972 election was a landslide. Nixon and Spiro Agnew carried 49 states and won the largest popular vote tally in history.

The policy debates in 1972 mask some of the other extraordinary stories from that year that we leave for another day, such as the return of Mount Adams in Washington, the murder of Raymond Yellow Thunder, the trail of Broken Treaties, and the legislation that defined the Navajo-Hopi land dispute.

Some of the policy proposals from 1972 came to be. Termination is no more. Self-determination continues to evolve. And the urban Indian programs are still largely underfunded. And in politics there is more representation than ever, including that half-century promise fulfilled for a Native Secretary of the Interior.

The long-distance run continues.

## EXPLAINER: What's behind unrest rocking oil-rich Kazakhstan

MOSCOW (AP) — Kazakhstan is experiencing the worst street protests the country has seen since gaining independence three decades ago.

The outburst of instability is causing significant concern in Kazakhstan's two powerful neighbors: Russia and China. The country sells most of its oil exports to China and is a key strategic ally of Moscow.

A sudden spike in the price of car fuel at the start of the year triggered the first protests in a remote oil town in the west. But the tens of thousands who have since surged onto the streets across more than a dozen cities and towns now have the entire authoritarian government in their sights.

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President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has cut an increasingly desperate figure. He first sought to mollify the crowds by dismissing the entire government early Wednesday. But by the end of the day he had changed tack. First, he described demonstrators as terrorists. Then he appealed to a Russian-led military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, for help in crushing the uprising and the CSTO agreed to send an unspecified number of peacekeepers.

## WHY ARE PEOPLE ANGRY?

Of the five Central Asian republics that gained independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan is by far the largest and the wealthiest. It spans a territory the size of Western Europe and sits atop colossal reserves of oil, natural gas, uranium and precious metals.

But while Kazakhstan's natural riches have helped it cultivate a solid middle class, as well as a substantial cohort of ultrarich tycoons, financial hardship is widespread. The average national monthly salary is just under \$600. The banking system has fallen prey to deep crises precipitated by non-performing loans. As in much of the rest of the region, petty corruption is rampant.

The rally that set off the latest crisis took place in the dusty western oil town of Zhanaozen. Resentments have long festered in the area over a sense that the region's energy riches haven't been fairly spread among the local population. In 2011, police shot dead at least 15 people in the city who were protesting in support of oil workers dismissed after a strike.

When prices for the liquified petroleum gas most people in the area use to power their cars doubled overnight Saturday, patience snapped. Residents in nearby cities quickly joined in and within days large protests had spread to the rest of the country.

## WHO IS LEADING THE PROTESTS?

The suppression of critical voices in Kazakhstan has long been the norm. Any figures aspiring to oppose the government have either been repressed, sidelined, or co-opted. So although these demonstrations have been unusually large — some drawing more than 10,000 people, a large number for Kazakhstan — no protest movement leaders have emerged.

For most of Kazakhstan's recent history power was held in the hands of former President Nursultan Nazarbayev. That changed in 2019 when Nazarbayev, now 81, stepped aside and anointed his long-time ally Tokayev as his successor. In his capacity as head of the security council that oversees the military and security services, Nazarbayev continued to retain considerable sway over the country. Tokayev announced Wednesday that he was taking over from Nazarbayev as security council head.

Much of the anger displayed on the streets in recent days was directed not at Tokayev, but at Nazarbayev, who is still widely deemed the country's ultimate ruler. The slogan "Shal ket!" ("Old man go") has become a main slogan.

## HOW ARE THE AUTHORITIES RESPONDING?

A police official in Almaty said Thursday that dozens of protesters were killed in attacks on government buildings. At least a dozen police officers were also killed, including one who got beheaded.

There were attempts to storm buildings in Almaty during the night and "dozens of attackers were liquidated," police spokeswoman Saltanat Azirbek said. She spoke on state news channel Khabar-24. The reported attempts to storm the buildings came after widespread unrest in the city on Wednesday, including seizure of the mayor's building, which was set on fire.

The initial reaction was in keeping with usual policy in the face of public discontent. Police and the National Guard were deployed in large numbers. The crowd that made its way to City Hall in the commercial capital, Almaty, early Wednesday was met by large phalanxes of riot police and armored personnel carriers. While gatherings are normally dispersed with ease, the number of people on the street this time was too large.

With government buildings coming under assault in several large cities, Tokayev appealed for help from the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a Moscow-led military alliance. He justified the appeal for external intervention by claiming the protesters were operating at the behest of international terrorist groups. He offered no details on what he meant by that.

## IS THE GOVERNMENT LIKELY TO BE TOPPLED?

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This is uncharted territory for Kazakhstan. The country has seen major demonstrations before: In 2016, after the passage of a contentious land law. And again in 2019, after the contentious election that secured Tokayev's hold on power. But never anything on this scale.

In one of his appeals to the public Wednesday, Tokayev pledged to pursue reforms and hinted that political liberalization might be possible. His darker remarks toward the end of the day, however, suggested he would instead go down a more repressive road.

Still, because the street protests are so lacking in focus, at least for now, it's difficult to see how they might end. But even if they fail to topple the government, it looks possible they might lead to deep transformation. What is not clear is what that might mean.

## Dozens of protesters, 12 police dead in Kazakhstan protests

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Dozens of protesters and 12 police died during extraordinarily violent demonstrations in Kazakhstan that saw government buildings stormed and set ablaze, authorities said Thursday. One police officer was found beheaded in escalating unrest that poses a growing challenge to authoritarian rule in the Central Asian nation.

After breaking into the presidential residence and the mayor's office in the country's largest city Wednesday, demonstrators continued to try to storm more buildings overnight. "Dozens of attackers were liquidated," police spokeswoman Saltanat Azirbek told state news channel Khabar-24, using a term common to describe the killing of people thought to be extremists. Twelve police officers were killed in the unrest and 353 injured, according to city officials cited by the channel.

While the president initially seemed to try to mollify the protesters, he later promised harsh measures to quell the unrest, which he blamed on "terrorist bands," and called on a Russia-led military alliance for help. The airports in Almaty and two other cities have been shut, and internet service was severely interrupted for the second day on Thursday, blocking access to Kazakh news sites.

Tens of thousands of people, some reportedly carrying clubs and shields, have taken to the streets in recent days in the worst protests the country has seen since gaining independence from the Soviet Union three decades ago. Although the demonstrations began over a near-doubling of prices for a type of vehicle fuel, their size and rapid spread suggest they reflect wider discontent in the country that has been under the rule of the same party since independence.

A Russia-led military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, said early Thursday that it would send peacekeeper troops to Kazakhstan at Tokayev's request.

The operation is the first military action by the CSTO — an indication that Kazakhstan's neighbors, particularly Russia, are concerned that the unrest could spread.

Russia and Kazakhstan share close relations and a 7600-kilometer (4700-mile) border, much of it along open steppes. Russia's manned space-launch facility, the Baikonur Cosmodrome, is in Kazakhstan.

The size and duties of the peacekeeping force have not been specified. Russia has already begun sending forces, according to the CSTO, which also includes Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. But Kyrgyzstan's presidential spokesman, Erbol Sutanbaev, said his country's contingent must be approved by parliament and said that the troops would not take actions involving demonstrators.

Tokayev has imposed a two-week state of emergency for the whole country, including an overnight curfew and a ban on religious services. That is a blow to Kazakhstan's sizable Orthodox Christian population who observe Christmas on Friday.

Of the five Central Asian republics that gained independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan is by far the largest and the wealthiest, spanning a territory the size of Western Europe and sitting atop colossal reserves of oil, natural gas, uranium and precious metals. In addition to its long border with Russia, it also shares one with China, and its oil and mineral wealth make it strategically and economically important.

But despite Kazakhstan's natural riches and a solid middle class, financial hardship is widespread, and

discontent over poor living conditions is strong in some parts of the country. Many Kazakhs also chafe at the dominance of the ruling party, which holds more than 80% of the seats in parliament.

The protests appear to have no identifiable leader or demands. Much of the anger displayed in recent days was directed not at Tokayev, but at Nursultan Nazarbayev, the country's first president who continued to wield enormous influence after his 2019 resignation. Protesters shouted "Shal ket!" ("Old man go"), an apparent reference to Nazarbayev, who dominated Kazakhstan's politics and whose rule was marked by a moderate cult of personality.

After the demonstrations spread to Nur-Sultan and Almaty, the government announced its resignation, but Tokayev said the ministers would stay in their roles until a new Cabinet is formed, making it uncertain whether the resignations will have significant impact.

At the start of the year, prices for the fuel called liquefied petroleum gas roughly doubled as the government moved away from price controls as part of efforts to move to a market economy.

## 'Hatred in the eyes': How racist rage animated Jan. 6 riots

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Cori Bush is no stranger to protests. She spent years marching the streets of St. Louis and Ferguson, Missouri, rising to public office on the strength of her activism.

But as the Missouri Democrat looked out the window of the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 — only her third day as a member of Congress — she knew what was about to take place would be no peaceful protest. The Confederate flags in the crowd, and the makeshift noose and gallows erected on the Capitol grounds, spoke to a more sinister reality.

"I've been to hundreds of protests and have organized so many protests, I can't count. I know what a protest is: This is not that," Bush, who is Black, said recently in an interview with The Associated Press.

The insurrection by pro-Trump supporters and members of far-right groups shattered the sense of security that many had long felt at the Capitol as rioters forcibly delayed the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's election victory.

But for people of color, including many in Congress, the attack was more than a violent challenge to a free and fair election — it was an eerily familiar display of white supremacist violence, this time at the very seat of American democracy.

"First of all, as a Black woman, that is already just tough on a level that's different from what a white person would experience," Bush said of the imagery and rhetoric surrounding the attack, especially the Confederate flag that was carried by a rioter inside the Capitol. "But it's especially different for Black people because of our history. The history of this country has been that type of language and imagery is directed right at us in a very negative and oftentimes violent way."

While Bush managed to escape the Capitol and barricade with her staff in her office in a nearby building, dozens of police officers faced down the violent mob in hours of frantic hand-to-hand combat. More than 100 officers were injured, some severely.

A group of officers testified to Congress in July about the physical and verbal abuse they faced from supporters of former President Donald Trump. Harry Dunn, a Black officer, recalled an exchange he had with rioters who disputed that Biden defeated Trump.

When Dunn said that he had voted for Biden and that his vote should be counted, a crowd began hurling a racial slur at him.

"One woman in a pink MAGA (Make America Great Again) shirt yelled, 'You hear that guys, this n--- voted for Joe Biden!'" said Dunn, who has served more than a dozen years on the Capitol Police force.

"Then the crowd, perhaps around 20 people, joined in, screaming, 'Boo! F---ing n---!'" he testified. He said no one had ever called him the N-word while he was in uniform.

Later that night, Dunn said, he sat in the Capitol Rotunda and wept.

Meanwhile, as the attack unfolded at the Capitol, a handful of lawmakers remained trapped in the House and Senate galleries with no escape as rioters fought to break in.

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After a gunshot killing Ashli Babbitt, who was among the rioters and attempting to leap through a broken window, rang out in the House chamber, Democratic Rep. Jason Crow of Colorado decided the best thing members could do was take off their congressional pins identifying them as lawmakers.

But for lawmakers of color like Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., removing the pin was not an option.

"I thought there's no way I'm taking off my pin. Because it was either you get recognized by the insurrectionist or you don't get recognized by Capitol Police as a brown woman or Black woman," Jayapal told the AP in December.

She added: "And so many of the members of color that I know did not take off their pins."

Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., the chairman of the panel investigating Jan. 6 and among those stuck in the gallery, said that day specifically brought back "unpleasant experiences" from his early days as a Black politician in Mississippi.

"I saw the kind of hatred in the eyes of the people who broke in the Capitol. It was that same kind of hatred I saw in people who wanted to stop people of color from casting a ballot for the candidate of their choice in Mississippi," Thompson said.

In the aftermath of the attack, Crow and other white lawmakers reckoned with the experiences their colleagues of color faced that day. Crow told his Democratic colleague Rep. Val Demings, a Black former Orlando police chief who was also trapped in the gallery, that he didn't realize at the time how difficult it would be for members of color to disguise themselves from the mob.

"Jason shared after all of it with me that for him — these are his words — as a white male he could take off his pin, or he could keep his pin and run over to the other side with the Republicans and stand there and people may not know the difference," Demings said.

Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., also reflected on his ability to blend in more easily.

"I think to myself, well, if I need to, I can untuck my shirt, I can throw my jacket away. I'm a white guy," Himes said. "There's actually a reasonable probability that I get through this crowd, right? In retrospect, I reflected on the fact that that was not true for Ilhan Omar," he said, referring to the Black Democrat from Minnesota.

Crow himself called the interaction that day a "learning moment."

"It wasn't until that day when I was on the receiving end of the violence of white supremacy in our nation that I understood," he said.

The attack finally ended and the Capitol was secured. The rioters were allowed to peacefully leave the complex and lawmakers who stayed to finish the certification of the election went home. The images that surfaced online and on television showed the Capitol's janitorial staff, the majority of them people of color, sweeping the broken glass and scrubbing the walls.

Rep. Andy Kim, D-N.J., joined them, getting on his hands and knees to pick up water bottles, clothing, Trump flags and U.S. flags. The son of Korean immigrants and, in 2018, the first Asian American to represent New Jersey in Congress, Kim reflected at the time how he, a person of color, was cleaning up after people who waved white supremacist symbols like the Confederate flag during the melee.

While he hadn't considered race at the time, Kim told the AP shortly after the attack, "It's so hard because we don't look at each other and see each other as Americans first."

## Djokovic in limbo as he fights deportation from Australia

By JOHN PYE AP Sports Writer

Novak Djokovic spent a day confined to a Melbourne hotel waiting for a court ruling and dealing with the prospect of deportation from Australia because of an issue related to his visa application.

The 20-time major champion from Serbia will spend at least another night in immigration detention, probably even the weekend, with his chances of playing in this month's Australian Open in limbo.

With his visa canceled by Australian Border Force officials who rejected his evidence to support a medical exemption from the country's strict COVID-19 vaccination rules, Djokovic had to trade the practice courts for the law courts on Thursday.

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Djokovic has not disclosed if he is vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Federal Circuit Court Judge Anthony Kelly adjourned Djokovic's case until Monday because of a delay in receiving the application for a review of the visa decisions and the temporary ban on his deportation. A lawyer for the government agreed the 34-year-old tennis player should not be deported before the next hearing.

Djokovic's trip was contentious before he landed, when it emerged the conservative federal government and the left-leaning state government of Victoria had differing views about what constituted acceptable grounds for an exemption to Australia's vaccination policy for visitors.

After announcing on social media Tuesday that he had "exemption permission," Djokovic landed in Melbourne late Wednesday thinking he had Victoria state approval that would shield him from the regulations requiring all players, fans and staff to be fully vaccinated to attend the Australian Open, which starts on Jan. 17.

That would have been OK to enter the tournament, but apparently not the country.

After a long-haul flight, Djokovic spent the night trying to convince the authorities he had all the necessary documentation, but the Australian Border Force issued a statement saying he failed to meet entry requirements.

"The rule is very clear," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said. "You need to have a medical exemption. He didn't have a valid medical exemption. We make the call at the border, and that's where it's enforced."

Health Minister Greg Hunt said the visa cancellation followed a review of Djokovic's medical exemption by border officials who looked "at the integrity and the evidence behind it."

Djokovic was transferred Thursday morning to a secure hotel controlled by immigration officials that also houses asylum seekers and refugees.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said he had spoken to Djokovic and that his government is asking that, before Monday, the 20-time major champion be allowed to move to a house he has rented and "not to be in that infamous hotel."

He added that Djokovic has been treated differently to other players.

"I'm afraid that this overkill will continue," Vucic said. "When you can't beat someone, then you do such things."

Quarantine-free access wouldn't have been an issue if Djokovic could have shown he was fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. Instead he applied for an exemption, which only became an option in recent months after Victoria state backed away from a full no-vaccination, no-play policy.

Questions have now been raised about the approval of the exemption.

The Sydney Morning Herald published letters sent in November from the Department of Health and the health minister to Tennis Australia which indicated that Djokovic didn't meet the national standard — as defined by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation — for quarantine-free entry.

Asked about the confusion, Morrison said the onus was on the individual concerned to have correct documentation on arrival.

The prime minister rejected the suggestion that Djokovic was being singled out, but he acknowledged that other players may be in Australia on the same type of medical exemption.

"One of the things the Border Force does is they act on intelligence to direct their attention to potential arrivals," he said. "When you get people making public statements about what they say they have, and they're going to do, they draw significant attention to themselves."

Anyone who does that, he said, "whether they're a celebrity, a politician, a tennis player ... they can expect to be asked questions more than others before you come."

The medical exemption, vetted by two independent panels of experts and based on information supplied anonymously by players, was supposed to allow Djokovic to play in the Australian Open regardless of his vaccination status.

Djokovic has spoken out against vaccines in the past and has steadfastly refused to acknowledge whether he received any shots against the coronavirus.

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The exemption has become a hot political topic this week. Many Australians who have struggled to obtain sparsely available and often expensive rapid antigen tests, or who have been forced into isolation, perceived a double standard.

Critics questioned what grounds Djokovic could have for the exemption, and backers argued that he has a right to privacy and freedom of choice.

Tension has grown amid another surge of COVID-19 in the country. The state recorded six deaths and 21,997 new cases on Thursday, the biggest daily jump in cases in Victoria since the pandemic began.

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley on Wednesday defended the “completely legitimate application and process” and insisted there was no special treatment for Djokovic.

Only 26 people connected with the tournament applied for a medical exemption and, Tiley said, only a “handful” were granted. None of those have been publicly identified, but the Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported that border officials are now investigating another player and an official.

Acceptable reasons for an exemption included acute major medical conditions and serious adverse reaction to a previous dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Another one widely reported to be acceptable — evidence of a COVID-19 infection within the previous six months — may now be the sticking point.

Djokovic tested positive for the coronavirus in June 2020 after he played in a series of exhibition matches that he organized without social distancing amid the pandemic.

## Trump maintains grip on GOP despite violent insurrection

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — As a raging band of his supporters scaled walls, smashed windows, used flagpoles to beat police and breached the U.S. Capitol in a bid to overturn a free and fair election, Donald Trump’s excommunication from the Republican Party seemed a near certainty, his name tarnished beyond repair.

Some of his closest allies, including Fox News Channel hosts like Laura Ingraham, warned that day that Trump was “destroying” his legacy. “All I can say is count me out. Enough is enough,” said his friend and confidant Sen. Lindsey Graham. Mitch McConnell, the Senate Republican leader who worked closely with Trump to dramatically reshape the judiciary, later denounced him as “morally responsible” for the attack.

But one year later, Trump is hardly a leader in exile. Instead, he is the undisputed leader of the Republican Party and a leading contender for the 2024 presidential nomination.

Trump is positioning himself as a powerful force in the primary campaigns that will determine who gets the party’s backing heading into the fall midterms, when control of Congress, governor’s offices and state election posts are at stake. At least for now, there’s little stopping Trump as he makes unbending fealty to his vision of the GOP a litmus test for success in primary races, giving ambitious Republicans little incentive to cross him.

“Let’s just say I’m horrendously disappointed,” said former New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman, a longtime Republican who now serves on the advisory committee of the Renew America Movement, a group trying to wrest the party away from Trump’s control.

“His ego was never going to let him accept defeat and go quietly into the night,” she added. “But what I am surprised by is how deferential so many of the Republican elected officials” have been.

Rather than expressing any contrition for the events of Jan. 6, Trump often seems emboldened and has continued to lie about his 2020 election loss. He frequently — and falsely — says the “real” insurrection was on Nov. 3, the date of the 2020 election when Democrat Joe Biden won in a 306-232 Electoral College victory and by a 7 million popular vote margin.

Federal and state election officials and Trump’s own attorney general have said there is no credible evidence the election was tainted. The former president’s allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges Trump appointed.

Undaunted, Trump is preparing for another run for the White House in 2024, and polls suggest that, at



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the moment, he would easily walk away with the GOP nomination.

