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UpComing Events

Sunday, Feb. 6

Show Choir Preview, 3 p.m., GHS Gym

Monday, Feb. 7

Junior High Boys Basketball at Aberdeen Christian. 7th grade at 6 p.m. followed by 8th grade.

Girls Basketball hosts Aberdeen Roncalli. C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and then Varsity. School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 8

Girls Basketball hosting Tiospa Zina with JV game at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity.

Boys Basketball vs. North Central at Edmunds Central with JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by Varsity.



Wednesday, Feb. 9

LifeTouch picture re-take day at Elementary School

Thursday, Feb. 10

Basketball Double Header at Milbank. 4 p.m.: Girls JV at elementary gym, Boys C game at Armory; 5 p.m.: Girls C game at elementary gym, Boys JV at Armory. 6:15 p.m.: Girls Varsity at HS Gym, 7:45 p.m. Boys Varsity at HS Gym.

Friday, Feb. 11

Rushmore Challenge Debate at Harrisburg

Saturday, Feb. 12

9 a.m.: State Junior High Wrestling at Pierre Basketball Doubleheader with Mobridge-Pollock in Groton. Girls JV at 1 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity

Rushmore Challenge Debate at Harrisburg

Monday, Feb. 14

GBB at Flandreau Indian - JV at 5 p.m. followed by varsity

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

OPEN: **Recycling Trailer in Groton**
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, February 6, 2022

Communion in Worship (white)

Conde Worship 9:00 AM

Sunday School 10:00 AM

Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

Community Coffee Hour 9:30 AM

Confirmation Snack Time 3:30 PM

Confirmation 4:00 PM

Sunday, February 13, 2022

Conde Worship 9:00 AM

Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Sunday School - Singing during Worship 11:10 AM

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, Feb. 6

9am Worship/Communion

10:15am Sunday School & Grace Alone BookStudy

Monday, Feb. 7

6:30am Bible Study

7:00pm Council

Wednesday, Feb. 9

6:00pm Confirmation

6:30pm League

Thursday, Feb. 3

2:00pm Nigeria Circle

Sunday, Feb. 13

9am Worship / milestones, 1st & 4th gr.

10:15am Sunday School & Grace Alone Study

Super bowl of Caring

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton

Sunday 8:30am Groton & 11:00am Turton

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton

Sat 10am Newman Center

Confessions:

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

Sun. 10:30-10:45am (T)

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton

St. John's Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, Feb. 6

8 a.m.: Bible Study

9 a.m.: St. John's Worship with Communion

10 a.m.: Sunday School

11 a.m.: Zion Lutheran Worship with Communion

Wednesday, Feb. 9

3:45 p.m.: Confirmation

Sunday, Feb. 13

8 a.m.: Bible Study

9 a.m.: St. John's Worship

10 a.m.: Sunday School

11 a.m.: Zion Lutheran Worship

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

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Six place at Big Dakota Wrestling Tourney, team places fifth

Groton Area placed fifth as a team at the Big Dakota Conference wrestling tournament held Saturday in Ft. Pierre. Winner placed first with 245.5 points followed by Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes with 220 points, Chamberlain was third with 166, Miller/Highmore-Harrold with 149 and Groton Area was fifth with 107 points.

Cole Bisbee and Lane Krueger both placed second place, Christian Ehresmann and Pierce Kettering both placed third and Brevin Flihs and Korbin Kucker both placed fourth.

106-A: Walker Zoellner (13-14) placed 6th and scored 7.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 13-14 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 13-14 won by decision over Tee Birkland (Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Dupree) 19-9 (Dec 8-5)

Semifinal - Gavin Braun (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 36-5 won by fall over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 13-14 (Fall 1:06)

Cons. Semi - Brody Gossen (Marion/Freeman/Freeman Academy/Canistota/Menno) 12-20 won by decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 13-14 (Dec 4-0)

5th Place Match - Tee Birkland (Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Dupree) 19-9 won by major decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 13-14 (MD 9-0)

120: Isaiah Scepaniak (3-19)

Champ. Round 1 - Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 3-19 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Kasen Konstanz (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 30-3 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 3-19 (Fall 1:07)

Cons. Round 2 - Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 3-19 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Karson Keiser (Winner) 36-13 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 3-19 (Fall 0:54)

132: Pierce Kettering (31-15) placed 3rd and scored 16.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Pierce Kettering (Groton Area) 31-15 won by decision over Quinn Long (Chamberlain) 12-16 (Dec 6-4)

Quarterfinal - Pierce Kettering (Groton Area) 31-15 won by fall over Carmine Crow Ghost (McLaughlin) 2-8 (Fall 0:41)

Semifinal - Konner Osborn (Winner) 22-17 won in tie breaker - 1 over Pierce Kettering (Groton Area) 31-15 (TB-1 6-5)

Cons. Semi - Pierce Kettering (Groton Area) 31-15 won by decision over Mark Sandquist (Moberly-Pollock) 20-17 (Dec 1-0)

3rd Place Match - Pierce Kettering (Groton Area) 31-15 won by decision over Colby Rittel (Miller/Highmore-Harrold) 13-15 (Dec 3-0)

138: Brevin Flihs (23-15) placed 4th and scored 17.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 23-15 won by fall over Aebrie Waugh (Todd County) 4-14 (Fall 0:59)

Quarterfinal - Bryce Reuer (Chamberlain) 20-15 won by decision over Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 23-15 (Dec 8-2)

Cons. Round 2 - Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 23-15 won in tie breaker - 1 over Declan Tveit (Chamberlain) 2-8 (TB-1 4-2)

Cons. Round 3 - Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 23-15 won by major decision over August Bartels (Winner) 15-17 (MD 18-4)

Cons. Semi - Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 23-15 won by fall over Zander Bowman (Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Dupree) 11-5 (Fall 1:27)

3rd Place Match - Bryce Reuer (Chamberlain) 20-15 won by major decision over Brevin Flihs (Groton Area) 23-15 (MD 11-3)

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138: Cameron Johnson (0-9)

Champ. Round 1 - Zander Bowman (Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Dupree) 11-5 won by fall over Cameron Johnson (Groton Area) 0-9 (Fall 0:28)

Cons. Round 1 - Cameron Johnson (Groton Area) 0-9 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - August Bartels (Winner) 15-17 won by fall over Cameron Johnson (Groton Area) 0-9 (Fall 1:47)

138: Nick Morris (1-9)

Champ. Round 1 - August Bartels (Winner) 15-17 won by fall over Nick Morris (Groton Area) 1-9 (Fall 1:55)

Cons. Round 1 - Nick Morris (Groton Area) 1-9 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Cody Provost (Lakota Tech) 2-3 won by fall over Nick Morris (Groton Area) 1-9 (Fall 2:16)

145: Christian Ehresmann (31-7) placed 3rd and scored 20.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 31-7 won by fall over Kellen Cihak-Brozik (Winner) 6-19 (Fall 2:42)

Quarterfinal - Colton Brady (Stanley County) 32-22 won by decision over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 31-7 (Dec 3-2)

Cons. Round 2 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 31-7 won by fall over Garret Westendorf (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 3-17 (Fall 2:04)

Cons. Round 3 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 31-7 won by major decision over Navarre Head (Harding County) 21-16 (MD 15-2)

Cons. Semi - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 31-7 won by major decision over Thomas Powell (Chamberlain) 21-18 (MD 11-2)

3rd Place Match - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 31-7 won by decision over Colton Brady (Stanley County) 32-22 (Dec 4-1)

152: Korbin Kucker (25-18) placed 4th and scored 15.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 25-18 won by forfeit over FORFEIT FORFEIT (Stanley County) 2-9 (For.)

Quarterfinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 25-18 won by decision over Owen Eitemiller (Marion/Freeman/Freeman Academy/Canistota/Menno) 17-16 (Dec 4-3)

Semifinal - Grayson Hanson (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 31-6 won by fall over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 25-18 (Fall 0:21)

Cons. Semi - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 25-18 won by major decision over Wyatt Head (Harding County) 17-18 (MD 11-3)

3rd Place Match - Ryder Rowland (Miller/Highmore-Harrold) 28-15 won by fall over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 25-18 (Fall 1:19)

160: Cole Bisbee (28-10) placed 2nd and scored 16.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 28-10 received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 28-10 won by decision over Ty Allen (Bennett County) 26-14 (Dec 3-1)

1st Place Match - Riley Orel (Winner) 35-0 won by fall over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 28-10 (Fall 1:28)

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285: Lane Krueger (21-8) placed 2nd and scored 16.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 21-8 received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 21-8 won in the ultimate tie breaker over Kameron Styles (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 27-12 (UTB 2-2)

1st Place Match - Canyon Burkard (Chamberlain) 18-4 won by fall over Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 21-8 (Fall 3:13)

Girls-106: Liza Krueger (3-4) placed 4th.

Round 1 - Emma McConnel (Marion/Freeman/Freeman Academy/Canistota/Menno) 5-6 won by fall over Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 3-4 (Fall 0:52)

Round 2 - Akane Metcalfe (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 10-2 won by fall over Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 3-4 (Fall 1:01)

Round 3 - Kendall Peterson (Chamberlain) 3-12 won by fall over Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 3-4 (Fall 4:26)

Cacek, Huss, and Turnquist Steam Roll No. 15 Mavericks

Mankato, Minn. – The No. 21 Northern State University wrestling team tallied their second straight win over a ranked opponent on Saturday evening, defeating No. 17 Minnesota State. The Mavericks forfeited two weights; however three extra point victories sealed the dual win for the Wolves.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 30, MSU 13

Records: NSU 9-2 (5-2 NSIC), MSU 2-3 (2-3 NSIC)

HOW IT HAPPENED

• Landen Fischer and Kolton Roth tallied the forfeit wins for the Wolves, notching a combined 12 team points

• Christopher Williams recorded his first collegiate victory and first wrestled win for the Wolves on the evening, defeating Brock Luthens in a 7-6 decision

• No. 8 Wyatt Turnquist added his 14th victory of the season, dominating Kayden Kraye in a 17-0 technical fall

• Minnesota State rattled off three straight victories through the middle weights, cutting the Northern State lead to 11

• Treyton Cacek recorded the team's second bonus point win of the evening, defeating Mike Smith in a 13-0 major decision at 184 pounds

• Cole Huss extended the Wolves lead to 30-9, pinning Dylan Butts at 4:58 in the 197 pound match

FULL RESULTS

125 Landen Fischer (NSU) over Unknown (For.)

133 Chris Williams (NSU) decision over Brock Luthens (MSU), 7-6

141 Kolton Roth (NSU) over Unknown (For.)

149 #8 Wyatt Turnquist (NSU) tech. fall over Kaydn Kraye (MSU), 17-0

157 Cooper Siebrecht (MSU) decision over Izaak Hunsley (NSU), 4-0

165 Brody Nielsen (MSU) decision over Chase Bloomquist (NSU), 6-4

174 #8 Trevor Turriff (MSU) decision over Kelby Hawkins (NSU), 6-3

184 Treyton Cacek (NSU) major decision over Mike Smith (MSU), 13-0

197 Cole Huss (NSU) won by fall over Dylan Butts (MSU), 4:58

285 #10 Darrell Mason (MSU) major decision over Josh Trumble (NSU), 16-6

UP NEXT

Northern State closes out the NSIC slate next Friday and Sunday. The Wolves will face No. 2 St. Cloud State at 7 p.m. on Friday in St. Cloud and No. 20 UMary at 2 p.m. on Sunday from Wachs Arena.

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No. 7 Bulldogs Best Northern State on the Road

Duluth, Minn. – The Northern State University men's basketball team fell to No. 7 Minnesota Duluth on Saturday evening. The Bulldogs sealed their North Division Championship on Friday evening and earned their 21st win of the season versus the Wolves.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 75, UMD 88

Records: NSU 15-11 (9-9 NSIC), UMD 21-2 (14-2 NSIC)

Attendance: 700

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern battled through the contest, chipping away at the Duluth lead, however the Wolves were unable to tie things or gain the lead themselves
- NSU tallied 32 points in the first and out-scored UMD 43-42 in the second
- The Wolves shot 43.9% from the floor, 31.8% from the 3-point line, and 81.8% from the foul line in the game
- They recorded 30 rebounds, 11 assists, seven made 3-pointers, four steals, and two blocks
- In addition, Northern recorded 34 points in the paint, a game high 17 second chance points, 13 points off the bench, and ten points off turnovers
- Four Wolves scored in double figures, however Northern was unable to keep the Bulldog offense at bay which shot 57.9% from the floor and 47.4% from beyond the arc in the game

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Augustin Reede: 16 points, 57.1 FG%, 3 rebounds
- Sam Masten: 16 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists
- Cole Bergan: 12 points, 4 assists, 2 rebounds
- Jordan Belka: 10 points, 50.0 FG%, 8 rebounds, 2 assists, 2 steals
- Jacksen Moni: 8 points, 7 rebounds, 1 assist

UP NEXT

Northern State returns to the confines of Wachs Arena next Friday and Saturday versus Bemidji State and Minnesota Crookston. Tip-off times are set for 7:30 p.m. on Friday and 6 p.m. on Saturday.

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Third Quarter Surge Not Enough for Northern State to Overcome Minnesota Duluth

Duluth, Minn. – The Northern State women's basketball team fell to NSIC co-leader Minnesota Duluth 66-46 on Saturday afternoon. A strong third quarter performance for the Wolves erased a 21 point halftime deficit and cut the Bulldog lead to eight points, however Duluth knocked down a pair of free throws and back-to-back 3-pointers to push the game back out of reach in the final period of play.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 46, UMD 66

Records: NSU 10-12 (7-10 NSIC), UMD 18-4 (16-2 NSIC)

Attendance: N/A

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Minnesota Duluth started the game with a quick 6-0 run two and a half minutes into the game, with four of the six points scored by Sarah Grow; UMD extended the lead to 13-3 going into a timeout with 3:46 remaining in the period

- Kailee Oliverson and Rianna Fillipi was the spark on the offensive side of the ball in the first half, combining to score 12 of the Wolves' 16 points

- After trailing by 21 at halftime, Northern State used a 14-5 scoring run to cut the lead back to 12 points at 42-30; Laurie Rogers scored eight of the teams 14 points during the run and shot 4-5 from the field

- The Wolves out-scored the Bulldogs 20-9 in the third quarter to cut the deficit down to ten points, NSU shot the ball 53.3 percent from the field compared to 18.2 percent by UMD in the quarter

- Northern's momentum continued into the fourth quarter as a fast break layup by Fillipi cut the lead to single digits at 46-38

- After cutting the lead down to eight, Duluth responded with a 16-3 run of their own to push the lead back to 21 points

- With one blocked shot in the first half and two in the second half, Rogers recorded her 13th game of the season with three or more blocks and moved into fourth place on the single season blocks lists with 68 blocks on the season

- Northern State shot the ball 36.0 percent from the field, 37.5 percent from 3-point range, and 63.6 percent from the free throw line

- The Wolves won the rebounding battle 31-27, with an 8-5 advantage in offensive rebounds

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Kailee Oliverson: 17 points, 6 rebounds

- Laurie Rogers: 10 points, 7 rebounds, 3 blocks

- Rianna Fillipi: 9 points, 5 rebounds, 2 assists, 3 steals

UP NEXT

Northern State returns to Aberdeen next weekend following four consecutive road games, welcoming Bemidji State and Minnesota Crookston to Wachs Arena. The Wolves and Beavers are set for a 5:30 p.m. tip-off on Friday, and the Wolves and Golden Eagles are scheduled for a 4 p.m. start on Saturday afternoon.

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#512 in a series - Feb. 2

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

At midday today, our seven-day new-case average was down to 424,077. The general trend is continuing: While we still have ridiculously high numbers of cases, numbers that would have been hair-on-fire emergencies at any previous point in this pandemic up to and including as recently as a couple of months ago, we are now seeing definite declines even in the later-surgings states. I have only nine out of the 56 states and territories I'm tracking that show any amount of increase over the past 14 days, and a couple of those increases are very small. It does appear that this sub-variant (or whatever we're calling it), BA.2, is prolonging the peak in places just cresting one and prolonging the tail for those past a peak; so this could all take longer than anticipated, as so many things seem to do these days. That said, here we are again, having passed both 74 and 75 million since we last talked, putting us at 75,285,898.

January 9 – 60 million – 2 days
January 10 – 61 million – 1 day
January 11 – 62 million – 1 day
January 12 – 63 million – 1 day
January 13 – 64 million – 1 day
January 14 – 65 million – 1 day
January 17 – 66 million – 3 days
January 18 – 67 million – 1 day
January 19 – 68 million – 1 day
January 20 – 69 million – 1 day
January 21 – 70 million – 1 day
January 24 – 71 million – 3 days
January 25 – 72 million – 1 day
January 27 – 73 million – 2 days
January 29 – 74 million – 1 day
February 1 – 75 million – 3 days

Despite declining new-case numbers, health care is still under significant pressure in much of the country. While the numbers are decreasing and today at just 138,674, hospitalizations are still higher than they've been in any previous wave of the pandemic. And many institutions are hanging on by a fingernail, emergency rooms packed with people awaiting transfer to larger hospitals or beds in the on a floor. Not all of these people have Covid-19, but Covid-19 is certainly responsible for their inability to find a hospital bed. The New York Times reports that some institutions are finding it takes as many as 200 phone calls to land a bed for one patient, and that bed might be 400 miles from home. And it increasingly appears that Covid-19 is worsening preexisting conditions of many kinds from kidney issues to heart problems even when the viral infection itself is not causing the severe respiratory illness we're accustomed to seeing in Covid-19 patients. Doctors at St. Luke's Hospital in Allentown, Pennsylvania, told the Times that almost two-thirds of their Covid-19-positive patients have Covid-19 as their primary diagnosis, but another 15 to 20 percent have other diagnoses that are "clearly related to a virus infection." Dr. Jeffrey Jahre, infectious disease specialist and senior vice president for medical and academic affairs at St. Luke's University Health Network of 11 hospitals, said, "It isn't an incidental diagnosis." So even though they are not having what we've come to expect as the conventional symptoms of Covid-19, what's wrong with them looks very much like it's been seriously enough exacerbated by this virus to land them in the hospital. These are among those said to be admitted "with Covid" rather than "for Covid."

In addition to crowding, hospitals have been having supply issues as well—just the basic everyday items like tubes for blood samples, IV bags of saline, and such. And something we've mentioned before is the need for places to discharge these patients. That problem continues: Nursing homes have fewer beds available now, primarily due to staffing issues of their own, and so sometimes patients stay in hospitals who should be discharged because they're not well enough to go home and there's nowhere else to send them.

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Our death rate, unlike cases and hospitalizations, continues to rise and will for some time yet, putting us today at 889,522 with a seven-day average of 2636 and a raw count yesterday of 3684, within shouting distance of last winter's record numbers. The US has a higher overall per capita death rate for this pandemic than any other developed nation, having recently passed the last contenders for the honor. We did that pretty much on the strength of our death rate during this Omicron wave which has us more than 60 percent higher than anyone else: Germany has just under 20 per 100,000 residents whereas we're north of 30 at the moment. According to the New York Times, "The only large European countries to exceed America's Covid death rates this winter have been Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Greece and the Czech Republic, poorer nations where the best Covid treatments are relatively scarce." The reasons for our dismal showing are pretty clear: We have all these vaccines—first out of the gate and threw more money at them—but fewer vaccinated than any other large, wealthy country; we're doing even worse than that for boosters. We are ignoring public health precautions. We are, as Bari Weiss famously said to Bill Maher last week, "done with Covid." So I guess we'll just keep on digging those graves.

The Moderna mRNA vaccine received its biologics license from the FDA on Monday; it received emergency use authorization (EUA) in December 2020. This is not a surprise; it happened pretty much on schedule since the application was made. The vaccine name will be Spikevax; you will recall Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine, the only other one with a biologics license in the US is Comirnaty. It is hoped this "full approval" will encourage the hesitant to step up, but I kind of doubt it—didn't work for Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine. Positions at this point have hardened. The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices is scheduled to meet on Friday to make their recommendations. Again, no surprises are likely.

Yesterday, Pfizer and BioNTech announced they are applying for an extension of the EUA for their vaccine to those aged 6 months to 5 years; they have begun submitting their data from clinical trials in this age group. The original plan was to use lab testing to establish via antibody testing that the vaccine was eliciting an appropriate immune response as a two-dose series. Then the vaccine did not elicit as good a response in the 2- to 4-year-olds as it had in adolescents and young adults, and so they decided to test it as a three-dose series and to hold off on data submission until third dose data were available. That was the plan until some things changed. The alarming surge in Omicron cases in this age group caused enough cases among trial participants to enable collecting real-world evidence for vaccine effectiveness, and this surge also impelled regulators to request the companies submit their data after they were available for the second dose so that, if it is authorized, children could begin to be vaccinated sooner. Since the timing of the doses is second dose three weeks after the first and third dose eight weeks later, the thinking is that third-dose data can follow with an application for EUA extension for the third dose well before children need it. The FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet on February 15 to make a recommendation to the FDA's commissioner. There's talk the vaccine could be available for use by these youngest recipients by the end of the month.

Novavax announced on Monday that they've submitted their application to the FDA for an EUA for their vaccine. We talked just a month ago about the fact that this request was coming, and now it has. This protein subunit vaccine, built on a familiar platform and storable at refrigerator temperatures, has already been authorized for use in Indonesia, Korea, Australia, India, the Philippines, and the European Union and has applications in process in the UK, Canada, and New Zealand. I do not have any sense of a timeline on the process for this one. If you want to read more about this vaccine, check out my Update #501 posted January 1 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/5489910947691933>.

We have another CDC study released on Tuesday that addresses vaccine effectiveness (VE) against severe disease, hospitalization, and death caused by the Delta and Omicron variants of SARS-CoV-2 between November 7, 2021, and January 8, 2022, in 422,966 cases in Los Angeles County. Findings confirmed what previous studies have been telling us for some time now.

For the two weeks ending Delta's predominance in the US, case incidence was 12.3 times higher among the unvaccinated than among fully vaccinated people with a booster, and hospitalization rates were 83.0 times higher. In the week ending January 8, 2022, when Omicron was predominant, case rates among

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unvaccinated individuals were 3.6 times higher and hospitalization rates were 23.0 times higher than among vaccinated and boosted individuals. Additionally, admission to an ICU, invasive mechanical ventilation (IMV), and death were more likely among the unvaccinated. In every case, persons who were considered fully-vaccinated, but not boosted fared worse than their vaccinated-and-boosted counterparts, but better than the unvaccinated. Overall, unvaccinated people were most likely to be hospitalized (2.8%), be admitted to ICU (0.5%), require IMV (0.2%), or die (0.3%). Fully-vaccinated persons without a booster came in at 1.0% for hospitalization, 0.12% for ICU admission, 0.05% for IMV, and 0.08% for death, whereas vaccinated-and-boosted persons were at 0.7% for hospitalization, 0.08% for ICU admission, 0.03% for IMV, and 0.07% for death.

During Delta, incidence and hospitalization rates were 443.9 per 100,000 and 45.9 per 100,000, respectively among unvaccinated people; 115.9 and 3.6 per 100,000 in vaccinated, but not boosted people; and 36.1 and 0.6 in vaccinated-and boosted. During Omicron, rates increased, but the disparities among various vaccination statuses remained. Now we're seeing 5743.5 and 187.8 per 100,000 in the unvaccinated, 3355.5 and 35.4 per 100,000 among vaccinated without booster, and 1889.0 and 8.2 among vaccinated-and-boosted. If you can read, it's got to be getting tougher to make the case that vaccines don't work.

I'm hearing a lot of outrage that Medicare is not being required to cover home Covid-19 tests with no copay the same way private insurance companies are being required to do so. As a Medicare recipient myself, I don't love the situation we're in either, so I've done some reading. It appears this wasn't a case where someone made a policy decision to exclude us olds—and in fact, that would have been a bad idea politically since there are a whole lot of old people in the US and we tend to show up to vote. The problem isn't a white-hair-hating bureaucrat somewhere; it's a law, specifically the statute that sets up Medicare rules. It forbids Medicare in its traditional form (covering some 60 percent of Medicare recipients) from paying for over-the-counter products of any kind. The Medicare drug coverage, which is optional so that not every Medicare recipient has it at all, covers only prescriptions. Unlike traditional private insurance where one policy covers all aspects of health care—physicians' services, other services, hospitalization, treatment and testing, and prescriptions—Medicare is segmented into these different parts, and these over-the-counter tests don't come in under any of them. Word on the street is that administration officials are seriously trying to find some sort of loophole, but I do not believe the President is empowered to simply issue an executive order that directly contravenes a law passed by Congress. The easy solution would typically be for Congress to pass legislation giving Medicare Services permission to authorize home tests for inclusion, but we all know how likely it is for Congress to pass any legislation in our current state of affairs. So that's where we are. If you receive Medicare and need tests, here are your current options: (1) Order the four tests available from the federal government for each household. (2) See a physician; if he/she orders a test, it will be paid for like any other lab testing. (3) Go to a testing site where anyone may be tested at no cost. (4) Find a community health center or rural clinic that has stocks of tests from the federal government, and pick them up there. I'm not sure how to find them in your area, but I would recommend starting with your state's department of health website.

We talked last week about Tonga, the South Pacific island nation which has kept Covid-19 at bay for two years now, reporting just one case in a person returning from abroad who was identified and quarantined appropriately. The way they've accomplished that is by requiring a three-week quarantine for all incoming persons. There were concerns about keeping that up after they suffered a devastating tsunami resulting from an underwater volcanic eruption just over two weeks ago. Last week, an aid ship carrying supplies to assist them in their recovery had an outbreak of Covid-19 onboard, so it was unloaded entirely mechanically without contact between any crew and any islanders. Other ships and planes from several countries, some of which also reported cases among crew, have brought in water and medicine too, planning contactless deliveries too. This appears to have been going well until yesterday when two port workers on Tongatapu, the main island, showed up with positive tests and then three more cases popped up today; there appears to be community spread now. The country went into lockdown Wednesday night—it's mid-day Thursday there right now—in an attempt to prevent spread to the other islands. It is not clear at this

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time what the source of the infection might be, but let's hope they were out ahead of this far enough. Only 60 percent of this population is fully vaccinated, so there's plenty of room for infection to spread and very few resources for dealing with it if it does.

Last time we talked (Update #511 posted January 29 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/5603909522958741>), we talked about BA.2. At that time, the only state reporting cases was Texas. Now, 29 states have joined the club. Most of them have just one or two, but multiple cases have been reported in Arizona and California.

Researchers at Statens Serum Institut, Copenhagen University, Statistics Denmark, and the Technical University of Denmark, a country where BA.2 now accounts for around 82 percent of cases, have been looking at infections in more than 8500 households in December and January, and they are adding evidence to support our suspicion this sub-variant is more infectious, that is, more transmissible. They also believe it is more able to infect vaccinated people, which is not great news. I have not seen the paper, which is still in preprint and has not been peer-reviewed, so I'm working from a summary here; but this is what I have.

They found people infected with BA.2 are about one-third more likely than BA.1 to pass it along to others. Someone exposed within the household has a 39 percent probability of becoming infected, whereas that probability is only 29 percent for BA.1. They said (quoted by Reuters), "We conclude that Omicron BA.2 is inherently substantially more transmissible than BA.1, and that it also possesses immune-evasive properties that further reduce the protective effect of vaccination against infection." They did point out that vaccinated and boosted individuals are still less likely to become infected or to transmit either BA.1 or BA.2.

The good news is that they are seeing no difference in hospitalization for BA.2, so it does not appear to be causing more severe disease. This isn't the last we'll hear of BA.2. Studies continue in an attempt to characterize this branch of the Omicron family tree. I'll update as information becomes available.

I've read two studies related to long-Covid or post-acute sequelae of Covid (PASC), the condition in which symptoms persist for at least four weeks and sometimes for months after the acute disease. We've talked about this several times lately as the studies accumulate. The first of those I saw today comes from University Hospital Zurich in Switzerland and has to do with antibodies. Looking at 175 patients with Covid-19 and 40 healthy participants, the research team analyzed blood for antibodies of various kinds, then combined their findings with other information about the patients including age, symptoms experienced, and medical history. What they found was that patients who developed PASC tended to run low levels of a class of antibody called IgM and a sub-class of IgG antibodies called IgG3. Increased age and number of symptoms in the primary infection, as well as more severe disease, also correlated with the development of PASC. Bronchial asthma was also noted as a factor: 94 percent of patients with a history of asthma developed PASC whereas only 59 percent of those without such history did. They then combined these findings to build and test models for predicting PASC so that they could calculate a risk score for developing long-Covid. When they had a risk-estimation model, they then tested its predictive value on an independent validation cohort of 395 patients who had not recovered after six months.

This, of course, needs more work, and the findings will need to be replicated in larger samples, but it's the first predictive model I've seen. The value in this model may be to inform interventions taken to arrange for early rehabilitation. It could be too that earlier identification of people with long-Covid will help us to figure out what causes it. And it may encourage certain people to reconsider their reluctance to vaccinate. While this model doesn't predict risk before you are infected because it incorporates information about your symptoms, it does suggest that people with low levels of IgM or IgG3 or who have asthma likely have increased risk.

The other PASC study needs us to lay some groundwork before we can talk about it. What we need to talk about here is your gut, that is, your gastrointestinal tract, that long tube that starts at your mouth where the food goes in and ends with your anus where the waste exits and takes a whole lot of twists and turns along the way. Interestingly, even though it's inside you, the GI tract is considered technically to be exterior to your body; this means the mucous membrane lining the tract, like your skin, separates

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you from the outside environment; food and whatever else is in it doesn't actually enter the body until it crosses through the GI tract's lining into the bloodstream; and the waste from food that is excreted was never in your body at all.

The important thing about your gut for our current purposes is that it contains something called a microbiome—a lot of microorganisms, all living and working together like a little microorganism town. Your gut microbiome is all the bacteria, viruses, fungi, and other microorganisms that live in your intestinal tract on a day-to-day basis. And that is really a lot of microorganisms: In fact, there are 10 times more microbial cells in your intestine—100 trillion of them—than there are human cells in your body. They weigh up to around four and a half pounds, and they operate in a way that causes most experts to consider them an organ. They weigh more than most of your other organs, more than your heart, your liver, your kidneys or spleen, and more than both lungs put together. At least half and up to 80 percent of fecal matter (poop) is actually microorganisms, not food waste. This "organ" has specific metabolic activity and operates immunologically as well. If it goes wrong, you're in trouble.

We don't see many until you get past the stomach: The level of acid in there kills off almost everything that comes in. It is in the intestines as the acidity of stomach effluent is neutralized where the number of microorganisms swells. It was only after genomic sequencing hit its heyday less than 20 years ago that we have any clue how much there is in there and how consequential it is, but we're thinking there are as many as 5000 species. Some of them are potentially pathogenic (disease-producing), and the only reason they're not giving you trouble right now is that the others are holding them in check, not permitting them unlimited reproduction. We presume these pathogens may serve some purpose as long as they remain at low levels, but the science of figuring this stuff out is still in its infancy. Something else we find in your gut microbiome is organisms called opportunists. As the name would indicate, they take advantage of any opening; these are organisms that can't normally cause disease in a healthy person, but if they're presented with an opportunity, they're happy to oblige and go crazy. So if there is a disruption in the microbiome, they might seize the opportunity to overgrow the other residents and cause real trouble. Something we do know is that your diet influences just which organisms are in your microbiome in what proportions, and some are better to have or at least to have in large numbers than others. We also know that antibiotic treatment can adversely affect the microbiome: If the antibiotic happens to kill off some of the beneficial organisms that keep the more scary ones in check, then the scary ones can overgrow and cause real trouble. So this whole thing is a pretty delicate balancing act. This is one reason among many we wish you'd quit demanding antibiotics from your doctor every time you sneeze. Much of the time, they won't help anyway (don't work on viruses, remember?), and they'll mess with your microbiome too. So quit that, OK?

OK, so to the point: The gut microbiome plays a role in regulating immune responses, so disturbances in it may exacerbate Covid-19 and may also cause the lingering symptoms we call PASC. The Center for Gut Microbiota Research at The Chinese University of Hong Kong had a research team take a look at the relationship between the gut microbiome and long-Covid in 106 individuals with Covid-19; their findings were published in the journal *Gut* this week. These researchers collected stool samples on admission, after one month, and again at six months. They analyzed the microbiota seen in these specimens, then compared what they saw with specimens taken before the pandemic from 68 people matched for age, sex, preexisting illness, and diet. Eighty-one percent of these individuals showed at least one symptom three months out and 76 percent at six months. What they found is a relationship between gut dysbiosis (reduction in microbial diversity) and long-Covid up to six months after the infection resolved. There were strong links between specific microorganisms or groups of microorganisms and particular symptoms, and there were reductions in organisms that have the ability to modulate immune responses. There were distinct differences in the diversity and abundance of the gut microbiome between patients without PASC and those with it. In patients with PASC, 28 bacterial species were reduced and 14 were enriched; I'll spare you the names of the individual organisms—I'd never heard of many of them either. Those that produce the chemical butyrate were the most likely to be depleted in folks with PASC; I'd be interested in what's happening

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there. The organism-symptom links sound interesting as well. People who did not develop long-Covid had changes in fewer of the species when they were admitted, and by six months their gut microbiome was pretty much the same as the non-Covid controls. The alterations in the microbiome in those with PASC were long-lasting. We know the kind of immune regulation that prevents immune responses against your own tissues stems from these gut bacteria and failure of those species can result in autoimmune responses where your responses damage your own tissues, so there's something there to look at too.

What we take from this is that there is an association between a persistently altered gut microbiome and PASC. That means perhaps we can alter the outcome by regulating the microbiome. Possibilities include diets that support a diverse microbiome, avoiding antibiotics wherever possible, using probiotics to supplement the microbiome (although the general efficacy of these is still very much in question), and fecal microbiota transplants. That last is exactly what you fear it is: transplanting fecal matter from healthy folks with a diverse microbiome into folks who don't have that. This can be done in various ways including enema, placing capsules of frozen fecal matter through a nasogastric tube into the intestines, or placing it up into the colon using a colonoscope. I know: Poop transplants sound unutterably gross. But they already save lives in other situations, and perhaps they'll play a role in sorting out folks with PASC. That remains to be seen, but it begins to appear that the evidence supports trying it.

And on that esthetically-pleasing note, I'll sign off. Stay safe, and we'll talk in a few days.

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Cyclones whirl past Groton Area

Clark/Willow Lake handed Groton Area its first Northeast Conference defeat with a 60-47 win. The game was played Saturday in Groton. It was the second straight Saturday that the Tigers have lost.

The first quarter was a battle as the game was tied four times and there were three lead changes before the quarter ended tied at 14. Both teams shot 46 percent in the first quarter.