For Trump, the extraordinary outcome is the product of sheer will and a misinformation campaign that began long before the election, when he insisted the only way he could lose was if the election was "rigged" and wouldn't commit to accepting defeat. His refusal to accept reality has flourished with the acquiescence of most Republican leaders, who tend to overlook the gravity of the insurrection for fear of fracturing a party whose base remains tightly aligned with Trump and his effort to minimize the severity of what happened on Jan. 6.

While five people died during the rioting or its immediate aftermath, less than half of Republicans recall the attack as violent or extremely violent, according to a poll released this week by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs. About 3 in 10 Republicans said the attack was not violent.

The situation has stunned and depressed critics in both political parties who were convinced the insurrection would force Republicans to abandon the Trump era once and for all. He became the first president in U.S. history to be impeached twice. The second impeachment centered on his role in sparking the insurrection, but Trump was acquitted in a Senate trial, a clear indication that he would face few consequences for his actions.

"There was this hope when we were in the safe room that we would go back and the Republicans would see how crazy this was, how fragile our democracy was, what President Trump had done, and that they would renounce that and we would all come together," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., describing the events that day. Instead, she said, "there were people defending the insurrectionists and defending Trump and continuing with the challenge and the Big Lie."

Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, a Republican who, with Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, has emerged as one of the few GOP anti-Trump critics in Congress, had predicted Trump's hold on the party would "be gone" by the summer. But Kinzinger, who recently announced his decision not to run for reelection, blamed House Republican leader and Trump ally Kevin McCarthy for proving him wrong.

"What I underestimated was the impact that one person would have on that, and that is Kevin McCarthy and his visit to Mar-a-Lago," Kinzinger said, referring to a trip McCarthy took to Florida in late January 2020 as the party was on the verge of disarray. With their eyes on retaking the House in 2022, Trump and McCarthy agreed to work together and released a photograph showing them smiling side by side.

"Kevin McCarthy is legitimately, singlehandedly the reason that Donald Trump is still a force in the party," Kinzinger said. "That full-hearted embrace, I saw firsthand in members, made them not just scared to take on Trump but in some cases also full-heartedly embrace him."

Aides to McCarthy didn't respond to a request for comment on Kinzinger's characterization.

Others, however, point to fractures that suggest Trump's power is waning.

Banned from Twitter and denied his other social media megaphones, Trump no longer controls the news cycle like he did in office. He canceled a news conference that was scheduled for Thursday following pressure from some Republican allies, who warned that such an event was ill-advised.

During last year's most prominent elections, Republicans like Virginia gubernatorial nominee Glenn Youngkin strategically kept Trump at arm's length. Youngkin's victory created a possible model for candidates running in battleground states where suburban voters uncomfortable with the former president are a key bloc.

While Trump's endorsement remains coveted in many midterm primary races, it has also failed to clear the field in some key races. Trump has similarly struggled to prevent other Republicans from eyeing the 2024 presidential nomination. His former vice president, secretary of state and a handful of Senate allies have made frequent trips to early voting states, preparing for potential campaigns and refusing to rule out running against Trump.

"When somebody walks out of the most powerful office in the world, the Oval Office, to sit by the swimming pool at Mar-a-Lago, his influence declines," said John Bolton, Trump's former national security adviser. Bolton has funded extensive national and state-level polling on the subject over the last year that has found Trump's sway and the power of his endorsement waning considerably since he left office.

"I really think that the evidence is clear that the people are done with Trump," Bolton said. "He still has

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support, but it is declining. Honestly, it's not declining as fast as I would like to see and it's not down to zero. But among real people, it is declining."

Trump is also facing a flurry of investigations, including in New York, where prosecutors are investigating whether his real estate company misled banks and tax officials about the value of his assets, inflating them to gain favorable loan terms or minimizing them to reap tax savings. New York Attorney General Letitia James' office confirmed this week that it has subpoenaed Trump and his two eldest children, Ivanka and Donald Trump Jr., as part of an investigation into the family's business practices. Both children have been prominent political surrogates for Trump.

Meanwhile, on Capitol Hill, the Jan. 6 committee continues to investigate the Trump White House's involvement in the deadly insurrection.

Trump still has his eyes on 2024, even as he continues to obsess over the 2020 election. After spending 2021 raising money and announcing his endorsements of candidates who have parroted his election lies up and down the ballot, Trump's team is preparing to pivot to helping those candidates win with a stepped-up rally schedule and financial support, including transfers to candidate accounts and targeted advertising.

Trump, according to allies, sees the midterms as a foundation for his next campaign, and intends to use the cycle to position himself for his party's nomination.

Voting rights advocates, meanwhile, are increasingly worried as states with Republican legislatures push legislation that would allow them to influence or overrule the vote in future elections. They fear what might happen if Trump-endorsed candidates for secretary of state and attorney general who say the election was stolen find themselves in positions that could sway the outcome in 2024.

"It's a concerted effort to undermine our public's confidence in the electoral system, so in 2022 and 2024, if they don't like the elections — and this is Republicans — they can overturn it," said Whitman, who also serves as co-chair of States United Action, a nonpartisan nonprofit that aims to protect the integrity of future elections. "We are in a very, very fragile place."

## In South Korea, hair loss emerges as new election issue

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung isn't bald. But he is enjoying the support of many bald voters over his push for government payments for hair loss treatments.

Since his proposal was disclosed earlier this week, hair loss has emerged as a hot-button topic ahead of March's presidential vote in South Korea, where previous elections have focused on North Korea's nuclear program, relations with the U.S., scandals and economic problems.

Online communities for bald people are flooded with messages supporting his proposal. There is also strong criticism that it's just a populism-driven campaign pledge by Lee, the governing party candidate, to win votes.

Messages on social media include, "Jae-myung bro. I love you. I'll implant you in the Blue House" and "Your Excellency, Mr. President! You're giving new hope to bald people for the first time in Korea."

Lee told reporters Wednesday that he thinks hair regrowth treatments should be covered by the national health insurance program.

"Please, let us know what has been inconvenient for you over hair-loss treatments and what must be reflected in policies," Lee wrote on Facebook. "I'll present a perfect policy on hair-loss treatment."

Lee, an outspoken liberal, is leading public opinion surveys. Some critics have called him a dangerous populist.

"(Lee's idea) may appear to be a necessary step for many people worrying about their hair loss but it's nothing but serious populism, given that it would worsen the financial stability of the state insurance program," the conservative Munhwa Ilbo newspaper said in an editorial Thursday.

Currently, hair loss related to aging and hereditary factors is not covered by the government-run insurance program. Hair loss treatments are only supported if the loss is caused by certain diseases.

Reports say one in every five South Koreans suffers from hair loss.

## Biden and Congress mark a year since violent insurrection

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, LISA MASCARO and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is preparing to mark the first anniversary of the U.S. Capitol insurrection, gathering with lawmakers to remember the violent attack that has fundamentally changed the Congress and raised global concerns about the future of American democracy.

Marking the one-year anniversary of the Capitol insurrection, Biden and congressional Democrats will start Thursday in Statuary Hall, one of several spots where rioters swarmed a year ago and interrupted the electoral count. Biden is expected to speak to the truth of what happened, according to White House press secretary Jen Psaki, and draw a contrast between that and “the lies some have spread since” — a reference to the continued refusal by many Republicans to affirm that Biden won the 2020 election.

“And so at this moment we must decide what kind of nation we are going to be,” Biden will say, according to excerpts of his remarks released early Thursday. “Are we going to be a nation that accepts political violence as a norm? Are we going to be a nation where we allow partisan election officials to overturn the legally expressed will of the people? Are we going to be a nation that lives not by the light of the truth but in the shadow of lies? We cannot allow ourselves to be that kind of nation. The way forward is to recognize the truth and to live by it.”

Psaki said Biden’s speech would “lay out the significance of what happened at the Capitol and the singular responsibility President Trump has for the chaos and carnage that we saw.”

A series of remembrance events during the day will be widely attended by Democrats, in person and virtually, but almost every Republican on Capitol Hill will be absent. The division is a stark reminder of the rupture between the two parties, worsening since hundreds of Donald Trump’s supporters violently pushed past police, used their fists and flagpoles to break through the windows of the Capitol and interrupted the certification of Biden’s victory.

While congressional Republicans almost universally condemned the attack in the days afterward, most have stayed loyal to the former president.

In a bid to inform the public, Democrats investigating the insurrection plan to spend the coming months telling the American people exactly what happened last Jan. 6. But leaders will spend the anniversary appealing to broader patriotic instincts.

During the 2020 campaign, Biden said his impetus for running for the White House was to fight for the “soul of the nation” after watching Trump’s comments that some good people were among the white supremacists who marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017. He warned that American democracy was at stake, and his view is that the Jan. 6 attack was a vivid demonstration of his fears.

On Thursday, aides said, Biden will harken back to his call during his inaugural address, just two weeks after the insurrection, for leaders to speak the truth about the attack and what motivated it — even as some GOP lawmakers and the the public deny the events of that day.

“There is truth and there are lies,” Biden said at the time. “Lies told for power and for profit. And each of us has a duty and responsibility, as citizens, as Americans, and especially as leaders — leaders who have pledged to honor our Constitution and protect our nation — to defend the truth and to defeat the lies.”

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, too, is marking the anniversary with a high-minded appeal, telling The Associated Press in an interview Wednesday that “democracy won that night,” when Congress returned to the Capitol after the riot and affirmed Biden’s victory.

To honor the anniversary, Pelosi has scheduled a moment of silence in the House, where many members were evacuated and some were trapped as the rioters tried to break in; a moderated discussion with historians Doris Kearns Goodwin and Jon Meacham; and a session featuring testimonials from members who were there that day. While many lawmakers will be absent due to concerns about COVID-19, several of the events will be livestreamed so they can participate.

Biden’s sharp message and the Republicans’ distance from it come as lawmakers are adjusting to the new normal on Capitol Hill — the growing tensions that many worry will result in more violence or, someday,

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a legitimate election being overturned. Democrats and a handful of Republicans feel a desperate urgency to connect to a public in which some have come to believe Trump's lies that the election was stolen from him and that the attack wasn't violent at all.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research showed that 3 in 10 Republicans say the attack was not violent, and about another 3 in 10 say it was somewhat violent. Around two-thirds of Americans described the day as very or extremely violent, including about 9 in 10 Democrats.

As Biden is prepared to direct blame toward the former president, the percentage of Americans who blame Trump for the Jan. 6 riot has grown slightly over the past year, with 57% saying he bears significant responsibility for what took place.

In an AP-NORC poll taken in the days after the attack, 50% said that.

Trump's claims of widespread election fraud were rejected by the courts and refuted by his own Justice Department.

An investigation by the AP found fewer than 475 cases of voter fraud among 25.5 million ballots cast in the six battleground states disputed by Trump, a minuscule number in percentage terms.

## Afghan Taliban turn blind eye to Pakistani militants

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Each year on Jan. 17, Shahana bakes a cake and invites friends to her home in the Pakistani city of Peshawar. They sing happy birthday for her son, even light a candle. But it's a birthday without the birthday boy.

Her son, Asfand Khan, was 15 in December 2014 when gunmen rampaged through his military-run public school in Peshawar killing 150 people, most of them students, some as young as 5. Asfand was shot three times in the head at close range.

The attackers were Pakistani Taliban, who seven years later have once again ramped up their attacks, seemingly emboldened by the return of Afghanistan's Taliban to power in Kabul. In the last week of December, they killed eight Pakistani army personnel in a half dozen attacks and counter attacks, all in the country's northwest. Another two Pakistani soldiers were killed in an attack on Taliban outposts late Wednesday night.

The Pakistani Taliban, known by the acronym TTP, are regrouping and reorganizing, with their leadership headquartered in neighboring Afghanistan, according to a U.N. report from July. That is raising fears among Pakistanis like Shahana of a return of the horrific violence the group once inflicted.

Yet the Afghan Taliban have shown no signs of expelling TTP leaders or preventing them from carrying out attacks in Pakistan, even as Pakistan leads an effort to get a reluctant world to engage with Afghanistan's new rulers and salvage the country from economic collapse.

It is a dilemma faced by all of Afghanistan's neighbors and major powers like China, Russia and the United States as they ponder how to deal with Kabul.

Multiple militant groups found safe haven in Afghanistan during more than four decades of war, and some of them, like the TTP, are former battlefield allies of the Afghan Taliban.

So far, the Taliban have appeared unwilling or unable to root them out. The sole exception is the Islamic State affiliate, which is the Taliban's enemy and has waged a campaign of violence against them and for years against Afghanistan's minority Shiite Muslims, killing hundreds in dozens of horrific attacks targeting schools, mosques, even a maternity hospital.

Washington has identified the Islamic State branch, known by the acronym IS-K, as its major militant worry emanating from Afghanistan. The Taliban's longtime ally al-Qaida is not seen as a strong threat. Though U.S. military leaders say there are signs it may be growing slightly, it is struggling near rudderless, with its current leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, alive but unwell, according to the July U.N. report.

Still, there are plenty of other militants based in Afghanistan, and they are raising concerns among Afghanistan's neighbors.

China fears insurgents from its Uighur ethnic minority who want an independent Xinjiang region. Russia

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and Central Asian nations worry about the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which in recent years went on a recruitment drive among Afghanistan's ethnic Uzbeks.

For Pakistan, it is the TTP, which stands for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The group perpetrated some of the worst terrorist assaults on Pakistan, including the 2014 assault on the military public school.

The TTP numbers anywhere from 4,000 to 10,000 fighters, according to the U.N. report. It has also succeeded in expanding its recruitment inside Pakistan beyond the former tribal regions along the border where it traditionally found fighters, says Amir Rana, executive director of the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, an independent think tank in the capital Islamabad.

Analysts say the Afghan Taliban's reluctance to clamp down on the TTP does not bode well for their readiness to crack down on the many other groups.

"The plain truth is that most of the terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan, aside from IS-K, are Taliban allies," says Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center. "And the Taliban aren't about to turn their guns on their friends, even with mounting pressure from regional players and the West."

The militants' presence complicates Pakistan's efforts to encourage international dealings with the Afghan Taliban in hopes of bringing some stability to an Afghanistan sliding into economic ruin.

Analysts say Pakistan's military has made a calculation that the losses inflicted by the TTP are preferable to undermining Afghanistan's Taliban rulers by pressing them on the issue. A collapse would bring a flood of refugees; Pakistan might be their first stop, but Islamabad warns that Europe and North America will be their preferred destination.

Islamabad attempted to negotiate with the TTP recently, but the effort fell apart. Rana of the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies said Pakistan's policy of simultaneously negotiating with and attacking the TTP is "confusing" and risks emboldening like-minded insurgents in both countries.

It also worries its allies, he said.

China, which is spending billions in Pakistan, was not happy with Islamabad's attempts at talks with the TTP because of its close affiliation with Uighur separatists, said Rana. The TTP took responsibility for a July bombing in northwest Pakistan that killed Chinese engineers as well as an April bombing at a hotel where the Chinese ambassador was staying.

Pressure is mounting on Pakistan to demand the Afghan Taliban hand over the TTP leadership.

But Islamabad's relationship with the Taliban is complicated.

Pakistan's powerful military, which shepherds the country's Afghan policy, has ties to the Taliban leadership going back more than 40 years to an earlier invasion. Then, together with the U.S., they fought and defeated the invading former Soviet Union.

After the 2001 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan was accused by Washington and its Afghan allies of aiding the Taliban. Pakistan denied the accusations, even as Taliban leaders and their families lived in Pakistan while waging their insurgency against Kabul.

But the Taliban also have interests divergent from Pakistan's, particularly the issue of the two countries' 2,500-kilometer (1,600-mile) border. Afghanistan has never recognized the border, known as the Durand Line, which was drawn by British colonial administrators in the 19th Century.

Last week, Afghan Taliban anger over Pakistan's construction of a border fence threatened to turn violent. Videos shared on social media showed Taliban destroying rolls of barbed wire meant for the fence and threatening to open fire on Pakistani troops.

The Taliban's Defense Ministry issued a statement saying Pakistan had no right to erect a border fence. On Wednesday Pakistan's military spokesman Gen. Babar Iftikar said the fence was 94% done and would be completed.

"The fence on the Pak-Afghan border is needed to regulate security, border crossing and trade," he said. "The purpose of this is not to divide the people, but to protect them."

Even if Pakistan were to ask the Taliban to hand over TTP leaders, it shouldn't expect any results, says Bill Roggio, editor of the Long War Journal which tracks global militancy.

"The Afghan Taliban will not expel the TTP for the same reasons it won't expel al-Qaida," he said. "Both

groups played a key role in the Afghan Taliban's victory. They fought alongside the Afghan Taliban and sacrificed greatly over the past 20 years."

## Omicron surge vexes parents of children too young for shots

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Afternoons with Grammy. Birthday parties. Meeting other toddlers at the park. Parents of children too young to be vaccinated are facing difficult choices as an omicron variant-fueled surge in COVID-19 cases makes every encounter seem risky.

For Maine business owner Erin Connolly, the most wrenching decision involves Madeleine, her 3-year-old daughter, and Connolly's mother, who cares for the girl on the one day a week she isn't in preschool.

It's a treasured time of making cookies, going to the library, or just hanging out. But the spirited little girl resists wearing a mask, and with the highly contagious variant spreading at a furious pace, Connolly says she's wondering how long that can continue "and when does it feel too unsafe."

Connolly, of West Bath, said she worries less about Madeleine and her 6-year-old vaccinated son getting the virus than about the impact illness and separation would have on the grandparents. But she's also concerned about her vaccinated parents contracting breakthrough cases.

Although health experts say omicron appears to cause less severe disease and lead to fewer hospitalizations, its rapid spread indicates that it is much more contagious than other variants. Nearly 718,000 COVID cases were reported Tuesday, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Omicron is currently the culprit in more than 90% of U.S. cases, a dizzying rise from less than 10% two weeks ago.

"The sheer volume of infections because of its profound transmissibility will mean that many more children will get infected," Dr. Anthony Fauci said Wednesday at a White House briefing.

COVID cases in U.S. children and teens nearly doubled in the last two weeks of December, totaling nearly 326,000 in the final week alone, according to a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association.

The omicron-fueled surge has also put children in the hospital in record numbers: During the week of Dec. 27, 2021, to Jan. 2, 2022, an average of 672 children 17 and under were admitted per day to hospitals with the coronavirus — more than double the number from the previous week. Children still represent a small percentage of those being hospitalized, however.

Fauci, the country's top infectious disease doctor, said surrounding children with vaccinated adults is one way to keep them from contracting the virus. Health officials also reiterate that face masks prevent transmissions, and putting them on children 2 and older in public and group settings can help keep them safe.

Connolly, 39, and her mother had a difficult conversation Tuesday morning about the dilemma.

"Will Madeleine be masked?" her mother asked. "I said, 'We're trying, but I don't know if she will,'" Connolly recalled. "I said, 'Does that mean that Thursdays with Grammy will go away?' She said, 'I'm not sure yet,'" Connolly said, choking back tears.

Parents who had hoped the new year might bring a COVID vaccine for young children had a setback when Pfizer announced last month that two doses didn't offer as much protection as hoped in youngsters ages 2 to 4.

Researchers were disappointed by the setback but are working to restart studies using a third vaccine dose, said Dr. Yvonne Maldonado, chief of pediatric infectious disease at Stanford University's medical school. Maldonado is leading the university's Pfizer vaccine studies in children under 12.

Maldonado said she understands the frustration of parents with young children but advises them to avoid unnecessary travel during this current surge, and to make sure their day care centers, preschools and other care providers are requiring masks and taking other recommended precautions.

Watching omicron's spread, Honolulu resident Jacob Aki is contemplating forgoing a first birthday party for his 10-month-old son. Celebrating the milestone is important in his native Hawaiian culture. The tradition stems from a time before the measles vaccine was available, when it was a feat to reach one's first

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birthday. The family also canceled plans to experience snow in Canada. Meanwhile, every cough and sniffle is provoking anxiety.

"Babies normally get sick at this age," Aki said. "But with everything with COVID ... anxiety is high."

Heather Cimellaro, a technology teacher from Auburn, Maine, says she worries more than ever about keeping her 3-year-old identical twin boys healthy. One has had medical issues related to their premature birth and the family makes regular trips to Boston to see a specialist.

"COVID can really throw a wrench in those plans," Cimellaro said.

Cimellaro, 33, says omicron has her rethinking running errands with the twins, library storytime visits, even preschool, located in a health center for the elderly. She worries the boys could catch COVID and spread it to their "grand-buddies."

"It's just a lot of worry: 'Am I doing the right thing?'" she said. "That's the thing. I'm not an epidemiologist. I don't know how dangerous it is for them. So it's kind of like that debate with myself."

Erin Stanley of Berrien Springs, Michigan, said she and her husband have curtailed their social lives because of omicron to help protect their 3-year-old son, Ralph. They are both vaccinated and boosted, but they worry about Ralph getting sick and spreading illness to his younger cousin, preschool classmates, grandparents and a beloved great-grandmother.

They didn't see the great-grandmother over Christmas and skipped a holiday get-together with other relatives too.

"That was upsetting," Stanley said. "We all really wanted to. It just seemed risky."

Stanley, 35, a cook at a popular organic farm, used to take Ralph grocery shopping, a trip he looked forward to and that represented one of his few social interactions outside preschool. But few shoppers wear masks, she said, and now that seems too risky as well.

The shy little boy has had three recent scares and three negative COVID tests.

"Getting the swab test was really traumatic for him," said Stanley, who added that "virus" and "swab" are now part of his vocabulary.

"He keeps saying, 'I don't want to get a swab!'" she said. "If a vaccine comes for him, we'll definitely get it."

## A season of joy -- and caution -- kicks off in New Orleans

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Vaccinated, masked and ready-to-revel New Orleans residents will usher in Carnival season Thursday with a rolling party on the city's historic streetcar line, an annual march honoring Joan of Arc in the French Quarter and a collective, wary eye on coronavirus statistics.

Carnival officially begins each year on Jan. 6 — the 12th day after Christmas — and, usually, comes to a raucous climax on Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, which falls on March 1 this year. Thursday's planned festivities come two years after a successful Mardi Gras became what officials later realized was an early Southern superspreader of COVID-19; and nearly a year after city officials, fearing more death and more stress on local hospitals, canceled parades and restricted access to the usually raucous Bourbon Street.

This year, the party is slated to go on despite rapidly rising COVID-19 cases driven by the omicron variant.

In what has become a traditional kickoff to the season, the Phunny Phorty Phellows will gather at a cavernous streetcar barn and board one of the historic St. Charles line cars along with a small brass band. Vaccinations were required in keeping with city regulations and seating on the streetcar was to be limited and spaced. And, in addition to the traditional over-the-eye costume masks, riders were equipped with face coverings to prevent viral spread.

Larger, more opulent parades will follow in February as Mardi Gras nears and the city attempts to leaven the season's joy with caution.

"It was certainly the right thing to do to cancel last year," said Dr. Susan Hassig, a Tulane University epidemiologist who also is a member of the Krewe of Muses, and who rides each year on a huge float in the Muses parade. "We didn't have vaccines. There was raging and very serious illness all over the place."

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Now, she notes, the vaccination rate is high in New Orleans. While only about 65% of the total city population is fully vaccinated, according to the city's statistics, 81% of all adults are fully vaccinated. And the overall percentage is expected to increase now that eligibility is open to younger children.

And, while people from outside the city are a big part of Mardi Gras crowds, Mayor LaToya Cantrell's anti-virus measures include proof of vaccination or a negative test for most venues. "The mayor has instituted a vaccine requirement and/or negative test to get into all the fun things to do in New Orleans — the food, the music," said Hassig. She adds, however, that she'd like to see a federal requirement that air travelers be vaccinated.

Sharing Hassig's cautious optimism is Elroy James, president of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, a predominantly Black organization whose Mardi Gras morning parade is a focal point of Carnival. Early in the pandemic, COVID-19 was blamed for the death of at least 17 of Zulu's members. Compounding the tragedy: Restrictions on public gatherings meant no traditional jazz funeral sendoff for the dead.

"I think most krewes, particularly, I know, for Zulu, we've been very proactive, leaning in, with respect to all of the safety protocols that have been in place since the onset of this thing," James said Wednesday. "Our float captains are confirming our riders are vaccinated. And part of the look for the 2022 Mardi Gras season is face masks."

Statistics still show reason for concern in a state where the pandemic has claimed more than 15,000 lives over the past two years. Louisiana health officials reported more than 1,287 hospitalizations as of Tuesday — a sharp increase from fewer than 200 in mid-December. Still, reports nationwide indicate the omicron-driven illnesses are milder than previous cases. Hassig notes that a lower percentage of patients require ventilators, a sign of less-severe illness.

And dedicated parade participants aren't stopping precautions at masks and shots. Muses founder Staci Rosenberg said the krewe had planned to gather at a bar a couple of blocks off the streetcar route to await the passing of the Phunny Phorty Phellows' procession. Now, they've moved that party to an outside parking lot.

Hassig, meanwhile, says she doesn't plan to attend any indoor gatherings. She, is, however, determined to ride in the Feb. 24 parade — vaccinated, face covered with an N95 mask and knowing that outdoor activities are generally less likely to spread disease.

It's important to Hassig. She rode in her first parade in 2006 as the city fought to recover from catastrophic flooding following Hurricane Katrina. And she wants to participate in the tourist-dependent, tradition-loving city's recovery from the economic ravages of the virus.

"It's incredibly important, financially, for the city that this go well," she said.

## Scientists explore Thwaites, Antarctica's 'doomsday' glacier

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

A team of scientists are sailing to "the place in the world that's the hardest to get to" so they can better figure out how much and how fast seas will rise because of global warming eating away at Antarctica's ice.

Thirty-two scientists on Thursday are starting a more than two-month mission aboard an American research ship to investigate the crucial area where the massive but melting Thwaites glacier faces the Amundsen Sea and may eventually lose large amounts of ice because of warm water. The Florida-sized glacier has gotten the nickname the "doomsday glacier" because of how much ice it has and how much seas could rise if it all melts — more than two feet (65 centimeters) over hundreds of years.

Because of its importance, the United States and the United Kingdom are in the midst of a joint \$50 million mission to study Thwaites, the widest glacier in the world by land and sea. Not near any of the continent's research stations, Thwaites is on Antarctica's western half, east of the jutting Antarctic Peninsula, which used to be the area scientists worried most about.

"Thwaites is the main reason I would say that we have so large an uncertainty in the projections of future sea level rise and that is because it's a very remote area, difficult to reach," Anna Wahlin, an oceanographer from the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, said Wednesday in an interview from the Research Vessel



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Nathaniel B. Palmer, which was scheduled to leave its port in Chile hours later. "It is configured in a way so that it's potentially unstable. And that is why we are worried about this."

Thwaites is putting about 50 billion tons of ice into the water a year. The British Antarctic Survey says the glacier is responsible for 4% of global sea rise, and the conditions leading to it to lose more ice are accelerating, University of Colorado ice scientist Ted Scambos said from the McMurdo land station last month.

Oregon State University ice scientist Erin Pettit said Thwaites appears to be collapsing in three ways:

— Melting from below by ocean water.

— The land part of the glacier "is losing its grip" to the place it attaches to the seabed, so a large chunk can come off into the ocean and later melt.

— The glacier's ice shelf is breaking into hundreds of fractures like a damaged car windshield. This is what Pettit said she fears will be the most troublesome with six-mile (10-kilometer) long cracks forming in just a year.

No one has stepped foot before on the key ice-water interface at Thwaites before. In 2019, Wahlin was on a team that explored the area from a ship using a robotic ship but never went ashore.

Wahlin's team will use two robot ships — her own large one called Ran which she used in 2019 and the more agile Boaty McBoatface, the crowdsource named drone that could go further under the area of Thwaites that protrudes over the ocean — to get under Thwaites.

The ship-bound scientists will be measuring water temperature, the sea floor and ice thickness. They'll look at cracks in the ice, how the ice is structured and tag seals on islands off the glacier.

Thwaites "looks different from other ice shelves," Wahlin said. "It almost looks like a jumble of icebergs that have been pressed together. So it's increasingly clear that this is not a solid piece of ice like the other ice shelves are, nice smooth solid ice. This was much more jagged and scarred."

## NKorea claims second successful test of hypersonic missile

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea claimed Thursday to have conducted the second successful test flight of a hypersonic missile, days after leader Kim Jong Un vowed to bolster his military forces despite pandemic-related difficulties.

Wednesday's launch, the North's first known weapons test in about two months, indicates the country will press ahead with plans to modernize its nuclear and missile arsenals rather than return to disarmament talks anytime soon.

The official Korean Central News Agency said the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party expressed "great satisfaction" at the results of the missile test, which was observed by leading weapons officials.

Hypersonic weapons, which fly at speeds in excess of Mach 5, or five times the speed of sound, could pose crucial challenges to missile defense systems because of their speed and maneuverability. It's unclear whether and how soon North Korea could manufacture such a high-tech missile, but it was among a wish-list of sophisticated military assets that Kim disclosed early last year, along with a multi-warhead missile, spy satellites, solid-fueled long-range missiles and underwater-launched nuclear missiles.

Wednesday's test was the second of its kind since North Korea first launched a hypersonic missile last September.

"The successive successes in the test launches in the hypersonic missile sector have strategic significance in that they hasten a task for modernizing strategic armed force of the state," a KCNA dispatch said.

The word "strategic" implies the missile is being developed to deliver nuclear weapons.

KCNA said the missile made a 120-kilometer-long (75 mile) lateral movement before hitting a target 700 kilometers (435 miles) away. It said the test reconfirmed the flight control and stability of the missile and verified its fuel capsule under the winter weather conditions.

While North Korea appears to have made progress in the development of a hypersonic missile, it still needs more test flights to determine whether it meets its tactical objectives or how advanced a hypersonic weapon it could develop, said Lee Choon Geun, an expert and honorary research fellow at South Korea's

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Science and Technology Policy Institute.

A photo of the launch shows that the upper parts of the missiles launched in September and this week have different shapes. Lee said this suggests that North Korea is testing two versions of warheads for a missile still under development or it is actually developing two different types of hypersonic missiles.

He said the missile's reported lateral movement would provide the weapon with a greater maneuverability to evade enemy missile defense systems.

Kim Dong-yub, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said North Korea will likely go ahead with its arms build-up plans without being affected by external factors like the Beijing Olympics in February, the South Korean presidential election in March and a possible change in the Biden administration's North Korea policy.

"Given the U.S. has decided on a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Olympics, North Korea doesn't have to worry about what China would think when it conducts" weapons tests, Kim said.

China is North Korea's last major ally and aid benefactor. Some experts earlier predicted that North Korea would not launch any provocations until the Beijing Olympics ended.

Tae Yongho, a former North Korean diplomat who now serves as a lawmaker in South Korea, wrote on Facebook that Pyongyang is keeping its borders shut due to fears about the pandemic. But he said Pyongyang is still working to perfect its missile technology to boost its position in any future negotiations.

The North's latest launch was first detected by its neighbors.

The U.S. military called it a ballistic missile launch that "highlights the destabilizing impact of (North Korea's) illicit weapons program," while South Korea and Japan expressed concerns or regrets over the launch. China, for its part, called for dialogue and said that "all parties concerned should keep in mind the big picture (and) be cautious with their words and actions."

U.S.-led diplomacy on North Korea's nuclear program remains stalled since 2019 due to disputes over international sanctions on the North. The Biden administration has repeatedly called for resuming the nuclear diplomacy "anywhere and at any time" without preconditions, but North Korea has argued the U.S. must first withdraw its hostility against it before any talks can restart.

During last week's plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party, Kim Jong Un repeated his vow to expand his country's military capabilities without publicly presenting any new positions on Washington and Seoul.

The North's advancing nuclear arsenal is the core of Kim's rule, and he's called it "a powerful treasured sword" that thwarts potential U.S. aggressions. During his 10-year rule, he's conducted an unusually large number of weapons tests to acquire an ability to launch nuclear strikes on the American mainland. But his country's economy has faltered severely in the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the sanctions and his government's own mismanagement.

## Antonio Brown says he was forced to play injured by Bucs

By FRED GOODALL AP Sports Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Antonio Brown says he didn't quit on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers during the middle of a game, but rather he was cut after refusing to play through an ankle injury that sidelined him for several weeks this season.

The oft-troubled wide receiver, who took off his jersey, shoulder pads and undershirt before walking off the sideline during a game Sunday against the New York Jets, said in a statement released by his attorney that he was pressured to play and coach Bruce Arians fired him when the player told the coach he was not able to re-enter the game because of his ankle.

While not specifying which ankle was hurt, Brown — through a statement released by his attorney Wednesday — said an MRI performed Monday showed broken bone fragments, a ligament tear and cartilage loss "which are beyond painful. You can see the bone bulging from the outside."

Arians said the day after the game that Brown did not claim he was injured when he refused to continue playing against the Jets. The coach declined to discuss specifics of the conversation on the sideline and

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said he had "no clue" why the receiver reacted by storming off the field, tossing some of his gear into the stands and waving to fans at MetLife Stadium.

Brown told a different story in his statement.

"Because of my commitment to the game, I relented to pressure directly from my coach to play injured," he said. "Despite the pain, I suited up, the staff injected me with what I now know was a powerful and sometimes dangerous painkiller that the NFLPA has warned against using, and I gave it my all for the team. I played until it was clear that I could not use my ankle to safely perform my playing responsibilities.

"On top of that, the pain was extreme. I took a seat on the sideline and my coach came up to me, very upset, and shouted, 'What's wrong with you? What's wrong with you?' I told him, 'It's my ankle.' But he knew that. It was well documented and we had discussed it.

"He then ordered me to get on the field. I said, 'Coach, I can't.' He didn't call for medical attention. Instead, he shouted at me, 'YOU'RE DONE!' while he ran his finger across his throat. Coach was telling me that if I didn't play hurt, then I was done with the Bucs."

Although Ariens said after the game that Brown was no longer a part of the reigning Super Bowl champions, the 33-year-old receiver who's caught a pass in his last 144 games remained on the roster Wednesday.

Wednesday's injury report noted Brown's absence from practice was "not injury related - personal."

Asked about the team not making an official transaction in regard to Brown, who did not accompany the team back to Tampa following Sunday's game, Ariens replied: "It's a management decision on what is happening right now."

On whether it was simply a matter of how Brown will be removed the team, not if, Ariens said: "Right."

The team did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Brown's statement Wednesday night.

The receiver alleged a coverup.

"I didn't quit. I was cut. I didn't walk away from my brothers. I was thrown out," Brown's statement read.

"Being fired on the sideline for having a painful injury was bad enough. Then came their "spin." Coach denied on national television that he knew about my ankle. That's 100% inaccurate," the receiver added. "Not only did he know I missed several games with the injury, he and I exchanged texts days before the game where he clearly acknowledged my injury."

Brown injured his ankle during a victory at Philadelphia in mid-October. He returned to the lineup against Carolina on Dec. 26, after serving a three-game suspension for misrepresenting his COVID-19 vaccination status.

The former Steelers, Raiders and Patriots receiver had 10 catches for 101 yards against the Panthers. He three receptions for 26 yards against the Jets after missing two practices last week due to the ankle injury.

## The AP Interview: Pelosi says 'democracy won' on Jan. 6

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had a singular message for Americans and the world on the eve of the anniversary of the horrific attack on the Capitol:

"Democracy won."

In an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday, inside the Capitol where a mob loyal to Donald Trump had laid siege, Pelosi said it's time for the country to turn to its "better angels," draw from history and ensure a day like Jan. 6 never happens again.

"Make no mistake, our democracy was on the brink of catastrophe," Pelosi told the AP.

"Democracy won that night," she said. "These people, because of the courageous work of the Capitol Police and Metropolitan Police and others, they were deterred in their action to stop the peaceful transfer of power. They lost."

The speaker will lead Congress on Thursday in a day of remembrance at the Capitol, with President Joe Biden speaking in the morning, and historians and lawmakers sharing remembrances throughout the day — though few Republicans are expected to attend.

"This has to be a period of remembrance, of reconciliation," Pelosi said, drawing on the example set by

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Abraham Lincoln.

"Lincoln said, With malice toward none, with charity toward all" as the Civil War was ending. "We have to extend the hand of friendship."

The deadly insurrection stunned the country, and the world, as rioters ransacked the Capitol, some in hand-to-hand combat with police, after a defeated President Trump exhorted them to fight as Congress was certifying the Biden's election.

Pelosi said no one could have imagined a U.S. president calling for an insurrection, but there's now an "enormous civics lesson learned as to what a president is capable of," she said.

"I think now people are alerted to the fact that there can be rogue presidents."

Republicans are mostly staying away from the remembrance events. They downplay the assault and blame Democrats for not fortifying the Capitol.

Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California, the House minority leader, said in a letter to colleagues that Democrats are using the anniversary "as a partisan political weapon to further divide our country."

Pelosi, the California congresswoman, who made history 15 years ago as the first female speaker of the House — and has become one of the most powerful leaders ever to have held the gavel — said she bears "absolutely no sense of responsibility" for the current divisions in Congress, or the country.

After having twice led the House to impeach Trump, she said her message to those who assaulted the Capitol — and the millions of Americans who backed Trump and could support him again — is that they were lied to. Countless court cases and investigations have shown no evidence of voter fraud that could have tipped the election, as he claims.

"They may have thought that was right," she said. "But they were lied to by the president of the United States."

For that, she said, "he should be ashamed."

Sitting beneath a portrait of George Washington, Pelosi drew heavily on the founders' vision for a country where Americans would have many differences but rely on common sense to resolve them.

She referred to Lincoln's efforts -- insisting on constructing the dome of the Capitol despite naysayers during the Civil War -- to underscore national unity.

"We cannot shirk our responsibility. We have the power and we have the responsibility and we will live up to that to keep our country together," she said.

"Let's hope that we never elect a president who will incite an insurrection on the Congress of the United States."

Looking back on the night of Jan. 6, once the Capitol was cleared of the mob, Pelosi said she is most proud of the decision congressional leaders made to quickly return to certify the election results.

She hopes to "soon" reopen the mostly shuttered Capitol -- a "symbol of democracy to the world," now closed to the public longer than any other time in its history — once the coronavirus pandemic wanes and the physician's office signals it is safe.

Inside her offices at the Capitol, Pelosi showed the mirror that was shattered in the melee but has since been repaired, along with a door that was vandalized as the mob went searching for her, menacingly calling her name.

There is a conference room where several from her staff barricaded themselves, silent and fearful as rioters stalked outside. She had been presiding over the House, down the hall, and was hurried to a secure location.

Pelosi said while historic artifacts can be mended and replaced, she knows the emotional toll of the deadly day lingers for many.

"What I remember most about the day is something that I find most unforgiving about it, and that is the impact that it had on young people in the Capitol, my staff in particular," she said. "What I remember the most, and will never forget, is the trauma that I saw in the eyes of the young people who were present for that violence."

Biden has suggested that one way to bolster democracy at home and around the world is to show that America's government can work, though his agenda has stalled in the Senate.

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Pelosi agrees and said she expects Congress to finish up Biden's "Build Back Better Act," a package of social initiatives and climate change strategies, and send it to the president's desk "this year."

And she said the election-law and voting rights legislation now stuck in the Senate is "probably the most important legislation that we can pass."

She said of Biden: "I think he's a great unifier. I think the times have found him and that he's the right person for the right job at this time."

As for her own plans, as many expect this may be her final term in office, Pelosi would only say she "may" run for reelection.

For now, she urged Americans to look ahead, not back.

"The future is America's resilience, America's greatness," she said. "America will always prevail and that we will survive — even what we went through last year."

## 'I trusted the President': Jan. 6 rioters in their own words

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing prison time, many Jan. 6 rioters admit they were wrong to enter the U.S. Capitol and disavow political violence, despite what former President Donald Trump claims in spreading lies about the attack.