Groton Area took a 17-16 lead early in the second period, but then the Cyclones made eight unanswered points to take a 24-17 lead and went on to lead at half time, 28-20. Groton made 25 percent of its shots in the second quarter while the Cyclones made 57 percent.

Clark/Willow Lake took a 40-29 lead late in the third quarter, but the Tigers battled to within five at the break, 40-35. Both teams put up 11 shots with Groton making five and Clark/Willow Lake six.

The Cyclones quickly jumped out to a 10-point lead early in the fourth quarter. Groton closed to within seven, 54-47, but the Cyclones made the final six points of the game for 60-47 win.

Tate Larson led Groton Area with 16 points. Noah Boykin led Clark/Willow Lake with 20 points followed by Tyler O'Neill with 15, Kaplan Felberg 11, Trey Huber had eight and Brady Jordan six.

Groton Area made 12 of 25 field goals for 48 percent, five of 15 three-pointers for 33 percent, and made eight of 11 free throws for 72 percent off of the Cyclones' 11 team fouls. The Tigers had 16 rebounds, five turnovers, 11 assists, eight steals and one block.

Clark/Willow Lake made 21 of 36 total field goals for 58 percent, 15 of 17 free throws for 88 percent off of Groton Area's 17 team fouls, and had nine turnovers.

Groton Area is now 11-2 on the season and will travel to Edmunds Central on Tuesday. Clark/Willow Lake is now 7-5.

GROTON TALLIES

Tate Larson - 16 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists, 3 fouls

Jacob Zak - 8 points, 9 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 steals, 2 fouls, 1 block

Kaden Kurtz - 8 points, 2 rebounds, 3 fouls

Wyatt Hearnen - 7 points, 2 steals, 5 fouls

Jayden Zak - 5 points, 4 assists, 2 steals, 1 foul

Cade Larson - 3 points

Lane Tietz - 1 rebound, 1 assist, 1 steal, 3 fouls

Cole Simon - 1 assist, 1 steal

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 35-27. The Cyclones had an 8-4 lead after the first quarter and the game was tied at 14 at halftime. Groton Area took a 22-19 lead after the third quarter and a seven-point run in the fourth quarter sealed the deal with the win.

Colby Dunker led Groton Area with 11 points followed by Cole Simon with 10, Logan Ringgenberg had six, Holden Sippel and Teylor Diegel each had three and Dillon Abeln added two points.

Mitchell Larson and Tyson Huber led the Cyclones with seven points apiece.

Groton Area won the eighth grade game, 48-25. The Tigers led at the quarter stops at 10-6, 21-16 and 41-20.

Ryder Johnson led the Tigers with 25 points, scoring 15 of those points in the third quarter. Gage Sippel had seven points followed by Keegen Tracy and JD Schwan with six each and Keegan Harry and Karter Moody each had two points.

Emmerson Larson led the Cyclones with 12 points while Mato Denoyers had six, Lincoln Reidburn had three and Ky Vandersnick and Masyn Knock each had two points.

Clark/Willow Lake won the seventh grade game, 33-9. The Cyclones led at the quarter breaks at 9-2, 11-8 and 23-8.

Ben Hoeft led Groton Area with seven points and Brody Lord had two points.

Talen Huber led the Cyclones with 10 points followed by Jacob Steen with nine, Diego Garcia six, Damien Severson four and Max Bratland had three points.

All of the games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The Johnson Agency sponsored the junior high games, Rutgear605 sponsored the junior varsity game and the varsity game was sponsored by Dacotah Bank, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, the John Sieh Agency, Groton Ford and Allied Climate Professionals with Kevin Nehls.

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Lady Tigers fall to Tea Area at NEC-DAKXII Clash

The Lady Tigers made just a single point in the second half as the Tea Area Titans pulled away for a 56-21 win at the NEC-DAK XII clash held Saturday in Madison.

Tea jumped out to a 14-1 lead and led it 26-18 at half time. Groton closed to within one, 28-20, early in the third quarter before going scoreless from field for the rest of the game.

Alyssa Thaler led the Tigers with six points.

Groton Area made three of 23 field goals for 13 percent, two of 19 three-pointers for 11 percent, made nine of 14 free throws, had 25 rebounds, 11 turnovers, three assists, six steals and 15 fouls.

Katie Vasecka led the Titans with 11 points while Bryan Schupher had 10, Kendra McKenng had nine and Haidyn West added seven.

The Titans made 21 of 45 field goals for 47 percent, five of 13 three-pointers for 39 percent, and made nine of 15 free throws for 60 percent. The Titans had 40 rebounds, six steals, 14 turnovers, three blocks and eight assists.

GROTON TALLIES

Alyssa Thaler - 6 points, 1 rebound, 2 steals.

Gracie Traphagen - 3 points, 8 rebounds, 1 steal, 2 fouls.

Brooke Gengerke - 3 points, 5 rebounds.

Sydney Leicht - 3 points, 1 steal.

Jerica Locke - 2 points, 1 rebound, 2 assists, 1 steal, 4 fouls.

Jaedyn Penning - 2 points, 2 rebound, 1 assist, 3 fouls.

Kennedy Hansen - 2 points, 2 rebounds, 3 fouls.

Allyssa Locke - 5 rebounds.

Aspen Johnson - 1 steal, 3 fouls.

Faith Traphagen - 1 rebound.



6th grade boys 1st place champs in Watertown Tourney

Front row: Jace Johnson, Karson Zak, Alex Abeln, TC Schuster, Coach Ryan Schelle
Back row: Coach Jeremy Weber, Ryder Schelle, Quinn Cogley, Ethan Kroll, Easton Weber,
Coach Jerry Johnson. (Photo by Samantha Weber)



4th grade boys 1st place champs in Watertown Tourney

Front Nolan Bahr, Trayce Schelle, Trey Tietz, Gavin Hanten
Back Ryder Schwan, Liam Johnson, Major Dolan, Axel Abeln
Coaches Tommy Tietz, Ryan Schelle

Not pictured Coach Brett Schwan, Liam Lord, Asher Zimmerman, Tucker Leicht, Hudson Eichler, Jace Hofer, Jamison Penning, Eli Heillman. (Photo by Samantha Weber)

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

And when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."



🌀 EXODUS 2:6 🌀

"A Sleeping Cupid" by Bartolomeo Coriolano (1630-45)

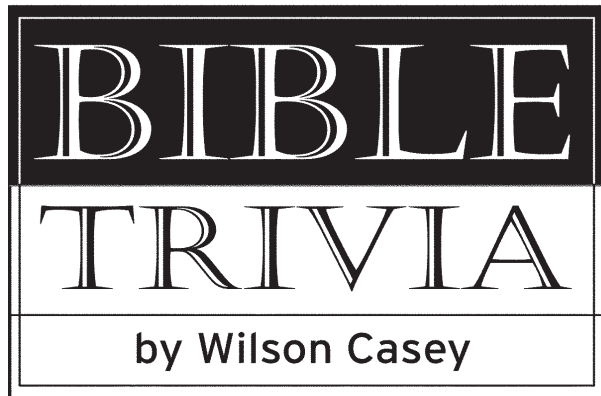
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FACIAL RECOGNITION

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

2. From Genesis 8, what was the mountain upon which Noah's Ark rested? *Sinai, Zion, Ararat, Ebal*

3. Laban, who tried to swindle Jacob, was what relationship to him? *Brother, Father-in-law, Friend, Father*

4. In Matthew 10, Jesus instructed the apostles to go among the ... ? *Heathen, Gentiles, Blind, Israelites*

5. What happened to Moses' rod when he cast it on the ground? *Broke in two, Spoke to him, Became a serpent, Blazed up*

6. From Job 20, what sort of men suck the poison of asps? *Wicked, Aged, Tribal, Leper*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Ararat; 3) Father-in-law; 4) Israelites; 5) Became a serpent; 6) Wicked

Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com

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Wow! You mean THIS started with a can of biscuits!? It sure did -- but it doesn't look or taste like it. Pairs perfectly with your morning coffee or as an afternoon pick-me-up at tea time.

2 tablespoons fat-free milk
Sugar substitute to equal 2 tablespoons sugar
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 (7.5-ounce) package refrigerated buttermilk biscuits
1/4 cup apricot spreadable fruit
1/4 cup raisins
1/4 cup chopped pecans

1. Preheat oven to 450 F. Spray a 9-inch pie plate with butter-flavored cooking spray.

2. In a small bowl, combine milk, sugar substitute and cinnamon. Separate biscuits. Dip each biscuit into milk mixture, then arrange in prepared pie plate. Drizzle any remaining milk mixture evenly over top of biscuits.

3. Gently stir spreadable fruit to soften, then evenly spread over biscuit tops. Sprinkle raisins and pecans evenly over all.

4. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Place pie plate on a wire rack and let set for at least 15 minutes. Cut into 6 wedges. Serves 6.

* Each serving equals: 199 calories, 7g fat, 3g protein, 31g carb., 360mg sodium, 1g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 Starch, 1 Fruit, 1 Fat.

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FLASH GORDON By JIM KEEFE
1-30

SHIPWRECKED ON THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA...

THE CREATURE...IT'S RETREATING BEHIND THOSE BOULDERS.

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BUT WHY? WE'RE AT ITS MERCY...

WHO KNOWS, JUST BE THANKFUL IT DID.

ZARKOV, ANY CHANCE YOU CAN GET US UP AND RUNNING AGAIN?

I THINK SO, M'BOY, IF GIVEN THE TIME.

TIME IS ONE THING WE DON'T HAVE.

OUTSIDE...

...THOSE AREN'T BOULDERS!

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

GOOD GOLFERS RARELY OFFER ADVICE TO LESSER PLAYERS UNLESS ASKED. BUT ARE USUALLY DELIGHTED TO HELP WHEN INVITED TO.

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SO DON'T BE SHY ABOUT ASKING A BETTER PLAYER FOR TIPS IF YOU THINK HE MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER.

I'VE GOTTEN MUCH HELP OVER THE YEARS FROM MY FELLOW PLAYERS. AS HAVE MOST OTHER TOURNAMENT GOLFERS.

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Drug Use and Hepatitis C



DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a 35-year-old white male who was a drug addict from the age of 14 until 32. You name it, I took it. About three years ago, I quit drugs and have lived a healthy lifestyle since. I do not drink alcohol, and I smoke one or two cigarettes a day. Three years ago, I was tested for hepatitis and was told the results were negative. About two weeks ago, I was tested and found to have hepatitis C. The results were "HCV RNA Quantitative real time PCR 8010 (high) and log 3.90 (high)." These results were given to me by a nurse without explanation other than to see a specialist. Further physician visits were denied by my insurance. I have no idea what this means, or what I need to do. I have no symptoms or discomfort at this time. What happens if this condition goes untreated? -- Anon.

ANSWER: First of all, congratulations on quitting almost everything. That was the best thing you could have done for your health.

Now you have to deal with a complication of drug use, particularly injection drug use: hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is a slow-acting virus that affects the liver. The course of hepatitis C is variable. Some people have a very aggressive virus, which without treatment can cause permanent liver damage, ultimately leading to cirrhosis and sometimes cancer of the liver. Others have a much more benign course with no evidence of liver damage, even after many years with the virus.

Your viral load, a measure of how much virus is in the blood, is fairly low. However, you absolutely should still go see a specialist. This is usually a hepatologist or infectious disease doctor, who has special expertise in treating hepatitis C. They will do additional blood testing, and probably a noninvasive scan of the liver to look for fibrosis, to determine whether there has been damage and the urgency of treatment.

Treatment for hepatitis C is so good now (97% or more effective) and the side effects of the new drugs are so mild that most experts treat someone with even very benign disease. Treatment courses are sometimes shorter for people with mild disease and without scarring of the liver.

Your insurance company is absolutely in the wrong to deny a visit with the specialist, and that decision needs to be appealed, preferably by your primary care doctor. In the meantime, continue to avoid alcohol, and do not take more than six regular strength (or four extra strength) Tylenol a day. You also should be sure to have immunizations to hepatitis A and B, if you are not already immune.

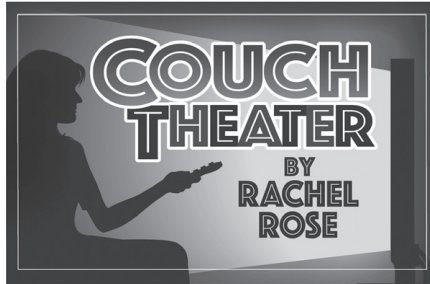
DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm an 82-year-old woman experiencing mucus in my rectal area. What causes this? -- M.C.

ANSWER: The cells lining the rectum normally make small amounts of mucus to help a bowel movement pass easily. Large amounts may be seen in people with irritable bowel syndrome, rectal fissures or prolapse, or a rectal ulcer, among others. This is something to discuss with your doctor the next time you visit. An exam will be able to identify most of the serious causes.

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

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The Tinder Swindler — If you're the type of viewer who often yells at the television "Girrrrr! you in trouble now!", then buckle up for this one! This true crime documentary follows the intricately woven story of multiple women who all fell for the same man they met on the dating app Tinder. After much wooing, globetrotting, wining and dining came the sudden desperate demands for thousands of dollars as Mr. Wonderful claimed to be in dire danger for his life. After some of the conned women eventually find each other, they pool their collective anger and seek revenge on the playboy shyster. (Netflix)

Backyard Bar Wars — Ever since "This Old House," Americans have been in a decades-long love affair with home renovation shows. This latest offering to the genre is hosted by comedian Chris Distefano (formerly of MTV's "Guy Code") and originally aired on TruTV, but is now in wider distribution. In it, two homeowners compete against each other for bragging rights based on who can create the dopest home pub in one week. The fun and sometimes over-the-top designs are a nice change from the ship-lap-heavy, neutral-grey-everything of so many other reno shows. (HBOMax)

Book of Love (PG-13) — Man writes book, book fizzles except in Mexico. Man goes to Mexico on book tour, wonders why there's such passion for his arrival. Man discovers woman hired to translate book into Spanish took creative liberties and rewrote book ("just the boring parts"). Man gets mad. Woman makes man see he didn't know what he was writing about in the first place. Man and woman may or may not then fall in love. An Amazon original movie,

the plot is an interesting twist on the themes of finding your passion in life and finding connection with people you think are all wrong for you. Starring Sam Claflin and Veronica Echegui. (Prime Video)

The New Air Force One: Flying Fortress — The current two Air Force One presidential jets having been in service for over 30 years, so updated versions are now under construction by Boeing. This NatGeo documentary allows us glimpses at the new design and all the unique features, technology, and personnel that make it the world's most secure and top-secret command center. (Disney+)



Paramount+

Joey King and Kyle Allen in "The In Between"

The In Between (PG-13) — As a former teenage girl, I can verify that teenage girls tend to think most everything is a sign. And as that former teenager, I definitely identify with main character of this supernatural romance flick. Tessa is a 16-year-old girl who survives a car crash but loses her boyfriend, Skylar, in it. Soon after physically recovering, she begins to experience unexplained feelings, movements and voices. A friend suggests these happenings are Skylar reaching out to her from some type of purgatory because he has unfinished business to complete with her. Tessa's quest to make real contact with Skylar becomes her obsession, but will it lead to final closure? Starring Joey King and Kyle Allen. Premieres Feb. 11. (Paramount+)

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1. Meat Loaf was taken to court to keep him from recording which song?
2. What is "The Witch Queen of New Orleans" about?
3. The titles of six of the first seven America albums all began with the same letter. What was it?
4. Name the duo that released "River Deep -- Mountain High."
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Well, it's been building up inside of me for, oh, I don't know how long."

Answers

1. "It's All Coming Back to Me Now," penned by Jim Steinman. Steinman insisted it was a woman's song,

and the court agreed, blocking Meat Loaf. He didn't get the chance to record the song until 2006, when he did so with a Norwegian singer.

2. A 19th-century New Orleans practitioner of voodoo. It was released in 1971 by Redbone.
3. H, for "Homecoming," "Hat Trick," "Holiday," "Hearts," "Hideaway" and "Harbor," from 1972 to 1977.
4. Ike and Tina Turner, in 1966.
5. "Don't Worry Baby," by the Beach Boys in 1964. Songwriter Brian Wilson later said he considered having the Ronettes record the song. But that never happened because Phil Spector (the Ronettes' producer) hadn't written the song.

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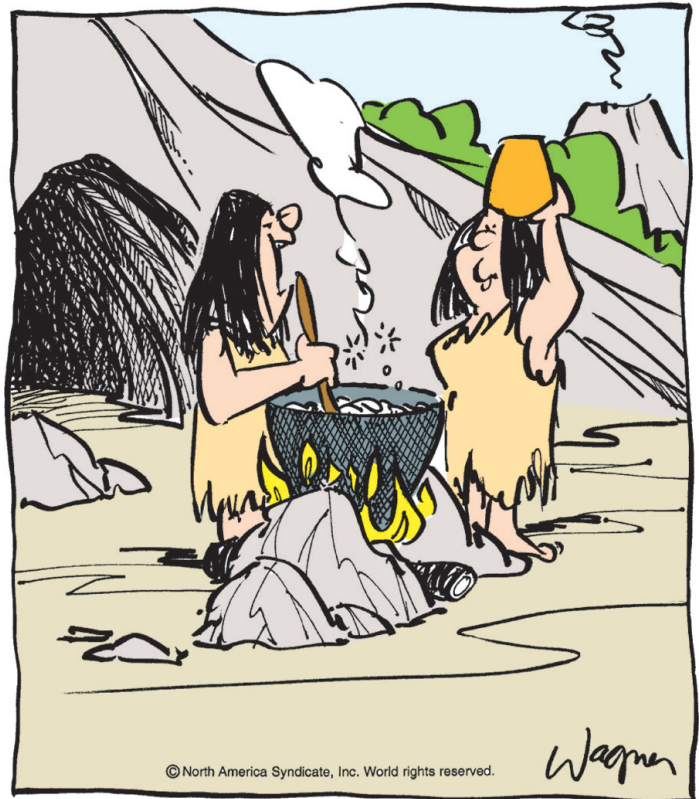
Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



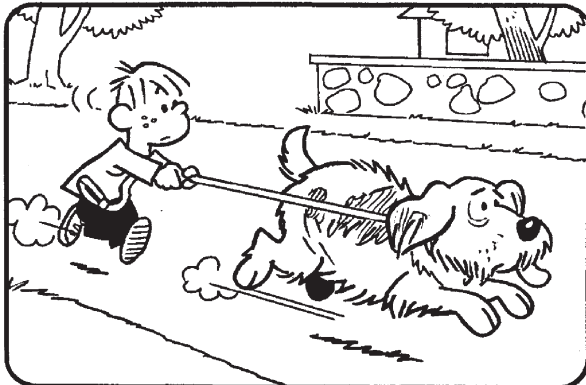
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Wagner

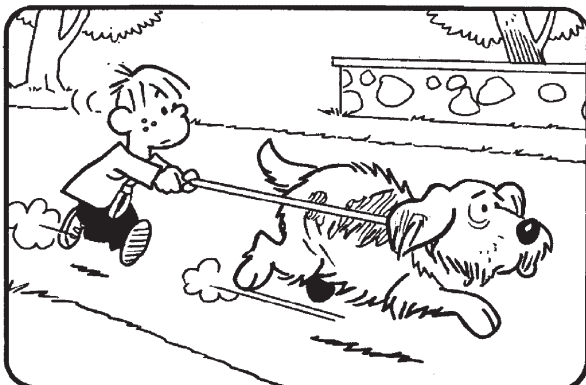
"I found the recipe on the wall of the cave."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Leash is shorter. 2. Tail is lowered. 3. Wall is shorter. 4. House is missing. 5. Tongue is different. 6. Front paw is hidden.



- If your dog likes a treat of moistened dry food from time to time, use the water from cooking vegetables. It has a bit of flavor and some vitamins, too!

- “A tip for banana peels: Dry until crispy and break into small pieces. Put in blender and blend to powder. Store in an airtight container to sprinkle around base of houseplants before watering. Orchids love them — it’s great free fertilizer.” — *B.C. in New Hampshire*

- “Unmatched socks are handy-dandy cleaners and have so many uses. Keep one by the dryer to get all the lint off the trap. Shake it out or pop it into the wash when needed.

- If you have lots of outdoor or feral cats in your area, here is some good advice, given to me by my grandmother: Start your car with a bang — on the hood, that is. When the overnight temperature dips, cats know to find someplace that is wind-shielded and off the ground, and sometimes that means they will climb up into your engine area to

hunker down. If your car starts while they’re there, they can be hurt or even killed. Give the hood a good knock to let a cat know to get out quick. — *JoAnn*

- “After you’ve cleaned out the gliders of your sliding-glass door, run over the parts with a little paraffin wax. It will protect the moving parts and quiet the door.” — *P.J. in Oregon*

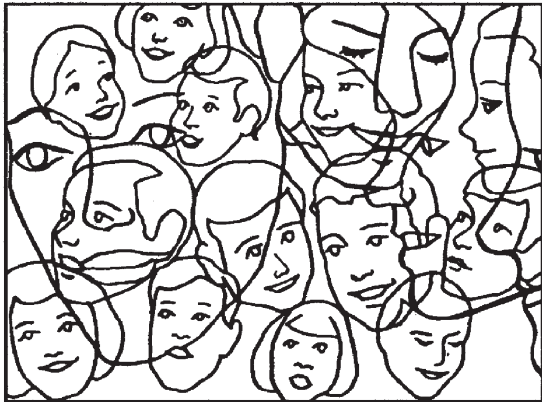
- If you have trouble threading a needle because the fibers seem to go in all directions, here’s a tip from T.I. in Illinois: Stiffen the end of thread with hairspray before threading a needle.

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

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FACE CASE! Our artist says there are some 17 faces in this drawing. See how many of them you can find. Time limit: 60 seconds.

Junior Whirl

by Hal Kaufman

1 _ cent ?

2 _ _ cent

3 _ _ _ cent

4 _ _ _ _ cent

5 _ _ _ _ _ cent

6 _ _ _ _ _ _ cent

7 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ cent

CENTS OF DIRECTION WORD-BUILDER

YOU ARE challenged to provide missing letters of seven progressively longer words, each ending in the word CENT (see left).

Definitions:

1. What a bloodhound picks up with its nose.
2. Newly done.
3. Interest unit.
4. Curved roll.
5. Still; inactive.
6. Teen-ager.
7. Grandly glorious, as a sunset perhaps.

Time limit: 2 minutes.

7. Magnificent.
4. Crescent. 5. Quiescent. 6. Adolescent.
1. Scent. 2. Recent. 3. Percent.

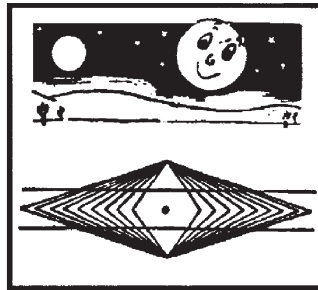
SELF STARTER! Challenge: To initiate some research. With how many toothpicks—without bending or breaking any—can letters of the word INITIATE be formed? Fifteen, 17, 19—what say?

In cap letters, it takes seventeen.

TIME WARP? What ho, Mr. Moon, when we fix our gaze on the black spot in the figure below, the two long lines (from side to side) appear to bend inward, as if to a distant infinity. Yet, when we hold the display at eye level and sight along these same two lines, alakazam, they are perfectly straight and parallel.

Why is this so?

It is a classic example, of course, of a design that fools the eyes.

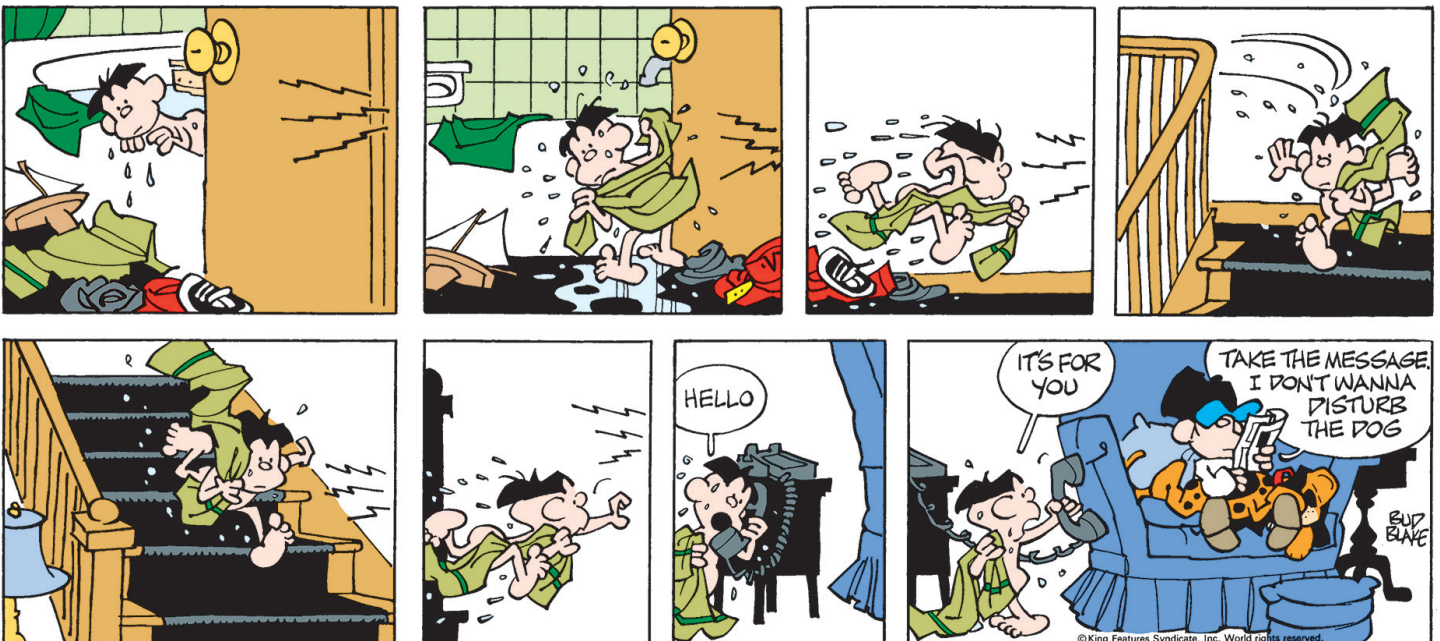


BIRD CALLS! Chickens (one red, one blue) are official birds of what two states?

Delaware (Blue Hen Chicken).
Rhode Island (Rhode Island Red).

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 "Keep it down!"
- 4 Tax pro
- 7 Whizzes (by)
- 12 Horse chow
- 13 Owned
- 14 Emanations
- 15 Shred
- 16 Pennsylvania city
- 18 Guitar's kin
- 19 Symbol of freshness
- 20 Lancaster or Reynolds
- 22 "Blue Bloods" ainer
- 23 Fly high
- 27 Flamenco cheer
- 29 Oliver Twist, for one
- 31 French composer Gabriel
- 34 Hilo hello
- 35 Snowman's nose
- 37 Links org.
- 38 Prop for Dr. House
- 39 Devilish laugh
- 41 Body powder
- 45 "I'm with you!"
- 47 Meadow
- 48 Pennsylvania city
- 52 Conditions
- 53 Boredom

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14				
15				16			17					
18				19								
20			21		22				23	24	25	26
			27	28			29	30				
31	32	33						34				
35					36		37					
38					39	40			41	42	43	44
				45				46		47		
48	49	50	51							52		
53						54				55		
56						57				58		

- 54 Kimono sash
- 55 Packed away
- 56 "The Dapper Don"
- 57 Fixed
- 58 Snake's sound
- 8 "Shoo!" org.
- 9 Acapulco gold
- 10 Gullet
- 11 Capitol Hill VIP
- 17 Old U.S. gas brand
- 21 Baseball manager Joe
- 23 Pie-in-the-face sound
- 24 Discoverer's call
- 25 Satisfied sigh
- 26 Genetic letters
- 28 Summer sign
- 30 Cleaning cloth
- 31 TV watchdog
- 32 Small battery
- 33 Coffee vessel
- 36 Biblical pronoun
- 37 "Friends" role
- 40 Community spirit
- 42 Fake name
- 43 Some jobs
- 44 Attorney's load
- 45 Roman 1052
- 46 Skip
- 48 Plead
- 49 Rock's Brian
- 50 Potent stick
- 51 Shack

DOWN

- 1 Bush
- 2 Japanese verse
- 3 High-strung
- 4 Sudan neighbor
- 5 Royal home
- 6 Extemporize
- 7 Madcap

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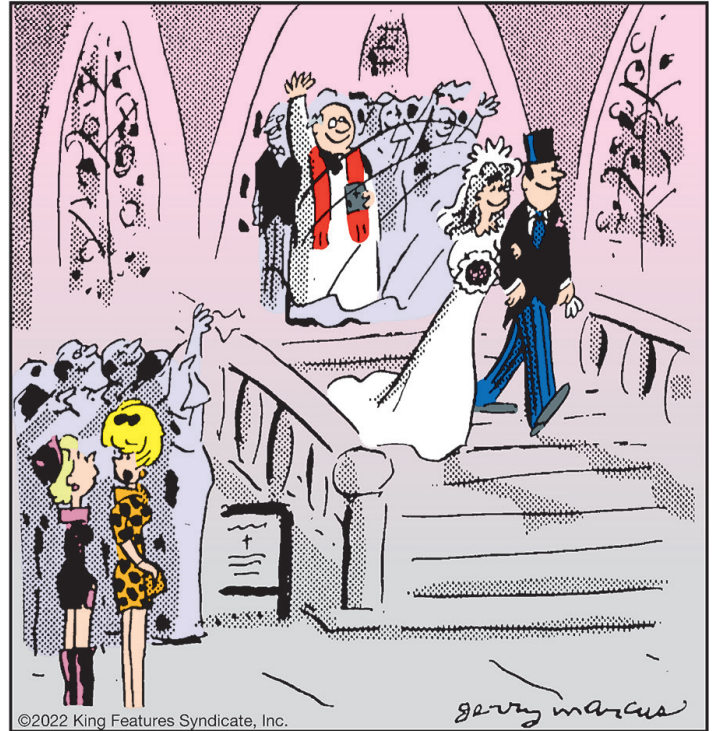
— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 26 mins.

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

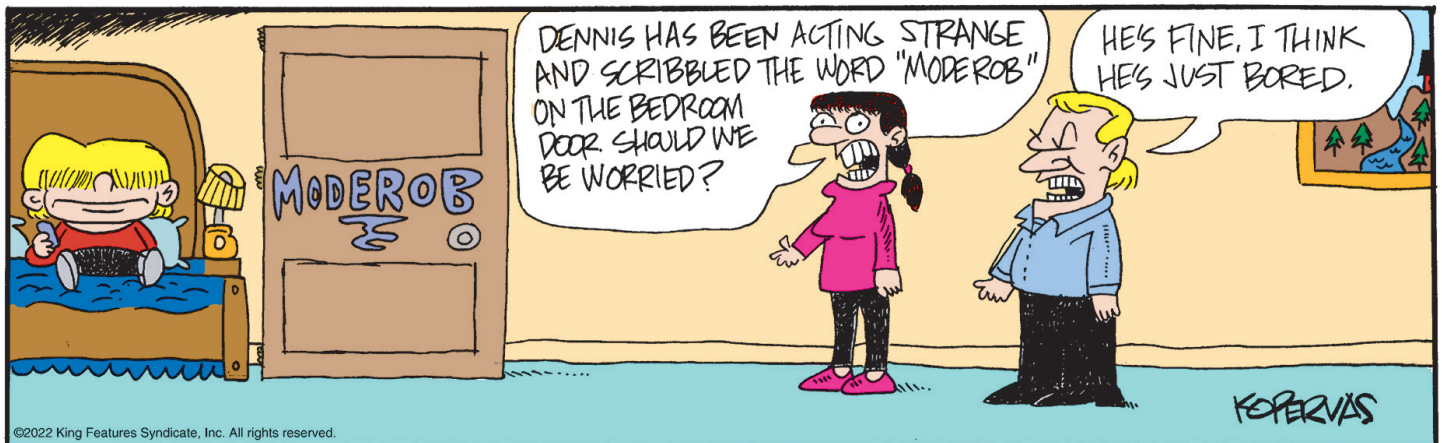
LAFF - A - DAY



Well! That's the last time I get HER a date!"

Out on a Limb

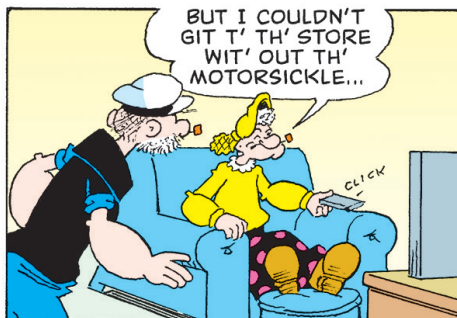
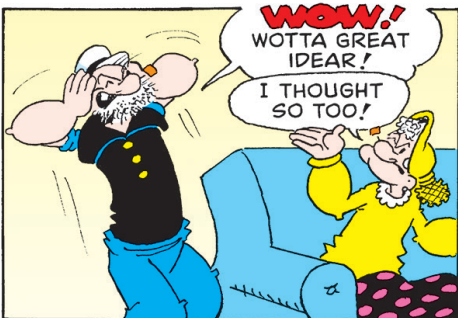
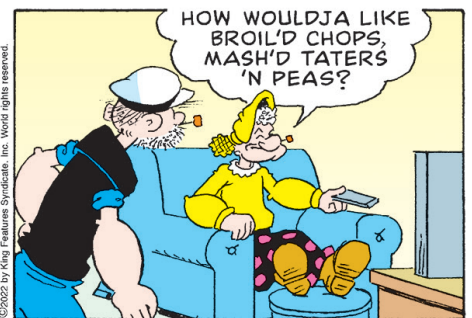
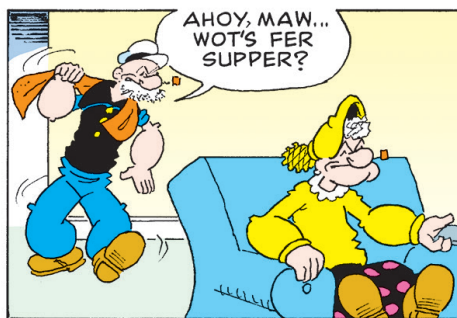
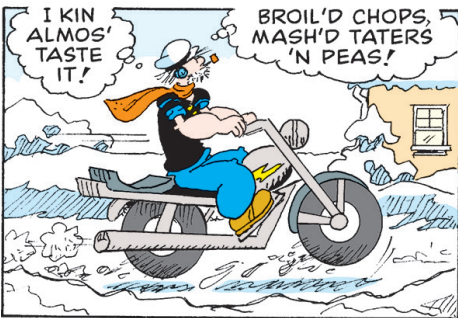
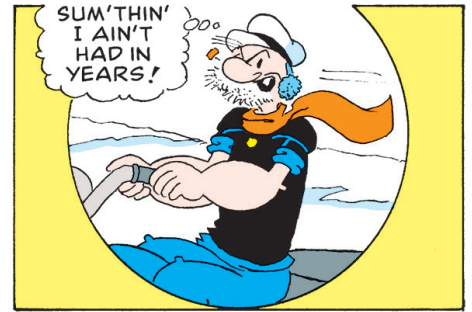
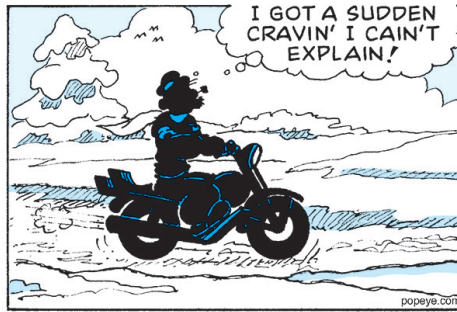
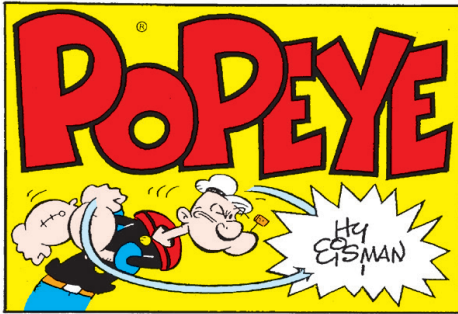
by Gary Kopervas



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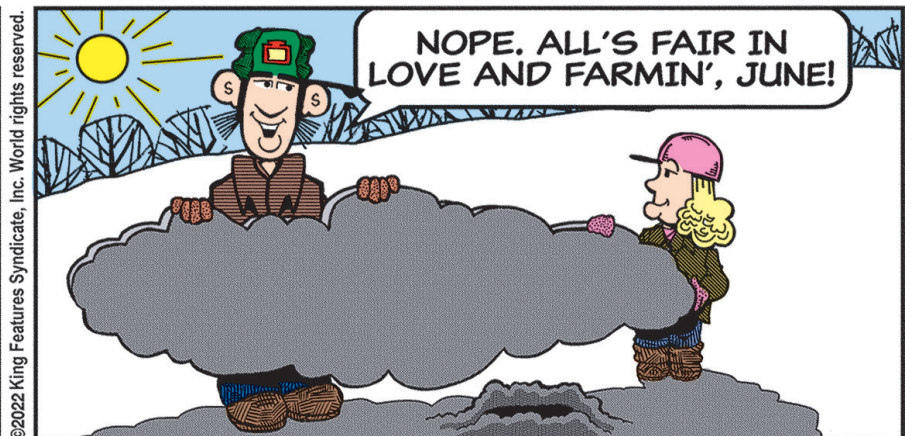
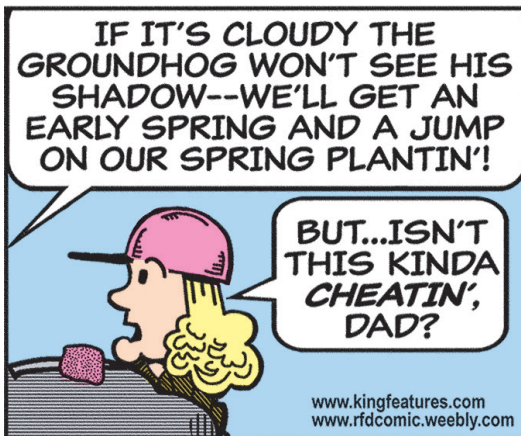
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland

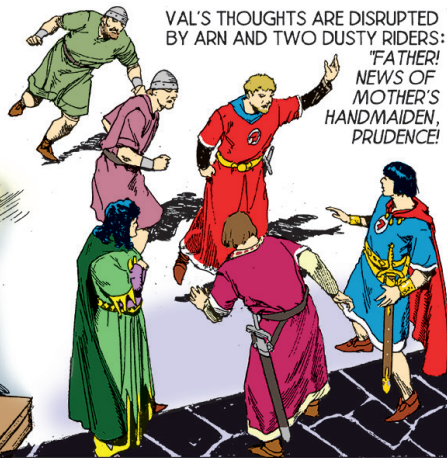


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Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

GALAHAD CONTINUES HIS TALE: "AND SO, I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT DRACO, PRODDED BY HIS WIFE MALDUBH, SCHEMES AGAINST YOU."



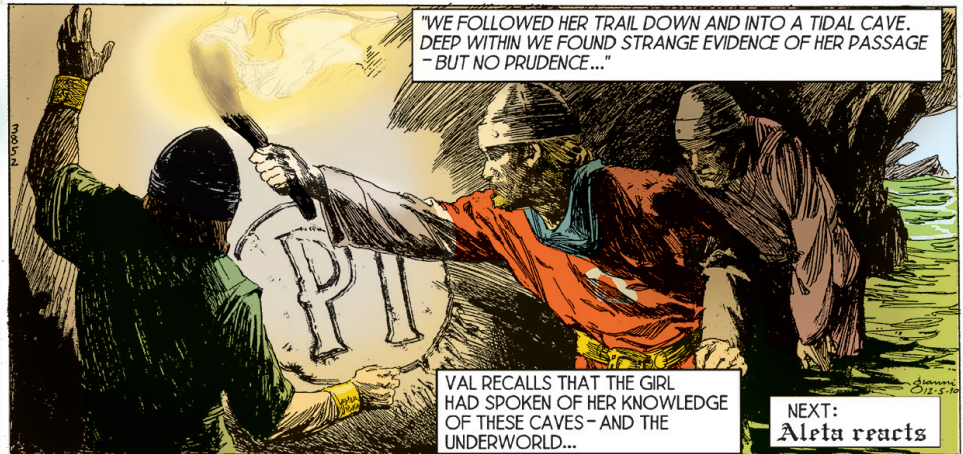
VAL'S THOUGHTS ARE DISRUPTED BY ARN AND TWO DUSTY RIDERS: "FATHER! NEWS OF MOTHER'S HANDMAIDEN, PRUDENCE!"

"AS YOU KNOW, SHE ABSCONDED WITH A PALFREY, APPARENTLY DISTRESSED OVER IG'S DEPARTURE. HER FRANTIC RIDE WAS WITNESSED BY SERFS IN THE FIELDS."



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"CRANWELL, ELDRIF AND I HOPED TO OVERTAKE HER, BUT FOUND HER ABANDONED MOUNT GRAZING AT THE EDGE OF A SEA CLIFF."



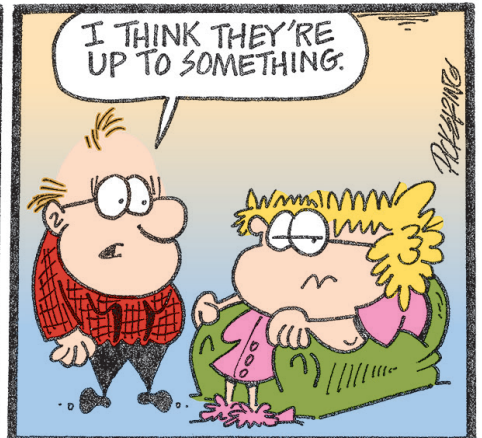
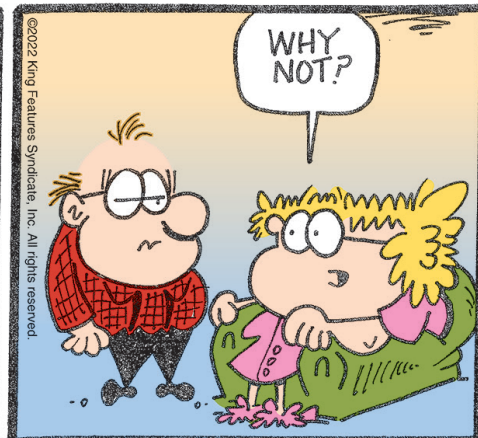
"WE FOLLOWED HER TRAIL DOWN AND INTO A TIDAL CAVE. DEEP WITHIN WE FOUND STRANGE EVIDENCE OF HER PASSAGE - BUT NO PRUDENCE..."

VAL RECALLS THAT THE GIRL HAD SPOKEN OF HER KNOWLEDGE OF THESE CAVES - AND THE UNDERWORLD...

NEXT:
Aleta reacts

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Is a Part B Premium Cutback Coming?

By now we know just how much our Social Security checks are going to be for this year, after the deductions for Part B.

The average dollar increase is \$92 per month for singles. The Part B deduction has gone up \$21.60, mostly due to the price of the new Alzheimer's drug, Aduhelm, for a total of \$170 per month. The drug costs \$56,000 per patient per year. And we're all going to pay for it, whether we need it or not.

The news now is that the price of that drug has been cut in half, to \$28,200 per year, after pressure was brought to bear on the manufacturer when it was revealed that Medicare might not pay for it at all. Additional pressure came from doctors who were suspicious the drug didn't actually work and who wanted their own tests run on it. Since it must be given via IV in the hospital or doctor's office, it falls under Part B instead of the Part D drug plan.

Hot off the press is a proposal that Medicare will cover the drug — but only for those in randomized controlled clinical trials that will settle once and for all the question about whether the drug actually works. They'll likely have a decision on that proposal in April.

And what of our Part B costs, given the lowered cost of Aduhelm? Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra ordered Medicare to look again at the premium we're being charged for 2022. There is the smallest chance it might be lowered, which has never been done before.

Last year it was estimated that our Part B premium would be \$158.50 this year. If that \$170 is cut back to that amount, it would net us an extra \$11.50 per month. What shall we spend it on?

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1. Name the 1977 Australian Open tennis champion from the U.S. who died from carbon monoxide poisoning in 1994.

2. What Pro Football Hall of Famer was head coach of the Buffalo Bills from 1986-97 and the team's general manager from 2006-07?

3. The NHL's William M. Jennings Trophy is awarded annually to players at what position?

4. What current NFL stadium hosted a NASCAR race on July 21, 1956?

5. What prize, named for an English politician and cricket patron, is awarded in Australia's first-class domestic cricket competition?

6. How many times did Jake LaMotta defeat boxing rival Sugar Ray Robinson in their six fights from 1942-51?

7. The plastic horns famously used by spectators at the 2010 FIFA World Cup soccer tournament in South Africa are known as what?



by Ryan A. Berenz

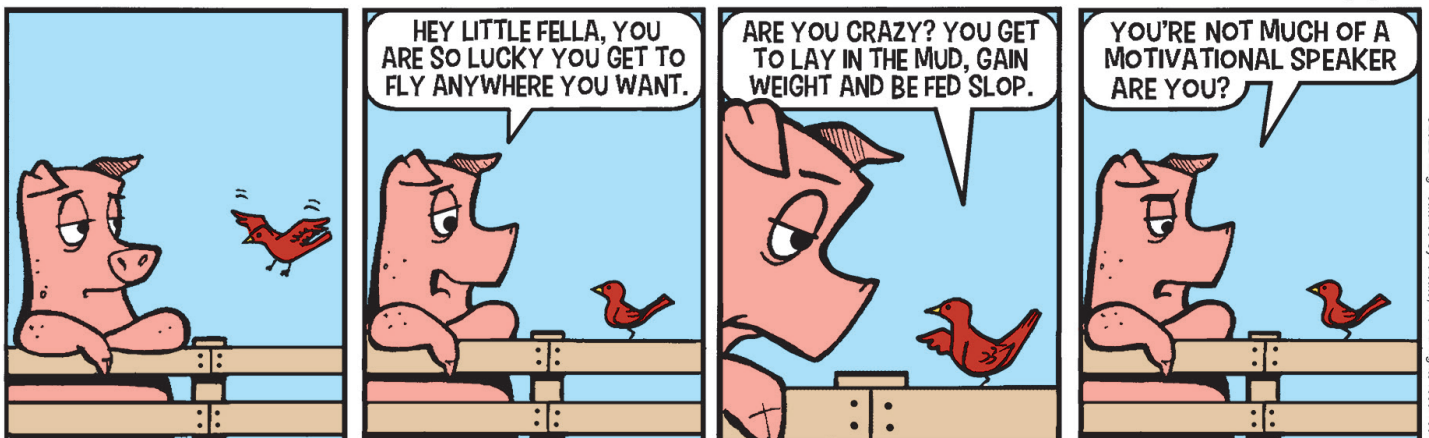
Answers

1. Vitas Gerulaitis.
2. Marv Levy.
3. Goaltenders on the team with the fewest goals against.
4. Chicago's Soldier Field.
5. The Sheffield Shield.
6. One.
7. Vuvuzelas.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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Training Your Cat May Save Its Life

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Is it possible to teach a cat to come when you call? I have a 2-year-old gray cat, Billy, who sometimes gets past my feet and runs out the door. I worry that he will get run over by a car or attacked by a coyote. He will look at me when I call, but that is it. — *Kelly in Fort Myers, Florida*

DEAR KELLY: You can teach cats to respond to certain commands, and calling them is one of those commands. I know that Billy can learn to do it, because he clearly recognizes your voice. He just doesn't see the value in returning to you right away.

So it's important to help Billy "see" the value in returning when you call! You do this through training that uses positive reinforcement — a favorite

positive reinforcement — a favorite treat or food. Here's how:

- Come up with a noise that you can make just before Billy gets a treat or dinner. A whistle, a clucking noise, even a little song.
- Just before you open his can of food or treat bag, make that noise. Do it at every feeding and treat time.
- Set aside five minutes, twice a day, for reinforcement training.
- During training, make the noise, wait for Billy to respond, then give him a treat. Back up a couple of feet and repeat.
- Gradually increase the distance during each session until Billy comes running when you call.

Once Billy associates that specific noise with a reward, he'll come back every time you call. Make sure to always reward him when he comes, even if it's just lots of praise. He'll be far less likely to stay out if he escapes, and you'll have much greater peace of mind.

You can learn this technique: <https://www.rd.com/list/how-to-train-a-cat/>.

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

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

profile, forgetting to log off from the site.

* In 2009 the British zombie movie "Colin," on which writer/director Marc Price spent 18 months and a whopping \$70, won an award at the renowned Cannes Film Festival.

* Further on the subject of zombies, their fans are known as zombopiles, while fear of the ghoulis creatures is known as kinemortophobia.

* Nineteen-year-old Jonathan Parker, of Fort Loudoun, Pennsylvania, was charged with burglary after stealing two diamond rings and using the computer in his victim's house to check his Facebook

* Vikings believed a goat in Valhalla supplied an endless supply of beer from its udders.

* A football's shape (prolate spheroid) is that of an inflated pig's bladder, which is what the first footballs were made of.

* The 1934 mystery novel "Cain's Jawbone" by Edward Powys Mathers is printed with its 100 pages out of order. To solve the mystery, readers must determine the correct page order and the names of the six murderers and six victims. The mystery has only ever officially been solved by four people.

* Researchers in Japan have fitted a train with a speaker that barks like a dog and snorts like a deer in order to prevent collisions with deer on the railway.

* Canadian radio stations are required by law to play Canadian artists on the airwaves at least 35% of the time.

* The Windows XP default background image of rolling green hills known as "Bliss" was historically a vineyard. The vines were taken out a couple years before the photo was taken due to a pest infestation.

* Thought for the Day: "When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us." -- Helen Keller

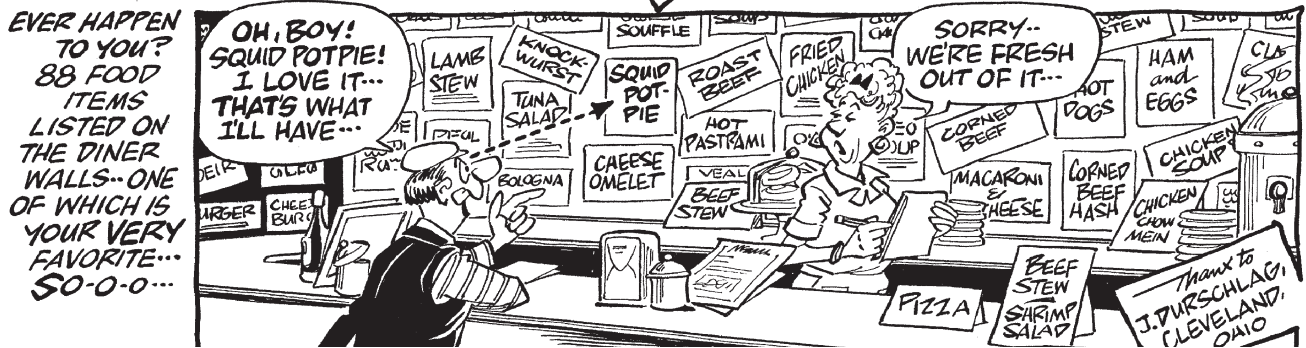
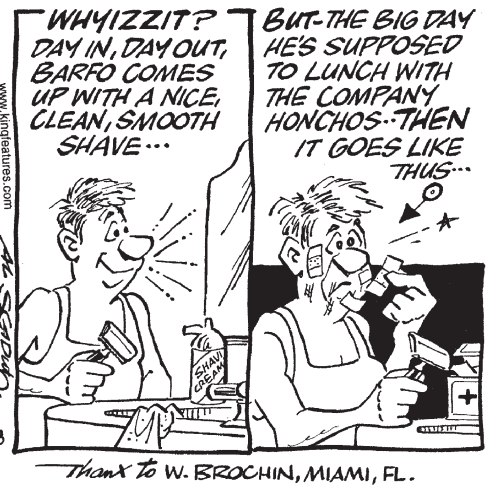
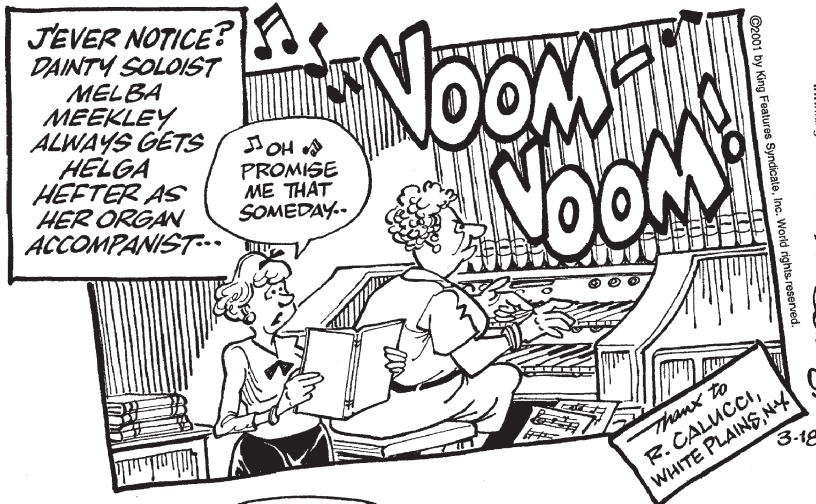
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO



Horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*) is a hardy perennial herb that has been cultivated for at least 3,000 years. It thrives in temperate climates, growing best in deep, rich soil in a sunny location. In early spring, before planting horseradish, spade or rototill the soil 8 to 10 inches down. Mix in generous amounts of compost or other organic material, then let the soil settle a few days before planting horseradish root cuttings.

- Brenda Weaver
Source: extension.umn.edu



by Freddy Groves

Inclusivity at the VA

The Department of Veterans Affairs now has a cultural transformation action plan with an 18-member task force created last year under a presidential executive order. That task force (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access, or I-DEA) made 20 recommendations and 60 subrecommendations to be considered over the next four years. Per their mission statement, the goal is to ensure that all employees, veterans, families, caregivers and survivors have equitable treatment and experiences when interacting with the VA.

The task force initially focused on existing policies and programs, barriers, gaps and institutional access points. One of the first things it accomplished was to raise the Pride flag at the VA Central Office. Another was to address the rule-making process to modify the Code of Federal Regulations to expand the VA's gender-affirming care and benefits for veterans.

firming care and benefits for veterans.

Additionally, the task force has changed the Veterans Experience Office (VEO) Trust Surveys to include questions about gender identity and sexual orientation, and medical records choices were added that include transgender male, transgender female, non-binary, other and "does not wish to disclose." The Veterans Health Administration's LGBT and Related Identities health program is now called the LGBTQ+ Health Program.

One of its goals (on the list of 20) is to integrate I-DEA into hiring, position management, talent development and executive coaching. Allied with that is their goal of evaluating "institutional symbols, mottos, expression of values displayed and used by VA to ensure inclusiveness and diverse representation." One of the guiding principles is to deliberately and consciously embed I-DEA into the institutional memory and organizational culture of the VA. To ensure that this happens, overseeing all this will be a proposed I-DEA Office and Chief Diversity Officer (DCO) position that will report directly to the Secretary of the VA.

To read the rest of the task force's 20 recommendations, go to: www.va.gov/ORMDI/docs/VA_I-DEA_Action_Plan-SIGNED.pdf.

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



Pump the Brakes, Sec. Buttigieg!

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is set to implement the Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) rule on February 7—this Monday. This rule imposes new requirements on entry-level Commercial Driver License (CDL) applicants before they can get behind the wheel. These regulations—originally mandated as part of the 2012 surface transportation reauthorization bill known as MAP-21—requires drivers to complete their training from a provider on the FMCSA's Training Provider Registry List.

While well-intended, these new requirements come at a terrible time. We are in the midst of a global supply chain crisis, intensified by an ongoing labor shortage. The American Trucking Associations reports there is a shortage of more than 80,000 truck drivers – I've heard for weeks from truck drivers who have said this will disrupt their business and make things worse.

I have been working with my colleagues to delay the ELDT rule, but unfortunately the Biden Administration remains largely unreceptive. This week, I sent a letter to Secretary Buttigieg, urging him to listen to the boots on the ground and delay the implementation of these new requirements.

In November, I sent a letter to Secretary Buttigieg urging reimplementing of the FMCSA's Under-21 Commercial Driver Pilot Program. The Administration just recently re-started the program, however, the current handling of the supply chain crisis seems to be one step forward, two steps back. Many are concerned that these ELDT requirements will only compound the supply chain crisis and hurt prospective CDL applicants, especially those in rural areas, as well as those pursuing part-time employment in the trucking industry. This will disincentivize new truck drivers from joining the industry, increasing the truck driver shortage.

While the Ocean Shipping Reform Act that Congressman Garamendi (D-CA) and I introduced will help combat part of the supply chain crisis – having readily available truck drivers to transport American goods around the country is a necessity of a proper-functioning supply chain.

Pump the brakes, Secretary Buttigieg. We need common sense solutions that solve our current crisis, and the new ELDT rule isn't one of them.

P.S. – If you want to know if the provider near you is qualified as a training provider, you can find a list at <https://tpr.fmcsa.dot.gov/>. You'll need to scroll down until you see the "Do you need to find a training provider?" section. Once there, click on "Download the list of registered training providers." This link will allow users to download a spreadsheet of the ELDT training locations that have registered with FMCSA. Please note the regulations are not retroactive—they do not apply to people who hold these licenses or endorsements prior to February 7, 2022, or who renew them prior to expiration.

South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Teach Our Children to be United

Imagine teaching your child that our country was founded on racism, or that hard work is not a virtue, or that a young boy or girl should be ashamed of themselves because of their skin color. As a mom and as a grandma, I can't even begin to imagine poisoning my child with those lies. But believe it or not, lessons like those are being taught to children in America's K-12 schools and universities. As governor, I want to keep that from happening in South Dakota.

You might have heard about it on TV or read about it on the internet: Critical Race Theory, a neo-Marxist philosophy that says the United States is racist to the core, that equal opportunity is a myth, and that the American Dream is a lie. There are some folks who deny that it's being taught to kids. They claim it's a concept that's just studied in universities or in law schools. Wrong. The truth is, the proponents of Critical Race Theory are hiding their anti-American philosophy in plain sight: in colorful children's books, revisionist textbooks, and radical lesson plans designed to indoctrinate children into their way of thinking.

Critical Race Theory is embedded in books like "Antiracist Baby," which teaches children at the earliest of ages not to be colorblind, and even tells them to "confess" to being racist. It's in the 1619 Project—a series of New York Times articles that invent lies about our country's history, even teaching that the American Revolution was fought to preserve slavery. Today, those articles are forming the basis of a new curriculum that is being used in 4,500 schools nationwide. And it's in the curriculum that tells teachers to "challenge the ways that math is used to uphold capitalist, imperialist, racist views."

If it's not enough that some schools are teaching kids ideas that are entirely against everything that America stands for, they're also turning children into political pawns. Through "Action Civics," students are being forced to take part in political protests. Instead of teaching children our nation's history, the founding principles, or even the structure of our government, Action Civics unleashes them on the streets as activists, turning them into foot soldiers for partisan fights they may not even understand.

And under President Biden, the U.S. Department of Education is rubber-stamping these materials and using federal dollars to entice school districts into teaching this harmful ideology. In July 2021, I signed an executive order preventing South Dakota schools from being able to apply for federal grants in history or civics until the legislature could provide a solution to this indoctrination from the federal government.

We will not stand for this in South Dakota. Racial division and political activism will have no place in our classrooms. That's why I have introduced two bills to put a stop to it before it spreads to our state. The first

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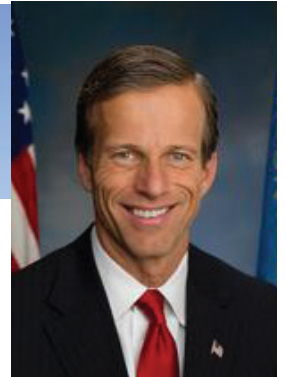
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bill ensures that our public schools are not indoctrinating kids and teachers with Critical Race Theory and that students won't be compelled to engage in political activism. The second bill extends protections against Critical Race Theory to college students and employees, too, while also preserving academic freedom.

It's also important to note what these bills will not do. They do not prevent difficult conversations about racism, or lessons about moments in the past when we have failed to live up to our American ideals. Bad books and ideas should be balanced, not banned, and students should have access to a wide range of perspectives. But overtly divisive lessons that teach children to hate America should not be forced on a captive audience of young students.

No child should be taught that someone is better or less than someone else because of their skin color. No child should be forced to participate in riots, protests, or lobbying to push a political agenda. And no child should be taught that America is racist, or that the American Dream is not for them. It's time to put Critical Race Theory and Action Civics in the ash heap of history where they belong.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Every State is a Border State

The crisis at our southern border is the worst in our nation's history, and the Biden administration bears full responsibility. During President Biden's first year in office, there were nearly 2 million illegal border crossing attempts. Instead of listening to early warnings from border experts, the president caved to the far-left and refused to acknowledge the humanitarian crisis unfolding right in front of him. Not literally in front of him, I suppose, since the president hasn't actually visited the crisis zones on our southern border at any point during his entire career as a senator, vice president, or president. During his first year as president, he's largely ignored the crisis from the comfort of the White House in Washington.

The Biden administration has single-handedly escalated this crisis, and it has refused to implement meaningful policies that will deter illegal immigrants from coming across our border – it has essentially created a haven for illegal border crossers. Now, instead of addressing the real security and humanitarian crisis that this massive wave of illegal immigration represents, the president and his administration have doubled down, resisting court orders to reinstate the Remain in Mexico policy and conducting migrant relocation flights in the dead of night.

The southern border crisis is not only a problem for border states. It is impacting communities all across our country, including ours in South Dakota. The president's failed policies make every state a border state. He and others in his administration can't waste another minute by plugging their ears and covering their eyes. They must act now.

When I traveled to the southern border last April, I didn't think it could get any worse than what I was seeing at that time. Well, I was wrong. Currently, there is a massive increase of fentanyl being smuggled across the border to states all around the country, with seizures up an average of 134 percent – 1,000 percent in south Texas alone. But this poison obviously doesn't stay there. It makes its way to communities across the country. Fentanyl overdoses are now the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 18 to 45. You would think that statistics like these would snap the Biden administration back to reality, but in fact, Vice President Kamala Harris – the president's designated border czar – has yet to travel to the border for more than a scripted photo op since taking office.

What's just as concerning to me are recent reports that revealed U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has been releasing large numbers of illegal immigrants into communities around the country. After migrants are processed at a makeshift border facility, they are put onto planes and scattered throughout the country. This is inexcusable and only encourages continued waves of illegal migration.

Now don't get me wrong, immigration has helped build this country, and I strongly support making sure that the United States continues to offer a chance for individuals to achieve their dream of a better life and positively contribute to our nation. I also support temporary worker programs, like the H-2B visa program, that allow individuals from other countries to come to the United States for a limited time period before returning to their home countries. This is a critical program for supplementing domestic workers that enables South Dakota businesses, like those in the tourism industry, to handle peak seasonal demand.

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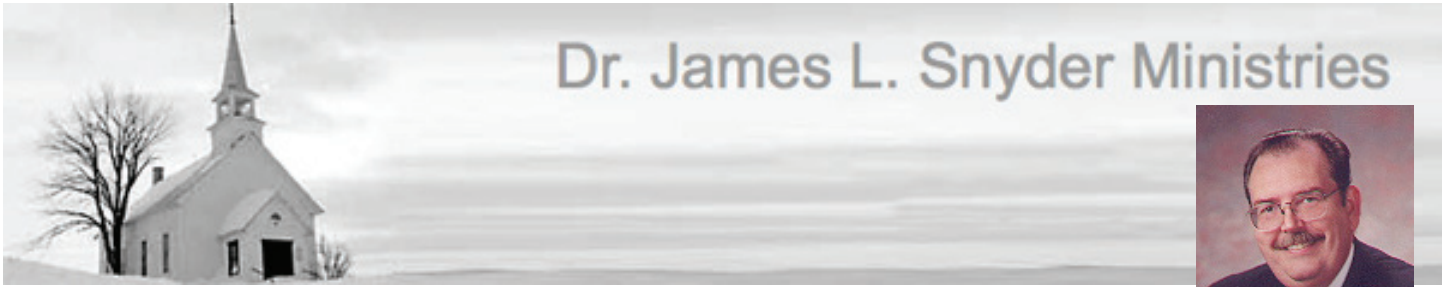
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I have introduced legislation to make this supplemental system more reliable for our employers. But we cannot have endless floods of illegal immigration that fly in the face of our laws and overwhelm the men and women who are trying to protect our country. Immigration has to have limits, and, most of all, it has to be legal.

The administration should prioritize strong border security, stop the rampant abuse of the asylum system, and crack down on the traffickers and cartels that prey on migrants. President Biden has the power to start ending this crisis today by enforcing immigration laws and asserting that the way to come to this country is by doing it legally. It's time for the president and his border czar to get out of Washington, D.C., to see the crisis they have created and take action before it gets any worse.

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It was a Murphy's Law kind of week

I am not what you would call a superstitious person. [Knock on wood.] I am a realist in a modified definition of that word and I usually take things as they come.

My past week, however, was an open commentary on "Murphy's Law." Offhand I am not quite sure who come up with this concept, but they must have had a week somewhat like my week this past week.

If I had it within me, I would establish "Snyder's Law" which simply stated means, what can go right will go right. Then all would be right with the world. Well, except for those who are left-handed.

It all started Monday morning when I had an early morning meeting. I meant to set my alarm clock for 6 AM but for some reason I set it for 6 PM and overslept. Have you ever noticed when you are 15 minutes late in the morning the day ends up being 90 minutes late? Do not ask me how that happens. Ask Murphy.

In the mail, I got a notice from the bank that I was overdrawn and they were charging me an insufficient fund fee. Well, I was furious. After all, I know how to add and subtract and I know how to take care of my bank account. I was about ready to call them and give them a piece of my mind when I noticed, how it happened I will never know, I forgot to include two checks I had written last week. I hate when that happens. My whole checkbook is now screwed up. I think it might be easier for me just to close my account and start all over again.

It was Tuesday but I had to go across town and endure all that traffic. It is not my favorite place to drive, I will tell you right now. Just as I turned onto a street, my engine sputtered a little bit. Then, much to my chagrin, the engine stopped completely. I hate when that happens.

I turned the key several times and then, I do not know why I did it, but I glanced at the gas gauge and the arrow was pointing way beyond the E. My gas tank was about as empty as my bank account. It is bad to run out of gas, but the worst thing for me about running out of gas is calling the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and asking her for help. I would walk 100 miles not to tell her I am out of gas.

She always comes and bails me out. However, for the next six months I am reminded and reminded and reminded to put gas in my tank.

Thursday also had its issues. My wife wanted me to go to the store and pick up something and for some reason, I cannot remember it now, I used her car. Maybe it was because I did not want to run out of gas!

I got to the store, paid for my purchase, came out and tried finding my truck. I walked up and down and my truck was nowhere in sight. The only thing I could think of at the time was that somebody had stolen my truck.

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I thought about calling the police, and then I thought better and decided I would call my wife first. You know what it is like when your wife hears something secondhand. And so I called her.

"I can't find my truck," I said trying to keep my voice as calm as possible not to get her upset, "I think somebody stole it. Should I call the police?"

Silence on the phone. Then I heard her say in a very calm voice, "Whoever stole your truck parked it in our driveway."

I then remembered I was driving her car.

I tried to chuckle within but I knew that this incident would hang in our house for months to come and I have Mr. Murphy to thank for that.

It was such a horrific week and I was so deep in trouble with my Better Half, I decided to take her out Friday night for a nice meal on the town. I took her to her favorite restaurant and we ordered our supper, then set back and kind of sighed the week away. Maybe all that could go wrong has gone wrong and the week was about to turn around.

We chatted; I tried to skew the conversation away from running out of gas and misplacing my truck. Then the waitress came with our meal. I was ready to settle down, enjoy a scrumptious meal and end the week on a happy note.

The waitress set my wife's plate in front of her and she smiled. Then the waitress set my plate in front of me and I freaked out. For some reason the waitress got my order mixed up with somebody else's order and right in the middle of my plate was a pile of broccoli.

The only hope I have is that it cannot get any worse than this. I think David, the psalmist, understood this when he wrote, "... weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5 KJV).

As bad as it gets, as a Christian I have some great things to look forward to in Jesus Christ.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: As millions and millions of electric car batteries start to reach the end of their useful lives, how can we avoid an e-waste apocalypse?

-- W. Alexander, San Francisco, CA

Record-breaking electric car sales confirm that the future of electric transport is here. Globally, 10 million lithium-ion battery-powered vehicles are now on the road. The International Energy Agency predicts that number will increase to 300 million by 2030, accounting for over 60 percent of new car sales. But a huge problem looms on the horizon: in less than a decade, nearly two million tons of lithium-ion batteries from electric vehicles will be retired each year, and the current recycling infrastructure isn't ready for them. Most lithium-ion batteries are tossed in landfills, with only five percent recycled worldwide.