Some directly blame Trump for misleading them and warn Trump supporters not to trust him. Others remain defiant and allege they are victims of so-called cancel culture.

At least 170 rioters have pleaded guilty and more than 70 have been sentenced. One case was dismissed and two others closed after the people charged died. No one has been found not guilty.

A sampling of what they and their lawyers have said in court:

"Why did I enter the Capitol building? I don't have a good answer. I've gone over it a thousand times and I'm still not sure why I didn't recognize what was happening and take alternative action. There were some factors influencing me that day which cannot be discounted. We were told, 'everyone is going to the Capitol' and 'be peaceful.'"

"The entire experience was surreal. I trusted the President and that was a big mistake."

—Leonard Gruppo, of Clovis, New Mexico, in a letter to the judge sentencing him. Gruppo, a retired Special Forces soldier, was sentenced to three months' house arrest.

"I have realized that we, meaning Trump supporters, were lied to by those that at the time had great power, meaning the then sitting President, as well as those acting on his behalf.

"They kept spitting out the false narrative about a stolen election and how it was 'our duty' to stand up to tyranny. Little did I realize that they were the tyrannical ones desperate to hold on to power at any cost, even by creating the chaos they knew would happen with such rhetoric."

—Robert Palmer, of Largo, Florida, in a handwritten letter. Palmer threw a fire extinguisher and attacked police officers. He was given more than five years in prison.

"False claims were made on media sources, as well as by the President himself, that the election system had been corrupted and that the integrity of the election should be questioned. ... Mr. Croy believed what he read on the internet and heard from the President himself — that the election had been stolen."

—attorney Kira Anne West, writing in a court filing for Glenn Wes Lee Croy, from Colorado Springs, Colorado, who was sentenced to three months' home detention.

"I have attended several of Pres. Trump's events without incident. ... My intention that day was to support, not to cause any kind of trouble. I am deeply saddened at the events that transpired on that day and very remorseful that I will forever be associated."

—Dona Sue Bissey, of Bloomfield, Indiana, in a handwritten letter. She was given 14 days in jail.

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“The only plan I had was to go to the White House Ellipse to listen to President Trump’s speech. He said during his speech that he would be going to the capitol after he spoke and he asked us to walk there together after his speech. I left his speech early to walk back to my hotel room because I was cold. Once back in my room, I saw on the news that people where (sic) at the capitol building. ... Having travelled a long way to attend this rally, I decided to put on an extra layer of clothing and walk to the capitol.”

—Valerie Elaine Ehrke, of Arbutle, California, in a letter to the court. Ehrke was given three years’ probation. Trump never went to the Capitol that day.

“This country has a long history of the public seeking to punish those who are perceived to have done wrong in ‘their’ eyes. .... A significant percentage of our population will ‘cancel’ Mr. Hodgkins because of 15-minutes of bad judgment, casting stones in his directions, all the while never fully realizing their own indiscretions and hypocrisy.”

—attorney Patrick Leduc, writing in a court filing for Paul Allard Hodgkins, of Tampa, Florida, who breached the Senate carrying a Trump campaign flag. Hodgkins was given eight months in prison.

“While I feel badly about unlawfully entering into the Capitol on January 6th, not everything I did that day was bad. Some actions I took that day were good. I came to DC to protest the election results. I wanted my voice to be heard. My only weapon was my voice and my cell phone.

“It is my belief that America is presently in an ‘Information War.’ This so-called ‘war’ that I spoke of, using my first amendment rights, is a war that is not fought with weapons, but with words, ideas, constructs and opinions.”

—Jenna Ryan, of Frisco, Texas, in a letter to the court. Ryan received 60 days in jail after posting online that “I have blonde hair white skin a great job a great future and I’m not going to jail.” She told NBC News in an interview published this week that she was being scapegoated “like the Jews in Germany.”

“My conservative creed still remains the same. However, the system of governance, a constitutional republic, and the processes in place for deciding who sits in the Oval Office behind the Resolute Desk transcends any one candidate or party. That peaceful transfer of power and the method set out for achieving it are worthy of protection. My message to fellow conservatives, or any American dissenting with the current administration, is that we must continue our work within the confines of the system and condemn the actions on January 6th as atrocious.”

—Devlyn Thompson, of Seattle, in a handwritten letter. Thompson, who pleaded guilty to assaulting a police officer with a baton, received nearly four years in prison.

## **EXPLAINER: Why was Novak Djokovic not let into Australia?**

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP National Writer

Novak Djokovic came within one victory of sweeping all four of last year’s Grand Slam tennis tournaments and entered 2022 needing one title to set the men’s record of 21 major championships.

He might not get the chance to pursue that mark at the Australian Open when play begins in Melbourne on Jan. 17.

That’s because, even though Djokovic, a 34-year-old from Serbia, was granted a medical exemption to get around a COVID-19 vaccine requirement for all players and their support teams at the hard-court tournament, his visa for entry into Australia was revoked in the early hours of Thursday, local time, after he was detained at the airport for about eight hours.

Here’s a look at some of the issues surrounding Djokovic’s attempt to play in the Australian Open:

**WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR DJOKOVIC’S EXEMPTION? WAS ANYONE ELSE GRANTED ONE?**

The state government for Victoria, where Melbourne Park is located, mandated full vaccinations for all

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players, staff and fans at the Australian Open unless there is a genuine medical reason. Victoria state Deputy Premier James Merlino said medical exemptions would not be “a loophole for privileged tennis players” and would only be possible in “exceptional circumstances if you have an acute medical condition.” Tennis Australia said Djokovic’s request for an exemption “was granted following a rigorous review process involving two separate independent panels of medical experts.” Neither Tennis Australia nor Djokovic revealed the reason he sought an exemption. Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley said a total of 26 players or support staff applied for exemptions and a “handful” were granted. Among the acceptable grounds were acute major medical conditions, serious adverse reaction to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or evidence of a COVID-19 infection within the previous six months.

## IF HE HAD AN EXEMPTION, WHY WAS DJOKOVIC PREVENTED FROM ENTERING AUSTRALIA?

When he landed at the airport, the Australian Border Force canceled Djokovic’s visa, saying he “failed to provide appropriate evidence to meet the entry requirements.” Prime Minister Scott Morrison tweeted, “No one is above these rules,” and later said at a news conference that Djokovic’s exemption wasn’t valid but did not explain the details.

## WHAT HAS BEEN THE REACTION IN AUSTRALIA? AND IN SERBIA?

The news that Djokovic was on his way to Australia with an exemption — announced first by him via social media, then by Tennis Australia via press release — was not exactly greeted warmly in Melbourne, where most people endured months of strict lockdowns and harsh travel restrictions at the height of the pandemic. More than 90% of Victoria state residents aged 12 and over are fully vaccinated. The about-face on Djokovic’s status upon his arrival was, not surprisingly, objected to by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, who called it “harassment.”

## IS DJOKOVIC VACCINATED? HAS HE HAD COVID-19?

While Djokovic has steadfastly refused to explicitly say whether or not he received any shots to protect against the coronavirus, he would not have needed an exemption to enter Australia if he were fully vaccinated. In April 2020, he issued a statement saying: “Personally I am opposed to the vaccination against COVID-19 in order to be able to travel. But if it becomes compulsory, I will have to make a decision whether to do it, or not.” Two months later, he and his wife tested positive for the illness caused by the coronavirus after a series of exhibition matches he organized with no social distancing or masking.

## WHY IS THIS AUSTRALIAN OPEN IMPORTANT FOR DJOKOVIC? AND WHY IS HE IMPORTANT FOR THE TOURNAMENT?

Djokovic is on the precipice of history, one Grand Slam trophy away from finally overtaking rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal for the most in the history of men’s tennis. Entering the 2011 season, Federer owned 16 major titles, Nadal nine and Djokovic one. Now each has 20. Djokovic, who last year eclipsed Federer’s mark for the most career weeks at No. 1 in the men’s rankings, already owns nine Australian Open championships, the men’s record.

## MUST TENNIS PLAYERS BE VACCINATED TO PLAY IN ALL TOURNAMENTS?

No. In tennis, such mandates come from national, state or local governments, and this is the first time it’s come into play at a tournament. At the last Grand Slam event, for example, the U.S. Open in New York in August and September, players and their team members did not need to be vaccinated (but, after prompting from the mayor’s office, the U.S. Tennis Association did require that spectators show they had at least one shot).

## ARE MOST TENNIS PLAYERS VACCINATED?

At least two others, Tennys Sandgren and Pierre-Hugues Herbert, are sitting out the Australian Open because they are not vaccinated. A spokeswoman for the women’s professional tennis tour said Wednesday

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that 85% of the WTA's top 100 players are fully vaccinated; a spokesman for the men's professional tour tweeted late last month that the ATP's top 100 vaccination figure was 95%.

SO IS THIS WHOLE EPISODE OVER?

Doubtful. Djokovic is launching legal action in Australia's Federal Circuit Court against the cancellation of his visa. If he were forced to leave now, he would have time to return before the Australian Open starts if his attempt to get into Australia — and the Australian Open — eventually proved successful.

## Texas day care gets reprieve after drilling plan is rejected

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ and MARTHA IRVINE Associated Press

Parents who send their children to a day care center in Arlington, Texas, will be able to breathe easier after the city refused to let a major energy company drill more gas wells a few hundred feet from the center's playground.

The Arlington City Council voted 5-4 on Tuesday night to reject the request by Total Energies to drill additional gas wells, reversing a preliminary decision by the council in November to allow the wells to go forward.

Tuesday's vote marked a setback for Total and a surprise victory for community members who wanted to halt the drilling because they feared it could harm the children's and neighboring residents' health. The Associated Press reported on the dispute in November, with a deep look at people affected along the natural gas supply chain. A statistical analysis of the locations of Total's wells in Arlington found a higher density of them in neighborhoods that many people of color call home. Living close to fracking sites has been linked to health risks, including asthma, neurological and developmental disorders.

"I am elated! Relieved.... It was totally unexpected," said Rosalia Tejada, who lives a few blocks from the drilling site with her three children. "I hope this means that the health and welfare of our children should come above anything else because they are the future, our future workforce, our future leaders."

Total Energies said Wednesday that it was reviewing its options in the aftermath of the council vote.

"We work diligently to ensure the safety and quality of life for all our neighbors near every one of our sites," Tricia Fuller, a company spokeswoman, told the AP.

The struggle between Total, a French energy giant, and Mother's Heart Learning Center, a family-owned day care that serves predominantly Black and Latino children, has persisted for more than a year. Total pumps gas from two active wells on the property, which were drilled by a prior owner, Chesapeake, about a decade ago. When Total originally sought approval to drill new gas wells at the site in 2020, at a time when Black Lives Matter demonstrations were arising in Arlington and across the nation, its request was denied.

But oil and gas companies in Arlington are allowed to re-apply for a permit every year, so Total applied again. In November, the council gave preliminary approval to Total's plan to expand the drilling zone, which would have paved the way for several new rigs near the day care. But late Tuesday night, it reversed that decision after Councilwoman Rebecca Boxall switched her vote from "yes" to "no."

Several council members had feared a lawsuit from Total if they denied the request. A Texas law makes it nearly impossible for local governments to obstruct oil and gas development. During the November meeting, Boxall had implored people to fight the diminishment of local control but still voted yes.

On Wednesday, Boxall declined to elaborate on her change of heart.

"Other than this was a very difficult vote for me, I have no comment at this time," she said in an email to the AP.

Regardless of the reason for the reversal, some parents expressed relief.

"I'm beyond happy and grateful," said Guerda Philemond, who sends her 2-year-old daughter, Olivia Grace Charles, to Mother's Heart.

During Tuesday night's council meeting, Wanda Vincent, who owns Mother's Heart, described two incidents in December in which she said she and others at the day care were overwhelmed and sickened by fumes that she believes came from the site. Vincent's daughter Mariah, who teaches at the day care,



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said she heard a screeching sound and then smelled a strong odor and felt nauseous after going outside to investigate.

"We love and care for our children, and it would break my heart if what I felt happened to any of my children," Mariah Vincent said. "I call them my babies, and we do not want our children to get sick from this drill site."

"What we experienced is proof that there is a problem," Wanda Vincent said. "Children playing and breathing this in is a major problem."

Despite the council decision, Vincent said she is still concerned about the nearby wells. She is hoping for around-the-clock air monitoring at the site, or for it to be closed down completely, she told the AP.

"There's a lot of children, a lot of people, that are being exposed," she said.

Ranjana Bhandari, whose group Liveable Arlington led the fight against the drilling plan, had filed a lawsuit along with Vincent against the city, claiming that the council hadn't properly followed procedures during its November vote. That lawsuit, Bhandari suggested, might have helped tip the scales on the council's final decision.

While relieved for the preschool and its neighbors, Bhandari said she was already thinking about which permit to focus on next, because it's "totally never-ending here."

"I've learned to wait and see what they do next," Bhandari told the AP. "But I hope this is the end."

## Novak Djokovic denied entry to Australia, has visa canceled

By JOHN PYE AP Sports Writer

BRISBANE, Australia (AP) — Novak Djokovic's chance to play for a 10th Australian Open title was thrown into limbo Thursday when the country denied him entry and canceled his visa because he failed to meet the requirements for an exemption to COVID-19 vaccination rules.

The top-ranked Djokovic announced on social media Tuesday that he had "exemption permission" and he landed in Australia late Wednesday with a medical exemption from the Victoria state government that was expected to shield him from the strict vaccination regulations in place for this year's first major tennis tournament.

But national border authorities didn't accept the exemption, with the Australian Border Force issuing a statement saying Djokovic failed to meet entry requirements.

"The rule is very clear," Prime Minister Scott Morrison told a news conference. "You need to have a medical exemption. He didn't have a valid medical exemption. We make the call at the border, and that's where it's enforced."

Health Minister Greg Hunt said the visa cancellation followed a review of Djokovic's medical exemption by border officials who looked "at the integrity and the evidence behind it."

He said Djokovic was free to appeal the decision, "but if a visa is canceled, somebody will have to leave the country."

The president of Djokovic's native Serbia blasted the "harassment" of the star, who was detained overnight at Melbourne Tullamarine Airport. The 20-time major winner had to wait more than eight hours at the airport to find out if he would be allowed into the country. He was later moved to a secure hotel near downtown Melbourne which is controlled by immigration officials.

The Australian Broadcasting Corp. and other local media reported that action had been launched in the Federal Court against the cancellation of Djokovic's visa.

Quarantine-free access wouldn't have been an issue if Djokovic had been able to prove he was fully vaccinated for the coronavirus. Instead he applied for a medical exemption, a route that only became an option in recent months after Victoria state backed away from a full no-vaccination, no-play policy.

Questions have been raised about the approval of the exemption.

The Sydney Morning Herald published letters sent late last year from the Department of Health and Health Minister Greg Hunt to Tennis Australia which indicated that Djokovic, at that time, didn't meet the standard for quarantine-free entry.

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Responding to questions about confusion over the differing state and federal requirements, Morrison said it was up to individual travelers to have correct documentation on arrival.

The prime minister rejected the suggestion that Djokovic was being singled out, but he acknowledged that other players may be in Australia on the same type of medical exemption.

"One of the things the Border Force does is they act on intelligence to direct their attention to potential arrivals," he said. "When you get people making public statements about what they say they have, and they're going to do, they draw significant attention to themselves."

Anyone who does that, he said, "whether they're a celebrity, a politician, a tennis player . . . they can expect to be asked questions more than others before you come."

The medical exemptions, vetted by two independent panels of experts and based on information supplied anonymously by players and taken on face value, had been designed to allow Djokovic to play in the Australian Open, regardless of his vaccination status.

He has spoken out against vaccines in the past and has steadfastly refused to acknowledge whether he received any shots against the coronavirus.

His father, Srdjan Djokovic, told the B92 internet portal that his son was held at the airport "in a room which no one can enter" and guarded by two police officers.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Instagram that he spoke to Djokovic while he was being held at the airport. He said Serbian authorities were taking measures "so the harassment of the best tennis player in the world be stopped in the shortest possible time."

Djokovic's revelation on social media that he was heading to Australia to seeking a record 21st major title instantly became a hot political topic. Many Australians who have struggled to obtain sparsely available and often expensive rapid antigen tests, or who have been forced into isolation, perceived a double standard in the exemption allowance for Djokovic.

Critics questioned what grounds he could have for the exemption, and backers argued that he has a right to privacy and freedom of choice.

Tension is growing amid another surge of COVID-19. The state recorded six deaths and 21,997 new cases on Thursday, the biggest daily jump in cases in Victoria since the pandemic began.

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley on Wednesday defended the "completely legitimate application and process" and insisted there was no special treatment for Djokovic.

The Victoria government has mandated that only fully vaccinated players, staff members, fans and officials can enter Melbourne Park when the tournament begins Jan. 17.

Only 26 people connected with the tournament applied for a medical exemption and, Tiley said, only a "handful" were granted. None of those players have been publicly identified.

Among the acceptable reasons for an exemption are acute major medical conditions, serious adverse reaction to a previous dose of COVID-19 vaccine or evidence of a COVID-19 infection within the previous six months.

Djokovic tested positive for the coronavirus in June 2020 after he played in a series of exhibition matches that he organized in Serbia and Croatia without social distancing amid the pandemic.

Concerns about the visa status heightened Wednesday when Morrison — after initially saying it was a matter for the Victoria government — said if the evidence to support Djokovic's exemption application was deemed insufficient, "then he won't be treated any different to anyone else, and he'll be on the next plane home."

Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews said while the state government and tennis organizers "may permit a non-vaccinated player to compete in the Australian Open, it is the Commonwealth government that will enforce our requirements at the Australian border."

Associated Press Writer Dusan Stojanovic in Belgrade, Serbia, contributed to this report.

## 8 children, 2 mothers among dead in Philadelphia house fire

By RON TODT and CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

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PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Two sisters and several of their children were among the 12 people killed when a fire tore through a Philadelphia rowhome that apparently had no working smoke detectors, fire officials said.

Eight children lost their lives in the Wednesday morning blaze — the city's deadliest single fire in more than a century.

At least two people were hospitalized and some others managed to escape from the three-story brick duplex, which was public housing, officials said. The cause of the fire has not been determined. Officials said 26 people had been staying in the two apartments.

"I knew some of those kids — I used to see them playing on the corner," said Dannie McGuire, 34, fighting back tears as she and Martin Burgert, 35, stood in the doorway of a home around the corner.

"I can't picture how more people couldn't get out — jumping out a window," she said.

Officials did not release the names or ages of those killed in the blaze, which started before 6:30 a.m.

Family members on Facebook have identified two of the victims as sisters Rosalee McDonald, 33, and Virginia Thomas, 30. The siblings each had multiple children but it's unclear if all of them were home at the time of the fire or how many of them died. Messages were left with several people who said they knew or were related to the victims.

Fire officials initially said 13 people died, seven of them children, but those figures were updated Wednesday evening. Eight children and four adults were found dead, officials said.

None of the four smoke alarms appeared to be working, said Craig Murphy, first deputy fire commissioner. The alarms had been inspected annually, and at least two were replaced in 2020, with batteries replaced in the others at that time, Philadelphia Housing Authority officials said. It said the last inspection was in May 2021. Smoke detectors were working at that time, officials said.

The fire burned in a residential area of the Fairmount neighborhood, northwest of downtown and home to the Philadelphia Museum of Art and its famous steps from the film "Rocky."

Streets around the home remained blocked off Wednesday evening. Moments after the last firetruck pulled away, several neighbors quietly approached the foot of the block and left candles and flowers.

In the late afternoon, onlookers and neighbors had migrated to a nearby elementary school, where relatives and friends of the home's residents gathered to wait for news.

A small group of people, some wrapped in Salvation Army blankets, stared down 23rd Street, where the blaze happened, hugging one another and crying. Several friends of the children stopped by the school, hoping for information, after their texts and calls went unanswered.

Rabiya Turner said she rushed to bring clothes to cousins who escaped the blaze. People gathered at the school for warmth and someone to talk to, she said.

"It's just like floating — everybody's floating," she said before hurrying away.