Researchers at Newcastle University in the UK warn that this growing stream of spent batteries poses "an enormous threat" to the natural environment and human health. "Degradation of the battery content in some cases may lead to the emergence of chemicals structurally similar to chemical warfare agents."

Given the risks, upping our capacity for recycling these batteries is imperative not only to avoid possibly catastrophic landfill disposal, but also to reduce the need for harmful mining. More than 70 percent of the world's cobalt, the most expensive element in a lithium-ion battery, is produced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). One would assume this to be an economic miracle for miners in the DRC, however unrelenting poverty forces even the children to work in the mines instead of attending school.

In addition to pitiful wages, DRC miners face serious health threats and local environmental annihilation. Researchers at the University of Lubumbashi found that residents near the mines, especially children, had higher urinary levels of cobalt, cadmium and uranium. The urinary cobalt concentrations found in this population are the highest ever reported for a general population. Fish in the DRC are also heavily contaminated with high levels of metals, while soil samples are so contaminated that the mining regions of the DRC are considered among the 10 most polluted areas in the world.

Lithium mining has also spurred a backlash across the globe, including in Serbia, Tibet and Chile. And in the U.S., residents near Thacker Pass in Nevada formed a grassroots group to sound off on multiple concerns should a proposed lithium mine begin production there. Concerns include a possible dramatic decrease in air quality due to the tens of thousands of gallons of diesel fuel that will be burned daily at the proposed mine, releasing the same carbon dioxide emissions as a small city. The mine would also extract more than a billion gallons of water annually from an already over-allocated aquifer in the Quinn River Valley, possibly leaching dangerous substances into groundwater in the process. Further distressing are the adverse impacts to the area's unique sagebrush steppe terrain, a habitat for over 350 species, including greater sage-grouse, golden eagles, pronghorn antelope, burrowing owls, pygmy rabbits and more.

Dramatically increasing recycling capacity for lithium-ion batteries and creating new ways to store electricity safely are crucial to staving off the worst impacts of our newfound reliance on this technology.



Activists are concerned that local workers, including many children, eat a steady diet of contaminated fish from a lake at the site of a big cobalt mine at Katanga in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Credit: Fairphone.

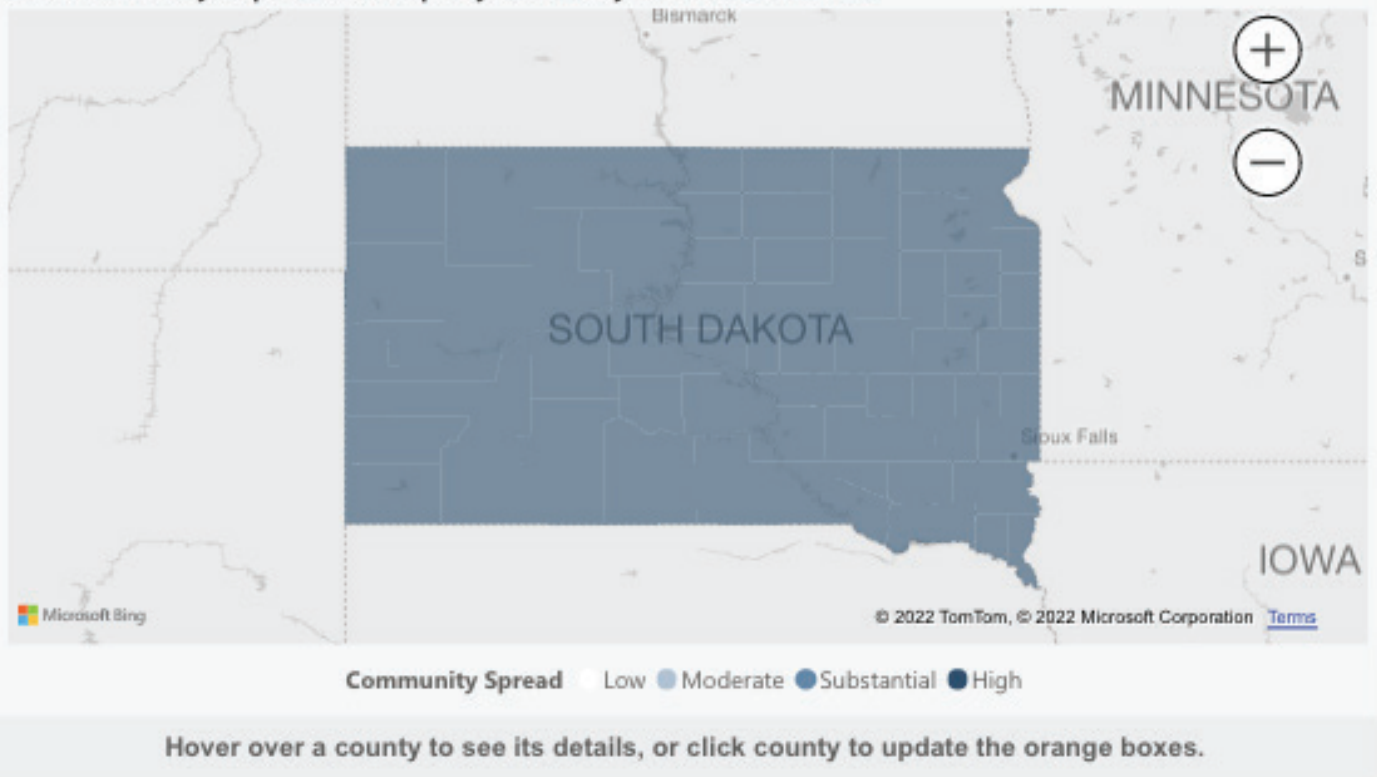
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South Dakota COVID-19 Report



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



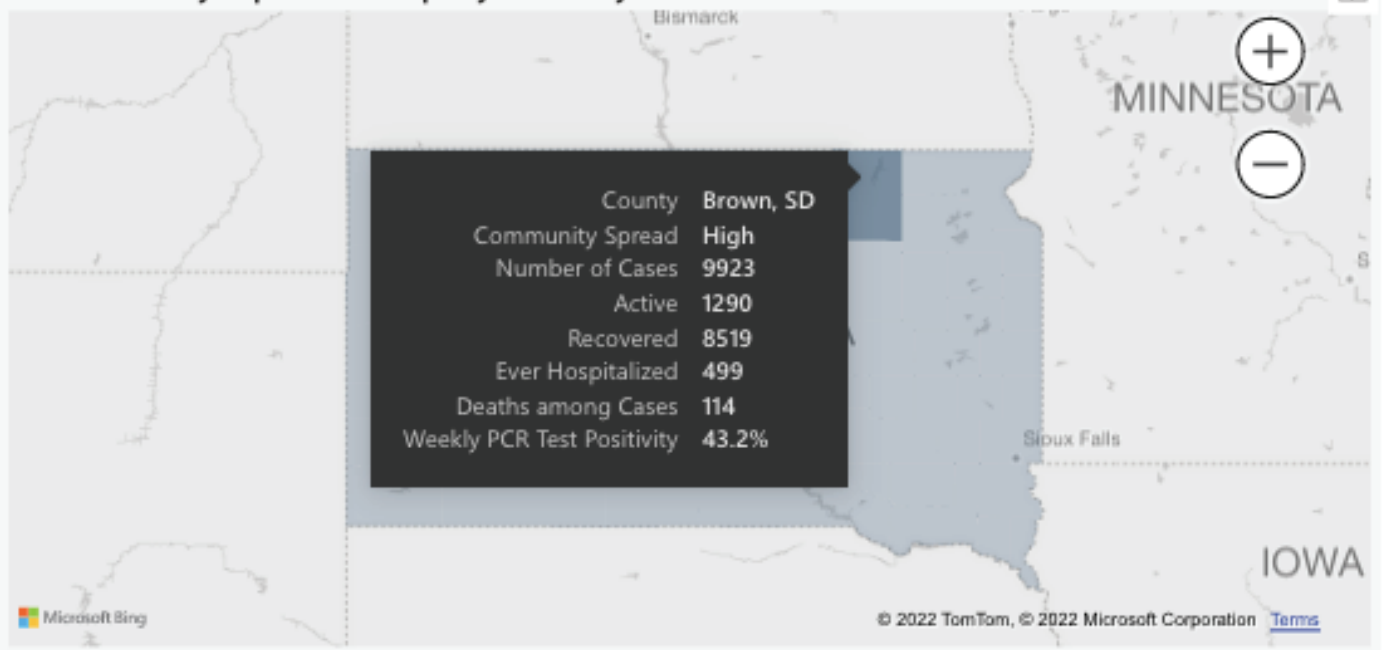
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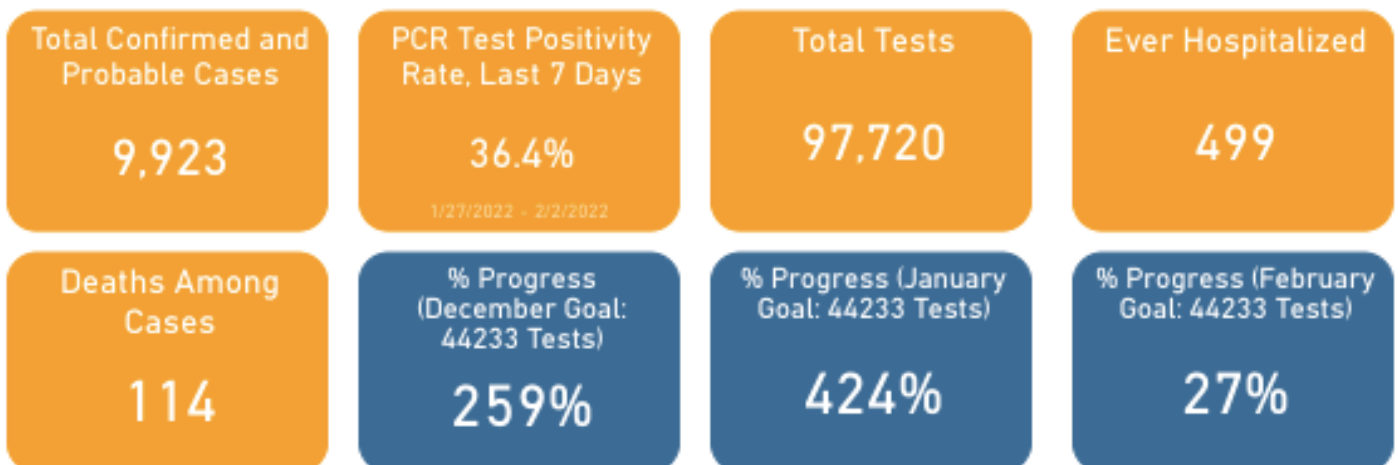
Brown County COVID-19 Report



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



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Day County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

5

Active Cases

160
-37

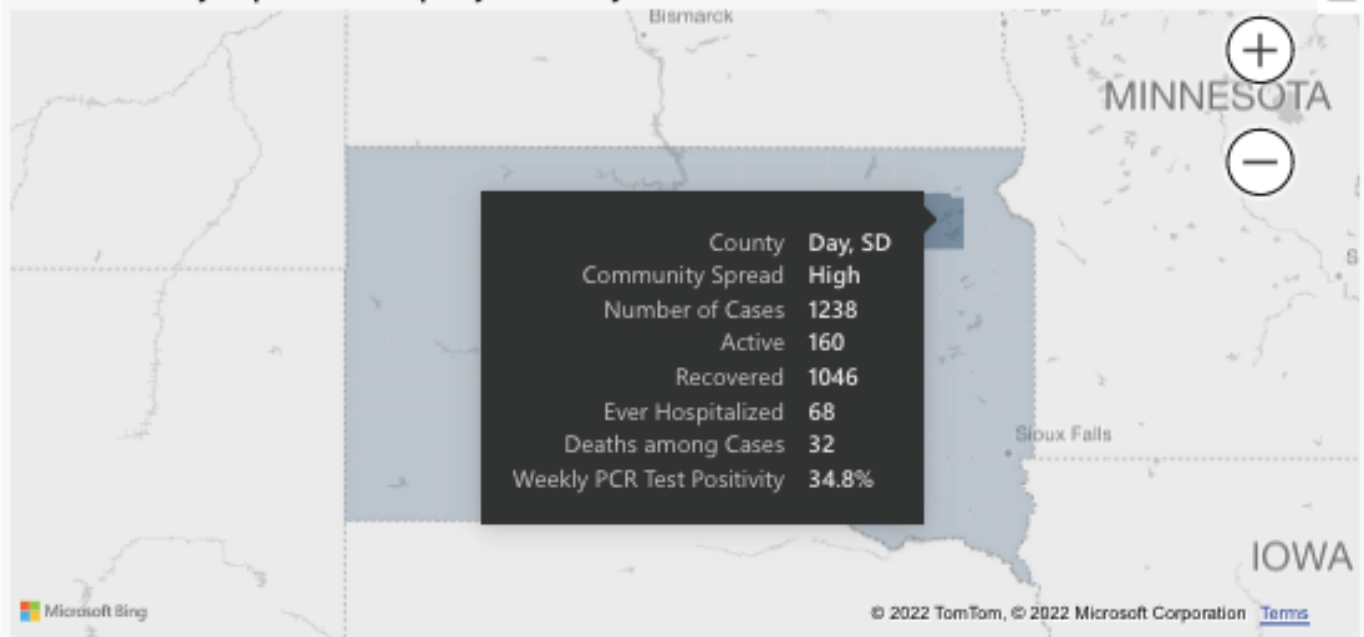
Recovered Cases

1,046

Currently Hospitalized

354

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Low ● Moderate ● Substantial ● High

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

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

1,238

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

24.4%

1/27/2022 - 2/2/2022

Total Tests

15,908

Ever Hospitalized

68

Deaths Among Cases

32

% Progress (December Goal: 44233 Tests)

259%

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

424%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

27%

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COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Currently Hospitalized	-57	354
Deaths Among Cases	+50	2687
Ever Hospitalized		10208
Active Cases		25052
Recovered Cases		202501
Total Cases		230240

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	121618	1225
Male	108622	1462

VARIANT CASES OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Variant	# of Cases
Delta (B.1.617.2 & AY lineages)	1420
Omicron (B.1.1.529 & BA lineages)	302
Alpha (B.1.1.7)	176
Gamma (P.1)	4
Beta (B.1.351)	2

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	15121	2
10-19 years	28016	1
20-29 years	40596	11
30-39 years	39295	46
40-49 years	32381	71
50-59 years	29679	206
60-69 years	24356	430
70-79 years	12659	625
80+ years	8137	1295

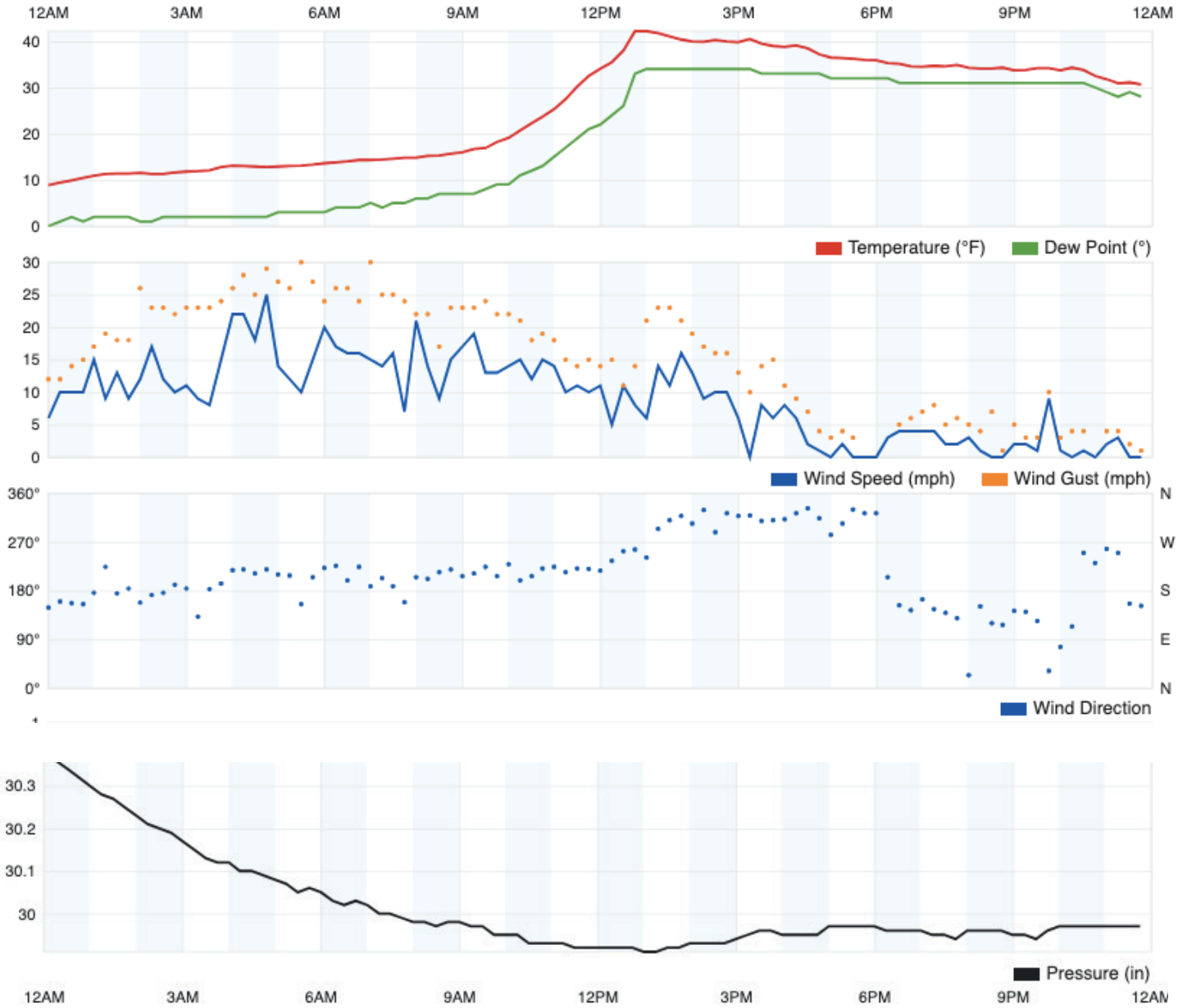
RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian / Pacific Islander	3059	1%
Black	5647	2%
Hispanic	9751	4%
Native American	28154	12%
Other	2390	1%
Unknown	6419	3%
White	174820	76%

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Slight Chance Snow and Blustery then Partly Sunny

High: 18 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 8 °F

Monday



Sunny

High: 40 °F

Monday Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 26 °F

Tuesday



Mostly Sunny and Breezy

High: 42 °F

Breezy/Windy Today...Temperatures To Warm Up This Week

Max Wind Gust Forecast Today

7 Day High Temperature Forecast

	2/6 Sun														Maximum	7 Day High Temperature Forecast											
	5am	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm		7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	2/6 Sun	2/7 Mon	2/8 Tue	2/9 Wed	2/10 Thu	2/11 Fri	2/12 Sat
Gettysburg	39	37	37	33	35	36	36	32	30	29	26	24	20	14	13	13	13	13	13	39	36	47	45	37	45	45	31
Eagle Butte	38	36	35	31	29	30	29	29	28	29	30	28	22	17	20	20	20	21	20	38	40	50	45	39	49	46	34
Redfield	39	30	28	28	30	32	32	32	30	26	23	21	16	14	14	13	12	10	10	39	34	46	48	38	44	44	30
Pierre	36	31	29	29	30	30	29	28	25	26	26	25	21	14	12	10	10	10	10	36	43	55	51	44	51	52	38
Watertown	25	18	24	24	26	26	28	26	25	25	25	22	20	14	12	10	9	9	7	28	29	32	38	30	33	34	20
Wheaton	24	22	23	22	22	23	24	22	22	21	21	18	15	12	12	10	8	8	7	24	17	20	36	29	28	29	15
Sisseton	22	21	23	23	23	23	25	24	23	22	22	20	16	13	10	9	7	7	8	25	23	28	37	32	33	33	18
Mobridge	38	30	30	31	30	29	28	25	22	22	22	21	16	13	14	13	13	12	12	38	38	51	48	39	48	46	35
Milbank	22	20	22	21	21	24	24	23	22	21	21	20	16	12	12	10	8	7	7	24	38	51	48	39	48	46	35
Aberdeen	35	26	28	26	25	26	28	28	25	23	21	17	16	15	14	14	14	13	12	35	21	26	38	31	32	34	20
Britton	24	21	23	22	23	25	25	24	24	23	22	17	14	12	12	12	10	10	10	25	31	39	43	35	40	40	26
Eureka	35	36	35	33	33	33	31	30	24	22	18	15	12	9	10	12	13	12	12	36	24	29	35	28	32	32	18
McIntosh	38	37	35	33	31	31	30	30	32	33	35	29	23	16	16	18	20	18	18	38	32	42	41	34	42	39	28
Miller	35	33	32	32	31	33	35	33	28	26	25	21	17	12	12	10	10	10	12	35	39	50	43	37	48	44	32
Kennebec	38	35	32	32	33	37	36	32	30	29	30	26	22	15	13	13	13	14	14	38	36	50	49	40	47	49	34
Murdo	36	35	33	35	33	33	32	32	31	32	32	30	26	20	20	18	18	18	20	36	42	52	51	43	50	52	37
Murdo	43	53	50	43	50	52	37	43	53	50	43	50	52	37	43	53	50	43	50	52	37						

NWS Aberdeen, SD
Updated: 2/6/2022 5:38 AM CST

Scattered snow showers and windy conditions this morning will diminish by early afternoon. After another day spent on the cold air side of things today, much of the rest of this upcoming week should be spent in air that is at or above climate normals for this time of year.

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Today in Weather History

February 6, 1959: A man from Gary in Deuel County was in critical condition with frozen hands, feet, and arms after spending the night in his car in subzero weather.

February 6, 1987: Record warmth occurred across all of central, north-central, and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, with highs in the mid-50s to the lower 60s. Aberdeen, Kennebec, Mobridge, Pierre, Sisseton, Timber Lake, Watertown, and Wheaton all set record highs on this date in 1987. Pierre recorded the warmest temperature for the day with 62 degrees.

1807 - It was the famous "Cold Friday" in the Midwest and South. The temperature did not rise above zero in Ohio and Kentucky. (David Ludlum)

1958: The Munich air disaster occurred when British European Airways Flight 609 crashed on its third attempt to take off from a slush-covered runway at Munich-Riem Airport, West Germany. On the plane was the Manchester United football team, nicknamed the "Busby Babes," along with supporters and journalists. Twenty of the 44 on the aircraft died at the scene. The injured, some unconscious, were taken to the Rechts der Isar Hospital in Munich, where three more died, resulting in 23 fatalities with 21 survivors.

1978: A massive nor'easter buried the northeastern U.S. Storm totals' cities, including 18 inches in New York City, 16 inches at Philadelphia, and 14 inches in Baltimore. The Boston MA area received 25 to 30 inches in "The Great New England Blizzard." The mayor outlawed travel in the city for an entire week.

1987 - Brownsville, TX, was deluged with seven inches of rain in just two hours, and flooding in some parts of the city was worse than that caused by Hurricane Beulah in 1967. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Arctic cold invaded the south central and eastern U.S. Sixteen cities reported new record low temperatures for the date. Squalls in the Great Lakes Region produced a foot of snow at Arcade NY in three hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Forty-one cities in the western U.S. reported new record low temperatures for the date. Lows of -30 degrees at Ely NV and -33 degrees at Richfield UT were all-time records. Morning lows of 31 degrees at San Francisco CA and -15 degrees at Reno NV were records for February. Logan Canyon UT was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 54 degrees below zero, and Craig CO hit 51 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - A second cold front brought more heavy snow to the high elevations of Oregon, with 12 inches reported at Sunset Summit. Ten inches of snow blanketed Crater Lake and Mount Bachelor. Heavy snow also blanketed northeastern Nevada and parts of Washington State. In Nevada, up to a foot of snow was reported between Spring Creek and Lamoille. Stevens Pass WA received 14 inches of snow in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2010: On February 5-6, a severe nor'easter, commonly referred to as Snowmageddon, impacted the east coast from North Carolina to New York. Some snowfall amounts include; 32.9 inches at Washington Dulles International Airport; 28.5 inches at the Philadelphia International Airport; 21.1 inches at the Pittsburgh International Airport; 18.2 in Atlantic City; Trace in Central Park.

2020: The Esperanza Base, the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, 63°23'S, reached 18.3°C (64.94°F), February 6th, 2020. The 18.3°C sets a new, all-time high temperature for the continent of Antarctica. The previous record was 17.5°C in 2015, also at Esperanza. Please Note: A verification process needs to be done before certifying as a new record.

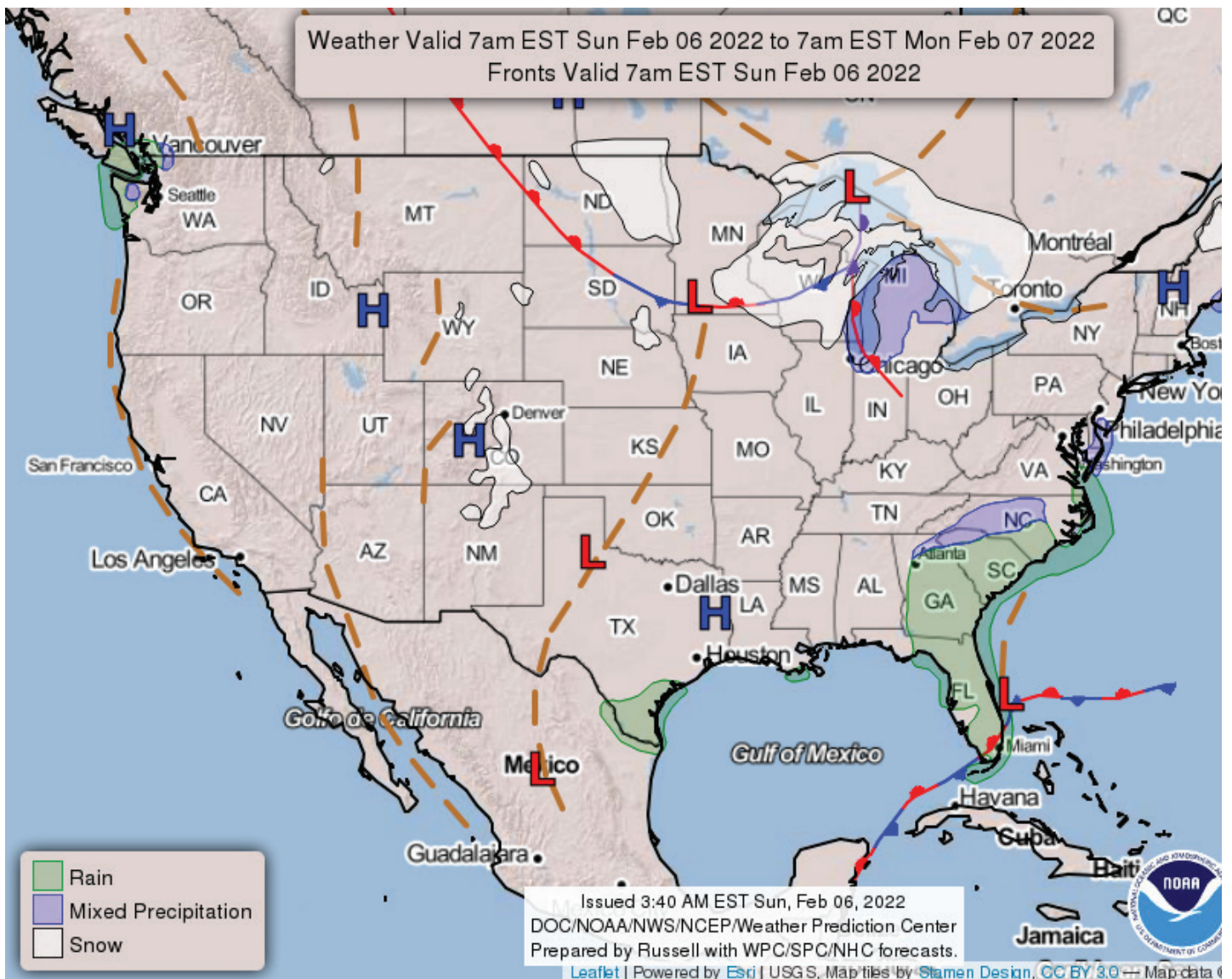
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 42 °F at 12:50 PM
Low Temp: 9 °F at 12:00 AM
Wind: 30 mph at 5:22 AM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 58 in 1987
Record Low: -33 in 1907
Average High: 26°F
Average Low: 3°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.12
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.67
Precip Year to Date: 0.59
Sunset Tonight: 5:48:01 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:43:32 AM



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THAT'S WHY I ASKED

James didn't want to be a farmer like his Dad. He resented the long days, hard work and low pay. So, every time Dad asked him to do something, he would ask sarcastically, "Why?" or "Why should I do that?" or "Why me?" or "Why do you want that done?" It bothered his Dad who planned on leaving the farm to him when he died.

One day he gave him a basket with a rope on it and said, "Go to the well and fill it with water." "Why?" asked his son. "None of your 'whys' this time - just do as you're told."

He dipped the basket in the well and pulled it to the top. He watched the water flow out between the spaces in the basket and became angry. "It won't hold water," he shouted. "Do it again," said the Dad. Again, the water seeped out of the basket. "Do it again," said his Dad. "I will not. You're not going to make a fool of me! I'm not going to do it again! Take your old basket back!"

"Look," said his Dad with a smile. "Now the basket is clean - which is what it needed, and you didn't have to ask 'why.' The water did what it was supposed to do. It washed away the dirt. Now it's clean, and we can use it to put our crops in."

How like God's Word! We don't need to ask God "Why" we need to read His Word. It's the way it works - it cleanses us from sin and keeps us pure. The Psalmist had it right: "How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to Your Word."

Prayer: Lord, give us a deep desire to read Your Word and allow it to fill our lives. Help us to become pure, and then to stay pure. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to Your Word. Psalm 119:9

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2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/09/2022 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)
06/17/2022 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start
06/18/2022 Groton Triathlon
Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start
07/04/2022 Firecracker Couples Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start
(4th of July)
07/10/2022 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion
Baseball Tourney
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm
08/05/2022 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/12/2022 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/14/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am (2nd Friday in October)
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm

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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 Saturday:

Dakota Cash

08-10-11-30-34

(eight, ten, eleven, thirty, thirty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

02-04-22-31-35, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 2

(two, four, twenty-two, thirty-one, thirty-five; Star Ball: ten; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$7.17 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$31 million

Powerball

05-16-27-39-61, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 2

(five, sixteen, twenty-seven, thirty-nine, sixty-one; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$137 million

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Arlington 57, Great Plains Lutheran 23

Belle Fourche 55, Custer 44

Bennett County 57, Hay Springs, Neb. 46

Beresford 46, Alcester-Hudson 44

Brookings 53, Douglas 38

Canistota 42, Gayville-Volin 35

Deubrook 64, Hitchcock-Tulare 34

Florence/Henry 60, Warner 23

Hot Springs 39, Lead-Deadwood 33

Huron 56, Sioux Falls Jefferson 55

Irene-Wakonda 35, Menno 21

James Valley Christian 41, Estelline/Hendricks 34

Mobridge-Pollock 53, Todd County 48

Rapid City Stevens 44, Brandon Valley 36

Red Cloud 68, Spearfish 45

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 70, Rapid City Central 47

Todd County 70, Stanley County 48

Wagner 62, Avon 49

Wakpala 104, Crazy Horse 13

Wessington Springs 49, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 31

Wilmot 39, Langford 34

Wolsey-Wessington 40, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 29

Dak XII/NEC Conference Clash=

Aberdeen Roncalli 55, West Central 52

Canton 63, Webster 27

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Dell Rapids 65, Tiospa Zina Tribal 52
Elk Point-Jefferson 37, Redfield 21
Hamlin 58, Dakota Valley 44
Lennox 45, Milbank 29
Madison 47, Deuel 39
Sioux Falls Christian 53, Parkston 44
Tea Area 56, Groton Area 21
Tri-Valley 65, Clark/Willow Lake 50
Vermillion 52, Sisseton 43
Highmore-Harrold Classic=
Jones County 54, Herreid/Selby Area 25

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Arlington 63, Great Plains Lutheran 62
Belle Fourche 48, Custer 38
Beresford 71, Alcester-Hudson 35
Canistota 63, Gayville-Volin 49
Clark/Willow Lake 60, Groton Area 47
Crazy Horse 80, St. Francis Indian 60
Crow Creek 69, Pine Ridge 67
Deubrook 67, Hitchcock-Tulare 38
Douglas 66, Brookings 63, OT
Langford 40, Wilmot 31
Menno 42, Irene-Wakonda 41
Milbank 50, Elkton-Lake Benton 35
Rapid City Stevens 54, Brandon Valley 45
Red Cloud 71, Spearfish 70
Sioux Falls Jefferson 76, Huron 62
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 75, Rapid City Central 40
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 61, Wessington Springs 51
Wagner 75, Avon 34
Winner 59, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 26
Wolsey-Wessington 55, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 22
Highmore Classic=
Burke 61, Highmore-Harrold 55
Gregory 66, Herreid/Selby Area 42
Jones County 63, North Central Co-Op 31
Lemmon 53, Harding County 45
Philip 62, Leola/Frederick 34
Sanford Pentagon Classic=
DeSmet 36, St. Thomas More 30
Lyman 65, Florence/Henry 42
McLaughlin 76, Little Wound 52
Moorhead, Minn. 68, Tea Area 56
Viborg-Hurley 48, Corsica/Stickney 37
West Central 81, Lakota Tech 58
White River 64, Sioux Valley 62

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

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Wilson lifts S. Dakota St. over South Dakota 89-79

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Douglas Wilson had a season-high 25 points as South Dakota State won its 12th consecutive game, topping South Dakota 89-79 on Saturday night.

Baylor Scheierman had 15 points and 10 rebounds for South Dakota State (21-4, 12-0 Summit League). Luke Appel added 13 points. Alex Arians had 11 points.

Kruz Perrott-Hunt had 15 points and six rebounds for the Coyotes (13-9, 6-5). Mason Archambault added 14 points. Hunter Goodrick had 13 points and eight rebounds.

Rapid City police arrest 4 after stolen vehicles, guns found

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Four people have been arrested after several stolen vehicles and guns were recovered at a storage facility in Rapid City.

The Rapid City Journal reports police responded to a report of a stolen vehicle that was found by its owner Wednesday.

Police later located seven or more vehicles and five firearms in storage units. The vehicles include motorcycles and side-by-side utility vehicles.

Police have not released the names of those arrested.

Olympics Live: Japan's Kobayashi wins ski jumping gold

BEIJING (AP) — The Latest on the Beijing Winter Olympics:

Japan's Ryoyu Kobayashi has won Olympic ski jumping gold on the normal hill.

Kobayashi jumped last and best, clearing 99.5 meters (326 feet) and had 129.6 points thanks to his graceful style from start to finish that won over the judges.

Austria's Manuel Fettner won silver and Dawid Kubacki of Poland earned bronze.

Two-time ski jumping gold medalist Andreas Wellinger is missing the Beijing Games because he tested positive for the coronavirus last week, clearing the way for a new champion in China.

Earlier in the night, Turkish ski jumper Fatih Arda İpcioğlu refused to say if the crescent and star on his blue skis was a statement in support of China's Uyghur community. The design on the skis used Saturday seemingly represented East Turkestan, the region home to Uyghurs. İpcioğlu finished deep in the field of 50.

Turkish ski jumper Fatih Arda İpcioğlu refused to say if the crescent and star on his blue skis was a statement in support of China's Uyghur community.

The design on the skis used Saturday seemingly represented East Turkestan, the region home to Uyghurs.

"I don't want to answer about those questions," İpcioğlu said Sunday night after jumping in the first round of the Normal Hill competition.

İpcioğlu switched skis on Sunday, saying the pair he had were for the competition.

"I'm a sportsman," he bristled. "I do just my job. The other things, I don't care about. It's not my job."

Human rights groups say the Beijing government has oppressed members of the Uyghur Muslim minority on a massive scale.

Finland men's hockey player Marko Anttila remains at an isolation hotel at the Beijing Games after testing positive for the coronavirus.

Coach Jukka Jalonen says nothing has changed with Anttila, who recovered from COVID-19 last month and has been unable to produce two negative tests that would allow him to return to the team. Jalonen and Finland players say Anttila is fully healthy and has no symptoms.

Jalonen confirmed Anttila is Finland's only player in isolation.

Defending champion Mikaela Shiffrin will set off seventh on the first run of the women's giant slalom at

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the Beijing Games on Monday.

Shiffrin's main rival, Slovakian Petra Vlhova, will ski first.

The 26-year-old Shiffrin is bidding for a third Olympic gold medal. It would be a first for Vlhova, and a first in Alpine skiing for Slovakia.

Sara Hector, who leads the World Cup giant slalom standings, starts just before Shiffrin. The Swedish skier is also looking for a first Olympic medal.

The two-leg giant slalom will be raced at 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Beijing time on The Ice River course at Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center.

Two-time Olympic figure skating champion Yuzuru Hanyu has arrived in Beijing two days before he's due at Capital Indoor Stadium for the start of the men's program.

The Japanese star is trying to become the first figure skater since Sweden's Gillis Grafstrom in 1928 to win three straight titles.

Hanyu took a similar approach four years ago in Pyeongchang, when he remained at his Canadian training base until two days before the start of his program. But that was pre-pandemic, and Hanyu took a risk that upon arrival in Beijing he would return the negative COVID-19 test required of anyone entering the Olympic bubble.

Hanyu is coming off his sixth Japanese championship in December. The Winnie-the-Pooh-loving wunderkind is expected to try the quad axel during his free skate, a 4 1/2-revolution jump that has never been landed in competition.

Nils van der Poel gave Sweden its first Olympic speedskating medal since 1988, pulling off a stunning comeback to win gold in the 5,000 meters at the Beijing Olympics.

Van der Poel was a big favorite coming into the event as the reigning world champion with an undefeated record in the distance events on this season's World Cup circuit.

He lived up to the hype in the 12 1/2-lap race at the Ice Ribbon oval, turning on the speed at the end to overcome Patrick Roest of the Netherlands with an Olympic record of 6 minutes, 8.84 seconds.

Roest had skated about an hour earlier in the sixth of 10 pairs, initially breaking the Olympic mark in 6:09.31.

It looked as though van der Poel would come up short, too. Then the Swede kicked it into another gear. He thrilled the sparse crowd by slicing into Roest's time with each stride. Turns out, van der Poel had just enough time to win gold.

The bronze went to Norway's Hallgeir Engebraaten in 6:09.88.

Sven Kramer's quest for a fourth straight speedskating gold medal in the 5,000 meters ended quickly.

The 35-year-old Dutchman skated in the first pair of the day at Beijing's Ice Ribbon and finished the grueling race in 6 minutes, 17.04 seconds. Two pairs later, both skaters posted faster times.

Kramer was the first male skater to win the same event at three straight Olympics, but he's no longer the world's dominant long-distance performer at the oval. Four years ago, he won gold at Pyeongchang in 6:09.76.

Kramer plans to retire after the Beijing Games, but he still has a couple of events to go. He'll also compete in the mass start and team pursuit.

No matter what, Kramer is already assured of leaving the sport as the most decorated speedskater in Olympic history with nine medals over the last four Olympics, including four golds.

The Australian mixed doubles curling team of Dean Hewitt and Tahli Gill pulled off a dramatic first win in their first Olympics when they beat Switzerland hours after it appeared they would be headed home because Gill returned a series of positive COVID-19 tests.

Greeted by an occasional chant of "Aussie Aussie Aussie!" by a spectator in the mostly empty Ice Cube,

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Hewitt and Gill beat Switzerland's Martin Rios and Jenny Perret 9-6. Gill had the big knockout shot to secure a 3-end, or three points, in the sixth end to tie the game at 6-6.

The first-ever Olympic curling team from Australia improved to 1-7. Their final game is against their coach, defending gold medalist John Morris of Canada and his new partner, Rachel Homan.

The Australian Olympic Committee announced earlier in the day that Gill and Hewitt would be heading home after Gill, who had COVID-19 before the games, returned a series of positive tests. But the committee said the Medical Expert Panel determined Gill's levels fell within an acceptable range. Gill said she was not infectious.

The Aussies got a call about an hour before the game that they could play and jumped into a cab to get to the venue. Gill said she had to grab her uniform out of her suitcases, which were already packed.

Russian skier Alexander Bolshunov pulled away from the pack early to win gold in the 30-kilometer skiathlon.

Bolshunov, the World Cup points leader in distance races, grabbed a Russian Olympic Committee flag in the final stretch and waved it in the air as he crossed the finish line in 1 hour, 16 seconds.

Bolshunov and Iivo Niskanen of Finland led the race through the first four classic ski laps but Russia's Denis Spitsov passed Niskanen once they were on the freestyle legs.

Spitsov stayed out front and secured the silver, 1 minute, 11 seconds behind Bolshunov. Niskanen held on for the bronze 2 minutes back.

Chinese teenager Su Yiming had the surprise top score in the men's Olympic slopestyle qualifying round.

Throwing a triple cork, the sort of trick most riders save for finals, Su finished with a score of 86.80. It topped his idol, Mark McMorris of Canada, and defending Olympic champion Red Gerard, who also both advanced to Monday's final.

The 17-year-old Su clapped his hands in excitement after finishing his first-round run as a sparse audience in the stands cheered. Su won a big air competition in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, in December. His best slopestyle finish on the World Cup circuit was sixth on New Year's Day.

Gerard wound up fifth in qualifying and McMorris second. The top 12 riders moved on.

Alpine skiing's power couple will have a busy day on the Olympic slopes — as long as the wind calms down, that is.

Mikaela Shiffrin and Aleksander Aamodt Kilde are now both supposed to race Monday after the men's downhill was pushed back a day because of too-strong gusts at the scheduled start Sunday. Shiffrin and Kilde are dating.

Kilde is considered the man to beat in the downhill. The Norwegian leads the World Cup standings in that event and was fastest during training in China on Friday.

Shiffrin is the defending Olympic champion in the women's giant slalom, which already was on the Alpine program for Monday.

The two-leg GS will be raced at 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on the technical slope at Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center. In between those runs, the downhill will be held at noon on the speed slope about a half-mile away.

The Australian mixed doubles curling team received a late reprieve and returned to competition at the Beijing Olympics after an earlier announcement that it would head home after Tahli Gill returned a series of positive COVID-19 tests.

The Australian Olympic Committee said Gill and Dean Hewitt could continue under the close contact provisions.

"We are thrilled for Tahli and Dean and I am delighted that our headquarters team continued pressing her case, after earlier advice that the pair could no longer compete," said Geoff Lipshut, head of the Australian delegation.

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Gill and Hewitt, representing Australia's first-ever Olympic curling team, were back at the Ice Cube in time to play Switzerland in the round robin competition. They are winless in seven games.

Gill contracted COVID-19 prior to the games. Ongoing testing alternated between negative and positive. She had been allowed to compete under the close contact arrangements after discussions with the IOC and games organizers. The AOC said earlier Sunday that initial attempts to return Gill to competition were rebuffed by the IOC and health authorities.

The International Olympic Committee says Olympic officials will meet with Netherlands state broadcaster NOS, which has been frustrated by fallout from its journalist being manhandled by a games security official during a live report.

NOS, which pays rights fees for the Beijing Olympics, disputed comments made Saturday by an IOC spokesman that it was contacted about the incident.

In a rare public criticism of the IOC by an official rights holder, NOS said none of its management nor reporter Sjoerd Den Daas had spoken to anyone from the Olympic body.

China-based Den Daas was pushed away from the camera by the guard while broadcasting live on Friday evening before the opening ceremony.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams clarified that contact with NOS on Friday and Saturday was through the Olympic broadcasting subsidiary, and that a meeting scheduled Sunday "should be the end of the matter."

Olympic organizers say they're addressing complaints about isolation conditions for athletes who test positive for the coronavirus and working to ensure they have clean rooms, better food and access to training equipment.

"These are exactly the kind of things we have to address. It's a duty. It's a responsibility. We have to make sure that the expectations are met," said Christophe Dubi, the International Olympic Committee's executive director for the games.

The comments came after multiple complaints about the isolation conditions. The German team called the situation for its athletes "unreasonable" and said rooms should be bigger and cleaner.

Russian biathlon competitor Valeria Vasnetsova said she couldn't stomach most of the food she was given, and mostly survived on a few pieces of pasta. Soon after the post, a team spokesperson posted a picture showing what he said was improved food, including salmon, cucumbers, sausages and yogurt.

A total of 363 people inside the Olympic bubble have tested positive for COVID.

The first event of the Alpine skiing schedule at the Beijing Olympics, the men's downhill, has been postponed because of strong wind that made it too dangerous to race.

No new date was announced immediately.

The first women's race -- the giant slalom -- is scheduled for Monday, with Mikaela Shiffrin of the U.S. defending her Olympic gold from 2018.

At the top of the speed course, known as The Rock, the wind was whipping at 30 mph, with gusts up to 40 mph, when Sunday's men's race originally was scheduled to begin at 11 a.m.

The start was delayed three times for a total of three hours in the hope that the wind would relent. But eventually the decision was made at 1 p.m. to put it off to another day.

Wind was also an issue for Alpine skiing at the 2018 Pyongchang Games, where multiple races were postponed and the schedule was shuffled repeatedly.

Saturday's third and final training session for the men was stopped after just three skiers because of wind. None of the world's top racers had ever seen the course until the first training run on Thursday. The usual pre-Olympics test events were scrapped because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The powerful Russian figure skating team is in first place in the team competition at the Beijing Games after a winning performance from world champion Kamila Valieva and another strong skate from Mark Kondratiuk.

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The team representing the Russian Olympic Committee has 45 points, two ahead of the U.S., which had a couple of shaky performances from Karen Chen and Vincent Zhou to slip out of first place.

The biggest surprise on the second of three days of team competition was Japan. Wakaba Higuchi was second in the women's short program before 18-year-old Yuma Kagiyama delivered a personal-best score of 208.94 points to easily win the men's free skate, sending the Japanese team into medal contention with 39 points.

The team competition concludes Monday with the women and pairs free skate and the free dance.

Australia's first-ever Olympic mixed doubles curling team has pulled out of the Beijing Games after Tahli Gill returned a series of positive COVID-19 tests.

The Australian Olympic Committee said it was trying to make arrangements to have Gill and Dean Hewitt fly home rather than having Gill remain in an isolation hotel. They will miss their final two games and finish 0-7 in round robin play.

Gill contracted COVID-19 prior to the games. Ongoing testing alternated between negative and positive. She had been allowed to compete under the close contact arrangements after discussions with the IOC and games organizers.

Attempts to return Gill to competition were rebuffed by the IOC and health authorities, Australian Olympic team head Geoff Lipshut said.

"We made the case that Tahli was at the end of the infection cycle but further positive results early this morning ended our hopes. Rather than remain in isolation, we now have the option of returning Tahli and Dean home," Lipshut said.

Zoi Sadowski Synnott won New Zealand's first gold medal in Winter Olympics history, stomping down a pressure-packed run on her last trip down the mountain Sunday to win the title in women's slopestyle.

The 20-year-old was one of the very few to put down clean run on a supersized course, where hard-packed snow and bone-cold wind chills made things difficult for all 12 finalists, including two-time defending champion Jamie Anderson, who finished ninth.

Sadowski Synnott went into her last of three runs trailing American Julia Marino but came up big.

She landed a double-cork 1080 on the second jump, and while not repeating that jump the way she did when she won the Winter X Games last month, her backside 1080 off the final kicker was more than enough.

She raised her hands in the air after landing, knowing what she'd done. Marino and third-place finisher Tess Coady of Australia knew it, too. They gang-tackled her at the finish line to celebrate.

Olympic favorite Kamila Valieva nearly eclipsed her own world record in the short program of the team figure skating event at the Beijing . That sends her Russian team into the lead heading into the men's free skate later Sunday.

The 15-year-old Valieva's score of 90.18 points to "In Memoriam" by the Russian pianist and composer Kirill Richter at the Beijing Games was just off the record of 90.45 points set just weeks ago at the European championships.

The Russians moved into first place with 36 points, two ahead of Day 1 leader Team USA and seven ahead of Japan.

Karen Chen took the ice for the Americans but made a couple of mistakes, including a fall on her triple loop near the end of the program. That left her in fifth place in the short program and cost her team valuable points.

Wakaba Higuchi was second, pushing her Japanese team into podium contention. Reigning gold medalist Canada survived the cutoff thanks to a strong performance from Madeline Schizas, while China claimed the last spot in the free skates by winning a tiebreaker with Georgia.

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Trump tirade on 'racist' DAs echoes other racist tropes

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Looking out at a sea of faces at a Texas fairground, most of them white, former President Donald Trump seethed about his legal troubles and blamed them on malicious prosecutors.

"These prosecutors are vicious, horrible people. They're racists and they're very sick, they're mentally sick," Trump said, before warning his audience: "In reality. They're not after me, they're after you."

He repeated his charge of racism, but skipped over an obvious detail: Those prosecutors are Black.

His diatribe left the clear impression that Trump, who rode the politics of white grievance into the White House, thinks he can't possibly be treated fairly by Black officials.

The comments carry the echoes of racist messages that have proliferated in recent years — that Black people and other minorities are taking power, and that they will exact revenge on white people, or at the very least treat white people as they have been treated.

That's among the fears stoking the white supremacy movement, the so-called "white replacement theory" that people of color will supplant whites in the country's power dynamics and social structure.

"These are the same justifications that they use for Jim Crow laws and their mistreatment of African Americans. So this is just a rerun of what we've seen in our country," said one Black district attorney, Brian Middleton of Fort Bend County, Texas, which lies southwest of central Houston.

Trump attacking prosecutors is nothing new. When his business and political dealings are investigated, he often strikes back with accusations of misconduct and witch hunts.

The former president has long been accused of bigotry. Before the 2016 election, Trump called U.S. District Judge Gonzalo Curiel a "hater" who could not be fair to him in a fraud case involving Trump University because of the judge's Hispanic heritage and because Trump vowed to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

And after 2017 demonstrations by white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, turned violent, he told a news conference that there were "very fine people, on both sides."

He had never accused his prosecutors of racism before — but then, until the start of the year, one of those attorneys was Cyrus Vance Jr., who is white.

Now he faces an array of Black prosecutors: New York Attorney General Letitia James; Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, Vance's successor and the first Black person to hold that office; Fani Willis, the Fulton County, Georgia, DA; even Rep. Bennie Thompson, the leader of the congressional investigation into the Jan. 6 insurrection. And critics say Trump's rhetoric has escalated, perhaps because he recognizes that some among his base are receptive to more overt racism.

"It intensifies that discourse and makes it explicitly racial," said Casey Kelly, a communications professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln who for years has pored over transcripts of Trump's speeches.

At a recent rally in Arizona, he said -- falsely -- that white people in New York were being sent to the back of line for antiviral treatments.

And now Trump is using the investigations against him — and the prosecutors behind them — as "evidence of a larger systemic pattern that white people don't have a place in the future of America and he's the only one that can fight on their behalf," Kelly said.

Michael Steele, who more than a decade ago was the first African American to chair the Republican National Committee, said Trump was being Trump.

"If he can race bait it, he will. These prosecutors, these Black people are coming after me — the white man," Steele said.

"They didn't just wake up and say, 'I'm gonna waste city resources and state resources to go after Donald Trump,'" said Steele, a member of the Lincoln Project, a Republican group opposed to the former president. "Whether the prosecutors are Black or white, his corruption is still the same. It's him, his actions, his behavior, his decisions — and that's where the onus lies."

There is evidence that Trump's words have had consequences. Willis — the Georgia prosecutor who asked a judge to impanel a special grand jury to help probe possible "criminal disruptions" by Trump and his allies during the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath -- told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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that threats and racist slurs against her have increased since Trump's rally in Texas.

In a letter to the FBI, Willis called Trump's rhetoric "alarming." She called on the FBI to help assess security at the county courthouse and provide personnel to protect the area against possible attack, like the one on the U.S. Capitol a year ago.

Trump has his defenders. Harrison Fields, who worked in the Trump White House, now serves as a spokesman for U.S. Rep. Byron Donalds of Florida, a Trump ally and one of only two Black Republicans serving in the House. He said the country has more important matters to tackle.

Donalds sees Trump's remarks as "a nonstory, as do about 98% of the American public, who are not in the media, or who are not in the Democrat Party," Fields said.

"The congressman is focused on issues that actually matter, which is supporting the America-first policies of the former president," he said.

The flip side of Trump's aspersions of Black prosecutorial power is the argument that it has been too long in coming.

The country's system of law and order has long subjugated African Americans — from slavery through the days of Jim Crow until today, some would argue, as some states adopt anti-protest laws and tighter control over the ballot box. Black inmates still disproportionately occupy jail and prison cells.

A 2019 study by the Reflective Democracy Campaign found that only 5% of the country's elected prosecutors were of color. But Black men and women now lead some of the country's largest prosecutorial offices, including those in New York, Chicago, Dallas and Detroit.

Trump is questioning their legitimacy, said Diana Becton, another Black district attorney who serves in Contra Costa County in the San Francisco Bay area.

"His accusations are certainly not subtle. They're frightening," Becton said. "It's like saying, we are out of our place, that we're being uppity and we are going to be put back in our place by people who look like him."

Middleton, the Texas DA, added that it's not about unjust laws. There are double standards in how laws are applied. And one remedy is to diversify the people who enforce those laws.

"Certain people get away with things and so we need people who are willing to hold people like Donald Trump accountable," he said, "where we have to have people in positions of authority who will make sure that all people are treated the same under the law."

Jackson, in high court mix, traces law interest to preschool

By JESSICA GRESKO and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Ketanji Brown Jackson's younger daughter was 11, she drafted a letter to the president suggesting her federal judge-mom for a vacancy on the Supreme Court.

"Dear Mr. President," Leila Jackson wrote. "She's determined, honest and never breaks a promise to anyone even if there are other things she'd rather do. She can demonstrate commitment and is loyal and never brags. I think she would make a great Supreme Court justice."

Jackson wasn't nominated for the vacancy her daughter was writing about, one created by the 2016 death of Justice Antonin Scalia. And Republican lawmakers blocked then-President Barack Obama's ultimate nominee, Merrick Garland, who is now President Joe Biden's attorney general.

But Jackson might have another shot.

She is considered to be among the top prospects to replace retiring justice Stephen Breyer as Biden seeks to fulfill a campaign pledge to nominate the first Black woman to the court.

Jackson talked about her daughter's letter in a 2017 speech. She said the letter came about after her daughter learned there was a high court opening and thought her mom should apply.

"Getting to be on the Supreme Court isn't really the kind of job that you apply for," she and her husband explained to their daughter.

Still, a little bragging doesn't hurt.

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Jackson has a background similar to justices on the court and had attracted Obama's attention as a possible nominee in 2016. She went to college and law school at Harvard. She also spent a year early in her career serving as a law clerk to Breyer.

Her experience as a public defender could set her apart, especially because Biden has prized criminal defense and civil rights work in other people he has nominated for federal judgeships.

Jackson is on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, a position Biden elevated her to last year from her previous job as a federal trial court judge. Three current justices — Brett Kavanaugh, Clarence Thomas and John Roberts, the chief justice — previously served on the same appeals court.

Jackson was confirmed to the appeals court by a 53-44 vote, winning the backing of three Republicans: South Carolina's Lindsey Graham, Maine's Susan Collins and Alaska's Lisa Murkowski. That could be important to Biden, who has been reaching out for GOP support as he chooses a nominee. Another GOP connection: Jackson is related by marriage to former House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis.

Jackson was born in Washington, D.C., but grew up in Miami. She has said that her parents, Johnny and Ellery Brown, chose her name to express their pride in her family's African ancestry. They asked an aunt who was in the Peace Corps in Africa at the time to send a list of African girl's names and they picked Ketanji Onyika, which they were told meant "lovely one."

She traces her interest in the law to when she was in preschool and her father was in law school and they would sit together at the dining room table, she with coloring books and he with law books. Her father became an attorney for the county school board and her mom was a high school principal. She has a brother who is nine years younger who served in the Army, including in Iraq, and is now a lawyer.

In high school, she was the president of her public high school class and a debate champion. Richard B. Rosenthal, a lawyer who has known her since junior high, said there was no question she would rise to the top of whatever field she chose, describing her as "destined for greatness." His older brother, Stephen F. Rosenthal, a classmate and friend from Miami who also went to college and law school with her, called her a "natural leader" and someone with "penetrating intelligence."

At Harvard she studied government but also was involved in drama and musical theater and part of an improv group called On Thin Ice. At one point she was assigned actor Matt Damon as a drama class partner, she has said, acknowledging he probably wouldn't remember her. He does not, Damon confirmed through a representative, but added: "That's so cool!"

Also at Harvard she met her husband, Patrick Jackson. The couple has two daughters, the letter-writer Leila, who is in high school, and her older sister, Talia, who is in college.

Patrick Jackson, a surgeon, has a Twitter account that sticks almost exclusively to medicine. But on June 12 in a tweet that has since apparently been removed he posted to note an important legal date. It was the anniversary of the Supreme Court's Loving v. Virginia decision that struck down interracial marriage bans. "Happy Loving Day! I am especially thankful to be walking through life with a brilliant and compassionate partner who still takes my breath away, made possible by sacrifices like Richard and Mildred Loving," Jackson wrote, adding a photo of himself and his wife.

The two married in 1996. From 1999 to 2000, Jackson was as a law clerk to Breyer on the Supreme Court.

Deborah Pearlstein, a law clerk to Justice John Paul Stevens the same year Jackson worked for Breyer, recalled Jackson as funny, insightful and "incredibly good at her job."

"I don't know anybody there at the time who didn't get along with Ketanji," Pearlstein said.

Over the course of her career since, Jackson has worked for large law firms but also was a public defender. After she was nominated to serve on the U.S. Sentencing Commission, the agency that develops federal sentencing policy, she taught herself to knit to deal with the stress of the nomination and confirmation process, she has said. As a commissioner, she was part of a unanimous vote to allow thousands of people already in federal prison for crack-related crimes get their sentences reduced as a result of a new law.

Prison isn't a distant concept for Jackson. Her uncle was serving a life sentence for a drug-related crime until it was commuted by Obama, according to a detailed account in The Washington Post.

Jackson's work on the Sentencing Commission paved the way for her to become a federal judge, where one of the things she displayed in her office was a copy of a famous, handwritten petition to the Supreme

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Court from a Florida prisoner, Clarence Gideon. The Supreme Court took his case and issued a landmark decision guaranteeing a lawyer for criminal defendants who are too poor to afford one.

In one of her most high-profile decisions, she ordered former White House counsel Don McGahn to appear before Congress. It was a setback to former President Donald Trump's effort to keep his top aides from testifying. The case was appealed and a deal was ultimately reached for McGahn's testimony.

Another highly visible case Jackson oversaw involved the online conspiracy theory "pizzagate," unfounded internet rumors about prominent Democrats harboring child sex slaves at a Washington pizza restaurant. A North Carolina man showed up at the restaurant with an AR-15 assault rifle and a revolver. Jackson called it "sheer luck" no one was injured and sentenced him to four years in prison.

Jackson has a considerably shorter record as an appeals court judge.

Her first opinion, written for a unanimous three-judge panel in favor of labor unions, came out in recent days. In earlier votes she joined colleagues in declining to stop the Biden administration from enforcing a freeze on evictions put in place during the coronavirus pandemic and ruled against an effort by Trump to shield documents from the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol. Those decisions were appealed to the Supreme Court and the justices allowed evictions to resume, but also allowed the documents' release.

As far as the current Supreme Court opening, in addition to the endorsement of her daughter, Jackson has also had the endorsement of the man she would replace. When officials called Breyer in the course of her original nomination to be a federal judge, Breyer reportedly picked up the phone and started the conversation with two words: "Hire her."

West Africa grapples with new wave of military coups

By SAM MEDNICK and KRISTA LARSON Associated Press

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso (AP) — It's a pattern becoming all too common again in West Africa: Mutinous soldiers detain a president, then seize control of the state broadcaster to announce they've taken over the country. International condemnation quickly follows, but the junta remains in power.

West Africa's new wave of coups kicked off in Mali in 2020, followed by another in Guinea the following year, and then Burkina Faso late last month. Just a week later, gunmen also tried to overthrow the president of Guinea-Bissau in a machine-gun attack that lasted hours but failed.

Military power grabs are nothing new in the region: There have been nearly 100 in West Africa since 1946 but they'd dropped off over the past decade. Now the regional body known as ECOWAS is grappling with how to bring about a return to democracy in three of its 15 member states, where juntas have seized power in the last 18 months.

"It looks increasingly hard to argue against the idea of coup contagion — that coups in one place inspire them in another — following the chain of events in the past year," said Eric Humphery-Smith, Africa Analyst at Verisk Maplecroft.

The new spike in power grabs comes as the Sahel, the vast region south of the Sahara Desert, faces growing violence from Islamic extremists, which in turn has caused people to turn against elected governments in both Mali and Burkina Faso. Neighboring Niger, hard-hit by Islamic insurgents, has also been vulnerable: Security forces stopped a coup attempt there last year.

"Coups in West Africa have been making a comeback for various reasons which bleed into one another," said Rukmini Sanyal, research analyst for the Middle East and Africa at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Regional political volatility is becoming entrenched, causing a slow erosion of democratic gains, she said.

And there's often widespread support for the government overthrows within the countries because people hope it will bring about new elections, she added.

After last week's coup in Burkina Faso, people across the country lauded the military takeover, saying it was overdue. In Mali, thousands of protesters took to the streets in support of the ruling military after the West African regional bloc, ECOWAS, imposed sanctions over delayed elections.

Guinea's junta also has benefited from the fact that ousted President Alpha Conde had become deeply

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unpopular because he sought to circumvent term limits and won a third term.

Governance and rule of law institutions are weak in many countries in the region, says Corinne Dufka, West Africa director for Human Rights Watch.

"And when societies are tested by insecurity and profound brutality against civilians, it may make some people more willing to accept less democratic military rule," Dufka said.

Some blame the rise in coups on the fact that the juntas know they'll face little more than strongly worded statements. In Mali, Col. Assimi Goita got West African mediators to accept an 18-month transition instead of the year-long one they've asked for.

Since then, he's carried out a second coup by getting rid of the original civilian leaders in his transitional government and made himself president instead. He's since pushed back new elections four more years. While ECOWAS has imposed tough economic sanctions, Goita shows few signs of leaving power anytime soon.

Ghana's President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the current ECOWAS chairman, called Thursday on his fellow leaders to address the problem of coups "collectively and decisively before it devastates the whole region."

Critics, though, say the regional body needs to do more than issue statements.

"ECOWAS is a reflection of the countries so it means that as far as governance is concerned they have to improve it in each country and in all the regional or global organizations," said Ablasse Ouedraogo, a former foreign affairs minister in Burkina Faso and president of the political party Faso Differently.

Civil society groups say leaders are struggling to meet basic security and governance expectations of their populations creating a breeding ground for coups and that regional bodies like ECOWAS and the African Union are quickly losing credibility.

"These institutions act more on the consequences than on the causes of the sociopolitical crises that lead to coups," said Chrysogone Zougmore, president of the Burkina Faso Movement for Human Rights.

Meanwhile aid groups responding to the dire humanitarian needs across the region say pulling people out of crisis will take time no matter who's in power. Hassane Hamadou, director of the Norwegian Refugee Council in Burkina Faso, says new, dismal records are being broken every month.

"Violence has claimed the lives of around 3,000 civilians, forced thousands of schools to shut down and driven 1.6 million people into displacement, a jaw-dropping 18-fold increase over the past three years," Hamadou said. "In this context, there can be no quick fix nor easy answer."

Kremlin is top destination for spooked European leaders

By SYLVIE CORBET, LORI HINNANT and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Rarely in recent years has the Kremlin been so popular with European visitors.

French President Emmanuel Macron arrives Monday. The Hungarian prime minister visited last week. And in days to come, the German chancellor will be there, too.

All are hoping to get through to President Vladimir Putin, the man who singlehandedly shapes Russia's course amid its military buildup near Ukraine and whose designs are a mystery even for his own narrow inner circle.

"The priority for me on the Ukrainian question is dialogue with Russia and de-escalation," Macron said this week as reporters were asking about a possible in-person meeting with Putin. "I'm very worried by the situation on the ground."

France is working for diplomacy but without "being naive," said an official in his office, speaking about the negotiations on condition of anonymity.

There are some signs that relations could thaw.

"From Putin's perspective he already has had something of a win because he's got our undivided attention and part of the exercise was clearly to get us to focus on him," Fiona Hill, a former U.S. intelligence officer on Russia and Eurasian affairs, testified last week during a congressional hearing.

Sergei Ryabkov, a senior Russian diplomat who led Moscow's delegation in last month's security talks

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with the U.S. in Geneva, said recently that Russia was now setting "the agenda that the U.S. and the so-called 'collective West' now follow. We have seized the foreign policy initiative."

Macron insists Europeans must have a say in the crisis which threatens the stability of the continent. Macron and Putin have already spoken three times by phone in recent days — with inconclusive results.

The French president has in the past shown skepticism of NATO, and in 2019 said the organization was experiencing "brain death." On Saturday, that skepticism was nowhere to be found, as Macron spoke by phone with the organization's secretary-general and underscored "France's commitment within NATO for the security of its allies."

France has also offered to send troops to Romania as part of NATO, which has regained a sense of unity in recent weeks.

European diplomacy has helped cool tensions in the past. The so-called "Normandy format" of French and German mediation in 2015 helped end large-scale hostilities in Ukraine, which erupted the previous year when Moscow threw its weight behind separatist rebels in the country's east following the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

Paris organized a meeting Jan. 26 of presidential advisers of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France. They agreed to meet again soon in Berlin, but Russian officials have said any new four-way summit would make sense only if the parties agree on the next steps to give a special status to pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine's east.

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, warned against insisting the country stick to the obligations it was forced to take after a string of military defeats, arguing that it could trigger internal unrest that would play into Moscow's hand.

"When they were signed under the Russian gun barrel — and the Germans and the French watched — it was already clear for all rational people that it's impossible to implement those documents," Danilov told The Associated Press in an interview Monday.

The French president travels to Kyiv on Tuesday. The new German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who is headed to the U.S. on Monday, plans a trip to Moscow in a week.

Russia expert Tatiana Kastoueva-Jean, from the French Institute of international relations (IFRI), said "we can at least give (Macron) credit for maintaining the dialogue... It's helpful to have a channel to express European concerns directly to Putin."

"It's not because (Macron) goes to Russia that he is abandoning Ukraine," she added.

Macron recently acknowledged "a discussion with Russia is always difficult." He's tried repeatedly to set up personal links with Putin, inviting him to the sumptuous Versailles palace and, in a rare honor, his summer residence at the Fort de Bregancon to give a boost to peace talks with Ukraine during summer 2019.

Putin had reciprocated with an invitation to Russia for Macron, but the coronavirus pandemic prevented the planned trip until now.

And so the visits and calls to the Kremlin continue, and Europe warily tries to discern Putin's ultimate range of goals and whether he can be persuaded that he's already achieved all that's possible — that any other moves will only backfire and potentially hurt him in the eyes of Russians.

In Ukraine, Hill said, 70% of the population see Russia as a hostile force.

And in Europe, "what has he achieved?" retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges testified. "NATO is more vigorous today than it has probably been in the last 20 to 25 years." Hodges noted that Russia was expelled from the G-8 after the 2014 invasion of Ukraine, which left him with fewer direct contacts among leaders of the world's most powerful nations.

Ultimately, it remains to be seen whether one-on-one meetings with those same leaders will be enough to persuade Putin that he stands more to lose than to gain.

"Every move has so far been on his timetable," Hill said. "The ultimate decision-making in Ukraine is up to Vladimir Putin as well as the small group of people in his inner circle who share his views."

UN experts: North Korea seeks to produce material for nukes

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By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — North Korea has continued to develop its nuclear and ballistic missile programs including its capability to produce nuclear device components in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, U.N. experts said in a new report.

The panel of experts said in the executive summary of the report obtained Saturday night by The Associated Press that there was “a marked acceleration” of Pyongyang’s testing and demonstration of new short-range and possibly medium-range missiles through January, “incorporating both ballistic and guidance technologies and using both solid and liquid propellants.”

“New technologies tested included a possible hypersonic guiding warhead and a maneuverable re-entry vehicle,” the panel said. North Korea also demonstrated “increased capabilities for rapid deployment, wide mobility (including at sea), and improved resilience of its missile forces.”

The experts said North Korea “continued to seek material, technology and know-how for these programs overseas, including through cyber means and joint scientific research.”

A year ago, the panel said North Korea had modernized its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles by flaunting United Nations sanctions, using cyberattacks to help finance its programs and continuing to seek material and technology overseas for its arsenal including in Iran.

“Cyberattacks, particularly on cryptocurrency assets, remain an important revenue source” for Kim Jong Un’s government, the experts monitoring the implementation of sanctions against the North said in the new report.

In recent months, North Korea has launched a variety of weapons systems and threatened to lift the four-year moratorium on more serious weapons tests such as nuclear explosions and ICBM launches. January saw a record nine missile launches, and other weapons it recently tested include a developmental hypersonic missile and a submarine-launched missile.