Officials held a news conference Wednesday near the scene of the fire.

"It was terrible. I've been around for 35 years now and this is probably one of the worst fires I have ever been to," said Murphy, the deputy fire commissioner.

"Losing so many kids is just devastating," said Mayor Jim Kenney. "Keep these babies in your prayers."

First lady Jill Biden, who along with President Joe Biden has deep ties to the Philadelphia area, tweeted, "My heart is with the families and loved ones of the victims of the tragic fire in Philadelphia."

Crews responded around 6:40 a.m. and saw flames shooting from the second-floor front windows in an area believed to be a kitchen, Murphy said. They found "heavy smoke, heat and limited visibility on all floors," according to a statement Wednesday night from the city.

The odd configuration of the building — originally a single-family home that had been split into two apartments — made it difficult to navigate, he said. Crews brought it under control in less than an hour, he said. Firefighters were able to rescue one child from the building, but the child died.

There were 18 people staying in the upstairs apartment on the second and third floors, and eight staying in the downstairs apartment, which included the first floor and part of the second floor, Murphy said.

He noted that 26 was a large number of people to be occupying a duplex, but a spokesperson for Philadelphia's Department of Licenses and Inspections said the city does not limit the number of family

members who can stay in a single unit. The mayor said people should withhold judgment.

"You don't know the circumstances of each and every family, and maybe there were relatives and family that needed to be sheltered," Kenney said. "Obviously the tragedy happened, and we all mourn for it. But we can't make judgment on the number of people living in the house because sometimes people just need to be indoors."

"It's just heartbreaking," said Andrea Duszenczuk, 68, whose family has long owned a home in the neighborhood and who walked her dog past the home regularly. "A lot of these homes have old wiring — these are probably 125 years old. Who knows what's behind the walls."

## A year after Jan. 6, Congress more deeply divided than ever

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — A deeply divided Congress is about to show the world a very unsettled view from the U.S. Capitol: Rather than a national crisis that pulls the country together, the deadly riot on Jan. 6, 2021, only seems to have pushed lawmakers further apart.

Some members are planning to mark the anniversary of the Capitol insurrection with a moment of silence. Others will spend the day educating Americans on the workings of democracy.

And still others don't think the deadliest domestic attack on Congress in the nation's history needs to be remembered at all.

Where they stand on remembrance can be largely attributed to their political party, a jarring discord that shows the country's lawmakers remain strikingly at odds over how to unify a torn nation.

The president who had been fairly and legitimately defeated, Donald Trump, told his followers to "fight like hell" to stop the certification of Joe Biden's election and said he would march with them to the Capitol, though he did not. The result was violence and mayhem that left five people dead in the immediate aftermath, hundreds facing charges and millions of dollars in property damage.

But the lack of bipartisan resolve to assign responsibility for the siege or acknowledge the threat it posed has eroded trust among lawmakers, turned ordinary legislative disputes into potential crises and left the door open for more violence after the next disputed election.

It all sets Congress adrift toward a gravely uncertain future: Did Jan. 6 bring the end of one era or the start of a new one?

"One thing that people should consider when thinking about Jan. 6 is ... people should think about the fragility of democracy," said Joanne Freeman, a professor of history and American studies at Yale, whose book "Field of Blood" chronicles violence and bloodshed in Congress in the years before the Civil War.

Seeing few historical parallels, Freeman warned, "We're at a moment where things that people have taken for granted about the working of a democratic politics can't be taken for granted anymore."

The aftermath of Jan. 6 hangs heavy over snow-covered Capitol Hill, in the relationships that deepened between lawmakers who feared for their lives that day and those that have frayed beyond repair.

The Capitol, before the riot a symbol of the openness of American democracy, remains closed to most visitors in part because of the coronavirus pandemic public health concerns, but also because of the escalated number of violent threats against lawmakers. Representatives are required to pass through metal detectors because Democrats say they cannot trust their Republican colleagues not to bring firearms to the House during floor proceedings.

Rep. Jamaal Bowman, D-N.Y., said every time he leaves his office he scans the hallways for potential threats — a feeling he said that, as a Black American, is familiar, but one that he never expected as a member of Congress.

"The lack of freedom of movement — without fear — is not there at the Capitol. And I'm a member of Congress," Bowman said.

Bowman has asked Biden to declare Jan. 6 a National Day of Healing.

But Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, a member of Republican leadership, has no plans to memorialize the day, and he doesn't think others should, either.

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"This thing has already become way too politicized, and that would just further exacerbate it," he said. Trump's false claims of voter fraud have continued to foment division, met mostly with silence from Republicans in Congress unwilling to contradict his version of events.

Some two-thirds of House Republicans and more than a handful of GOP senators voted against certifying the election results that night, after police had battled the rioters for hours, sometimes in hand-to-hand combat. That the Republicans would carry on with their objections, after all that, stunned Democratic colleagues. Views hardened.

Sen. Josh Hawley, a Missouri Republican who went forward with efforts to block the certification after the riot, brushed off questions about it, saying he's talked about it enough.

Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas said he had no second thoughts about his vote to block certification.

"I am proud of leading the effort to defend voter integrity," Cruz said. He decried the siege as "unacceptable," a "terrorist attack." But he also said the insistence by Democrats and the media of no mass voter fraud "only inflamed the divisions we have."

An investigation by The Associated Press found fewer than 475 cases of voter fraud among 25.5 million ballots cast in the six battleground states disputed by Trump, a minuscule number in percentage terms.

Unlike past national traumas — including the 2001 terror attacks — the country has emerged from Jan. 6 without an agreed upon road map for what comes next.

Democratic Rep. Mikie Sherrill, a former Navy helicopter pilot whose New Jersey-area district recently marked the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, said people have repeatedly recalled "in these sort of bewildered tones" how united the country was that day — compared to now.

"It feels like a huge break from our history," Sherrill said.

The result is not just a breakdown in trust among colleagues, but also a loss of common national commitment to the rules and norms of democracy.

Routine disputes over ordinary issues in Congress can quickly devolve into menacing threats — as happened when several Republican lawmakers started receiving violent messages, including a death threat, after voting for an otherwise bipartisan infrastructure bill that Trump opposed.

The two Republicans on the House panel investigating the attack, Reps. Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger, face calls to be banished from their party.

Despite dozens of court cases and published reports showing no widespread voter fraud, Trump's baseless claims have become the party standard and led to what some call a "slow-motion insurrection" as his supporters work the machinery of local elections in ways that are alarming voting rights advocates.

Democrats are redoubling efforts to approve stalled election legislation that seeks to bolster ballot access and protect election officials from harassment. But to pass the bill in the evenly split Senate, they are considering dramatic rules changes to overcome a Republican filibuster.

Many of Trump's supporters have argued they are the ones fighting to save democracy. Two-thirds of Americans described the siege as very or extremely violent, according to an AP-NORC poll, but only 4 in 10 Republicans recall the attack that way.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, said the false story that the election was rigged or stolen has just continued "to be spun and spun and spun."

She said, "The danger is when people act on it."

Yet unlike the hundreds of Americans being prosecuted for their roles in Jan. 6, many members of Congress face no reprimand — and could be rewarded for their actions.

Hawley and Cruz are both considered potential 2024 presidential candidates.

GOP Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California, who rushed to Mar-a-Lago to patch things up with Trump after initially being critical of the insurrection, remains on track to become the next House speaker if Republicans — with Trump's help — win control in the November election.

And GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia has seen her profile — and fundraising — skyrocket as she shares Trump's baseless theories and decries the treatment of defendants jailed for their role in the attack.

"We're in this no man's land, where basically anything goes, and that's a very unsettling place to be in a legislative body," said Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt. "And it's really a very unsettling place for the country to be."

## US urges COVID boosters starting at age 12 to fight omicron

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

The U.S. is urging that everyone 12 and older get a COVID-19 booster as soon as they're eligible, to help fight back the hugely contagious omicron mutant that's ripping through the country.

Boosters already were encouraged for all Americans 16 and older, but Wednesday the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention endorsed an extra Pfizer shot for younger teens — those 12 to 15 — and strengthened its recommendation that 16- and 17-year-olds get it, too.

"It is critical that we protect our children and teens from COVID-19 infection and the complications of severe disease," Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the CDC's director, said in a statement Wednesday night.

"This booster dose will provide optimized protection against COVID-19 and the Omicron variant. I encourage all parents to keep their children up to date with CDC's COVID-19 vaccine recommendations," she said.

Vaccines still offer strong protection against serious illness from any type of COVID-19, including omicron — what experts say is their most important benefit. But the newest mutant can slip past a layer of the vaccines' protection to cause milder infections. Studies show a booster dose at least temporarily revs up virus-fighting antibodies to levels that offer the best chance at avoiding symptomatic infection, even from omicron.

Earlier Wednesday, the CDC's independent scientific advisers wrestled with whether a booster should be an option for younger teens, who tend not to get as sick from COVID-19 as adults, or more strongly recommended.

Giving teens a booster for a temporary jump in protection against infections is like playing whack-a-mole, cautioned CDC adviser Dr. Sarah Long of Drexel University. But she said the extra shot was worth it to help push back the omicron mutant and shield kids from the missed school and other problems that come with even a very mild case of COVID-19.

More important, if a child with a mild infection spreads it to a more vulnerable parent or grandparent who then dies, the impact "is absolutely crushing," said panelist Dr. Camille Kotton of Massachusetts General Hospital.

"Let's whack this one down," agreed Dr. Jamie Loehr of Cayuga Family Medicine in Ithaca, New York.

The vaccine made by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech is the only option for American children of any age. The CDC says about 13.5 million children ages 12 to 17 — slightly more than half of that age group — have received two Pfizer shots. Boosters were opened to the 16- and 17-year-olds last month.

Wednesday's decision means about 5 million of the younger teens who had their last shot in the spring are eligible for a booster right away. New U.S. guidelines say anyone who received two Pfizer vaccinations and is eligible for a booster can get it five months after their last shot, rather than the six months previously recommended.

But one committee member, Dr. Helen Keipp Talbot of Vanderbilt University, worried that such a strong recommendation for teen boosters would distract from getting shots into the arms of kids who have not been vaccinated at all.

The advisers saw U.S. data making clear that symptomatic COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are between seven and 11 times higher in unvaccinated adolescents than vaccinated ones.

While children do tend to suffer less serious illness from COVID-19 than adults, child hospitalizations are rising during the omicron wave -- the vast majority of them unvaccinated.

During the public comment part of Wednesday's meeting, Dr. Julie Boom of Texas Children's Hospital said a booster recommendation for younger teens "cannot come soon enough."

The chief safety question for adolescents is a rare side effect called myocarditis, a type of heart inflammation seen mostly in younger men and teen boys who get either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. The vast majority of cases are mild — far milder than the heart inflammation COVID-19 can cause — and they

seem to peak in older teens, those 16 and 17.

The FDA decided a booster dose was as safe for the younger teens as the older ones based largely on data from 6,300 12- to 15-year-olds in Israel who got a Pfizer booster five months after their second dose. Israeli officials said Wednesday that they've seen two cases of mild myocarditis in this age group after giving more boosters, 40,000.

Earlier this week, FDA vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks said the side effect occurs in about 1 in 10,000 men and boys ages 16 to 30 after their second shot. But he said a third dose appears less risky, by about a third, probably because more time has passed before the booster than between the first two shots.

## Remains found, yet most people escaped Colorado fire

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 were 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 residents have easy access to vehicles and could flee because the region has an extensive road network.

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 mph (160 kph) winds — I think it's incredible that's there's only two people missing."

The Boulder County Sheriff's Office said Wednesday that investigators looking for one of the two found partial human remains in an area near the suspected origin of the blaze. The adult's remains were found in the Marshall area south of Boulder, the office said.

Sheriff Joe Pelle previously said officials were looking for a man in the area. Sheriff's and coroner's officials continued to work the scene.

Authorities are conducting a separate search for a woman reported missing in the hard-hit community of Superior.

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.

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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 vehicles, 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."

## Ransom freed some missionary hostages in Haiti, workers say

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

An unidentified person paid a ransom that freed three missionaries kidnapped by a gang in Haiti under an agreement that was supposed to have led to the release of all 15 remaining captives early last month, workers for their Ohio-based organization have confirmed.

The person who made the payment was not affiliated with Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries, and the workers say they don't know who the individual is or how much was paid to the gang, which initially demanded \$1 million per person. Internal conflicts in the gang, they say, led it to renege on a pledge to release all the hostages, freeing just three of them instead on Dec. 5.

The accounts from former hostages and other Christian Aid Ministries staffers, in recent recorded talks to church groups and others, are the first public acknowledgement from the organization that ransom was



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paid at any point following the Oct. 16 kidnapping of 16 Americans and a Canadian affiliated with CAM. CAM officials had acknowledged at a news conference Dec. 20 that an unaffiliated party had offered to provide ransom money, but at the time they refused to say a payment had been paid.

In subsequent remarks, officials said the group had opposed paying cash ransom on principle, though it did make an offer of food boxes that the captors rejected. Eventually CAM accepted a third-party offer to negotiate with the gang.

"In the course of this whole thing, there was Christian Aid Ministries' no-ransom policy," Philip Mast, a CAM Executive Committee member, said in a recent talk at Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church in Crossville, Tennessee.

But "there was a donor who offered to take the negotiations and deal with the situation, and so CAM accepted that offer, and it was turned over to another party to deal with it," he continued. "Yes, there was ransom paid, but I don't think (the gang members) had the intention of releasing the prisoners."

His and others' accounts, which The Associated Press gained access to this week, are archived at Plain-News.org, an online news source for conservative Anabaptists such as Mennonites, Amish and Brethren, who comprise the core of CAM workers and supporters.

One of the ex-hostages, Austin Smucker, said in a recorded talk that a gang member "promised that we were all going to be going home in the next few days" after the Dec. 5 release of three hostages, but that did not happen.

Barry Grant, CAM's field director in Titanyen, Haiti, said the captors "renege" on the deal.

Smucker and Grant both said they learned gang members refused to release all the hostages to try to force the Haitian government to free their imprisoned leader.

The 400 Mawozo gang seized the 17-member group of missionaries, which included young children, as they were traveling home from a visit to a CAM-supported orphanage in Ganthier, in the Croix-des-Bouquets area.

Two hostages were released in November for medical reasons, and the last 12 suddenly turned up Dec. 16.

While CAM officials have described it as a dramatic escape, a Dec. 30 column in the Yonkers Times of New York cited an unnamed source as saying the gang deliberately left the door unguarded and allowed the 12 to walk to freedom in fulfillment of the ransom deal.

The person, whom the paper described as someone with "direct and detailed knowledge" of the case, said if the gang hadn't allowed them to leave, someone would have reported the escapees before they reached safety.

However ex-hostages have continued to say, in detailed and consistent accounts, that they escaped during a narrow window of opportunity under fear of being recaptured or shot. They said recent rains had led the guards to congregate on the more sheltered side of the house, away from where the hostages nudged open a barricaded door and sneaked out for an overnight trek for miles through mud, thorns and mountainous terrain.

They also spoke of what they characterized as a divine deliverance, saying that a guard miraculously was blinded to evidence of their tampering with the door despite looking directly at it, and that neither villagers nor dogs reacted as they through the gang-controlled territory.

A CAM spokesman declined further comment. Haitian police have declined to comment on the kidnappings, and the gang's leaders have not given interviews.

The U.S. State Department declined to comment beyond thanking "our Haitian and international partners as well as the U.S. interagency for their assistance in facilitating their safe release."

## Hannity, Fox face ethical issues over Trump text revelations

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For years, Sean Hannity has skirted ethical boundaries with his role on a television network with "news" in its name. Yet it's never been as stark as now, with the committee investigating last year's Capitol insurrection seeking his testimony.

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The Jan. 6 select committee has revealed a series of texts where Hannity privately advised former President Donald Trump before, during and after the assault, and is seeking his insight about what happened in those days.

The popular Fox News Channel prime-time host hasn't said what he will do, but he's slammed the congressional probe as a partisan witch hunt. His lawyer has raised First Amendment concerns about the request.

It's not unheard of for journalists to offer advice to politicians — history records Ben Bradlee's friendship with former President John F. Kennedy — but such actions raise questions about their independence and allegiance to the public interest, said Jane Kirtley, director of the Silha Center for the Study of Media Ethics and Law at the University of Minnesota.

Just last month, CNN fired prime-time host Chris Cuomo when it became clear his efforts to advise his brother, former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, were more extensive than previously acknowledged.

In one text revealed by the committee on Tuesday, Hannity wrote to Trump's former chief of staff, Mark Meadows, on Dec. 31, 2020, that "we can't lose the entire WH counsel's office" and said Trump should announce he was leading a nationwide effort to reform voting integrity.

In a previously-revealed text, Hannity urged Trump on Jan. 6 to tell people to leave the Capitol peacefully. On Jan. 10, Hannity texted Meadows that Trump should never mention the election again — advice Trump clearly didn't take.

Noting that Hannity had texted on Jan. 5 that he was "very worried about the next 48 hours," Rep. Bennie Thompson, the committee chair, said he wanted to know what concerned the host.

It was widely reported during the Trump administration that Hannity spoke frequently with the president. The texts to Meadows put specificity to some of the communications.

Hannity's identity as a conservative talk show host has been locked in for two decades, both as a prime-time host on Fox News Channel and on talk radio. His identity as a journalist has been murkier.

Fox refers to him as an opinion host. In 2016, Hannity told The New York Times that "I never claimed to be a journalist." A year later, he told the same newspaper that "I'm a journalist. But I'm an advocacy journalist, or an opinion journalist."

He conducts interviews on his program, sometimes with people he's been privately advising.

"He seems to consider himself a journalist when it suits his purposes and an entertainer when it doesn't," Kirtley said. "And he can't have it both ways."

Fox News executives have not immediately commented on the revelations of what Hannity has been texting Meadows or criticism about his or the network's ethics.

There have been times when Fox News has acknowledged journalism norms with regards to Hannity. He was forced to cancel a 2010 appearance in Cincinnati when it was revealed he was participating in a fundraiser for the Tea Party. When Hannity was featured in a 2016 Trump campaign video, he was told not to do it again.

In 2018, Fox called it an "unfortunate distraction" when Hannity was called on to speak at a Trump campaign rally.

"It obviously raises ethical issues for Hannity," Kirtley said. "But it also raises ethical issues for Fox. What do you purport to be? What do you aspire to be? You have to decide where your loyalties lie, whether your goal is to be a microphone for a particular political agenda or to serve the public interest."

Fox has long tried to draw distinctions between news and opinion programming. Particularly in the past few years, those lines have become less clear, as they have at a number of news organizations. Some of Fox's prominent journalists, like Chris Wallace last month, have left.

"I don't consider Fox to be a news organization," said June Cross, a documentarian and journalism professor at Columbia University. "They're in the business of what I call 'news entertainment,' that may or may not have anything to do with news."

For a traditional news organization, implicit in the text messages is another kind of embarrassment: that someone on its payroll was aware of some significant, newsworthy information — about what was being discussed in the White House before and after the Capitol riot — that was apparently kept private.

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If opinion journalists elsewhere were in a similar position, such as Maureen Dowd of The New York Times or Eugene Robinson of The Washington Post, "I would argue they did have an obligation to tell their news organizations," Cross said.

"If your loyalty is to the public," Kirtley said, "you should have revealed this."

In his letter to Hannity, Thompson said that the committee has "immense respect for the First Amendment." He said members wanted to question Hannity on a specific and narrow range of factual questions, and not about his broadcasts, reporting or opinions.

"We have no doubt that you love our country and respect our Constitution," he wrote. "Now is the time to step forward and serve the interests of your country."

## Russia-led alliance sending peacekeepers to Kazakhstan

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russia-led military alliance said Thursday that it will dispatch peacekeeping forces to Kazakhstan after the country's president asked for help in controlling protests that escalated into violence, including the seizure and setting afire of government buildings.

Protesters in Kazakhstan's largest city stormed the presidential residence and the mayor's office Wednesday and set both on fire, according to news reports, as demonstrations sparked by a rise in fuel prices escalated sharply in the Central Asian nation.