The Security Council initially imposed sanctions on North Korea after its first nuclear test explosion in 2006 and made them tougher in response to further nuclear tests and the country’s increasingly sophisticated nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

The panel of experts said North Korea’s blockade aimed at preventing COVID-19 resulted in “historically low levels” of people and goods entering and leaving the country. Legal and illegal trade including in luxury goods “has largely ceased” though cross-border rail traffic resumed in early January, it said.

The panel has previously made clear that North Korea remains able to evade sanctions and to illicitly import refined petroleum, access international banking channels and carry out “malicious cyber activities.”

U.N. sanctions ban North Korean coal exports and the experts said in the new report that although coal exports by sea increased in the second half of 2021, “they were still at relatively low levels.”

“The quantity of illicit imports of refined petroleum increased sharply in the same period, but at a much lower level than in previous years,” the panel said, adding that direct deliveries by non-North Korea tankers has ceased and only tankers from the North delivered oil, “a marked change of methodology” probably in response to COVID-19 measures.

The experts said North Korea also continues to evade maritime sanctions “by deliberately obfuscated financial and ownership networks.”

While the humanitarian situation in the country continues to worsen, the panel said the almost complete lack of information from the country makes it difficult to determine the “unintended humanitarian consequences of U.N. sanctions affecting the civilian population.”

Lata Mangeshkar, legendary Indian singer, dies at 92

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Lata Mangeshkar, a legendary Indian singer with a prolific, groundbreaking catalog and a voice recognized by a billion people in South Asia, has died. She was 92.

The iconic singer died Sunday morning of multiple organ failure at Breach Candy hospital in Mumbai, her physician, Dr. Pratit Samdani, told reporters. She was hospitalized on Jan. 11 after contracting COVID-19.

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She was taken off the ventilator after her condition improved in late January but her health deteriorated on Saturday and was put back on life support.

India declared two days of national mourning and said Mangeshkar will be given a state funeral before being cremated in Mumbai on Sunday evening. The country's flags will fly at half-staff.

Condolence messages poured in immediately after her death was announced.

"I am anguished beyond words," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a tweet. "She leaves a void in our nation that cannot be filled. The coming generations will remember her as a stalwart of Indian culture, whose melodious voice had an unparalleled ability to mesmerize people."

Over the course of nearly eight decades, Mangeshkar was a major presence as a playback singer, singing songs that were later lip-synced by actors in India's lavish Bollywood musicals. She was also fondly revered as the "Melody Queen" and "Nightingale of India."

Mangeshkar's songs, always filled with emotion, were often sad and mostly dealt with unrequited love, but others involved national pride.

Born in Maharashtra on Sept. 28, 1929, Mangeshkar first sang at religious gatherings with her father, who was also a trained singer. After she moved to Mumbai, India's film industry capital, she became a star with immensely popular appeal, enchanting audiences with her smooth but sharp voice and immortalizing Hindi music for decades to come.

Few musicians defined versatility like Mangeshkar, who issued her debut song in 1942 for a Bollywood film when she was just 13. Soon after, she became an icon of Hindi singing, lending her voice to over 5,000 songs in over a thousand Bollywood and regional language films. She sang for Bollywood's earliest women superstars like Madhubala and Meena Kumari and later went on to give voice to modern divas like Priyanka Chopra.

Mangeshkar was still in her 20s when she had already been established as one of the best playback singers in India. But her career-defining moment came in the epic historical "Mughal-e-Azam," a romantic tragedy that was released in 1960. Its soundtrack "Pyar Kiya To Darna Kya?" (Why fear if you are in love?) is considered one of the most memorable in Bollywood films, one that over decades has become an undisputed epitome of love's often rebellious nature.

Throughout her career, Mangeshkar worked with nearly all legendary Indian music directors, including Madan Mohan, Naushad, S.D. Burman, R.D. Burman, the duo Laxmikant-Pyarelal and A.R. Rahman, selling tens of millions of records. She also won dozens of singing awards, earning her a near saint-like status in the Bollywood music industry.

"I can't believe I've been tolerated by music lovers for 75 years!" she said last year in an interview with the news website Rediff.

Mangeshkar's popularity extended far beyond India. She was celebrated not only in neighboring Pakistan and Bangladesh but also in some Western countries.

In 2001, she was awarded the "Bharat Ratna," India's highest civilian honor. The government of France conferred on her its highest civilian award, "Officier de la Legion d'Honneur," in 2007.

In December, Mangeshkar commemorated eight decades of her debut on radio.

She wrote on Twitter in Hindi: "On 16 December 1941, I sang two songs for the first time in the studio for radio after seeking the blessings of my parents. It has been 80 years today. In these 80 years, I have got immense love and blessings from the people. I believe that I will always keep getting your love and blessings."

Mangeshkar never married. She is survived by four siblings, all accomplished singers and musicians.

Olympic organizers address complaints about isolation hotels

BEIJING (AP) — Olympic organizers say they're addressing complaints about isolation conditions for athletes who test positive for the coronavirus and are working to ensure they have clean rooms, better food and access to training equipment and the internet.

"These are exactly the kind of things we have to address. It's a duty. It's a responsibility. We have to

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make sure that the expectations are met," said Christophe Dubi, the International Olympic Committee's executive director for the games.

Dubi said Sunday that organizers will work to ensure "everything is perfect" for athletes waiting to be released. Han Zirong of the Beijing Organizing Committee also noted that athletes who test positive will now be able to order food from the Olympic Village and have it delivered to their isolation rooms.

As part of China's efforts to prevent the virus from spreading during the Games, everyone in the so-called Olympic bubble has to take daily PCR tests. Those who are confirmed to be positive go to an isolation facility until they're cleared for discharge, either through tests showing they're negative or a review by a panel of medical experts.

Dubi's comments came after complaints about the hotels where athletes must isolate. The German delegation called the situation "unreasonable" and said rooms should be bigger and cleaner after Eric Frenzel, a three-time gold medalist in Nordic combined, tested positive.

Russian biathlete Valeria Vasnetsova said she couldn't stomach most of the food she was given and survived mainly on a few pieces of pasta. Soon after the Instagram post, a team representative posted a picture showing what he said was improved food, including salmon, cucumbers, sausages and yogurt.

So far, organizers say 363 people inside the Olympic bubble have tested positive for COVID-19. In addition to athletes, the figure includes media and team officials.

Book aims to shine light on Romanian role in the Holocaust

By STEPHEN McGRATH Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Maksim Goldenshteyn recounts a story his late grandmother once told him about how, as a 4-year-old child, she snuck out of a Jewish ghetto during World War II to retrieve her favorite dolls that had been left behind the day her family was forcibly evicted from their home in occupied Soviet Ukraine.

"She knew even at that age that because she had lighter hair and blue eyes, she could pass for a local Ukrainian girl," said Goldenshteyn. "She put on a kerchief and slipped out of the ghetto."

It is one of the stories that Seattle native Goldenshteyn tells in his book, "So They Remember," which recounts — with a blend of intimate family memoir and vigorous historical research — the Holocaust in Transnistria, a territory in occupied southern Ukraine that was controlled by Romania, a close ally to Nazi Germany for most of the war.

In that territory, where around 150 camps and ghettos operated, there played out a lesser-known but equally sinister chapter of the Holocaust, where hundreds of thousands of Jews were brutalized, exploited, and murdered.

Many died of starvation; some succumbed to disease or exposure; some were executed.

Goldenshteyn, 33, whose family moved to the U.S. as refugees from the former Soviet Union in 1992, says he heard fragments of his family's past while growing up, but he never linked it to one of humanity's darkest chapters.

"They didn't really align with the image of the Holocaust that I thought was representative," he said. Then, 10 years ago, his mother told him the story. "I was shocked at first," he said.

Moved by what he'd learned, Goldenshteyn embarked on a decade-long journey researching a part of the Holocaust he feels is largely overlooked.

His starting point was to interview his grandfather, Motl Braverman, in his Seattle home over a series of weekends. Braverman, who died in 2015, languished as an adolescent with his family in the remote Pechera death camp, which became known to many prisoners as the "death noose."

He cuts a central figure in the book. "My grandfather spoke with a certain detachment, as if relating someone else's experiences," Goldenshteyn writes. "Later, he assured me that the death camp he survived was never far from his mind."

Awareness of Romania's role in the Holocaust, at home and abroad, is far less than that of the Nazis' role. But in Romanian-controlled territories under the military dictatorship of Ion Antonescu, between 280,000

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and 380,000 Jews, plus some 12,000 Roma, were killed during the war. The decades of communism that followed, much like in the Soviet Union, all but erased memories of the Holocaust.

"I don't think many people realize that Romania was Germany's principal ally in the East," Goldenshteyn said, adding that the country's communist period under Nicolae Ceausescu became the "traumatic history that is more immediate" to Romanians.

A late 2021 study by the National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania "Elie Wiesel," showed that 40% of respondents were not interested in the Holocaust. Nearly two-thirds of the 32% who agreed that the Holocaust took place in Romania mistakenly identified the deportation of Jews to "camps controlled by Nazi Germany."

Stefan Cristian Ionescu, a historian and Holocaust expert at Northwestern University, said that most Romanians "think that it's a responsibility of Nazi Germany."

"I think a lot of Romanians still have a problem accepting that the Antonescu regime and the Romanian authorities ... were involved in the Holocaust," he said. "In the mass murder, deportation, and dispossession of Jews in Romania, and in occupied territories such as Transnistria."

In a push for wider public awareness, Romanian lawmakers passed a bill last fall to add Holocaust education to the national school curriculum, a move that was applauded by many. But it was met with controversy in January when the far-right Alliance for Romanian Unity, which holds seats in parliament, called it a "minor topic" and an "ideological experiment."

David Saranga, Israel's ambassador to Romania, strongly condemned the party's comments online and said such statements are "outright proof of either a lack of taking responsibility, or of ignorance."

Goldenshteyn believes that Romanian authorities have made progress in recent years in acknowledging the country's role in the Holocaust, and said he was troubled by the party's comments but also encouraged by the reaction of the diplomatic community.

"It's important for any country with a dark past to confront it," said Goldenshteyn, the father of two small children. "Because it's impossible to chart the way forward without knowing where you've been. There is not enough knowledge about what happened during the Holocaust in Eastern Europe."

In late January at a Holocaust memorial event at the Choral Temple Synagogue in Romania's capital, Bucharest, President Klaus Iohannis said that the pandemic has "amplified the virulence of antisemitic attacks" and warned against "conspiracy theories and misinformation."

"Let us not close our eyes to these real dangers, which are often cleverly hidden behind a claimed freedom of expression," Iohannis said.

At the Pechera camp, the gates of which sported a wooden sign that read "Death Camp," hunger was such that cases of cannibalism were reported. As an adolescent, Motl Braverman would evade guards and take perilously long roads in sub-zero temperatures to return with small amounts of food to keep his family alive. He would later help others escape from the camp to head to relatively safer ghettos.

Goldenshteyn said that what affected his grandfather most was that "his story was never validated" because of the taboo about discussing the Holocaust. "So They Remember" tells that story, and it is as much about human bravery and kindness as it is about the depraved indifference to human suffering.

"I think the strength of this book is that it combines this personal, family story ... with historical research. It makes it interesting for the general public, not just for a small circle of scholars," Ionescu said. "There is still a lot to be uncovered about Romania's participation in the Holocaust — specifically this territory of Transnistria."

Goldenshteyn writes in his book's prologue that, after his grandfather died, he avoided listening to the audio recordings of their interviews made five years earlier. Then, in 2017, when he did finally press play, he heard his late grandfather's words.

"You should write this so that no one forgets," his grandfather said. "So they remember."

EXPLAINER: What happens to Europe's energy if Russia acts?

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ, DAVID MCHUGH and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

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FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Fears are rising about what would happen to Europe's energy supply if Russia were to invade Ukraine and then shut off natural gas exports in retaliation for U.S. and European sanctions.

The tensions show the risk of Europe's reliance on Russia for energy, which supplies about a third of the continent's natural gas. And Europe's stockpile is already low. While the U.S. has pledged to help by boosting exports of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, there's only so much it can produce at once.

It leaves Europe in a potential crisis, with its gas already sapped by a cold winter last year, a summer with little renewable energy generation and Russia delivering less than usual. Prices have skyrocketed, squeezing households and businesses.

Here's what to know about Europe's energy supply if tensions boil over into war and Russia is hit with sanctions:

WILL RUSSIA CUT OFF GAS SUPPLIES TO EUROPE?

No one knows for sure, but a complete shutoff is seen as unlikely, because it would be mutually destructive.

Russian officials have not signaled they would consider cutting supplies in the case of new sanctions. Moscow relies on energy exports, and though it just signed a gas deal with China, Europe is a key source of revenue.

Europe is likewise dependent on Russia, so any Western sanctions would likely avoid directly targeting Russian energy supplies.

More likely, experts say, would be Russia withholding gas sent through pipelines crossing Ukraine. Russia pumped 175 billion cubic meters of gas into Europe last year, nearly a quarter of it through those pipelines, according to S&P Global Platts. That would leave pipelines under the Baltic Sea and through Poland still operating.

"I think in the event of even a less severe Russian attack against Ukraine, the Russians are almost certain to cut off gas transiting Ukraine on the way to Germany," said former U.S. diplomat Dan Fried, who as State Department coordinator for sanctions policy helped craft 2014 measures against Russia when it invaded and annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula.

Russia could then offer to make up the lost gas if Germany approves the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline, whose operators may potentially face U.S. sanctions even though a recent vote to that effect failed. German officials also have said blocking operation of the pipeline would be "on the table" if there's an invasion.

Interrupting gas supplies beyond the Ukrainian pipelines is less likely: "If they push it too far, they're going to make a breach with Europe irreparable, and they have to sell the oil and gas someplace," Fried said.

WHAT CAN THE U.S. DO?

It's a major gas producer and already is sending record levels of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, by ship worldwide. It could only help Europe a little.

"We're talking about small increases to the size of U.S. exports, whereas the hole that Europe would need to fill if Russia backed away or if Europe cut Russia off would be much larger than that," said Ross Wyeno, lead analyst for Americas LNG at S&P.

The Biden administration has been talking with gas producers worldwide about whether they can boost output and ship to Europe, and it has been working to identify supplies of natural gas from North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the U.S.

The administration also is talking with buyers about holding off.

"Is there some other country that was planning to get an LNG shipment that doesn't need it and could give it to Europe?" said Amy Myers Jaffe, managing director of the Climate Policy Lab at Tufts University, mentioning Brazil or countries in Asia.

Over the past month, two-thirds of American LNG exports went to Europe. Some ships filled with LNG were heading to Asia but turned around to go to Europe because buyers there offered to pay higher prices, S&P said.

IS THERE ENOUGH LIQUEFIED GAS WORLDWIDE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

Not in the event of a full cutoff, and it can't be increased overnight. Export terminals cost billions of dollars to build and are working at capacity in the U.S.

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Even if all Europe's LNG import facilities were operating at capacity, the amount of gas would only be about two-thirds of what Russia sends via pipelines, Jaffe said.

And there could be challenges distributing the LNG to parts of Europe that have fewer pipeline connections.

If Russia stopped sending just the gas that goes through Ukraine, it would take the equivalent of about 1.27 shiploads of additional LNG per day to replace that supply, said Luke Cottell, senior LNG analyst at S&P. Russia also could reroute some of that gas through other pipelines, reducing the need for additional LNG to about a half-shipload per day, he said.

IS RUSSIA ALREADY SUPPLYING LESS GAS?

Russia has been fulfilling its long-term contracts to supply gas to Europe, but it's been selling less on the spot market and hasn't been filling the storage containers it owns in Europe, experts say.

"It's already happened. It's not theoretical," Jaffe said.

Russian cutbacks to spot gas supplies have contributed to sharply higher natural gas prices in Europe. They went as high as 166 euros (\$190) per megawatt hour in December, more than eight times their level at the start of 2021. Prices have fallen to under 80 euros per kilowatt hour as more LNG arrives.

But consumers are feeling the crunch in higher electric and gas bills. European governments are rolling out subsidies and tax breaks to ease the financial stress on households.

IS THERE IMPACT IN THE U.S.?

As the U.S. ramped up LNG exports, domestic prices of natural gas also rose. More than 10% of gas produced in the U.S. last year was exported, said Clark Williams-Derry, analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

U.S. gas prices spiked by more than 30% in the last week of January, primarily because of an approaching winter storm in New England, Williams-Derry said. But prices also were affected by tighter U.S. supplies amid uncertainty over Russia, he said.

"Russia is disturbing European gas markets, with the U.S. talking about exporting basically the next 'Berlin airlift' for natural gas to Europe," he said.

If the U.S. pushes for increased LNG exports, prices at home would likely rise, Williams-Derry added.

Ten Democratic senators, led by Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Angus King of Maine, recently urged the Energy Department to study the effect of higher exports on domestic prices and pause approvals of proposed terminals. They said they understood "geopolitical factors" give rise to sending more gas.

"However, the administration must also consider the potential increase in cost to American families," the senators said.

Inside the Olympic bubble, looking for China — or 'China'

By SARAH DiLORENZO Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Explore Guangzhou's old city. Wander a historic neighborhood in Shanghai. Visit with the giant pandas out west in Sichuan province. All these experiences are available to those attending the Beijing Olympics. By videolink — without ever leaving the press center.

Welcome to China. But not really.

The Olympics are usually a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the host country to showcase its culture. This year, however, athletes, coaches and others traveling to the Winter Games in Beijing are entirely sequestered in a bubble so complete that it even contains its own intercity trains. It's all part of the elaborate effort by China to control the spread of COVID-19 (and, some say, control the curious visitors as well).

Nothing is supposed to leave this alternate universe. But what clues of China might seep in?

The country is celebrating Lunar New Year. That much is clear. Traditional lantern decorations adorn the streets outside (as seen from the Olympic shuttle buses) and the venues inside. You're unlikely to participate in any actual celebrations — but the Games' swag bag includes a small lantern decoration. If you have the souvenir, did you also have the experience?

Forget a visit to the Summer Palace or the Great Wall, but there are large cutout photos of these landmarks in the press center. Would a selfie taken at just the right angle in front of one make it seem as if

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you were there? Does having the photo mean you sort of were?

One genuine part of China does pierce the bubble (even as it preserves another): Except for places where the International Olympic Committee provides the Wi-Fi, visitors to the Games are blocked from vast swaths of the internet by the country's "Great Firewall." A small taste of what it might be like to live in China — and an insight into the ways the government seeks to control its people.

Inside the bubble, unsurprisingly, there is a lot of longing for what is outside. In one of the world's great culinary destinations, only pale imitations of Chinese food are available. Tabitha Peterson, a curler for Team USA, recalled that she and her sister, fellow Olympian Tara, visited Beijing in 2007. Back then, they were able to immerse themselves in the culture, she explained, to eat in restaurants, to try new food.

Not at these Cruise Ship Olympics, in which participants do not so much enter China as sidle up to it.

Still, Yao Qian, who is staffing a cultural exhibit in the press center, said foreigners were able to experience something of China — pointing to a recent workshop inside the bubble where they learned how to write Chinese characters as part of New Year celebrations.

"This is a place to spread Chinese culture," she said. "I want foreigners to learn more and more (about) Chinese culture."

With little to visit or photograph, many inside the bubble are keen to participate in another tourist pastime: purchasing souvenirs. Disappointment rippled through its denizens in the days before the opening ceremony because there did not seem to be that much to buy. Where were the plush toys of Bing Dwen Dwen, the chubby panda mascot? Where were the T-shirts and hats with the rings? Eventually the shop began filling up, and now a line of eager would-be consumers stretches out the door all day, every day.

"I didn't know if what you would find in the bubble would really be authentic," Jackson Haselnus, who works for Olympic Broadcasting Services, the host broadcaster for the Games, said as he waited in the line.

And actually he's still not sure: It's his first time to China, and he admits he has nothing to compare it to. But at least, he can come away with some Olympic pins — one of the prized purchases at any Games. Most of the others waiting with him were Chinese volunteers who assist at the Olympics.

Which makes you wonder: Who is visiting whom? While the athletes, officials and journalists coming from abroad are hoping to visit Beijing, the volunteers are visiting the Olympics themselves. And they want their souvenir, too.

Tourism is always a mediated experience. Marita Sturken, a professor of media, culture and communication at New York University, notes there are a series of practices that define tourism, all of which are available to those inside the bubble: We visit the iconic sites (the Bird's Nest stadium is inside), we buy a souvenir, we take a photo.

Which gets someone living inside the bubble to thinking: If you were able to travel outside of it, what would you come away with? What could you learn about China — a vast, diverse country with a long, complicated history — in just a few short weeks?

Perhaps the bubble merely highlights what is always true: that a foreign place, a foreign culture is always ultimately inaccessible, whether the barriers are cultural, linguistic or physical.

In Beijing, the fences surrounding each hotel or venue are just the start. Language also poses an obstacle, leading to a frequent pantomime between visitors and locals, where each furiously types something into his device, hits translate and shows the result to his interlocutor.

There are all the pandemic impediments, too. Masks abound, of course. And even when they come off so their wearers can eat, a new barrier appears: a sheet of plexiglass that separates each diner from her neighbor.

While packaged tours get a bad rap, Sturken says even the most controlled experience can offer insight.

"We tend to look down on tourism as if it's an inauthentic activity that's searching for authenticity," she said. But "you can't, as an American, go to China and not have your world view challenged, even if you go on a packaged tour. Even when it's a contained and scripted experience, it still has value."

The search for authenticity leads many to wander the cordoned-off area outside the main press center, where they can approach the fence that separates "Beijing" from Beijing. Here, the real city is within

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shouting distance. But when it comes to communicating with passersby, what is there to say? Those inside the bubble do not need to know how to get to the Forbidden City or a recommendation for a good local restaurant.

"Happy New Year!" the bubblers shout in Chinese, one of the few phrases they have learned. "Happy New Year!" comes back the reply, first in Chinese, then in English. Furious waving ensues on both sides.

And there it is. A genuine interaction with genuine Beijingers. A moment of spontaneity to recount back home. And isn't that what travel is all about?

Men's downhill at Olympics postponed a day because of wind

By ANDREW DAMPF and DANIELLA MATAR AP Sports Writers

BEIJING (AP) — The men's downhill at the Beijing Olympics was postponed a day because of wind that gusted at up to 40 mph at the top of the course when the race was supposed to start Sunday, delaying the opening event of the Alpine schedule.

The downhill now shifts to Monday, which already was the day for the women's giant slalom, with Mikaela Shiffrin of the United States defending her Olympic gold from 2018. The downhill will be at the slope used for speed races at Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center, and the giant slalom will be about a half-mile away on the slope used for technical races.

The first giant slalom leg will be at 9:30 a.m., the downhill will follow at noon, and the second giant slalom leg will be at 2:30 p.m. On the initial schedule, there would have been 3 1/2 hours between the women's runs; now there will be five.

All in all, should make for quite an action-packed Day 1 for the sport and its power couple: Shiffrin is dating Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, considered the man to beat in the downhill.

"The wind here is a big, big challenge. And it's a pity, because you have good weather, you have good snow, you have a perfect slope," said Kilde, a Norwegian who leads the World Cup downhill and super-G standings and was fastest in Friday's second training session. "We just have to stay patient and do the best."

Added Kilde: "I would love to ski today, but I would not love to ski in unfair conditions."

At the top of the speed course known as The Rock, the wind was deemed too dangerous when Sunday's men's race originally was scheduled to begin at 11 a.m.

"It was obviously too windy to race, so that's the call," said Travis Ganong, an American who finished fifth in the downhill at the 2014 Sochi Games.

"I've been a downhiller for my whole career and this is part of the sport," Ganong said. "We've gotten good at this: the waiting game."

The start was delayed Sunday three times for a total of three hours in the hope that the wind would relent. But eventually the decision was made at 1 p.m. to put it off to another day, instead of trying to run the race at 2 p.m. By then, part of the issue was that the light would be fading, with sunset expected shortly after 5:30 p.m.

As soon as the race was called off, many of the skiers came down an adjacent training slope with their gear. Then they either went back up the mountain for some free skiing or went down to their rooms in the village.

It created a chaotic scene in the space between the two main gondolas, with athletes, coaches and servicemen going every which direction — up, down and across.

One thing missing: a sudden exodus of fans. Because of the pandemic, no spectators are attending the Alpine skiing races.

The sky was clear and sunny, but there were some sporadic bursts of wind in the finish area.

"At certain points, the wind is on your back, and at others it's in your face," said Johan Clarey, a 41-year-old Frenchman at his fourth Olympics. "It changes all the time and it's hard to predict, hard to anticipate." He and the other racers spent hours waiting and now need to recalibrate.

"You've got to try to stay focused and try to stay mentally there, but also you have to turn it off, because if you're always focused the whole day, then it's really hard to keep your energy up. You use all

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this adrenaline and it's gone by race time," Ganong said. "Now I need to go get some wind in my face, and just kind of connect with the mountain again, get some snow under my feet and just kind of reset."

Wind was also an issue for Alpine skiing four years ago at the Pyongchang Games, where multiple races were postponed and the schedule was shuffled repeatedly.

"It happens. It's the way of the game," said Kjetil Jansrud, a 36-year-old Norwegian who leads active athletes with five Olympic Alpine medals, including a downhill silver in 2018 and bronze in 2014. "For us, this day is over. Might happen tomorrow. Might be another day."

Saturday's third and final downhill training session for the men was stopped because of wind after only three skiers — including Kilde — went down the hill.

None of the world's top racers had ever seen the course until the first training run on Thursday. The usual pre-Olympic test events were scrapped because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Valieva sends Russians into Olympic team figure skating lead

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Kamila Valieva stood at the edge of the rink to get some last-second advice from her coach, Eteri Tutberidze, then took one deep breath and glided swiftly to the middle of the ice inside cavernous Capital Indoor Stadium.

And proceeded to leave everyone else breathless.

In a performance that confirmed her place as the gold medal-favorite at the Beijing Games, the 15-year-old Valieva laid down one of the highest-scoring short programs in history. Her score of 90.18 points on Sunday thrust the heavily favored Russian team into the lead after the second of three days of competition in the team event.

"I'm obviously happy that we're in the lead at the moment," she said, "and I hope that continues in the free skate as well."

It did through the men's free skate, where Mark Kondratiuk finished a surprising third behind Yuma Kagiyama of Japan. That left the Russians with 45 points, three ahead of the U.S. and six ahead of Japan, heading into the free dance, pairs and women's free skates that will decide the medals on Monday.

It was a disappointing day for the Americans, who had led after Day 1 thanks to winning performances from Nathan Chen and ice dancers Maddison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue. Karen Chen fell on her final jump in the women's short program, and Vincent Zhou — subbing into the event for Nathan Chen — struggled during his free skate.

That left the U.S. trailing the Russian team and forced to keep a wary eye on Japan in third place.

"The rest of our team is extremely strong and everyone here is prepared to say that they're part of getting the job done," Zhou said, "so I believe in my teammates and I fully support them along the way."

One of the dominant story lines of the figure skating program in Beijing is whether the powerful trio of Russian women, all led by the renowned Tutberidze, can become the first to sweep an Olympic podium.

And whether the incomparable Valieva, with her soaring jumps and unmatched artistry, will land on top.

She did nothing to dissuade anybody during her short program Sunday. Poised and confident beyond her years, Valieva opened with a clean triple axel and an effortless triple flip before a triple lutz-triple toe loop combination that pushed her score to 90.18 points, just off her world record of 90.45 set at last month's European championships.

To put that in perspective, Wakaba Higuchi of Japan was second in the team event with 74.73 points.

"I was a little nervy," said Valieva, the fourth woman to land a triple axel in Olympic history, "but along with that I know that the team always supports me, so it happened with this kind of neutral attitude."

Neutral? Imagine what she'll do if she puts it in drive.

Valieva's performance was so dynamic that the American team gave her a standing ovation.

"It was really nice. They're athletes, too, and they understand how it is to skate," she said. "It was really nice that they all liked it, not just the Americans but the Canadian team and a few others. It was really inspiring."

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The Americans made headlines on the opening day of competition when Nathan Chen combined with Hubbell and Donohue and the pairs team of Alexa Knierim and Brandon Frazier to build a surprising two-point lead over the Russian team.

In a bid to keep the momentum going, Team USA opted for the experience of Karen Chen, a member of the 2018 Olympic team, over newcomers Mariah Bell and Alysa Liu in the women's short program and Zhou for the men's free skate.

It didn't go exactly to plan.

Chen was shaky on her opening triple lutz-triple toe loop, then appeared to gather herself during the middle of her short program, set to music from the 2000 psychological drama "Requiem for a Dream." And it looked as if she'd make it through the rest of the program cleanly before a fall on her final jump, a triple loop.

"Overall the practices have been feeling very solid," Chen said, "but I will say this morning: My morning practice, I felt just, like, the idea of competing started to sink in. And I felt a little, just like, tense."

Zhou also admitted feeling a little tense before his program. It didn't help that he was the last of the five men to take the ice, and that he had to follow Kagiyama's near-perfect program set to music from the movie "Gladiator."

Zhou under-rotated his opening triple lutz, then was supposed to do a quad flip but only did a single. He also was shaky on a quad salchow and quad toe loop before rallying in the back half of his program to salvage third place.

"A little bit of nerves from waiting to skate last, but it wasn't terrible," Zhou said. "I think a good way to get into my knees before the individual event and hopefully Team USA can get a medal in the team event."

Joe Rogan apologizes for racial slur after video surfaces

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Spotify's popular U.S. podcaster Joe Rogan apologized Saturday after a video compilation surfaced that showed him using a racial slur in clips of episodes over a 12-year span.

The mea culpa came after Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter India.Arie posted the compilation on Instagram and announced that she was removing her music from Spotify's streaming service because of it.

Spotify is facing growing discontent from artists over Rogan's podcast, which it reportedly paid more than \$100 million to license. Last month, musician Neil Young removed his music over concerns that Rogan was magnifying vaccine skepticism.

In a video posted on his Instagram account, Rogan, who hosts a podcast called "The Joe Rogan Experience," said his use of the N-word in the compilation Arie posted was the "most regretful and shameful thing that I've ever had to talk about publicly." But he said the clips were "taken out of context."

"It's not my word to use. I am well aware of that now, but for years I used it in that manner," he said during the six-minute video on his Instagram account. "I never used it to be racist because I'm not racist."

He did not specify which years he used the racial slur.

Rogan also addressed a clip from his podcast 11 years ago in which he talked about going to a movie theater in a Black neighborhood to see "Planet of the Apes".

"I was trying to make the story entertaining, and I said we got out and it was like we were in Africa. It's like we were in 'Planet of the Apes,'" Rogan said. He said he wasn't trying to be racist but realized it was "an idiotic thing" to say. He said he deleted the podcast but that someone must have saved the clip.

In her video, Arie said even if some of Rogan's conversations were taken out of context, "he shouldn't be uttering the word."

"Don't even say it under any context," she added.

Rogan's apology comes as Spotify is promising to combat the spread of COVID-19 misinformation as part of a damage-control campaign sparked by Young.

Last Sunday, Spotify said it will soon add a warning before all podcasts that discuss COVID-19, directing listeners to factual, up-to-date information from scientists and public health experts. The company also

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aims to bolster transparency about its publishing decisions by laying out the rules it uses to protect users' safety.

Spotify garnered 31% of the 524 million worldwide music stream subscriptions in the second quarter of 2021, more than double that of second-place Apple Music, according to Midia Research. Spotify isn't always popular with musicians, many of whom complain that it doesn't pay them enough for their work.

Arie said on her video that Spotify is built on the back of the music streaming business and that it uses that money to reward Rogan in a lucrative deal. She said she doesn't want to generate money that pays for the podcaster.

"Just take me off," she said.

Spotify didn't respond immediately to a request for comment.

Officials: Russia at 70 percent of Ukraine military buildup

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russia has assembled at least 70 percent of the military firepower it likely intends to have in place by mid-month to give President Vladimir Putin the option of launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, U.S. officials say.

The officials, who discussed internal assessments of the Russian buildup on condition they not be identified, sketched out a series of indicators suggesting Putin intends an invasion in coming weeks, although the size and scale are unclear. They stressed that a diplomatic solution appears to remain possible.

Among those military indicators: an exercise of Russia's strategic nuclear forces that usually is held each fall was rescheduled for mid-February to March. That coincides with what U.S. officials see as the most likely window for invasion. The officials made no suggestion that a prospective conflict would involve the use of nuclear weapons, but the Russian exercise — likely involving the test-launching of unarmed long-range missiles on Russian territory — could be used as a message aimed at deterring the West from intervening in Ukraine.

U.S. officials have said in recent weeks that a Russian invasion could overwhelm Ukraine's military relatively quickly, although Moscow might find it difficult to sustain an occupation and cope with a potential insurgency.

The ongoing Russian buildup comes as the Biden administration has been disclosing intelligence in hopes of preemptively countering Russian disinformation and blocking Putin's plans for creating a pretext for an invasion. But it has come under criticism for not providing evidence to back up many of its claims.

On Saturday, The New York Times and The Washington Post said officials were warning that a full Russian invasion could lead to the quick capture of Kyiv and potentially result in as many as 50,000 casualties. A U.S. official confirmed that estimate to The Associated Press. But it's not clear how U.S. agencies determined those numbers, and any predictions about how an invasion would proceed and the human cost it would inflict are inherently uncertain given the vagaries of war.

President Joe Biden has said he will not send U.S. troops to Ukraine to fight a war. He has, however, ordered additional forces, including headquarters personnel and combat troops, to Poland and Romania to reassure those NATO allies that Washington would fulfill its treaty commitment to respond to Russian aggression against NATO territory. Ukraine is not a NATO member but receives U.S. and allied military support and training.

Army officials on Saturday announced that Maj. Gen. Christopher Donahue, the commanding general of the 82nd Airborne Division, arrived in Poland. About other 1,700 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne are deploying to Poland from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and 300 soldiers are deploying from Bragg to Germany. In addition, 1,000 Germany-based soldiers are shifting to Romania.

With growing nervousness in Eastern Europe over Russia's buildup, much attention is focused on its placement of thousands of troops in Belarus, which shares a border not only with Ukraine but also with three NATO nations — Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The Biden administration may soon shift some more troops within Europe to allied nations on NATO's eastern flank, a U.S. official said Saturday without specifying which nations.

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Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said last week that Putin could use any portion of the force he has assembled along Ukraine's borders to seize Ukrainian cities and "significant territories" or to carry out "coercive acts or provocative political acts" like the recognition of breakaway territories inside Ukraine.

More recently, other U.S. officials provided a more detailed breakdown of Russia's continuing force buildup, of U.S. assessments of prospects for war, and of the U.S. view of Putin's approach to the crisis.

The officials reiterated what other Biden administration officials have been saying for weeks — that they don't believe Putin has made a final decision to invade Ukraine. But it appears possible that the Russian leader set his intentions and is waiting until the last moment to give the go-ahead for an invasion.

Officials sketched out the disposition of Russian forces that have been deployed toward Ukraine's borders over the past several months, creating what Western officials see as the threat of a full-scale invasion despite repeated assertions by senior Russian officials that they do not intend to attack unprovoked.

As of Friday, the officials said, the Russian army has put in place near Ukraine a total of 83 "battalion tactical groups," each of which is roughly equivalent in size to an American battalion of between 750 and 1,000 soldiers. That is an increase from 60 battalion tactical groups in position just two weeks ago, they said.

Another 14 battalion tactical groups are on their way to the border area from other parts of Russia, the officials said. Two officials said the U.S. assesses that Russia would want a total of between 110 and 130 battalion tactical groups for use in a full-scale invasion, but Putin could decide on a more limited incursion. Including support units, Russia might be aiming to have 150,000 troops in place for a full-scale invasion, one official said, adding that the ongoing buildup could reach that level in the next couple of weeks.

Depending on Putin's ultimate objective, the Russian forces could attack Kyiv directly by moving south from current positions in southern Belarus. He might also send forces across the Russian border into eastern and southern Ukraine if his intent is to fracture and destroy a large portion of the Ukrainian army, the officials said.

On the lower end of the scale of military action, Putin might order sabotage, cyberattacks and other destabilizing actions inside Ukraine with the goal of removing the current government in Kyiv, officials have said.

Trump's GOP: Party further tightens tie to former president

By SAM METZ and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — In 2016, Donald Trump overtook the Republican National Committee through a shock and awe campaign that stunned party leaders. In 2020, the party was obligated to support him as the sitting Republican president.

Heading into 2024, however, the Republican Party has a choice.

The RNC, which controls the party's rules and infrastructure, is under no obligation to support Trump again. In fact, the GOP's bylaws specifically require neutrality should more than one candidate seek the party's presidential nomination.

But as Republican officials from across the country gathered in Utah this week for the RNC's winter meeting, party leaders devoted considerable energy to disciplining Trump's rivals and embracing his grievances. As the earliest stages of the next presidential contest take shape, their actions made clear that choosing to serve Trump and his political interests remains a focus for the party.

"If President Trump decides he's running, absolutely the RNC needs to back him, 100%," said Michele Fiore, an RNC committeewoman who has represented Nevada since 2018. "We can change the bylaws."

The loyalty to Trump is a fresh reminder that one of America's major political parties is deepening its alignment with a figure who is undermining the nation's democratic principles. As he fought to stay in the White House, Trump sparked a violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. More recently, he has explicitly said that former Vice President Mike Pence could and should have overturned the election results, something he had no power to do.

Away from the ballrooms of the RNC meeting, Pence rebuked Trump on Friday, saying he had "no right to overturn the election" and that his former boss was "wrong" to suggest otherwise.

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That kind of dissent was rare in Salt Lake City. In censuring two GOP lawmakers who have criticized Trump and joined the committee probing the Jan. 6 insurrection, the RNC channeled the former president in assailing the panel for leading a "persecution of ordinary citizens engaged in legitimate political discourse."

Pence, whose life was threatened on Jan. 6, is one of a few Republicans making moves toward a 2024 campaign regardless of whether Trump wages a comeback bid. If he were to run for the White House again, Trump is such a powerful force with the GOP base that he probably wouldn't need the party's help to become the nominee.

Some Republicans said that's beside the point.

"There's probably some disagreement there," said Bruce Hough, a longtime RNC member from Utah who lost to a Trump ally in a race for party co-chair last year. "The RNC has to provide a level playing field for any and all comers for president. That's our job. That's what we have to do."

But a stark divide has emerged between veterans like Hough, who are devoted to the GOP as an institution, and a larger group of Trump-aligned newcomers, who argue they're bringing new energy to the party. Their chief loyalty, however, seems to be to the former president.

"Leading up to 2020, or most of the time Trump was in office, he sent around his minions to populate the committee with very loyal Trump folks in a lot of red states," said Bill Palatucci, an RNC committeeman from New Jersey and frequent Trump critic. "And they still enjoy that strong majority."

The RNC's continued embrace of Trump more than two years before the 2024 election is a decided shift from the party's position in past elections.

In 2012 and 2016, for example, Reince Priebus as RNC chair went to great lengths to ensure each of the candidates was treated equally. The party sanctioned 12 debates, including early rounds that featured up to 17 candidates.

"Clearly, there's a bias that didn't exist in the past," said Tim Miller, who previously worked for the Republican National Committee and has since emerged as a fierce Trump critic. "It's all Trump all the time coming out of there."

A year ago, just after President Joe Biden's inauguration, RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel declined to encourage Trump to run again when asked, citing party rules that require neutrality. She also discouraged attacks on those Republicans who voted for Trump's impeachment.

This week, however, she backed an effort by Trump loyalists to censure Reps. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., and Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., a move triggered almost entirely by their fight against Trump's enduring influence in the party beyond the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

The censure, which passed on a voice vote Friday, says the two "support Democrat efforts to destroy President Trump more than they support winning back a Republican majority in 2022."

McDaniel's shift coincides with the RNC's reliance on Trump for fundraising. The party has issued hundreds of fundraising appeals since Trump left office evoking his name. One offered this message to prospective small-dollar donors on Tuesday: "YOU must stand with President Trump and YOUR Party."

In speeches made minutes before party leaders voted to censure Cheney and Kinzinger, McDaniel and co-chair Tommy Hicks did not mention Trump and stressed the need to unify for the 2022 midterm elections.

Though the committee's moves demonstrated a sustained loyalty to the former president, outside the winter meeting the censure was condemned by opponents as divisive and contrary to frequent appeals from leaders to expand the party's tent.

The RNC's discipline "shows more about them than us," Kinzinger said in an interview. "It shows that Trump and Trumpism has overtaken the RNC."

Cheney in a statement said the move demonstrated how the party had become hostage to Trump.

Indeed, this week's focus on debates that won't take place until 2024 and on anti-Trump Republicans overshadowed the party's preparations for the midterm elections. That's notable because the GOP could reclaim control of at least one chamber of Congress and several governor's mansions.

But this week, Trump's grievances with his Republican critics took center stage instead.

"We should be focused on what the voters are focused on," said Caleb Heimlich, chair of the Republi-

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can Party in Washington state, where two of three Republican House members voted to impeach Trump following the Jan. 6 insurrection. "I've been talking to voters in Washington state, traveling around and nobody talks about Cheney. That's a D.C. topic."

Others disagreed.

Harmeet Dhillon, an RNC committeewoman from California, said it was imperative to send a clear message about Cheney and Kinzinger for her and the legions of volunteers working to elect Republicans this year.

"The midterms are about a party electing its leaders, and what Adam Kinzinger and Liz Cheney did here is defy their party's leadership," Dhillon said. "I do not want to elect people in the midterms who do what these two did."

On Saturday, Trump weighed in with a statement congratulating the RNC and McDaniel for their "great ruling" censuring "two Horrible RINOs."

Beyond the censure, Republicans set in motion a rules change rooted in another of Trump's longstanding grievances. A measure advanced that would force presidential candidates to sign a pledge saying they will not participate in any debates sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates advanced. It is expected to be voted on when RNC members convene again in August.

"We are not walking away from debates," McDaniel said. "We are walking away from the Commission on Presidential Debates because it's a biased monopoly that does not serve the best interests of the American people."

The eventual 2024 nominee, however, will have final say on whether to participate.

Another Republican eyeing a White House campaign, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, decried the RNC's push to punish Trump's rivals.

"The GOP I believe in is the party of freedom and truth," the frequent Trump critic tweeted Friday. "It's a sad day for my party — and the country — when you're punished just for expressing your beliefs, standing on principle, and refusing to tell blatant lies."

Delta asks DOJ to put unruly passengers on no-fly list

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Any person convicted of a disruption on board a flight should be added to the national "no fly" list, Delta Air Lines told the U.S. Department of Justice.

In a letter to the Justice Department Attorney General Merrick Garland dated Thursday, Delta CEO Ed Bastian said there should be "zero tolerance" for any behavior that affects flight safety. Bastian noted that while such incidents of bad behavior represent a small fraction of overall flights on Delta, the rate of incidents on the airline has increased nearly 100% since 2019.

"This action will help prevent future incidents and serve as a strong symbol of the consequences of not complying with crew member instructions on commercial aircraft," Bastian wrote in the letter furnished to The Associated Press by Delta Air Lines.

Delta has, along with its industry partner Airlines for America, been pushing since last year for heightened reporting, investigation and prosecution of those who interfere with on-board safety. The airlines, based in Atlanta, said it has put nearly 1,900 people on Delta's "no-fly" list for refusing to comply with masking requirements and submitted more than 900 banned names to the Transportation Security Administration to pursue civil penalties.

A spokesperson with TSA, which enforces the FBI "no fly" list of potential terrorist threats, referred a reporter to the FBI since that agency maintains the database. Both the FBI and the Justice Department declined to comment. The Federal Aviation Administration cited 4.9 reported unruly incidents per 10,000 flights the week ending Jan. 23, according to its website.

In December, the TSA announced a new partnership with the FAA that would call for unruly airline passengers facing additional consequences for bad behavior under a new partnership. Under the alliance, the FAA will share information of passengers facing fines for unruly behavior with the TSA, which may remove the passenger from its pre-check screening eligibility, a privilege reserved for low-risk travelers.

Morocco's king says boy, 5, trapped in deep well has died

By MOSA'AB ELSHAMY and TARIK EL-BARAKAH Associated Press

IGHRAN, Morocco (AP) — A 5-year-old boy who was trapped for four days in a deep well in Morocco has died, the royal palace said Saturday.

Moroccan King Mohammed VI expressed his condolences to the boy's parents in a statement released by the palace.

The boy, Rayan, was pulled out Saturday night by rescuers after a lengthy operation that captivated global attention.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw the boy wrapped in a yellow blanket after he emerged from a tunnel dug specifically for the rescue.

His parents, Khaled Oram and Wassima Khersheesh had been escorted to an ambulance before the boy emerged. His plight had captured worldwide attention.

The palace statement said the king had been closely following the frantic rescue efforts by local authorities, "instructing officials to use all means necessary to dig the boy out of the well and return him alive to his parents". The king hailed the rescuers for their relentless work and the community for landing support to Rayan's family.

Hundreds of villagers and others had gathered to watch the rescue operation.

Online messages of support and concern for the boy poured in from around the world as the rescue efforts dragged on for four days.

Rescuers used a rope to send oxygen and water down to the boy as well as a camera to monitor him. By Saturday morning, the head of the rescue committee, Abdelhadi Temrani, said: "It is not possible to determine the child's condition at all at this time. But we hope to God that the child is alive."

Rayan fell into a 32-meter (105-foot) well located outside his home in the village of Ighran in Morocco's mountainous northern Chefchaouen province on Tuesday evening.

For three days, search crews used bulldozers to dig a parallel ditch. Then on Friday, they started excavating a horizontal tunnel to reach the trapped boy. Morocco's MAP news agency said that experts in topographical engineering were called upon for help.

Temrani, speaking to local television 2M, said Saturday that rescuers had just two meters (yards) left to dig to reach the hole where the boy had been trapped.

"The diggers encountered a hard rock on their way, and were therefore very careful to avoid any landslides or cracks," he said. "It took about five hours to get rid of the rock because the digging was slow and was done in a careful way to avoid creating cracks in the hole from below, which could threaten the life of the child as well as the rescue workers."

The work has been especially difficult because of fears that the soil surrounding the well could collapse on the boy.

The village of about 500 people is dotted with deep wells, many used for irrigating the cannabis crop that is the main source of income for many in the poor, remote and arid region of Morocco's Rif Mountains. Most of the wells have protective covers.

The exact circumstances of how the boy fell in the well are unclear.

Nationwide, Moroccans had taken to social media to offer their hopes for the boy's survival, using the hashtag #SaveRayan which has brought global attention to the rescue efforts.

Queen backs plan to one day call son's wife "Queen Camilla"

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Queen Elizabeth II offered her support Saturday to have the Duchess of Cornwall become Queen Camilla — using a special Platinum Jubilee message to make a significant decision in shaping the future of the British monarchy.

In remarks delivered on the eve of the 70th anniversary of her accession to the throne, the monarch

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expressed a "sincere wish" that Camilla be known as "Queen Consort" when her eldest son Charles, the Prince of Wales, succeeds her as expected to the throne. In giving her blessing, the popular and respected sovereign is placing significant heft behind the move.

"When, in the fullness of time, my son Charles becomes king, I know you will give him and his wife Camilla the same support that you have given me," the monarch wrote. "And it is my sincere wish that, when that time comes, Camilla will be known as Queen Consort as she continues her own loyal service."

The message ties up a loose end that has hung over the House of Windsor since Charles' divorce from the popular Princess Diana.

It took years for many in Britain to forgive Charles, the man whose admitted infidelity brought such pain to "the people's princess" before she died in a Paris car crash in 1997. But the public mood softened after Charles married Camilla Parker Bowles in 2005 and she became the Duchess of Cornwall.

Although Camilla played a significant role in the breakup of Charles' first marriage, her down-to-Earth style and sense of humor eventually won over many Britons. Her warmth softened the Charles' hard edges and made him appear more approachable, if not happier, as he cut ribbons, unveiled plaques and waited for his chance to reign.

At the time of their marriage, royal aides had suggested that Camilla did not want to be called queen and "intended" to be known instead as Princess Consort — a first in British history. But the careful use of the word "intend" led to the possibility of change later on.

The move is seen as an effort to safeguard a smooth transition to the future as the queen navigates the twilight of her reign.

"This is the most extraordinary message. The queen is ensuring the transition, when it comes, to her son as king is as seamless and trouble-free as possible," former BBC royal correspondent Peter Hunt told the Press Association. "She's future-proofing an institution she's served for 70 years. And for Camilla, the journey from being the third person in a marriage to queen-in-waiting is complete."

The queen also paid tribute to the Duke of Edinburgh, who died last year after decades of serving as her consort, and to the work of her mother.

"I am fortunate to have had the steadfast and loving support of my family. I was blessed that, in Prince Philip, I had a partner willing to carry out the role of consort and unselfishly make the sacrifices that go with it," she wrote. "It is a role I saw my own mother perform during my father's reign."

Earlier Saturday, Elizabeth attended her largest public engagement since a recent health scare, mingling with guests at a reception ahead of her platinum anniversary.

The monarch met with members of the local community during a tea at Sandringham, her country estate in eastern England where she normally spends the anniversary. The 95-year-old queen leaned on a walking stick as she chatted with guests.

Despite recent concerns about her health, Elizabeth moved freely and appeared to use her stick more to lean on when she stopped moving rather than depending on it as she walked around the room.

The monarch's health has been a concern since she cancelled a two-day trip to Northern Ireland in October and was quietly admitted to a hospital overnight for preliminary tests. Doctors advised her to rest and restrict herself to light duties.

But in her message, she promised she would continue to serve and said she was optimistic about the upcoming Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

"I am reminded of how much we can be thankful for," she wrote. "These last seven decades have seen extraordinary progress socially, technologically and culturally that have benefitted us all; and I am confident that the future will offer similar opportunities to us and especially to the younger generations in the United Kingdom and throughout the Commonwealth."

The sovereign signed the message "Your servant Elizabeth R."

Jennifer Garner celebrated as Hasty Pudding's Woman of Year

By STEPHANIE MORALES Associated Press

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CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — “Alias” actor Jennifer Garner was honored as Hasty Pudding Theatrical’s Woman of the Year at a parade in historic Harvard Square Saturday afternoon.

Garner was paraded through the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Despite the frigid temperatures, Garner was all smiles as she waved to the hundreds of spectators along the parade route.

“This is crazy. This is nuts,” Garner said, with jubilation in her voice, as she observed the large crowds from a red Bentley.

Garner, 49, will be bestowed the group’s iconic pudding pot at a traditional roast Saturday evening. Harvard’s famed theater troupe will also be performing its latest production, “Ship Happens,” after the roast. This will be the organization’s third time featuring both men and women in their cast and its first production in two years since the coronavirus pandemic began in 2020.

At the parade, Garner was accompanied by several of the theater troupe’s members, who were dressed in elaborate costumes and drag.

Hasty Pudding Theatricals, which dates to 1844 and bills itself the third-oldest theater group in the world, established its Woman of the Year award in 1951 to honor people who have made “lasting and impressive contributions to the world of entertainment.”

Last year’s recipient was Viola Davis, and previous winners include Meryl Streep, Katharine Hepburn, Ethel Merman and Cher.

Hasty Pudding organizers said they chose Garner based not just on her career as an actor but also because of her record as a philanthropist and entrepreneur.

“As a talented actress and philanthropist, Jennifer is a role model to all of us at Hasty Pudding Theatricals,” said the award’s organizer, Jacqueline Zoeller, in a press statement. “It is so wonderful to celebrate her in this exceptional year with the organization’s return to stage.”

Garner was nominated for several Primetime Emmys for her role as Sydney Bristow in the television spy series “Alias.” She’s been lauded for her work in several movies including “Juno,” “Dallas Buyers Club” and “13 Going on 30.”

Garner is a Save the Children trustee and has advocated on Capitol Hill and around the nation to raise awareness and funds for the organization. She also co-founded the organic food company Once Upon a Farm in 2017, with a goal of providing children with the highest quality food grown using sustainable methods.

Jason Bateman, who played Garner’s husband in the 2007 film “Juno,” was feted earlier this week as 2022 Man of the Year.

VMI to change honor system said to expel Blacks more often

LEXINGTON, Va. (AP) — The Virginia Military Institute says it will change its student-run honor court to make it more fair to cadets as part of a response to a state-ordered investigation into racism and sexism at the school.

VMI detailed the reforms in a progress report Friday, The Washington Post reported. The 70-page report, which the college gave to General Assembly members and the Virginia secretary of education, describes initiatives approved, enacted or begun last year. Those initiatives included mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion training for administrators and members of VMI’s Board of Visitors, and changes to the Lexington school’s one-strike-and-you’re-out honor court system.

Data obtained by the newspaper showed Black students at VMI were expelled by the honor court at a disproportionately high rate for the three academic years between the fall of 2017 and the spring of 2020. Though Black cadets made up about 6% of the student body, they represented about 43% of those expelled for honor code violations.

Twelve out of the 28 VMI students dismissed in those three academic years were Black. When students of color were included in the count, the number of expelled rose to 15, or about 54% of the total, even though minorities made up only about 21% of the student population in that three-year period.

Barnes & Thornburg, a law firm hired by the state to investigate racism and sexism at VMI, recommended

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in its final report that the college "consider changing" its policy of allowing convictions without unanimous verdicts by student juries.

But VMI, which received \$21.6 million in state funding for the 2021-2022 academic year, reported Friday that it will continue to allow student prosecutors to win cases with non-unanimous verdicts. One concession the school did make was that student juries will expand in size and guilty verdicts will require nine out of 11 jury votes instead of five of seven votes.

Another change would allow cadets to use pro bono attorneys during their trials. VMI used to allow lawyers to represent cadets during the proceedings, but stopped about a decade ago because of complaints that the professional litigators prosecuted the system itself and that only affluent students could afford them.

Now, VMI will draw up a list of pro bono lawyers willing to work with cadet defendants and their "defense advocates" — typically VMI faculty or staff members — before and during trials. But the attorneys will be allowed only to observe and consult their client or their defense advocate during the hearing, not argue the case themselves.

All of the new honor court changes will go into effect in August 2022, at the beginning of the next academic year.

The college also said it will begin retaining "key demographic data" to "monitor the fairness of the system." VMI's chief diversity officer, Jamica Love, will help "facilitate annual reviews" of the honor system, the report said.

A state-sanctioned report released last year said VMI has tolerated and failed to address institutional racism and sexism and must be held accountable for making changes. The 145-page report compiled by an independent law firm at the request of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, said "racial slurs and jokes are not uncommon" and "contribute to an atmosphere of hostility toward minorities."

Waffle House shooter receives life in prison without parole

By JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A man who shot and killed four people at a Nashville Waffle House in 2018 received a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole on Saturday.

Jurors handed down the penalty for 33-year-old Travis Reinking after hearing about two hours of testimony from family members of the four people killed. They sobbed and trembled as they talked about their loved ones and how losing them continues to fracture their lives more than three years later. Jurors had the option of giving Reinking the chance for parole after serving 51 years in prison.

Naked save for a green jacket, Reinking opened fire inside the restaurant just after 3:20 a.m. on April 22, 2018, killing Taurean Sanderlin, 29; Joey Perez, 20; Akilah Dasilva, 23; and DeEbony Groves, 21. He fled after restaurant patron James Shaw Jr. wrestled his assault-style rifle away from him, triggering a manhunt.

"I've always been somebody that they say is unbreakable, because no matter what our family has been through, I will always be the one to bring our family up," Patricia Perez said through tears about losing her son Joey. "This has broken me."

Jurors on Friday rejected Reinking's insanity defense as they found him guilty on 16 charges, including four counts of first-degree murder. The trial opened Monday after jury selection the previous week. Prosecutors in 2020 indicated they would not seek the death penalty and would seek life without parole.

Reinking's defense team, which didn't put on any sentencing witnesses Saturday, argued for the possibility of parole, saying he was mentally untethered. Prosecutors argued the evidence shows Reinking planned out the attack and wanted to kill everyone at the restaurant.

Prosecutors also directed jurors' attention back to heart-wrenching testimony from family members. Shaundelle Brooks said her son Akilah Dasilva was a gifted artist, a brilliant student and a talented musician who built his own computer to work on his music, which he used to urge people to turn away from gun violence.

"He loved his family, but most of all Akilah wanted to live," Brooks said, crying. "He wanted to create positive change in this world. He showed compassion, not anger. He spread love, not hate."

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Evidence at trial showed Reinking had schizophrenia and had suffered delusions for years, believing unknown people were tormenting him. He contacted law enforcement several times to report that he was being threatened, stalked and harassed. In July 2017, he was detained by the Secret Service after he ventured unarmed into a restricted area on the White House grounds and demanded to meet with then-President Donald Trump.

State police in Illinois, where he lived at the time, revoked Reinking's state firearms owner identification. But that only meant he had to turn over his guns to someone else with valid identification. Reinking surrendered the guns to his father, who later returned them to his son.

Since law enforcement declined to take his delusions seriously, Reinking began to feel that they and other random people were part of a conspiracy against him, psychologists testified. Shortly before the attack, he believed someone had drugged him, broken into his apartment and raped him. Reinking told psychologists that while praying about what to do, he received a command from God to go to the Waffle House and shoot three people.

To prove Reinking was not guilty by reason of insanity, defense attorneys had to show not only that he suffered from severe mental illness that left him unable to understand the wrongfulness of his actions.

Prosecutors presented evidence that Reinking was calm and cooperative after his arrest, able to understand and respond to commands. Although Reinking was naked when he walked from the crime scene, when he was captured nearly two days later, he was dressed and carrying a backpack loaded with water bottles, sunscreen, a pistol, ammunition, Bible and several silver bars. And they mentioned he had asked to talk to an attorney after his arrest.

Prosecutors suggested Reinking was acting out of revenge. He noted that days before the shooting, Reinking stole a BMW from a dealership. Reinking wrote in a journal about plans to drive to Colorado, describing a life in which he would hang out with friends, smoke marijuana, hike in the mountains and "repossess" cars and houses so that he would not have to work, a prosecutor said.

After police took the BMW back the next day, he wrote, "This time I would have to punish them by taking something they couldn't take back, some of their own lives," the prosecutor said.

Prosecutors also emphasized Reinking's own account of the shooting: He said that after killing Perez, "I felt like I was going to throw up because this was something God told me to do but it felt evil."

The jury also convicted Reinking on four counts of attempted first-degree murder and four counts of unlawful employment of a firearm during commission of or attempt to commit a dangerous felony. In addition to the four people he killed, he seriously wounded Sharita Henderson and Shantia Waggoner. Kayla Shaw and James Shaw Jr., who are not related, suffered lesser injuries.

Women's hockey world still playing catch-up to Canada, US

By JOHN WAWROW AP Hockey Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Immediately after one of Finland's most lopsided losses in international women's hockey history, general manager Tuula Puputti marveled with envy at the depth of talent Canada has assembled.

She began by referencing Canada's top line centered by captain Marie-Philip Poulin, who has drawn comparisons to Sidney Crosby for scoring two gold-medal clinching goals. Then there's a second line anchored by Sarah Fillier, the 21-year-old Princeton captain, who has already scored four times in her Olympic debut.

Puputti, however, didn't stop there.

"Who wouldn't want to have their third and fourth lines on their teams as well?" the former goalie said, incredulously. "It's plenty to choose."

Plenty harder to contain.

Whatever faint hope there was of the rest of the world closing the gap on the Canadian and U.S. women's hockey teams is quickly being dashed three days into the Beijing Games.

Canada outclassed its first two Group A opponents with a pair of 11-1 victories, beginning with Switzerland on Thursday and the Finns on Saturday. And Finland, which won bronze at the 2018 Winter Games and the world championships in August, hardly fared much better against the United States in a 5-2 loss

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on Thursday night.

The defending Olympic champion Americans improved to 2-0 by overcoming a slow start in a 5-0 win over the Russian team later in the day.

In Group B play, Haruka Toko had a goal and two assists, and Japan improved to 2-0 with a 6-2 victory over Denmark (0-2). The Czech Republic is off to a 2-0 start in its Olympic women's hockey debut after Tereza Vanisova scored twice in a 3-1 win over Sweden (0-2).

For Puputti, very little has changed her mind in the two months since she called Canada the tournament favorite.

"Today, it wasn't our best game, and they came out very strong," she said.

After Minnamari Tuominen provided Finland brief life by scoring from the left point to cut the deficit to 2-1 with 1:33 remaining, Canada responded with a five-goal second period.

Barring a drastic turn of events, the likelihood of the U.S. facing Canada in the gold-medal game for the sixth time in seven Olympic tournaments appears inevitable. The only exception was the 2006 Torino Games, when Sweden beat the U.S. in the semifinals before losing to Canada.

"I really believe Canada and the U.S. are playing on a different planet right now," said Czech coach Tomas Pacina. "It's a very mature hockey, very high-end hockey, very close to men's hockey."

Canada's up-tempo transition attack and heavy emphasis on the forecheck was readily apparent against the Finns. Fillier opened the scoring 61 seconds in by snapping in a shot from the right circle, and Sarah Nurse scored 11 minutes later off Sanni Rantala's giveaway.

The rout was on when Brianne Jenner and Laura Stacey scored 2:08 apart to put Canada up 7-1 with 3:25 left in the second period, when each of their pass attempts deflected in off Finland defenders.

"Not every game is going to look like that," said Jenner, who scored three goals and added an assist. "But we're confident with this group, no matter what the score is."

Canada didn't skip a beat despite missing second-line winger Melodie Daoust, who is listed as day-to-day after sustaining an upper-body injury against the Swiss. Jamie Lee Rattray filled Daoust's spot and finished with a goal and two assists.

"It speaks to how versatile everyone's game is," Fillier said. "It's the best 23 players in Canada. So, wherever you put anyone it's going to click."

The 11 goals scored were the most by the Canadian women against Finland in Olympic or world championship play. The 10-goal margin of defeat represented the Finns' second worst behind an 11-0 loss to the U.S. at the 2012 world championships.

And to think, many outside of North America viewed the 2019 world championships as a potential turning point. That's when the tournament host Finns stunned Canada with a 4-2 win in the semifinals and got within a disallowed overtime goal of beating the United States in an eventual 2-1 shootout loss.

The difference, Puputti said, is Finland doesn't have a talent pool deep enough to draw upon to replace the players who have since retired. Another key factor is the U.S. and Canada having the resources to centralize their teams in one place during the four-month lead-up to the Olympics.

Other nations, by comparison, squeeze in a limited number of weeklong camps to fit around their players' pro or college schedules. Finland was hampered further by losing practice time because of COVID-19 restrictions.

"I think you can see that they have been together a lot," Finland captain Jenni Hiirikoski said, before being asked to compare Canada and the U.S. after facing both in three days.

"Canada is maybe a little more driving straight to the net. U.S. is maybe trying to make plays a little more," Hiirikoski said. "But tough teams. Good teams. They are really good."

Hilary Knight, a four-time U.S. Olympian, disputed the notion of the gap growing larger following a win in which the Americans outshot ROC 62-12.

"You know, 2019 isn't too long ago. You saw that final," Knight said. "Everyone's good at this tournament. And it's wonderful because I think it's a testament to the growth of women's hockey."

But only a few seemingly growing faster than others.

Mass swarm of dead fish in Atlantic prompts European inquiry

PARIS (AP) — France and the European Union are investigating why a massive swarm of dead fish was released by a huge trawler in the Atlantic Ocean off France, after an environmental group released dramatic video and photos of the incident.

The images by the group Sea Shepherd show a blanket of dead blue whiting fish floating on the surface of the Bay of Biscay, off the coast of southwest France. The group estimates it held some 100,000 dead fish.

Struck by the “shocking” images, French Maritime Minister Annick Girardin tweeted Friday that she ordered the National Center for Fishing Surveillance to investigate what happened.

The European commissioner for the environment, oceans and fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius, announced an inquiry into “national authorities of the fishing area and presumed flag state of the vessel, to get exhaustive information and evidence about the case.”

The Pelagic Freezer-Trawler Association, which represents the Lithuania-registered trawler Margiris, which caught the fish, said in a statement that the fish were “involuntarily released into the sea” on Thursday because of a tear in the trawler’s net.

“Such an accident is a rare occurrence, and in this case was caused by the unexpectedly large size of the fish caught,” it said. It said the trawler has adapted its practices to deal with “the exceptional size of the fish currently in the area concerned.”

Sea Shepherd, however, questioned whether it was an accident or instead an intentional dump of unwanted fish. The group is calling for more policing of the seas — and especially of massive industrial trawlers — to protect sea life and oceans.

Millions in tax dollars flow to anti-abortion centers in US

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Anti-abortion centers across the country are receiving tens of millions of tax dollars to talk women out of ending their pregnancies, a nearly fivefold increase from a decade ago that resulted from an often-overlooked effort by mostly Republican-led states.

The nonprofits known as crisis pregnancy centers are typically religiously affiliated and counsel clients against having an abortion as part of their free but limited services. That practice and the fact that they generally are not licensed as medical facilities have raised questions about whether it’s appropriate to funnel so much tax money their way.

An Associated Press tally based on state budget figures reveals that nearly \$89 million has been allocated to such centers across about a dozen states this fiscal year. A decade ago, the annual funding for the programs hovered around \$17 million in about eight states.

Estimates of how many abortions have been prevented by such programs are unknown because many states only require reports of how many clients were served. Similarly, as abortion rates have declined across the U.S. for years, there is no way to know the extent to which the pregnancy centers have played a role.

Trying to pinpoint exactly how many pregnancy centers receive taxpayer dollars also is difficult because each state has a different system to distribute the money.

“It’s bad governing. We’re supposed to be monitoring our taxpayer money and we don’t know where the money is going,” said Julie von Haefen, a Democratic state representative in North Carolina, which has sent millions in public money to pregnancy centers. “These clinics don’t provide medical care. They act like they do, but they don’t.”

What is clear is that taxpayer funding for the centers has spiked in recent years as more Republican-led states have passed legislation severely limiting access to abortion.

The centers have also been accused of providing misleading information about abortion and contraception — for example, suggesting that abortion leads to mental health problems or breast cancer.

“What we have found is that they’re providing misleading information about the risks of abortion and

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not providing the actual prevalence of when that happens, because abortion is quite safe," said Andrea Swartzendruber, a University of Georgia public health professor who has helped map the location of crisis pregnancy centers nationwide. "They'll claim that abortion will lead to breast cancer, when it in fact does not. Or they'll say abortion leads to abortion PTSD. They make up this post-abortion syndrome."

The pregnancy centers often pop up close to abortion clinics with the goal of luring pregnant women away.

Supporters hope to expand the number of centers if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns or significantly restricts abortion rights in a case to be decided later this year.

That momentum is already building in Texas, where a state law that effectively bans abortion at about six weeks — before many women know they are pregnant — has been in effect since September. State lawmakers recently gave a hefty funding boost to programs offering abortion alternatives, dedicating \$100 million over the next two years.

Programs in Texas and other states typically offer counseling and classes in parenting skills, as well as clothing and food. Proponents argue that these are essential social services offered to women who would otherwise remain pregnant but were unaware of the help they could receive.

"We have seen women still steadily seeking out resources and services," said Chelsey Youman, Texas state director and national legislative adviser for Human Coalition, a top contractor under the state's alternatives-to-abortion program. "Women are saying, 'All right, abortion isn't available after my child has a heartbeat, so what is out here?'"

The new law, Youman said, has helped refocus the crisis pregnancy centers' efforts on both women who have accepted the new restrictions and need help, as well as those who are wavering on whether to cross state lines to get an abortion.

Most centers offer pregnancy tests and pregnancy-related counseling. Some also offer limited medical services such as ultrasounds. Because the centers are not licensed health care facilities, they are exempt from certain government regulations, such as minimum staffing levels.

Last year, Tennessee lawmakers allocated money for several ultrasound machines to be placed in pregnancy centers. The website of one center includes a disclaimer stating that any information provided "is an educational service and should not be relied on as a substitute for professional and/or medical advice."

At a recent dedication of an ultrasound machine in Murfreesboro, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Nashville, Republican Gov. Bill Lee and anti-abortion supporters said the state-funded purchase was critical in swaying patients who were considering the procedure.

"This is really about serving women who have a crisis and want information," Lee said.

The first state to enact an official abortion-alternatives program was Pennsylvania in the mid-1990s. The funding grew out of a deal in the Legislature between abortion rights supporters and abortion opponents.

Then-Gov. Robert P. Casey, an anti-abortion Democrat, signed the crisis pregnancy center funding into law, barely a year after his administration fought to the Supreme Court to win a landmark 1991 ruling allowing states to impose restrictions on abortion.

Under the deal, Pennsylvania began subsidizing the program to appease opponents of a preexisting program that subsidized Planned Parenthood's services for women's health. Republican majorities in the Legislature have enforced the agreement ever since, including for the past eight years under Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf, who supports abortion rights. It received \$7.2 million in the current fiscal year.

If money for the program were cut from the budget, "then we would ax that line item that goes to Planned Parenthood, as well," said state Rep. Kathy Rapp, a Republican who chairs the health committee in the House.

By 2001, Pennsylvania also became the first state to receive approval to use \$1 million from the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to help fund the pregnancy centers.

The Pennsylvania Health Department then contracted with a nonprofit known as Real Alternatives to oversee the program and distribute money. The Pennsylvania-based group eventually was selected to oversee similar programs in Michigan and Indiana, where it says it has since served more than 408,000

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women.