Police reportedly fired on some protesters at the residence in Almaty before fleeing. They have clashed repeatedly with demonstrators in recent days, deploying water cannons in the freezing weather, and firing tear gas and concussion grenades.

The Kazakh Interior Ministry said eight police officers and national guard members were killed in the unrest and more than 300 were injured. No figures on civilian casualties were released.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev appealed to the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a Moscow-based alliance of six former Soviet countries, for assistance. Hours later, the CSTO's council approved sending an unspecified number of peacekeepers, said Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the council's chairman.

Tokayev earlier vowed to take harsh measures to quell the unrest and declared a two-week state of emergency for the whole country, expanding one that had been announced for both the capital of Nur-Sultan and the largest city of Almaty that imposed an overnight curfew and restricted movement into and around the urban areas.

The government resigned in response over the unrest. Kazakh news sites became inaccessible late in the day, and the global watchdog organization Netblocks said the country was experiencing a pervasive internet blackout. The Russian news agency Tass reported that internet access was restored in Almaty by early Thursday.

Although the protests began over a near-doubling of prices for a type of liquefied petroleum gas that is widely used as vehicle fuel, their size and rapid spread suggested they reflect wider discontent in the country that has been under the rule of the same party since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Tokayev claimed the unrest was led by "terrorist bands" that had received help from unspecified other countries. He also said rioters had seized five airliners in an assault on Almaty's airport, but the deputy mayor later said the airport had been cleared of marauders and was working normally.

Kazakhstan, the ninth-largest country in the world, borders Russia to the north and China to the east and has extensive oil reserves that make it strategically and economically important. Despite those reserves and mineral wealth, discontent over poor living conditions is strong in some parts of the country. Many Kazakhs also chafe at the dominance of the ruling party, which holds more than 80% of the seats in parliament.

Hours after thousands of demonstrators gathered outside the presidential residence in Almaty, Tass reported that it was on fire and that protesters, some wielding firearms, were trying to break in. Police fled from the residence after shooting at demonstrators, according to the report, which was filed from

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Kazakhstan.

Many of the demonstrators who converged on the mayoral office carried clubs and shields, according to earlier reports in Kazakh media. Tass later said the building was engulfed in flames.

Protesters also broke into the Almaty office of the Russia-based Mir television and radio company and destroyed some equipment, the broadcaster said. It later reported that a crowd broke into the Almaty building of the Kazakh national broadcaster.

The protests began Sunday in Zhanaozen, a city in the west where government resentment was strong in the wake of a 2011 strike by oil workers in which police fatally shot at least 15 people. They spread across the country in the following days, and on Tuesday large demonstrations broke out in Nur-Sultan and in Almaty, the former capital.

The protests appear to have no identifiable leader or demands. Many of the demonstrators shouted "old man go," an apparent reference to Nursultan Nazarbayev, the country's first president who continued to wield enormous influence after his 2019 resignation.

In an earlier televised statement to the nation, Tokayev said that "we intend to act with maximum severity regarding law-breakers."

He also promised to make political reforms and announced that he was assuming the leadership of the national security council. The latter is potentially significant because the council had been headed by Nazarbayev, who was president from 1991 until he resigned in 2019.

Nazarbayev dominated Kazakhstan's politics and his rule was marked by a moderate cult of personality. Critics say he effectively instituted a clan system in government.

After the demonstrations spread to Nur-Sultan and Almaty, the government announced its resignation, but Tokayev said the ministers would stay in their roles until a new Cabinet is formed, making it uncertain whether the resignations will have significant impact.

At the start of the year, prices for the gas called LPG roughly doubled as the government moved away from price controls as part of efforts to move to a market economy.

## Maxwell to seek new trial after reports of juror's sex abuse

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Ghislaine Maxwell, convicted last week of conspiring to recruit and groom teenage girls to be abused by Jeffrey Epstein, plans to request a new trial after a juror in her case revealed he was a victim of sexual abuse, her defense lawyers said Wednesday.

The lawyers said in a letter to U.S. District Judge Alison J. Nathan that "based on undisputed, publicly available information, the Court can and should order a new trial without any evidentiary hearing."

The judge late Wednesday set a schedule for the defense to ask for a new trial, saying it should make the request by Jan. 19, with prosecutors replying by Feb. 2.

She asked them to address whether "an inquiry of some kind" is permitted or required. Nathan also said she will offer a court-appointed lawyer for the juror.

The judge's order came after defense lawyers said Maxwell "intends to request a new trial" with a submission that will include all known undisputed remarks of the juror, along with recorded statements and the questionnaire all jurors filled out.

"It is clear to Ms. Maxwell that based on this record alone a new trial is required," they said, urging that all trial jurors be examined to evaluate their conduct if a hearing occurs.

In interviews published Tuesday and Wednesday by The Independent and the Daily Mail, one juror described a moment during the deliberations when he told fellow jurors in Maxwell's trial that, like some of the victims of the late financier Epstein, he had been sexually abused as a child. And he said he convinced other jurors that a victim's imperfect memory of sex abuse doesn't mean it didn't happen.

"I know what happened when I was sexually abused. I remember the color of the carpet, the walls. Some of it can be replayed like a video," he said he told the jury, according to The Independent. "But I can't remember all the details, there are some things that run together."

The judge denied a request by another defense lawyer who wrote a separate letter asking her to sus-

pend all other post-trial motions in the case.

In their own letter to Nathan, even prosecutors said those reports “merit attention by the Court.” The juror was identified only by his first and middle name in the articles.

Prosecutors suggested in their letter that Nathan schedule a hearing in about one month, along with a schedule for lawyers to file briefs regarding the applicable law and the scope of the hearing.

“The Government respectfully submits that any juror investigation should be conducted exclusively under the supervision of the Court,” prosecutors wrote.

Potential jurors in Maxwell’s case were asked to fill out a questionnaire asking: “Have you or a friend or family member ever been the victim of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual assault?”

Quoting from the press reports, prosecutors said the juror asserted that he “flew through” the questionnaire and didn’t recall being asked if he’d been a victim of sex abuse.

Epstein killed himself in jail in 2019 as he awaited a sex trafficking trial.

No sentencing date has been set after the conviction of Maxwell, 60, and she is still facing trial on perjury charges.

## **Garland vows accountability for anyone responsible for 1/6**

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Merrick Garland on Wednesday vowed to hold accountable anyone who was responsible for last year’s insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, whether they were physically there or not.

In a speech to Justice Department employees, Garland said prosecutors remained “committed to holding all January 6th perpetrators, at any level, accountable under law.”

His remarks come just shy of the one-year anniversary of the attack on the Capitol and as the Justice Department has faced increased pressure from some Democrats to focus more on actions that may have inspired the thousands of pro-Trump rioters to storm the building.

“We will follow the facts wherever they lead,” Garland said in his speech. “The actions we have taken thus far will not be our last.”

The investigation into the attack on the Capitol is the largest in the Justice Department’s history. So far, more than 700 people have been arrested and 350 others are still being sought by the FBI, including 250 of whom are accused of assaulting police officers.

Garland also detailed the serious assaults on law enforcement officers, describing in detail how officers were beaten and shocked with stun guns. During January’s riot, one officer was beaten and shocked with a stun gun repeatedly until he had a heart attack; another was foaming at the mouth and screaming for help as rioters crushed him between two doors and bashed him in the head with his own weapon.

“Those involved must be held accountable, and there is no higher priority for us at the Department of Justice,” Garland said.

## **Man whose arrest led to ‘separate but equal’ is pardoned**

By JANET McCONNAUGHEY Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Louisiana’s governor on Wednesday posthumously pardoned Homer Plessy, the Black man whose arrest for refusing to leave a whites-only railroad car in 1892 led to the Supreme Court ruling that cemented “separate but equal” into U.S. law for half a century.

The state Board of Pardons last year recommended the pardon for Plessy, who boarded the rail car as a member of a small civil rights group hoping to overturn a state law segregating trains. Instead, the protest led to the 1896 ruling known as Plessy v. Ferguson, which solidified whites-only spaces in public accommodations such as transportation, hotels and schools for decades.

At a ceremony held near the spot where Plessy was arrested, Gov. John Bel Edwards said he was “beyond grateful” to help restore Plessy’s “legacy of the rightness of his cause ... undefiled by the wrongness

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of his conviction.”

Keith Plessy, whose great-great-grandfather was Plessy’s cousin, called the event “truly a blessed day for our ancestors ... and for children not yet born.”

Since the pardon board vote in November, “I’ve had the feeling that my feet are not touching the ground because my ancestors are carrying me,” he said.

Justice Henry Billings Brown wrote in the 7-1 decision: “Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts or to abolish distinctions based upon physical differences.”

Justice John Marshall Harlan was the only dissenting voice, writing 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” — an 1857 decision that said no Black person who had been enslaved or was descended from a slave could ever become a U.S. citizen.

The ceremony began with cellist Kate Dillingham — a descendant of the dissenting justice — playing “Lift Every Voice and Sing” while the audience sang along.

The Plessy v. Ferguson ruling allowing racial segregation across American life stood as the law of the land until the Supreme Court unanimously overruled it in 1954, in Brown v. the Board of Education. Both cases argued that segregation laws violated the 14th Amendment’s right to equal protection.

The Brown decision led to widespread public school desegregation and the eventual stripping away of Jim Crow laws that discriminated against Black Americans.

Plessy was a member of the Citizens Committee, a New Orleans group trying to overcome laws that rolled back post-Civil War advances in equality.

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

Eight months after the ruling in his case, Plessy pleaded guilty and was fined \$25 at a time when 25 cents would buy a pound of round steak and 10 pounds of potatoes.

Keith Plessy said donations collected by the committee paid the fine and other legal costs. But Plessy returned to obscurity, and never returned to shoemaking.

He worked alternately as a laborer, warehouse worker and clerk before becoming a collector for the Black-owned People’s Life Insurance Company, Medley wrote. 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.

Also present at the pardon ceremony were descendants of the Citizens Committee and descendants of the local judge.

The purpose of the pardon “is not to erase what happened 125 years ago but to acknowledge the wrong that was done,” said Phoebe Ferguson, the judge’s great-great-granddaughter.

Other recent efforts have acknowledged Plessy’s role in history, including a 2018 vote by the New Orleans City Council to rename a section of the street where he tried to board the train in his honor.

The five blocks of Homer Plessy Way run through the campus of the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, a public school where the courtyard ceremony was held. Cars from the city’s Public Belt Railroad served as a backdrop for the signing of the pardon, which took place blocks from where Plessy was arrested.

The governor’s office described this as the first pardon under Louisiana’s 2006 Avery Alexander Act, which allows pardons for people convicted under laws that were intended to discriminate.

Former state Sen. Edwin Murray said he originally wrote the act to automatically pardon anyone convicted of breaking a law written to encode discrimination. He said he made it optional after people arrested for civil rights protests told him they considered the arrests a badge of honor.

## Oldest US veteran of WWII, Lawrence N. Brooks, dies at 112

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Lawrence N. Brooks, the oldest World War II veteran in the U.S. — and believed to be the oldest man in the country — died on Wednesday at the age of 112.

His death was announced by the National WWII Museum and confirmed by his daughter.

Most African Americans serving in the segregated U.S. armed forces at the beginning of World War II were assigned to noncombat units and relegated to service duties, such as supply, maintenance and transportation, said Col. Pete Crean, vice president of education and access at the museum in New Orleans.

"The reason for that was outright racism — there's no other way to characterize it," Crean said.

But Brooks, born on Sept. 12, 1909, was known for his good-natured sense of humor, positivity and kindness. When asked for his secret to a long life, he often said, "serving God and being nice to people."

"I don't have no hard feelings toward nobody," he said during a 2014 oral history interview with the museum. "I just want everything to be lovely, to come out right. I want people to have fun and enjoy themselves — be happy and not sad."

On sunny days, Brooks was known for sitting on the front porch of the double shotgun house he shared with daughter Vanessa Brooks in the Central City neighborhood of New Orleans. Neighbors would call out to the local celebrity, wave and bring him soda and snacks.

Brooks was passionate about the New Orleans Saints football team and never missed a game, his daughter said. His church, St. Luke's Episcopal, was also close to his heart and he never missed a Sunday service until the coronavirus pandemic hit.

Originally from Norwood, Louisiana, near Baton Rouge, Brooks' family moved to the Mississippi Delta when he was an infant. He was one of 15 children, and lived too far from the nearest school, so his parents taught him what they could at home.

Brooks was working at a sawmill when he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1940. After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, he was assigned to the mostly Black 91st Engineer General Service Regiment stationed in Australia.

Later in the war, troop losses virtually forced the military to begin placing more African American troops into combat positions. In 1941, fewer than 4,000 African Americans were serving in the military. By 1945, that number increased to more than 1.2 million.

The 91st, where Brooks served, was an Army unit that built bridges, roads and airstrips for planes. Brooks was assigned as a caretaker to three white officers. His job was to cook, drive and take care of their clothes.

President Joe Biden on Wednesday posted a video on Twitter of him calling Brooks to wish him a happy Veterans Day last year.

"He was truly the best of America," Biden tweeted.

In the Veterans Day video, Biden thanked Brooks' daughter Vanessa for taking such good care of him.

"What people don't realize — you look at your dad and think of all of the African American men who fought — and some who died — in World War II and never got credit," he said.

Brooks did not often speak publicly about the discrimination he and other Black soldiers faced in the war, or the discrimination his family faced in the Jim Crow Deep South, his daughter said.

Crean, who got to know Brooks and his family through his work at the museum, said Brooks did talk about noticing how much better he was treated as a Black man in Australia compared with the U.S. But Brooks told Crean thinking about it would make him angry, so he tried not to. During his oral history interview, Brooks said the officers he cared for treated him well and he considered himself fortunate not to have to fight in combat.

"I got lucky. I was saying to myself, 'If I'm going to be shooting at somebody, somebody's going to be shooting at me and he might get lucky and hit,'" he said.

He often told the story about a time when he was a passenger in a C-47 aircraft delivering a load of barbed wire to the front when one of the transport plane's engines went out.

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After they dumped the cargo to conserve weight, he made his way to the cockpit. He told the pilot and co-pilot that since they were the only two with parachutes, if they had to jump for it, he was going to grab on to one of them.

"We made it, though," he said during the 2014 oral history interview, laughing. "We had a big laugh about that."

Despite not being in combat, Brooks did experience enemy fire during the war. He said the Japanese would sometimes bomb Owen Island, where he worked. He said he learned to tell the difference between the sounds of Japanese, American and German planes approaching.

"We'd be running like crazy, trying to hide," he said. They had to dig foxholes to protect themselves.

He was discharged from the Army in August 1945 as a private first class.

When he returned from service, he worked as a forklift driver until retiring in his 60s. He has five children, five stepchildren, and dozens of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He lost his wife, Leona, shortly after Hurricane Katrina.

That 2005 disaster destroyed his home. Then in his late 90s, he was evacuated from his home's roof via helicopter. His daughter described him as "resilient."

"He's been through a lot. He's real tough, and that's one thing I learned from him. If nothing else, he instilled in me, 'Do your best and whatever you can't do, it don't make no sense to worry about it,'" she told the AP. "I think that's why he has lived as long as he has."

Starting with his 105th birthday, the museum began throwing him annual birthday parties. His favorite part of the celebration was watching the Victory Belles, a trio performing the music of the 1940s. During the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the museum organized a parade in front of his home with brass bands and Krewe of Zulu warriors in full regalia.

"Even at 112, Mr. Brooks stood up for a little bit and danced," Crean said.

## Grammys postpone ceremony, citing omicron variant risks

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Grammy Awards were postponed Wednesday weeks before the planned Los Angeles ceremony over what organizers called "too many risks" from the omicron variant, signaling what could be the start of another year of pandemic upheaval for awards season.

The attempt at a back-to-normal show had been scheduled for Jan. 31st at the newly renamed Crypto.com Arena with a live audience and performances, but no new date is on the books. The Recording Academy said it made the decision to postpone the ceremony "after careful consideration and analysis with city and state officials, health and safety experts, the artist community and our many partners.

"Given the uncertainty surrounding the omicron variant, holding the show on January 31st simply contains too many risks," the academy said in a statement.

Last year, like most major awards shows in early 2021, the Grammys were postponed due to coronavirus concerns. The show was moved from late January to mid-March and held with a spare audience made up of mostly nominees and their guests in and around the Los Angeles Convention Center, next door to its usual home, the arena then known as Staples Center.

It was a big night for Beyoncé and Taylor Swift, but the live performances that set the Grammys apart from other awards shows were set separately with no significant crowds, many of them pre-taped.

"We look forward to celebrating Music's Biggest Night on a future date, which will be announced soon," the academy statement said.

Finding that date could be complicated, with two professional basketball teams and a hockey team occupying the arena. The Recording Academy made no mention of a possible venue change in its statement.

The move was announced around the same time the Sundance Film Festival canceled its in-person programming set to begin on Jan. 20 and shifted to an online format.

The multitalented Jon Batiste is the leading nominee for this year's honors, grabbing 11 nods in a variety of genres including R&B, jazz, American roots music, classical and music video.



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Justin Bieber, Doja Cat and H.E.R. are tied for the second-most nominations with eight apiece. The Grammys' move could be the beginning of another round of award-show rescheduling after another winter coronavirus surge, with the Screen Actors Guild Awards planned for February and the Academy Awards for March.

## US, Germany say Russia poses 'urgent' challenge to stability

By MATTHEW LEE and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and Germany said Wednesday that Russia's military buildup near Ukraine's border poses an "immediate and urgent challenge" to European security and that any intervention will draw severe consequences.

But the country's top diplomats left open what those consequences would be and how differences on arming Ukraine and a controversial Russian gas pipeline will be resolved.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock sought to present a unified front on Russia after a meeting in Washington.

"Both Germany and the United States see Russia's actions toward Ukraine as an immediate and urgent challenge to peace and stability in Europe," Blinken said.

"We condemn Russia's military buildup on Ukraine's borders, as well as Russia's increasingly harsh rhetoric as it continues to push the false narrative that Ukraine seeks to provoke (Russia)," he said. "That's a little bit like the fox saying it had no choice but to attack the henhouse because somehow the hens presented a threat."

Baerbock agreed. "We jointly reiterated that Russian actions and activities come with a clear price tag, and a renewed violation of Ukrainian sovereignty by Russia would have severe consequences," she said.

The Blinken-Baerbock meeting followed a telephone call last week between President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir 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 also preceded 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.

"The real question is whether Russia is serious about diplomacy, serious about de-escalation," Blinken said. "Let's see where this goes over the next weeks."

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.

But, there have been very few specifics and Blinken again declined to discuss them. "I'm not going to telegraph them publicly, but I can tell you with great confidence that a tremendous amount of work has been done already. There is very strong coordination and collaboration and very strong agreement on measures that would be taken in the event of renewed Russian aggression against Ukraine."

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

Baerbock is the top diplomat in the first German government in 16 years not headed by Angela Merkel. She has struck a tougher tone on Russia than her predecessor. But Germany has adopted a less confrontational stance toward Russia compared with many other European nations.

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.

Under Merkel, Germany persuaded the Biden administration last year not to impose sanctions on the company building the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which many believe will leave Europe beholden to Russia

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for energy and Ukraine more vulnerable.

Blinken noted that the pipeline, while completed, has yet to go into operation and said gas flows through it would be unlikely if Russia invades Ukraine.

"If Russia renews its aggression toward Ukraine, it would certainly be difficult to see gas flowing through it in the future," he said. This actually gives the EU leverage over Russia, he said, rather than the other way around.

Baerbock sidestepped the question of whether the pipeline would be operationalized in the event of a Russian intervention. However, she said the new German government would abide by an agreement signed last summer with Washington that says Russia will not be allowed to use energy as a political weapon against Europe.

"We agreed on this, together with our European partners, that we would take effective measures together with our European partners, should Russia use energy as a weapon or should it continue its aggressive acts against Ukraine," Baerbock said.

Blinken did not directly address her response but said the U.S. would press ahead with joint measures on the pipeline if necessary.

"We will continue to work in a way that I hope can be effective in dealing with energy issues and challenges, including those posed in our judgment by Nord Stream 2, and also in a way that preserves what is so vital, and that is strong trans-Atlantic solidarity. That is the most effective response and most effective tool that we have in countering Russian aggression," he said.

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.

Blinken said the U.S. has delivered weapons to Ukraine and would continue to do so in the event of a further Russian military assault on the country.

Echoing concerns by some in Germany that this could stoke military tensions with Russia, Baerbock said "we have a different position on arms supply to Ukraine," but noted that Berlin has provided a military hospital to the Ukrainian army and support in treating wounded soldiers.

## US hospitals seeing different kind of COVID surge this time

By RODRIQUE NGOWI, MICHAEL CASEY and DON THOMPSON Associated Press

Hospitals across the U.S. are feeling the wrath of the omicron variant and getting thrown into disarray that is different from earlier COVID-19 surges.

This time, they are dealing with serious staff shortages because so many health care workers are getting sick with the fast-spreading variant. People are showing up at emergency rooms in large numbers in hopes of getting tested for COVID-19, putting more strain on the system. And a surprising share of patients — two-thirds in some places — are testing positive while in the hospital for other reasons.

At the same time, hospitals say the patients aren't as sick as those who came in during the last surge. Intensive care units aren't as full, and ventilators aren't needed as much as they were before.

The pressures are nevertheless prompting hospitals to scale back non-emergency surgeries and close wards, while National Guard troops have been sent in in several states to help at medical centers and testing sites.

Nearly two years into the pandemic, frustration and exhaustion are running high among health care workers.

"This is getting very tiring, and I'm being very polite in saying that," said Dr. Robert Glasgow of University of Utah Health, which has hundreds of workers out sick or in isolation.

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About 85,000 Americans are in the hospital with COVID-19, just short of the delta-surge peak of about 94,000 in early September, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The all-time high during the pandemic was about 125,000 in January of last year.

But the hospitalization numbers do not tell the whole story. Some cases in the official count involve COVID-19 infections that weren't what put the patients in the hospital in the first place.

Dr. Fritz François, chief of hospital operations at NYU Langone Health in New York City, said about 65% of patients admitted to that system with COVID-19 recently were primarily hospitalized for something else and were incidentally found to have the virus.

At two large Seattle hospitals over the past two weeks, three-quarters of the 64 patients testing positive for the coronavirus were admitted with a primary diagnosis other than COVID-19.

Joanne Spetz, associate director of research at the Healthforce Center at the University of California, San Francisco, said the rising number of cases like that is both good and bad.

The lack of symptoms shows vaccines, boosters and natural immunity from prior infections are working, she said. The bad news is that the numbers mean the coronavirus is spreading rapidly, and some percentage of those people will wind up needing hospitalization.

This week, 36% of California hospitals reported critical staffing shortages. And 40% are expecting such shortages.

Some hospitals are reporting as much as one quarter of their staff out for virus-related reasons, said Ki-yomi Burchill, the California Hospital Association's vice president for policy and leader on pandemic matters.

In response, hospitals are turning to temporary staffing agencies or transferring patients out.

University of Utah Health plans to keep more than 50 beds open because it doesn't have enough nurses. It is also rescheduling surgeries that aren't urgent. In Florida, a hospital temporarily closed its maternity ward because of staff shortages.

In Alabama, where most of the population is unvaccinated, UAB Health in Birmingham put out an urgent request for people to go elsewhere for COVID-19 tests or minor symptoms and stay home for all but true emergencies. Treatment rooms were so crowded that some patients had to be evaluated in hallways and closets.

As of Monday, New York state had just over 10,000 people in the hospital with COVID-19, including 5,500 in New York City. That's the most in either the city or state since the disastrous spring of 2020.

New York City hospital officials, though, reported that things haven't become dire. Generally, the patients aren't as sick as they were back then. Of the patients hospitalized in New York City, around 600 were in ICU beds.

"We're not even halfway to what we were in April 2020," said Dr. David Battinelli, the physician-in-chief for Northwell Health, New York state's largest hospital system.

Similarly, in Washington state, the number of COVID-19-infected people on ventilators increased over the past two weeks, but the share of patients needing such equipment dropped.

In South Carolina, which is seeing unprecedented numbers of new cases and a sharp rise in hospitalizations, Gov. Henry McMaster took note of the seemingly less-serious variant and said: "There's no need to panic. Be calm. Be happy."

Amid the omicron-triggered surge in demand for COVID-19 testing across the U.S., New York City's Fire Department is asking people not to call for ambulance just because they are having trouble finding a test.

In Ohio, Gov. Mike DeWine announced new or expanded testing sites in nine cities to steer test-seekers away from ERs. About 300 National Guard members are being sent to help out at those centers.

In Connecticut, many ER patients are in beds in hallways, and nurses are often working double shifts because of staffing shortages, said Sherri Dayton, a nurse at the Backus Plainfield Emergency Care Center. Many emergency rooms have hours-long waiting times, she said.

"We are drowning. We are exhausted," Dayton said.

Doctors and nurses are complaining about burnout and a sense their neighbors are no longer treating the pandemic as a crisis, despite day after day of record COVID-19 cases.

"In the past, we didn't have the vaccine, so it was us all hands together, all the support. But that support

has kind of dwindled from the community, and people seem to be moving on without us," said Rachel Chamberlin, a nurse at New Hampshire's Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center.

Edward Merrens, chief clinical officer at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health, said more than 85% of the hospitalized COVID-19 patients were unvaccinated.

Several patients in the hospital's COVID-19 ICU unit were on ventilators, a breathing tube down their throats. In one room, staff members made preparations for what they feared would be the final family visit for a dying patient.

One of the unvaccinated was Fred Rutherford, a 55-year-old from Claremont, New Hampshire. His son carried him out of the house when he became sick and took him to the hospital, where he needed a breathing tube for a while and feared he might die.

If he returns home, he said, he promises to get vaccinated and tell others to do so too.

"I probably thought I was immortal, that I was tough," Rutherford said, speaking from his hospital bed behind a window, his voice weak and shaky.

But he added: "I will do anything I can to be the voice of people that don't understand you've got to get vaccinated. You've got to get it done to protect each other."

## Sundance cancels in-person film festival due to virus surge

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Just two weeks before it was to be held in Park City, Utah, the Sundance Film Festival is canceling its in-person festival and reverting to an entirely virtual edition due to the current coronavirus surge.

Festival organizers announced Wednesday that the festival will start as scheduled on Jan. 20 but will shift online. The festival had been planned as a hybrid, with screenings both in Park City and online. Last year's Sundance was also held virtually because of the pandemic.

"This was a difficult decision to make," the festival said in a statement. "As a nonprofit, our Sundance spirit is in making something work against the odds. But with case numbers forecasted to peak in our host community the week of the festival we cannot knowingly put our staff and community at risk. The undue stress to Summit County's health services and our more than 1,500 staff and volunteers would be irresponsible in this climate."

The cancellation of an in-person Sundance is a huge blow to an independent film industry that has struggled to stay afloat during the pandemic. Last year's virtual Sundance, where films like "Summer of Soul (or The Revolution Will Not Be Televised)" and "CODA" made a splash, proved that a digital festival can still foster breakout hits. But filmmakers, executives, audiences and journalists had held out hope that Sundance — the premier American film festival and a launchpad for young filmmakers — could again kick off a new movie year with packed premieres in the Utah mountains.

The Sundance Institute, which puts on the festival, held out as long as it could in making the decision. In late December, when the highly infectious omicron variant of COVID-19 was driving cases up nationwide, the festival announced that vaccination boosters would be required for attendees, audience capacity would be slimmed down and no food or drink would be allowed in theaters. That was on top of previous protocols that mandated vaccination proof, masking indoors and other requirements.

But with omicron sending case counts to record highs, organizers ultimately pulled the plug on bringing crowds back to Park City.

"We do not believe it is safe nor feasible to gather thousands of artists, audiences, employees, volunteers, and partners from around the world for an 11-day festival while overwhelmed communities are already struggling to provide essential services," said the festival.

Sundance, which runs Jan. 20-30, earlier announced a slate of 82 feature-length films selected from more than 3,700 submissions. Kim Yutani, Sundance's director of programming said at the time that "this year's program reflects the unsettling and uncertain times we've been living in for the past year and a half."

## IOC assures teams Winter Olympics in Beijing will go ahead

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

GENEVA (AP) — A day after Switzerland's team leader asked for talks about possibly postponing the Beijing Olympics because of the coronavirus pandemic, the IOC promised officials worldwide on Wednesday the Winter Games will go ahead as planned.

The Swiss Olympic committee said the IOC gave assurances about staging next month's event during a video conference call with teams.

The International Olympic Committee also promised case-by-case assessments of athletes who recover after testing positive for COVID-19 ahead of traveling to China, the Swiss team said in a statement.

"The issue of a postponement is no longer relevant to all of us," Swiss team leader Ralph Stöckli said in the statement.

The International Olympic Committee is hoping to avoid a second straight delay. The Tokyo Games, originally scheduled to be held in 2020, were postponed by one year. That decision was made four months before the scheduled opening ceremony.

However, Stöckli raised concerns about going ahead with the Beijing Olympics amid rising numbers of athletes being infected by COVID-19 when speaking Tuesday in a Swiss television interview.

"We must really discuss the possibility of a postponement of the Games," Stöckli had told French-language state broadcaster RTS. "If we don't have the best athletes there, that's going to be very, very difficult."

After listening to the IOC on Wednesday, the Swiss Olympic team said it is "happy to now have some certainty on this subject."

Another Swiss concern that was eased Wednesday related to waiting times after recovering from a COVID-19 infection before an athlete would be allowed to enter China. The IOC and Chinese organizers announced that a panel of international experts will evaluate individual cases and handle the issue in a "more flexible manner," the Swiss team said.

"It's a positive signal," Stöckli said, otherwise given the high current case rates "we would have had to assume many athletes, no longer presenting any risk of infection, would have been deprived of their dream of participating in the Olympic Games."

Still, the team noted "very demanding" conditions to compete, qualify and prepare with the opening ceremony on Feb. 4 only 30 days away.

Stöckli acknowledged Wednesday "there will probably be disappointments" for athletes who end up being unable to compete.

Beijing organizers and the IOC are creating a health safety bubble for the Olympics with stricter testing and limits on travel and movement than were enforced at last year's Tokyo Games.

The rules include a 21-day quarantine for athletes, officials and workers not fully vaccinated, daily testing even for vaccinated people and also keeping local staff within the bubble.

International fans are again being kept away though tickets to attend events in stadiums will be sold to people living in China.

## France allows some COVID-19-infected medics to keep working

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LE PECQ, France (AP) — France is allowing health care workers who are infected with the coronavirus but have few or no symptoms to keep treating patients rather than self-isolate, an extraordinary stopgap measure aimed at easing staff shortages at hospitals and other facilities caused by an unprecedented explosion in cases.

The special exemption to France's quarantine rules being rolled out to hospitals, elderly care homes, doctors' offices and other essential health services testifies to the growing strain on the French medical system by the fast-spreading omicron variant.

It is a calculated risk, with the possibility that health care workers with COVID-19 could infect colleagues and patients being weighed against what the government says is a need to keep essential services running.

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Outside the health sector, for those not covered by the special exemption, France's quarantine rules require at least five days of self-isolation for the fully vaccinated who test positive. For the unvaccinated, self-isolation is at least seven days.

Governments and industries have warned that isolation rules are creating staff shortages across a range of sectors as the omicron variant causes surges in infections in many countries. In some places, quarantines have been shortened, including France, to get workers back to their posts.

But in Europe, France appears to be alone in now also opening up the possibility for health care personnel to work while infected.

There are increasing signs that the variant causes less-severe disease. But the deluge of infections is still sending increasing numbers of people to hospitals, putting those institutions under pressure, especially when medical workers are absent, too.

French hospital authorities said the new flexibility from self-isolation would help them plug staffing holes if and when they open up.

"If the system becomes very strained and 50% of our staff are positive, the less symptomatic will come to work because the patients will still need to be cared for," said Dr. Marc Leone, head of anesthesiology at the North Hospital in the southern city of Marseille.

"But we're not in that situation yet," he said.

The new rules were detailed in a Health Ministry alert message that was addressed Sunday to hospitals, care facilities and health authorities and was seen by The Associated Press. The changes are being rolled out this week.

The ministry alert said France's deluge of virus infections poses "a major risk of disruption to the offer of care." It described the measure as "exceptional and temporary" and said it will be lifted when the system isn't so saturated with virus cases.

The exemption opens the possibility for doctors, hospital staff, and those working with the disabled and other vulnerable people to stay on the job despite testing positive, on condition that they are fully vaccinated and aren't coughing and sneezing.

In the Paris region, hospitals said the measure could be applied as a last resort if infected staff are urgently needed to help keep services open and if they volunteer to work.

"If they are tired, have a scratchy throat and prefer to stay at home, nobody will force them to come to work with COVID," said Romain Eskenazi, communications director for two hospitals in the French capital's northern suburbs.

Professor Rémi Salomon, a commission president for the Paris hospitals' authority, said that while staff absences are "a major problem," allowing infected staff to work is "extremely hard to implement."

"Health workers say to themselves, 'I'm scared of transmitting the virus to patients,'" he told broadcaster France Info.

The Health Ministry instructions say that, where possible, the infected workers shouldn't be in contact with unvaccinated patients or those at greater risk of severe illness with COVID-19.

The ministry said they also must limit as much as possible their interactions with colleagues and cannot take part in shared activities where face masks are removed, such as breaks for food and drinks.

With Europe's highest number of confirmed daily virus cases, France is in an increasingly challenging position.

France's average daily case load has more than doubled in a week, and the country reported a record 332,252 daily virus cases Tuesday as the omicron variant burdens hospital staff and threatens to disrupt health care, transportation, schools and other services.

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

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

More than 124,000 people with the virus have died in France, among the world's higher recorded death

tolls.

## Blood test may one day predict severe pregnancy complication

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — A blood test may one day be able to predict whether someone who is pregnant will develop a serious blood pressure disorder months before symptoms show up.

Preeclampsia happens in around 1 of 20 pregnancies, usually in the third trimester, and can cause organ damage, stroke and preterm birth. Pregnancy-related high blood pressure disorders are among the leading causes of maternal death worldwide.

Although the blood test is still being developed and won't be available for a while, doctors and parent advocates say it could someday save lives.

Bekah Bischoff of Louisville, who developed preeclampsia during two pregnancies and now helps others who've had the condition, said she was diagnosed late in the third trimester both times. While pregnant with her son Henry in 2012, she found out she had a very severe type called HELLP Syndrome at 36 weeks. He was delivered that day. She nearly died.

"Just think about all the chaos and the heartbreak and all the trauma, really, that went with it that could have been avoided if there had just been a simple test that could have been done," she said.

The experimental new test involves detecting and analyzing chemical messages — a form of RNA — from the mom, baby and placenta. It would allow doctors to spot indications of preeclampsia as early as 16 to 18 weeks into the pregnancy, before the appearance of symptoms such as high blood pressure, swelling and protein in the urine. Research published Wednesday in the journal *Nature* found that the test, being developed by the South San Francisco-based company Mirvie, can correctly identify 75% of women who go on to develop preeclampsia.

"It's often in the first trimester that a lot of the onset of the condition happens biologically," although symptoms show up late in pregnancy, said Maneesh Jain, Mirvie's CEO. Detecting preeclampsia after symptoms arise "leaves you very little time to address the challenge. And it's mostly crisis management."

Diagnosing preeclampsia now involves testing urine for protein, measuring blood pressure and doing other tests if it's suspected. Treatment can involve bed rest, medication, monitoring at the hospital or inducing labor near the end of a pregnancy.

Earlier studies have also suggested circulating RNA could predict preeclampsia. But authors of this study looked at a large and diverse data set, analyzing RNA in 2,539 blood samples from 1,840 women in the U.S., Europe and Africa to get a better sense of how a test could work. After the RNA messages were detected, a computer analyzed them for patterns. Although the test "robustly" predicted preeclampsia in those who got it, the study said, there were also some people it predicted would get the disorder who did not.

Dr. Thomas McElrath of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, the study's senior author, hopes the test could also be used for the early detection of other pregnancy complications, such as gestational diabetes. Scientists said Mirvie's approach reveals the underlying biology of healthy pregnancies. And by understanding what those normal RNA "profiles" look like, researchers say they can find early indications of risks for other problems when these patterns differ in particular ways. More research is needed to look closely at how the test might detect these other conditions, they said, and to further validate the preeclampsia results.

Jain said it's too early to say when the test might be available to the public, but he may have a better idea of timing toward the end of the year. McElrath is a scientific advisor to Mirvie and has a financial interest in the company, as do some other authors of the *Nature* paper. Some are inventors on patent applications covering detection or treatment of pregnancy complications. The study was paid for by Mirvie.

Dr. S. Ananth Karumanchi with Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles, who has done extensive research on preeclampsia but was not involved with the *Nature* study, said detecting the condition early would allow doctors to make simple adjustments such as giving women low-dose aspirin to delay the onset of preeclampsia.

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"There's no question there's a clear unmet medical need," Karumanchi said. Looking at the data in the paper, he said, the scientists' method "appears to be better than the current sort of methods that are being used around the world." If validated by other studies, "there would be clearly a need for something like that."

Bischoff, who now works for the Preeclampsia Foundation, agreed. When she was about five months along with her son, she said, she felt drained of energy and was gaining more weight than she thought she should be. But when she asked people on her medical team about these sorts of problems, she recalled, she was told things were normal — like many of the other women she's met who have had preeclampsia. A blood test, she said, "would take out that barrier of having to fight to be heard."

## 4 acquitted in toppling of British slave trader statue

LONDON (AP) — Four anti-racism demonstrators were cleared Wednesday of criminal damage in the toppling of a statue of a 17th-century slave trader during a Black Lives Matter protest in southwestern England.

Protesters used ropes to pull down the bronze statue of Edward Colston and dump it in Bristol's harbor on June 7, 2020. The demonstration and toppling were part of a worldwide reckoning with racism and slavery sparked by the death of a Black American man, George Floyd, at the hands of police in Minneapolis.

Loud cheers rang out from a packed public gallery at Bristol Crown Court as a jury acquitted Rhian Graham, 30, Milo Ponsford, 26, and Sage Willoughby, 22, and Jake Skuse, 33.

"This is a victory for Bristol, this is a victory for racial equality and it's a victory for anybody who wants to be on the right side of history," Willoughby said.

Graham, Ponsford and Willoughby were caught on closed-circuit television passing the ropes around the statue that were used to pull it down, while Skuse was accused of orchestrating a plan to roll it into the harbor.

All four had admitted their involvement but denied their actions were criminal, claiming the statue itself had been a hate crime against the people of Bristol.

They laughed with relief as the verdicts were read out and hugged the many supporters that were waiting outside of court when they were released.

The four had gotten high profile help with their case. Elusive street artist Banksy designed a limited edition T-shirt, pledging the funds raised to their cause.

"The truth is that the defendants should never have been prosecuted," Raj Chada, who represented Skuse, said in a statement following the verdict.

"It is shameful that Bristol City Council did not take down the statue of slaver Edward Colston that had caused such offence to people in Bristol, and equally shameful that they then supported the prosecution of these defendants," Chada added.

Colston was a 17th-century trader who made a fortune transporting enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas on Bristol-based ships. His money funded schools and charities in Bristol, 120 miles (195 kilometers) southwest of London.

Bristol authorities fished the Colston statue out of the harbor and it was later put on display in a museum in the city, along with placards from the Black Lives Matter demonstration.

## 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



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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 nearly 1,800 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.

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 in recent days after the discovery of three asymptomatic cases. As of mid-afternoon Wednesday, its total had risen to nine cases with symptoms and 23 without.

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.

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 out-

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break, 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.

## 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.

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. 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."

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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."

## 'Substitute camera' captures Ghislaine Maxwell trial drama

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 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 indel-

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ible 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

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.

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## 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."

## Virus surge tests limits of primary health care in Europe

By ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Like many people, Alberto Pérez of Madrid used a home test to discover that his headache and cold-like symptoms were caused by COVID-19.

Unable to contact his local health center, where calls went unanswered and online appointments were booked up for the following week, he turned to a hospital emergency room for confirmation. After waiting three hours to be seen, health workers there agreed with his self-diagnosis but provided no PCR test to ensure a more reliable result.

"The nurse seeing me said that, because I had not lost my sense of taste or smell, I had the omicron variant," said Pérez, 39, who works as an online game developer in the Spanish capital. "But how could she know?"

Overwhelmed by people wanting tests, requiring medication or needing certificates to excuse their absence from work, primary health care services in Spain are operating well past their limit during the current phase of the coronavirus pandemic. The omicron variant has fueled the latest surge of infections, although data shows it produces less-severe disease than earlier strains.

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Family doctors are usually the first stop for health care in Europe. They and primary care nurses are viewed as vital to helping prevent sickness, keeping the pressure off hospitals and providing continuity of care.

In a country that only a few weeks ago thought itself relatively safe because more than 80% of the target population is fully vaccinated, the mounting workload in Spain has prompted doctors and nurses to cancel regular checkups for conditions other than COVID-19 and postpone visits to vulnerable people at home.

On Tuesday, Spanish hospitals cared for nearly 13,000 COVID-19 patients -- the highest number since February. Nearly 2,000 were in ICUs, the most in almost five months.

Because Pérez's positive test had been taken at home, neither the hospital nor his local health center would spare the much-needed resources to give him a PCR test. The PCR samples can be sequenced to determine virus variants, something nobody did with Pérez or with many thousands of other positive cases from home tests in Spain.

"You are left with the feeling that there are no resources, that they have no people, and that all they do is cover up the reality by sending people home," Pérez said.

Caroline Berchet, a health economist at the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, says primary health care in Europe has been underfunded and understaffed for a long time. The pandemic has simply exposed the resulting frailties in the system.

"Investment in primary health care is not enough across Europe" and beyond, Berchet said. In the 38 OECD member countries, which include the United States, on average only 13% of health spending in 2019 was devoted to primary health care, compared with 28% on in-patient care.

"Primary health care requires better funding and investment in all (OECD) countries," she said, to ensure more staff, more training, better pay and working conditions, and a more flexible delivery of care.

Paloma Repila, a spokeswoman for SATSE, the biggest Spanish union representing nurses, said that fewer hospitalizations in the current surge mean that many people with milder symptoms are having a "brutal impact" on local health centers.

"Infection rates are so high that we are taking the pandemic out of the health care setting and we are asking people to be their own carers," she said.

"Individual responsibility is great, but asking people to self-diagnose, to deal with their own medical leave and to be left without any follow-up by professionals, is extremely worrisome."

In France, years of funding cuts to the public health system are blamed for shortages of doctors in rural areas.

There's a similar problem in Italy, where general practitioners are feeling the weight of the latest surge as well as the burdens of increased paperwork to certify people are safe to return to work and school, officials say.

Repila, the Spanish union spokeswoman, said authorities should be worried about the consequences.

"If you take the test at home, what variant of the virus do you have? We don't know," she said. "Everything, including the length of self-isolation periods, is being decided based on sequencing that isn't happening."

Even the daily figures that provide headlines and inform the response by experts and policymakers are once again out of sync, like they were at the beginning of the pandemic. That's because home test results are not being reported to overwhelmed health centers, either because phones are not being answered, because there are no appointments, or because people are simply not bothering.

Health Minister Carolina Darias last week appealed for people to report their positive tests, even when they show no symptoms or if they decide to stay at home with mild ones.

Unions and other professional groups say medical personnel cannot cope with the number of phone calls, video-assisted consultations and requests for tests, advice, treatment or issuing certificates for people who need to justify an absence from work.

Contact tracing, once viewed as a key to halting the pandemic, is something that has been long forgotten.

Primary care has been out of the media and public attention for much of the pandemic, when most of the concern was focused on the capacity to cope with the flow of patients into hospitals and intensive care units.

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But labor groups and professional associations say the problems began much earlier, the result of years of underfunding that has led to many temporary contracts for medical staff and poor health facilities.

After the 2008 European debt crisis, a conservative government in Spain imposed strict austerity measures that meant significant budget cuts for the public health system. Similar cuts occurred elsewhere in Europe.

Spain's center-left Socialist government last month unveiled a plan to improve the quality and accessibility of primary health care in the next two years. Critics said the move was overdue.

Ten days after completing his quarantine at his Madrid home, Pérez, the online game developer, kept testing positive with home kits but was still struggling to get an appointment with his general practitioner. His health center, which he finally reached by phone, told him to stay home for the New Year's holiday, and offered a phone call the following week.

"There are no doctors or nurses and then we are left to deal with this on our own," Pérez said. "How is that not linked?"

## '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

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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 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



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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 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."

## Images of chaos: AP photographers capture US Capitol riot

By JULIO CORTEZ and ANDREW HARNIK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6,

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2021, The Associated Press had nine photographers inside and outside the building.

As the chaotic day unfolded, they shot hundreds of photos that were transmitted live within minutes, giving the world a front-row seat to the shocking events.

The AP's team of photographers captured the chaos from a variety of vantage points, shooting frame after frame from inside the surging crowd, from upper floors of the Capitol looking down on the raging riot and from inside the Capitol itself as glass shattered and guns were drawn in a stunning, surreal and terrifying moment of history.

Julio Cortez, an AP photographer based in Baltimore, was in Washington, D.C., at the Trump outdoor rally in the morning and then headed to the Capitol ahead of the march, arriving just after 1 p.m. Here's his account:

"Going into the day, I had an idea of the possibilities of danger because of all the chatter I had been seeing. The night before, at Freedom Plaza, I photographed a gathering of Trump supporters who were vocally expressing how violent they were willing to go in their efforts to stop the election results from being formally counted by Congress.

Those sentiments echoed early in the morning as people started to arrive in Washington for what quickly became a massive rally. A man walked around with a blowhorn saying that after the rally near the Washington Monument, they should head over to the Capitol and stop electoral vote count that would give Joe Biden the presidency.

I did not wait for the end of the rally and decided to go with my teammate John Minchillo to the Capitol to get ahead of the crowd.

By the time we got near the Capitol, we were just behind the first group of people scuffling with cops at barricades surrounding the building. We suited up with our gas masks and helmets and headed toward the chaos. We jockeyed for position up front near the protesters.

As I raced up the steps, I stopped to take a photograph of protesters playing tug-of-war with a barricade against authorities. I framed my image of the moment with the Capitol building in the background. As I pressed the shutter, I thought about how surreal that scene was and how I really couldn't believe this was happening. Framing the building as a backdrop allowed me to show the world exactly how this moment was unfolding.

I heard a man trying to tell the crowd to form a plan to enter the building. Along with the many bad words the protesters were yelling at authorities, the officials were called traitors. One man was heard yelling, "Wait till we come back next with our big guns!"

The sights and sounds really struck me, and at the moment I thought, "This is it! The civil war is starting now."

For about 45 minutes, I photographed protesters and authorities scuffling back-and-forth. One protester put his hands on my camera lens and threatened me for looking his way. Another man, wearing fingerless gloves, dared cops to a fistfight. A man wearing a "Make America Great Again" blue beanie cap was shot with a rubber bullet that pierced his left cheek. With the pellet still in the hole, he chewed on a gauze wrap, while a bystander told him to stay calm because he was going into shock.

Meanwhile, I tried to stay calm myself. I kept an eye out on Minchillo at all times. And unfortunately, during a moment when the authorities seemed to have pushed back the crowd, the protesters turned on Minchillo and aggressively dragged him down a few steps, punched him, shoved him, threatened his life and finally threw him over a small retaining wall. At that moment, I went into protect mode and figured out a way to intervene without making things worse. Luckily, we were able to back off from the scene for safety.

But when we tried to get back to the front of the crowd, it was too late. Hundreds of people tried to enter the small doors of the building. We tried to push our way up to the front but were quickly threatened by protesters. At a different door, an officer was standing on the threshold shaking hands with protesters as they went in.

We tried really hard to get into the building, but I kept reminding myself that we had a very good team

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of photographers covering this event and had several photographers inside the building to provide images of what was going on there.

Eventually, the National Guard arrived and took control of the situation, which gave me some peace because I wasn't sure what would happen once it got dark.

The day shook me in many ways. Two weeks later, I had to go back to cover the inauguration of President Biden. I was afraid the man who yelled he'd be back with his big guns would make good on his threat. It took me more than two hours to say goodbye to my wife and kids before heading to Washington to prepare for inauguration coverage. I cried. I thought I would never come home."

Meanwhile, AP photographer Andrew Harnik was inside the Capitol, covering Congress as he has for 18 years:

"Compared to the photographers assigned to cover the rally at the White House and the march to the Capitol outside all day, I thought Jan. 6 was going to be a short, comfortable day for me. Congress started their joint session to certify the presidential election at about 1 p.m.

At about 2 p.m., I got a call from one of my editors. He said they were hearing things were intense on the east side of the Capitol and asked me to check it out but stay inside the building.

I remember being a little frustrated. I had a lot of work to do, and there's always a protest somewhere. D.C. is a place where Americans from all over the country come to have their voices heard. It's not unusual to see people gathering at the White House, on the National Mall and definitely at the Capitol building. Rising reluctantly, I grabbed my cameras and, leaving my laptop and camera bag at my desk, headed toward the center of the building on the third floor. At the first window I came across, I looked out to the plaza below and could see that this wasn't the usual gathering of protesters. A group of people, most wearing some combination of Trump hats, shirts, posters, and flags, was gathering at the main steps at the center of the east side of the building and the group was getting bigger by the minute.

From a huge round window in a men's bathroom, I took some photographs and made a short video of the scene below me. I could see the crowd was surging on a small group of Capitol Police officers trying to push their way up onto the main stairs onto a landing. These steps are always off-limits because they lead to two large doors and then the Rotunda, the large room at the center of the building under the dome. If you've ever watched a funeral ceremony for a former president or dignitary, these are the steps where the casket is carried in.

Suddenly, the crowd pushed forward as the hopelessly outnumbered police line broke apart and people poured up the stairs toward the doors. From my vantage point, I couldn't see what was happening below me, but I could hear cheering and glass breaking, followed by a huge explosion and smoke rising, which I could only guess came from a flash-bang grenade used in a vain attempt to disperse the crowd. People took up every space on the landing outside the doors.

We have state-of-the-art digital cameras that can connect directly to wireless internet. I turned this feature on and began sending digital photos in real time back to our editors in Washington who would receive them and publish them.

After a few minutes, I left the window and walked down a set of stairs nearby. I was at the main doors. Through the small windows in the doors, I could see the backs of two police officers, one in each window. It was clear they were pressed up against the doors unable to move. Beyond them, a sea of people was yelling and rowdy. I took photographs of people through the windows, and as I did, a man closest to the officers motioned for me to open the doors for him. I ignored him and looked over my shoulder to the Rotunda. During a normal day, before the pandemic, this was a bustling room: Groups of tourists from all over the country would turn their heads to look up at the fresco-painted ceiling as politicians, while staff and members of the media scurried from one side of the building to the other. Today, it was completely empty and silent. The only sound was the echoes of yelling coming through the door before me.

A police officer told me to return to my office, but when I got there, the door was locked, the lights were off, and no one answered my knocking on the door. Another officer led me and a second photographer to

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the House gallery. We got to one of the last doors that was still open, and the officer pushed us through and locked the door behind us.

The scene below us on the House floor was tense. A member of security yelled to everyone in the room to take out gas masks underneath our chairs and to put them on. They started telling members of Congress on the House floor to evacuate the building, and they were picking up any furniture or object that wasn't attached to the ground — benches, signs and tables — and stacking them at the main center door to the chamber. Suddenly, we heard glass breaking, and I realized there were people on the other side of the door trying to get in. The police, most of them dressed in a suit and tie, pulled out their handguns and pointed them at the people on the other side of the door. By now, the floor was almost completely evacuated. The members of Congress surrounding me up in the gallery were instructed to get down between the seats and keep their heads down. Some people followed directions; some didn't. One congressman shouted to no one in particular that this was the fault of the Republican members.

The officers inside with us didn't seem to know what was going on in the hallway on the other side of the locked doors. There was a range of emotion from the members of Congress huddled around me. Some were clearly angry, some stunned. Some were scared and breathing hard. Others displayed a take-charge attitude, trying to help the police or calm those who were clearly overwhelmed with the situation. I remember one person instructing colleagues to take their congressional pins off their jackets in case they encountered protesters so they wouldn't be identifiable as a member of Congress.

Others were on their phones — some texting, some talking, some recording video. My phone was buzzing nonstop in my pocket. I pulled it out and set it on the floor, and between photographs I could see dozens of texts from family and friends. They knew more about what was happening than I did. I put down my camera quickly and picked up my phone long enough to write, "I'm ok," to a group chat I keep with my extended family and my wife of just four months. I remember the concern that my wife had for me, and for a few moments, I could feel my own emotions welling up and beginning to overtake me.

The floor below was now completely evacuated. Debris and trash were strewn everywhere. Across the room I could see members of the media had been pushed to the exit as the doors out to the hall began to be unlocked, and police told everyone to get up and leave the room as fast as they could. A security guard screamed at my coworker, AP photojournalist Scott Applewhite, to get up and leave the room.

Scotty has worked all over the world as a photographer for the AP and has been a fixture on Capitol Hill for as long as just about anyone in D.C. can remember. I don't say this lightly — everyone knows him. He's one of the hardest-working, nicest people in D.C.

As the room emptied out, Scotty didn't budge, sitting all alone with his camera pointed at the standoff at the center door, shooting photos of the people trying to break in.

Hours later, I was able to get back into my office and found my laptop and bags just as I had left them. Congress still had hours of work ahead to finish the certification of the presidential election.

Sometime past midnight I took my cameras and walked around the building. The marble floor, usually pristine, was covered with a slippery powder, likely the result of spent chemical fire extinguishers and other debris. Trash, used gas masks, personal belongings and broken furniture littered the floor throughout the building. Windows were broken; some openings were boarded up. At one of the entrances, a cloth banner in bright red with the word "Treason" lay on the ground.

I found Rep. Andy Kim, a Democrat from New Jersey, cleaning up trash in the Rotunda. Heavily armed police officers working with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives began to help him. The images of him alone, quietly cleaning the building, were picked up by many publications in the days after and got a lot of attention. Artists and children around the country made art based on the photographs of Kim, and the Smithsonian Institution asked him to donate the suit he was wearing that day to the museum as part of its permanent collection.

At 3:40 a.m. Thursday, Congress formally confirmed Biden's election win, and we all packed up and went home. I came home, showered, kissed my wife and did an interview with the BBC for their morning news radio program while sitting in bed. Sometime after 5 a.m., I hung up the phone and fell back into bed.

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One of the most common questions I get about my experience is how I was feeling through all of this. Was I scared? Am I mad? Who do I blame for what happened?

It must be said, I experienced none of the violence that police officers and members of the media experienced outside the building. I was lucky that I was thrust into this protective bubble with the members of Congress. This job has always been to document what happens in front of me without bias, and I remember that going through my mind as I pushed emotion aside and documented the day.

When I think about the experience now, almost a year later, I think the thing that stays with me is the "what if" questions. Things could have easily gone a different way and more people could have been hurt.

For those of us who were there that day, and many watching across the country and the world, we have all been changed forever by the experience.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Jan. 6, the sixth day of 2022. There are 359 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 6, 2021, supporters of President Donald Trump, fueled by his false claims of a stolen election, assaulted police and smashed their way into the Capitol to interrupt the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's victory, forcing lawmakers into hiding; most of the rioters had come from a nearby rally where Trump urged them to "fight like hell." A Trump supporter, Ashli Babbitt, was shot and killed by a police officer as she tried to breach a barricaded doorway inside the Capitol. Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, injured while confronting the rioters, suffered a stroke the next day and died from natural causes, the Washington, D.C., medical examiner's office said. (In the weeks that followed, four of the officers who responded to the riot took their own lives.) Congress reconvened hours later to finish certifying the election result.

On this date:

In 1412, tradition holds that Joan of Arc was born this day in Domremy.

In 1838, Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail gave the first successful public demonstration of their telegraph in Morristown, New Jersey.

In 1912, New Mexico became the 47th state.

In 1919, the 26th president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, died in Oyster Bay, New York, at age 60.

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his State of the Union address, outlined a goal of "Four Freedoms": Freedom of speech and expression; the freedom of people to worship God in their own way; freedom from want; freedom from fear.

In 1974, year-round daylight saving time began in the United States on a trial basis as a fuel-saving measure in response to the OPEC oil embargo.

In 1982, truck driver William G. Bonin was convicted in Los Angeles of 10 of the "Freeway Killer" slayings of young men and boys. (Bonin was later convicted of four other killings; he was executed in 1996.)

In 1994, figure skater Nancy Kerrigan was clubbed on the leg by an assailant at Detroit's Cobo Arena; four men, including the ex-husband of Kerrigan's rival, Tonya Harding, went to prison for their roles in the attack. (Harding pleaded guilty to conspiracy to hinder prosecution, but denied any advance knowledge about the assault.)

In 2001, with Vice President Al Gore presiding in his capacity as president of the Senate, Congress formally certified George W. Bush the winner of the bitterly contested 2000 presidential election.

In 2005, former Ku Klux Klan leader Edgar Ray Killen was arrested on murder charges 41 years after three civil rights workers were slain in Mississippi. (Killen was later convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 60 years in prison; he died in prison in 2018.)

In 2006, velvet-voiced singer Lou Rawls died in Los Angeles at age 72.

In 2020, throngs of Iranians attended the funeral of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who'd been killed in a U.S.

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airstrike in Iraq; Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei wept while praying over the casket. Former White House national security adviser John Bolton said he was "prepared to testify" if subpoenaed by the Senate in its impeachment trial of President Donald Trump. (The Senate voted against calling witnesses.)

Ten years ago: A bomb exploded at a busy Damascus intersection, killing 25 people and wounding dozens in the second major attack in the Syrian capital in as many weeks. The Obama administration expanded the FBI's more than eight-decades-old definition of rape to count men as victims for the first time and to drop the requirement that victims physically resisted their attackers.

Five years ago: Congress certified Donald Trump's presidential victory over the objections of a handful of House Democrats, with Vice President Joe Biden pronouncing, "It is over." An arriving airline passenger pulled a gun from his luggage and opened fire in the baggage claim area at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport in Florida, killing five people and wounding eight. (An Alaska man, Esteban Santiago, admitted to the shooting and was sentenced to life in prison.) Mother-and-daughter actors Debbie Reynolds and Carrie Fisher were laid to rest together at Forest Lawn Memorial Park - Hollywood Hills.

One year ago: As final votes were counted in the preceding day's Senate runoffs in Georgia, Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock emerged as the winners over Republicans David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, giving Democrats control of the Senate.

Today's Birthdays: Country musician Joey Miskulin (Riders in the Sky) is 73. Former FBI director Louis Freeh is 72. Rock singer-musician Kim Wilson (The Fabulous Thunderbirds) is 71. Singer Jett Williams is 69. Actor-comedian Rowan Atkinson is 67. World Golf Hall of Famer Nancy Lopez is 65. Actor Scott Bryce is 64. R&B singer Kathy Sledge is 63. TV chef Nigella Lawson is 62. R&B singer Eric Williams (BLACKstreet) is 62. Actor Norman Reedus is 53. Food writer and blogger Ree Drummond is 53. TV personality Julie Chen is 52. Actor Danny Pintauro (TV: "Who's the Boss?") is 46. Actor Cristela Alonzo is 43. Actor Rinko Kikuchi (RINK'-oh kih-KOO'-chee) is 41. Actor Eddie Redmayne is 40. Retired NBA All-Star Gilbert Arenas is 40. Actor-comedian Kate McKinnon is 38. Actor Diona Reasonover is 38. Rock singer Alex Turner (Arctic Monkeys) is 36.