The Campaign for Accountability, a Washington-based watchdog organization, has launched multiple complaints against Real Alternatives, including allegations that the group failed to meet its own goals and misspent taxpayer money.

Pennsylvania Auditor General Eugene DePasquale declared in 2017 that a lack of government oversight allowed Real Alternatives for decades to use tax dollars to expand their work in other states. The state instructed the group to change the way it pays subcontractors when its contract was renewed.

In Michigan, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer vetoed the state's annual \$700,000 budget for abortion alternatives in 2019 following a complaint from the Campaign for Accountability, which argued that Real Alternatives had provided services to only about 3,700 pregnant women instead of the 9,000 outlined in its contract. Michigan had funded the program since 2013.

"Michiganders deserve comprehensive family planning programs that are evidence-based and support a person's full range of reproductive health options," Whitmer said in a letter to the watchdog group, thanking them for raising the complaint.

In Georgia, critics point to lax reporting requirements that require abortion-alternative programs to disclose only their total expenses and the amount of money dispersed to providers.

Despite the transparency concerns, the push to expand alternative programs continues across the country.

Arizona does not have an official alternatives-to-abortion program, but in 2019 lawmakers set aside \$2.5 million for three years to develop a phone help line designed to steer pregnant women away from abortions.

In Tennessee, the GOP supermajority in the Legislature recently signed off on giving \$3 million to the Human Coalition to set up call centers to serve as "virtual clinics" in Nashville, Memphis and Knoxville. Their goal is to direct people to pregnancy centers or government services.

Arkansas is the first state to require patients seeking an abortion to first call an information hotline to learn about possible pregnancy assistance before they can undergo the procedure. The program is set to be implemented in 2023.

Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio and Oklahoma have all funded crisis pregnancy centers for years. But no state has acted as ambitiously as Texas.

In 2005, Texas created its own program with \$5 million taken from its federal welfare dollars, allowing a variety of nonprofits to apply for grants. It quickly expanded under the Republican-controlled Legislature as crisis pregnancy centers, adoption agencies and maternity homes clamored for more money.

By 2020, the state's abortion-alternatives contractors provided roughly 1 million goods such as diapers and food, gave 331,000 counseling sessions, taught 314,000 parenting classes, made 217,800 referrals to government assistance programs and provided 56 adoption services, according to the latest annual report.

This year, Texas lawmakers dedicated a record \$100 million in state tax dollars to fund the project over the next two years.

State Rep. Debra Howard said the money could be better spent on state-supervised women's health programs that offer annual exams, disease screenings and family planning services.

"The exponential increase in funding is unparalleled," the Austin Democrat said. "It's certainly not something we've seen for other programs that are in the category for women's health."

Amir Locke, killed by Minneapolis cop, wanted music career

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

Before he was fatally shot by a Minneapolis police officer, Amir Locke had been making plans.

The 22-year-old Black man had filed paperwork to start a music business, his mother said, and had already designed a logo. Next week, he planned to move to Dallas, where he would be closer to his mom and — he hoped — build a career as a hip-hop artist, following in the musical footsteps of his father.

His death inside a Minneapolis apartment where police were serving a search warrant early Wednesday has renewed calls for police accountability and justice for Black people who are too often victims. It also left Locke's tight-knit family, friends and a community grieving for the life he didn't get to live.

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"Amir was a bright light, and he deserves to be able to shine," his father, Andre Locke, said during a news conference Friday.

Many questions remain about the events leading up to Locke's death. But a police bodycam video shows officers entering the apartment without knocking and an officer kicking the couch where Locke's family said he was sleeping. On the video, he is seen wrapped in a comforter, beginning to move, with a pistol in his hand just before an officer fires his weapon.

Locke's family said he had no criminal record, and he had a license and concealed carry permit for the gun, which they said he had for protection because he worked in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area as a driver for a food delivery service. His family includes several people with backgrounds in law enforcement and the military, and his parents and a cousin said they spoke often with Amir and other young Black men in the family about how to handle interactions with police: keep your hands visible, don't make any sudden movements.

They believe Amir, who they say was a deep sleeper, was startled when the officer kicked the couch inside his cousin's apartment and didn't know who was inside when he grabbed for his gun.

Those closest to him repeatedly described him as "a good kid."

"You took a good kid who was trying to make the best out of his environment, and surpass it and succeed and he was doing it," said Reginald McClure, a close cousin of Andre Locke who works in law enforcement in Texas. "He was figuring out life, but he was doing it safely."

Amir Locke was born in the St. Paul suburb of Maplewood, his mother Karen Wells said, with "a headful of curly hair." He grew up in the suburbs, where he played basketball in middle school and tried out for his high school football team.

"But he broke his collarbone, so that didn't last," Wells recalled.

His true passion was music, and he had a natural talent for it, his mother said. Locke enjoyed hip-hop, and speaking about "the realities of what's going on in the neighborhoods," Andre Locke said. He also wanted to work with young people, his mother said.

McClure also recalled Amir Locke as having "a big heart."

When his grandmother died last year, Amir didn't want to see her body in the casket so he stayed outside in the parking lot during the funeral, McClure said. After the funeral ended, Andre Locke and the funeral director arranged to have Amir go inside through a back door so he could be alone with his grandmother.

"We have these pictures with him, and he's standing there and he's saying goodbye to his grandmother," McClure said. "And here's the crazy part. The same funeral home that he was so heartbroken to go see his grandmother in because of the bigness of his heart, is the same one he's going to be in."

US military faces crisis in Hawaii after leak poisons water

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A giant U.S. government fuel storage installation hidden inside a mountain ridge overlooking Pearl Harbor has provided fuel to military ships and planes crisscrossing the Pacific Ocean since World War II.

Its very existence was a secret for years. Even after it was declassified, few people paid attention — until late last year, when jet fuel leaked into a drinking water well, showed up in tap water and sickened thousands in military housing.

Now the Navy is scrambling to contain what one U.S. lawmaker calls a "crisis of astronomical proportions." Native Hawaiians, veterans, liberals and conservatives across Hawaii are all pushing to shut down the tanks even though the Navy says they're vital to national security.

Military medical teams have examined more than 5,900 people complaining of symptoms including nausea, headaches and rashes. The military has moved about 4,000 mostly military families into hotels and has flown in water treatment systems from the U.S. mainland.

In the first six weeks since the water crisis emerged, the Navy spent more than \$250 million addressing the public health emergency.

"Frankly, it's been a nightmare and a disaster. A total disaster," said U.S. Rep. Kaiuli'i Kahele.

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Kahele, a combat pilot who still serves as an officer in the Hawaii National Guard, is the lawmaker who characterized the crisis as astronomical at a hearing in December. An admiral said that the Navy takes the blame.

"The Navy caused this problem, we own it and we're gonna fix it," Navy Rear Adm. Blake Converse, the deputy Pacific Fleet commander, told lawmakers last month.

The military built the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility in the early 1940s by excavating caverns within the mountain ridge to protect 20 fuel tanks from aerial attacks. Each tank is about the height of a 25-story building and can hold 12.5 million gallons (47.32 million liters.)

The tanks are connected to underground pipelines that send fuel about 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) to Pearl Harbor and to ships and planes used by the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines and Navy.

The Navy hasn't determined how petroleum got in the water. Officials are investigating a theory that jet fuel spilled from a ruptured pipe last May and somehow entered a fire suppression system drain pipe. They suspect fuel then leaked from the second pipe on Nov. 20, sending it into the drinking water well.

Within a week, military families started complaining about health problems.

Lauren Wright remembers her skin peeling, feeling nauseous and vomiting. Her symptoms disappeared only when she stopped drinking, showering and washing dishes with her home's water.

"I'm a proud Navy spouse, but this is not right — to do this to your families," she said.

Since early December, Wright, her sailor husband and their three children ages 7 to 17 have been among the thousands of military families living in Honolulu hotels paid for by the Navy so they can have clean water.

The Navy has been trying to clear petroleum from the contaminated well and pump it out of the aquifer. Officials are also flushing clean water through the Navy's water system — which serves 93,000 people in military homes and offices in and around Pearl Harbor. Teams have separately visited homes and workplaces to flush individual water pipe systems.

But Wright said Marines sent to flush a neighbor's home received two days of training, failed to follow a checklist for the work and had to be taught how to do the job by a neighbor with expertise.

"We're all afraid that we are going to be forced into our toxic homes and go right back to it," she said.

The first major complaints about the fuel complex came in 2014, when 27,000 gallons (123,000 liters) leaked from one tank but didn't get into the drinking water.

The Navy blamed contractor error and ineffective oversight. The Sierra Club of Hawaii and Honolulu's water utility warned leaks could seep into one of Honolulu's most important drinking water aquifers, located just 100 feet (30 meters) below the tanks, but the Navy resisted calls to move the facility.

The aquifer normally supplies more than 20% of the water consumed in the city. After the latest spill, Honolulu's water utility shut off three wells to prevent petroleum from migrating through the aquifer into the utility's drinking water.

If the biggest of the three wells remains shut, about 400,000 people in neighborhoods including downtown and Waikiki could face rationing and outages during the summer when water demand increases.

The Navy last month said it would comply with an order by Hawaii Gov. David Ige, a Democrat, to drain the tanks and not use them until it's safe to do so. But it reversed course this week and appealed to get more time to work on solutions.

The Navy has said draining the tanks wouldn't affect short-term Pacific operations, but commanders said they would give congressional members a classified briefing on longer-term implications.

Many Hawaii residents, including Republican state Rep. Bob McDermott, say the dangers posed by the tanks justify getting rid of the fuel complex forever. The Marine veteran has two sons in the Navy, one son who is a Marine veteran and another currently at Marine Corps boot camp.

"I'm very close to the military, but these things are too old. It's just that simple. And if they're going to look at infrastructure for the next century, they need to fill these things in with dirt," said McDermott.

Forty-eight of the 51 members of the state House of Representatives signed a letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin calling for the tanks to be decommissioned. State senators are considering legislation to outlaw them.

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Hawaii's four-member congressional delegation has secured wording in recent legislation requiring the Navy to study fuel storage alternatives.

Esther Kia'aina, a Honolulu city council member, said public trust in the military in Hawaii could be scarred if the Navy doesn't close the tanks for good.

"This is a watershed moment. This is a turning point for the military's relationship with Hawaii," said Kia'aina, who was an Interior Department assistant secretary during the Obama administration.

She warned that failure to shut them down could jeopardize the military's ability to obtain lease extensions for state lands under sites like Pohakuloa Training Area, a Big Island site used by the Army and the Marines.

Converse, the deputy Pacific Fleet commander, said during the congressional hearing that the Navy is working to restore public trust.

"We recognize how much these events impacted the lives of so many, and we are firmly committed to restoring safe drinking water in a manner that builds trust and protects the land and the waters of Hawaii," Converse said.

Hawaii has been a strategically important outpost for the U.S. military since the early 1900s, when it set up a coal refueling station for steam-powered warships at Pearl Harbor. Today defense spending accounts for 8.5% of Hawaii's gross domestic product.

Activist protests got the Navy to stop bombing Kahoolawe Island for target practice in 1990. This time, opposition to the military is broader because it involves water, something that everyone connects to, said Colin Moore, a University of Hawaii political science professor.

"I don't think they have any friends on the island at this point," he said.

Olympic Updates: China's first gold draws cheers downtown

BEIJING (AP) — The Latest on the Beijing Winter Olympics:

China's first gold medal drew cheers from city residents gathered at a downtown shopping district.

China won its first event of the 2022 Winter Olympics with a victory in short track speedskating's mixed team relay. Wu Dajing edged Pietro Sighel of Italy by .016 seconds — or half a skate blade — to claim gold.

"It was thrilling. I was very excited and was filled with all kinds of emotions as I watched the Chinese team approach the finish step by step. This is the glory that belongs to China," said Beijing resident Cheng Hongwei, who stopped to watch the final when he found out it was being aired on a big screen in Wangfujing, a busy shopping area in central Beijing.

The live broadcast attracted dozens of pedestrians to stop by and cheer for Chinese athletes, including Olympic enthusiasts and people who said they hadn't followed winter sports very closely.

"It's great stimulation and incomparable delight for everyone. We have gradually earned our place in the history of Olympics. It's a very exciting thing to see the Chinese national flag being raised again, and I'm very proud as a Chinese," said Jolin Li, whose 7-year-old daughter is a huge fan of the Winter Games.

China has won its first gold of the Beijing Games, emerging victorious in the mixed team relay at short track speedskating in the event's Olympic debut.

Wu Dajing edged Italy's Pietro Sighel by .016 seconds. That's half a skate blade. Hungary earned bronze Saturday night.

Qu Chunyu, Fan Kexin and Ren Ziwei joined Wu for the historic victory. The small number of Chinese fans at Capital Indoor Arena cheered and waved tiny flags.

The results were delayed while the referee reviewed the race. Canada was penalized for pushing from behind and causing contact with Hungary.

China was the favorite coming in, having led the World Cup standings this season.

Italy remained undefeated in mixed doubles curling at the Beijing Olympics with a 7-5 victory against

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Britain while defending gold medalist John Morris of Canada and his new partner, Rachel Homan, beat Chris Plys and Vicky Persinger 7-2 to snap the Americans' win streak at two games.

Italy's Amos Mosaner and Stefania Constantini beat the British pair of Bruce Mouat and Jennifer Dodds to improve to 6-0 in the round robin competition in the 10-team field. Britain dropped to 4-2.

Morris and Homan scored a 3-end in the seventh to clinch their game against Plys and Persinger. The Canadians improved to 4-2 while the Americans dropped to 3-3.

The top four teams move into the semifinals on Monday and the medals will be decided on Tuesday.

Walter Wallberg of Sweden has dethroned the so-called King of Moguls to take home the gold in the freestyle skiing men's moguls.

The Swede looked almost in shock when his score of 83.23 flashed on the scoreboard, edging that of defending Olympic champion Mikael Kingsbury of Canada late Saturday night. Wallberg picked up points for his speed over the smooth and technical skiing style of Kingsbury, who ended up with silver.

Ikuma Horishima of Japan took home the bronze.

Wallberg's surprise victory interrupts the men's moguls dominance of Team Canada, which had won the event in the last three Winter Games. This was his first major win. The 21-year-old has never even won a World Cup event.

Slovenia's Ursa Bogataj has taken Olympic gold in women's ski jumping, floating 100 meters (328 feet) with 121 points on the final jump.

Katharina Althaus of Germany won silver for the second straight Olympics and Bogataj's fellow Slovenian Nika Kriznar took bronze. Japan's Sara Takanashi had entered as one of the favorites, but finished fourth.

Takanashi had won a record 61 World Cup events and earned bronze four years ago in South Korea. 2018's gold medalist, Maren Lundby, did not participate this year. The top-ranked women in World Cup standings, Austrian Marita Kramer, could not compete after testing positive for COVID-19.

This was the third time women had jumped for gold in the Winter Olympics.

The final round of women's ski jumping was delayed by 15 minutes, giving the athletes a brief break after the first round took more time than expected.

Germany's Katharina Althaus jumped 105.5 meters (346 feet) had 121.1 points in the first round. Althaus won silver at the 2018 Olympics and was aiming to hold off a trio of Slovenians: Ursa Bogataj, Nika Kriznar and Ema Klinec.

Japan's Sara Takanashi, the bronze medalist four years ago, was fifth after the first round.

Norway has won gold in the biathlon mixed relay, beating France and the Russian team in the first biathlon event of the Beijing Olympics.

Johannes Thingnes Boe of Norway, Quentin Fillon Maillet of France and Eduard Latypov of the Russian team left the range close together after the last round of shooting and raced for position until the final stretch, when Boe sprinted for the win.

Norway, which came into the relay as the World Cup leader, also got strong performances from Marte Olsbu Røiseland and Tarjei Boe. But they trailed early in the race when Tiril Eckhoff struggled.

Fillon Maillet was joined on the French team by Emilien Jacquelin, Julia Simon and Anais Chevalier-Bouchet. The Russian team of Uliana Nigmatullina, Kristina Reztsova, Alexander Loginov and Latypov were leading after the last hand-off, but France and Norway caught them on the range.

Snowboarder Shaun White says the Beijing Games will be his last competition.

The three-time gold medalist held a reflective, sometimes emotional news conference not far from the halfpipe where he'll take his last competitive ride.

The 35-year-old said it's a decision that's been building since a soul-sucking training stop in Austria in November.

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He was dealing with nagging remnants from injuries to his knee and back and ankle. He got lost on the mountain with the sun going down. This has been a rough season for him — including an ankle injury, a bout with COVID-19, a late unscheduled trip to Switzerland to secure his Olympic spot and, most recently, a training plan that got thrown off schedule during his stay in Colorado in January.

This has been a rough season for him — including an ankle injury, a bout with COVID-19, a late unscheduled trip to Switzerland to secure his Olympic spot and a training plan that got thrown off schedule. But he says he still feels lucky to be here.

Irene Schouten gave the mighty Dutch a gold in the first speedskating event of the Beijing Winter Games, breaking a 20-year-old Olympic record in the women's 3,000 meters.

Skating in the last of 10 pairs, Schouten turned in a blazing final lap to post a winning time of 3 minutes, 56.93 seconds.

That broke the previous Olympic mark of 3:57.70, set by Germany's Claudia Pechstein at the 2002 Salt Lake City Games.

In a fitting bookend to the event, Pechstein skated in the opening pair to become the oldest female athlete in Olympic history at age 49. The German finished last — more than 20 seconds behind the winner.

Italy's Francesca Lollobrigida, pushing Schouten all the way in the final pair, held on for the silver in 3:58.06. The bronze went to Canada's Isabelle Weidemann in 3:58.64.

Germany's Claudia Pechstein has become the oldest woman to compete at a Winter Olympics. The 49-year-old raced in the 3,000 meters, the opening event of the speedskating competition at the Ice Ribbon.

She becomes just the second athlete — and first woman — to compete in eight Winter Games.

Pechstein's career includes nine Olympic medals and a two-year doping ban, which she continues to fight in court. She tied Japanese ski jumper Noriaki Kasai for the most Winter Olympics.

Pechstein, who turns 50 two days after the end of the Beijing Games, finished with a time of 4 minutes, 17.16 seconds in the opening pair of the event. That was nearly 20 seconds off the Olympic record (3:57.70) she still holds from the 2002 Salt Lake City Games. She won her first medals at the Lillehammer Olympics of 1994.

Cross-country skier Therese Johaug of Norway has won the first gold medal of the Beijing Games in the women's 15-kilometer skiathlon.

Johaug fought wind and frigid temperatures to win by skiing away from a chase group of four.

Russian athlete Natalia Nepryaeva, the current overall World Cup leader, pulled away from the group on the last climb to take the silver. Teresa Stadlober of Austria followed just behind for the bronze medal.

The skiathlon was a mass-start race that began with 7.5 kilometers of classic skiing. After striding two laps around the 3.75-kilometer course, racers came through the stadium and quickly switched to skate skis before heading out for another two laps.

Johaug crossed the line with her arms in the air and a huge smile on her face. She has 10 world championship titles but has never won an individual Olympic gold medal.

Dinigeer Yilamujiang, a skier from China's Uyghur community who helped deliver the Olympic flame to the opening ceremony of the Beijing Games, placed 43rd.

A total of 45 new positive tests for COVID-19 have been announced by organizers of the Beijing Olympics. Athletes and officials account for 25 of the cases, with 20 detected in people arriving at the airport in Beijing and five more in daily PCR tests taken by everyone at the games.

The 20 other cases involved people working at the games, including media, with six at the airport and 14 inside the Olympic bubbles.

Organizing committee official Huang Chun says the numbers are "within our expectations."

A drop in cases is expected in the days ahead as fewer people arrive for the games and those inside the

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bubbles have already returned several days of negative tests.

The overall total of COVID-19 cases at the games is 353 since Jan. 23. More than 12,000 people have arrived from outside China.

The snow replica of the Great Wall constructed on the Olympic slopestyle course to block the strong wind has only helped a bit.

It was still gusty during the women's Olympic qualifying round on a bitterly cold day in the mountains above Beijing.

The swirling wind made judging the rails and jumps along the course tricky.

Snowboarder Zoi Sadowski Synnott of New Zealand navigated the extreme conditions and turned in the top score of 86.75. Synnott may just be the biggest challenger to two-time defending Olympic gold medalist Jamie Anderson of the United States.

Anderson finished fifth in qualifying. The top 12 advanced to Sunday's final.

The 31-year-old Anderson said the Great Wall barrier was helpful, but joked "they need a bigger wall."

The course makers built a carved-out, block-by-block structure at the top of the slopestyle course in recognition of China's iconic monument and to provide wind protection.

The temperature was 5 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 15 Celsius) and felt like minus 12 (minus 24 Celsius) during the competition.

The International Olympic Committee says an Olympic security guard was "being overzealous" by manhandling a reporter broadcasting live on Dutch television before the opening ceremony.

Asked about the incident, Beijing Olympics spokeswoman Yan Jiarong says "we welcome all the international media" to report on the games and will protect their legal rights.

Sjoerd den Daas was speaking to the camera Friday evening when a security official pushed him away. He was able to complete his report later.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams says "it was an unfortunate circumstance" and Olympic officials have contacted broadcaster NOS.

NOS is the Netherlands' state broadcaster and an official rights holder of the Olympic Games. Den Daas is its correspondent in China.

Beijing Olympic organizers and the International Olympic Committee responded to questions about why an athlete from China's Uyghur community was picked to help deliver the Olympic flame to the opening ceremony of the Beijing Games.

Dinigeer Yilamujiang, a cross-country skier, is from Xinjiang province, where Western governments and human rights groups say the Beijing government has oppressed members of the Uyghur Muslim minority on a massive scale.

Yilamujiang's selection for the high-profile duty was seen by some as a provocation.

Asked about the choice, IOC spokesman Mark Adams said "we don't discriminate against people on where they are from" and she was entitled to take part as a competitor.

The 20-year-old cross-country skier was among seven current and former Chinese athletes chosen as the final torch-bearers to cap the ceremony.

Organizing committee official Chang Yu says the IOC gave final approval this week to picking athletes by age to represent each decade. The idea was to respect the Chinese tradition of passing legacy on between the generations.

China denies allegations of human rights abuses in a crackdown on the Uyghur community that the U.S. government and others have called genocide. That issue and others have led to diplomatic boycotts of the games by the United States and other countries.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping will meet with his counterparts from Egypt and Serbia on the sidelines of the Beijing Winter Olympics, state broadcaster CCTV said.

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Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and Serbia's Aleksandar Vucic are among more than a dozen world leaders who attended the opening ceremony Friday night.

Xi met with Russian President Vladimir Putin before the opening.

Egypt's ties with China have grown stronger, particularly during the pandemic. There are signs their worldviews are becoming more closely aligned, as el-Sissi seeks to move away from Western leaders who have concerns over his human rights record.

Vucic has been cultivating close ties with China, which has become one of the main investors in Serbia. He called Xi his "brother" at the start of the pandemic for supplying Serbia with respirators and vaccines. Opposition officials have been warning about a lack of transparency in deals Vucic has made with China, including major loans for building roads, highways and factories.

The third and final training session for men's downhill skiing at the Beijing Games has been canceled because of high winds.

Organizers say they made the decision "in the best interest of safety."

The start of the second training session had to be delayed Friday because of wind. Organizers said Saturday there was no window in the forecast that would allow them to push back the third session rather than canceling it.

Only three skiers had set off, including one of the favorites, Aleksander Aamodt Kilde of Norway.

The world's best skiers only saw the Rock course up close for the first time on Thursday because test events were canceled over the last two years amid the pandemic.

The men's downhill opens the Alpine competition on Sunday.

Ukrainian figure skater Ivan Shmuratko has cleared COVID-19 protocols by returning two negative tests on consecutive days. That allows him to begin preparing for the men's individual competition that begins Tuesday.

It was one day too late for his team, though. The Ukrainians scored zero points for the men's discipline in the team competition on Friday because Shmuratko was still going through protocols, taking them out of the running for a medal.

The team competition resumes Sunday with the women's short program. Then the top five nations will advance to the free skate, which begins with the men later the same day. The event concludes with the women, pairs and dance free skates on Monday.

China's National Health Commission says new domestic cases of COVID-19 in China have fallen into the single digits, allaying fears for now of a new outbreak that could disrupt the Winter Olympics.

The commission says nine cases were reported in a 24 hour period, only one of them in Beijing.

The Beijing case was in the western district of Fengtai, far from the Olympic venues that have been sealed off into a bubble with gates and fencing to prevent any contact between athletes, officials and other participants on the inside and the general public.

Chinese authorities credit a strict "zero-tolerance" policy with keeping case numbers down through lockdowns and mass testing, even when only small numbers of cases are reported.

The commission on Saturday reported another 18 cases among people who had traveled from abroad, along with 60 imported asymptomatic cases.

As of Thursday, a total of 308 people associated with the Olympics had tested positive since Jan. 23, including athletes, officials and workers at the Games. Almost 12,000 people have arrived in Beijing from outside China for the Olympics.

Canadian hockey forward Melodie Daoust will not play against Finland in the Olympics and is being listed as day-to-day with an upper body injury.

Hockey operations director Gina Kingsbury says Daoust is expected to return during the tournament.

The three-time Olympian was hurt in the second period of Canada's 12-1 win over Switzerland in an open-

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ing day preliminary round Group A matchup on Thursday. Daoust has been playing on a line with Natalie Spooner and young star Sarah Fillier, who combined for four goals and three assists against the Swiss.

Sofia Goggia is back on snow and preparing to fly to China to defend her Olympic downhill title two weeks after crashing and injuring her left knee and leg.

Goggia posted a video on Facebook showing herself wearing Italy's Olympic team jacket and says, "today I got back on skis and it was great."

She adds, "So much work over these two weeks, so many injuries to cure, so much effort ... but so much desire to make it."

Goggia sprained her left knee, partially tore a cruciate ligament and has a "minor fracture" of the fibula bone in her leg. She also had some tendon damage after the crash in a World Cup super-G in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

Goggia has won the last eight World Cup downhills that she completed.

The Italian says that she's "always been able to focus on the goal and I never considered it lost." She adds that she'll fly to China "soon" and that once there she'll "put everything together turn after turn like always."

Goggia could race the super-G next Friday. The women's downhill is scheduled for Feb. 15.

EXPLAINER: Ukraine not joining NATO so why does Putin worry?

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — At the core of the Ukraine crisis is a puzzle: Why would Russian President Vladimir Putin push Europe to the brink of war to demand the West not do something that it has no plan to do anyway?

Russia says NATO, the American-led alliance that has on its hands the biggest European crisis in decades, must never offer membership to Ukraine, which gained independence as the Soviet Union broke apart about 30 years ago. Ukraine has long aspired to join NATO, but the alliance is not about to offer an invitation, due in part to Ukraine's official corruption, shortcomings in its defense establishment, and its lack of control over its international borders.

Putin's demands go beyond the question of Ukraine's association with NATO, but that link is central to his complaint that the West has pushed him to the limits of his patience by edging closer to Russian borders. He asserts that NATO expansion years ago has enhanced its security at the expense of Russia's.

The Russians demand a legal guarantee that Ukraine be denied NATO membership, knowing that NATO as a matter of principle has never excluded potential membership for any European country — even Russia — but has no plan to start Ukraine down the road toward membership in the foreseeable future. The principle cited by NATO is that all nations should be free to choose whom they align with.

Why, then, is Moscow making an issue of Ukraine's relationship with NATO now? The answer is complicated.

WHY IS PUTIN WORRIED ABOUT UKRAINE JOINING NATO?

The stated reason is that a further eastward expansion of NATO would pose a security threat to Russia. Washington and its allies deny this is a valid worry, since no NATO country is threatening to use force against Russia.

More broadly, Putin wants NATO to pull back its existing military presence in Eastern Europe, which includes a regularly rotating series of exercises in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, all former Soviet states. There are no U.S. troops based permanently in those three Baltic countries; currently there are about 100 serving a rotational tour in Lithuania and about 60 in Estonia and Latvia combined, the Pentagon says.

Putin also opposes NATO's missile defense presence in Romania, a former Soviet satellite state, and a similar base under development in Poland, saying they could be converted to offensive weapons capable of threatening Russia. President Joe Biden this week approved sending an additional 2,700 American troops to Eastern Europe — 1,700 to Poland and 1,000 to Romania — plus 300 to Germany.

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Ukraine has deep historical and cultural ties to Russia, and Putin has repeatedly asserted that Russians and Ukrainians are “one people.” He has said that large chunks of Ukrainian territory are historical parts of Russia that were arbitrarily granted to Ukraine by communist leaders under the Soviet Union.

Putin’s own actions, however, have served to strengthen Ukrainians’ sense of national identity. After Russia seized the Crimean Peninsula and instigated a rebellion in eastern Ukraine in 2014, Ukraine’s desire to align itself with the West and join NATO only grew.

Putin recently described his Ukraine concern more specifically. He sketched out a scenario in which Ukraine might use military force to reclaim the Crimean Peninsula or to recapture areas in eastern Ukraine that are now effectively controlled by Russian-backed separatists.

“Imagine that Ukraine becomes a NATO member and launches those military operations,” Putin said. “Should we fight NATO then? Has anyone thought about it?”

Indeed, some in NATO have thought about the prospect of an expanded war with Russia inside Ukraine. It is a reminder of what NATO membership means — an attack on one is an attack on all, which in the theoretical case of Ukraine being attacked by Russia would mean a legal commitment by every NATO member to come to its defense.

WHAT ARE UKRAINE’S PROSPECTS FOR JOINING NATO?

The prospects are extremely unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Although Ukraine has no membership offer from NATO, it has drawn closer to the alliance over time, starting with the establishment in 1997 of a NATO-Ukraine Charter to further develop cooperation.

NATO heads of government did publicly declare in 2008 that Ukraine, and its fellow former Soviet republic Georgia, “will become members of NATO.” They did not say when or how, but the statement could be seen as explaining Moscow’s concern that Kyiv eventually will join the alliance.

On the other hand, the U.S. and other NATO leaders who signed the 2008 statement about Ukraine and Georgia decided against giving them what is known as a Membership Action Plan — a pathway to eventual membership. Germany and France strongly opposed moving Ukraine toward membership and the broader view within NATO was that Ukraine would have to complete far-reaching government reforms before becoming a candidate for membership.

This seeming contradiction has never been resolved, which means that while NATO’s door is open, Ukraine won’t fit through anytime soon.

HOW IS PUTIN PRESSURING UKRAINE?

Moscow says it has no intention of invading Ukraine, yet over the past several months it has assembled a robust array of combat forces along Ukraine’s borders and has implied it will take action of some kind if its demands of Washington and NATO are not met. The Biden administration says Russia is now capable of a wide range of actions, including a full-scale invasion to capture Kyiv.

Putin says NATO has gone too far not only by providing Ukraine with weaponry and military training but also by stationing forces in other Eastern European countries that compromise Russian security.

It’s also true that increases over the past decade in the U.S. and NATO military presence in Eastern Europe were triggered by Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and its incursion into eastern Ukraine in 2014. Those Russian actions prompted NATO to redouble its focus on collective security. In September 2014, NATO leaders established a new rapid-response force capable of deploying within days, and they reaffirmed pledges to boost their defense spending.

What message did China send by choosing Uyghur torchbearer?

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — As soon as a Uyghur athlete helped light the Olympic flame at the Beijing Olympics, the debate began: Was it a defiant signal from Chinese leaders, or proof that protests around the world were having impact?

The selection of Dinigeer Yilamujiang for the supreme honor of being a final Olympic torchbearer at the ceremony that opened the Winter Games in Beijing on Friday night was a huge surprise.

What it meant — because Olympic gestures like this always have meaning — wasn’t clear.

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U.S.-based human rights lawyer Rayhan Asat — whose brother Ekpar Asat is among more than 1 million Uyghurs that China has imprisoned — was at first aghast.

The pictures of Yilamujiang, a 20-year-old cross-country skier, holding the torch with Zhao Jiwen, a skier from China's dominant Han majority — both of them all smiles — reminded Asat of the half-Jewish fencer, Helene Mayer, who competed for Germany at the 1936 Summer Olympics that Adolf Hitler hosted in Berlin.

"I did feel like history is repeating itself," Asat said in a phone interview. "This is like a new low. That is how I felt, initially."

But on reflection, Asat saw crumbs of encouragement. China has steadfastly rejected international criticism of its crackdown on Uyghurs, treatment that the U.S. government and others have said is tantamount to genocide. China's hosting of the Games has made many exiled Uyghurs feel that their voices aren't heard.

But the selection of a relatively unknown athlete to light the flame couldn't be a coincidence. Asat said, after her initial outrage had subsided, she figured China isn't as immune to outside criticism as it pretends.

"It obviously cares profoundly about outside criticism. This is why it's important that we keep criticizing," she said. "I do feel like Beijing is very much scared that it has lost its international reputation."

China says the detention centers in the western Xinjiang region were built to fight Islamic extremism. Leaders say the camps provided job training and have since been closed. Uyghurs overseas say their loved ones are still imprisoned.

Some saw the choice of Yilamujiang as a deliberate poke in the eye to critics.

"That was very, very much a deliberate choice," said Darren Byler, an assistant professor of international studies at Canada's Simon Fraser University who has written extensively about the camps.

"I think it should be read as China saying we are not backing away from our stance on what we're doing in Xinjiang and we don't really care what the world thinks about it," Byler told The Associated Press by phone.

The Chinese public has been mobilized to support Xinjiang following an international campaign against the use of cotton from the region amid allegations of forced labor.

"I think that this was intended for an international audience primarily but certainly for the domestic audience as well as a sign of defiance and strength," Byler said.

Officially, there has been little commentary on Yilamujiang's role, although the Communist Party newspaper Global Times wrote Saturday that her Xinjiang background was "worth noting."

International Olympic Committee spokesperson Mark Adams said it did not take a torchbearer's ethnicity into consideration when giving its approval, but added; "I think it was a lovely concept."

Among the multiple human rights issues overshadowing the Games, Xinjiang by far looms the largest.

Human rights groups have dubbed these the "Genocide Games," and the U.S. and several other Western democracies have cited rights abuses in staging a diplomatic boycott of the event.

Uyghurs, who are culturally, linguistically and religiously distinct from Han Chinese, have long resented Beijing's heavy-handed rule and the influx of migrants who have reaped economic benefits in the resource-rich region.

The resentment erupted into a series of violent incidents labeled terrorism by China, leading president and Communist Party leader Xi Jinping to demand a mass crackdown. The network of camps was established around 2017.

Critics and former inmates told of strict discipline and harsh living conditions inside. Other reports spoke of families separated by the authorities, mass surveillance and coercive birth control policies forced on Muslim women.

China dismisses accusations of abuses as "the lie of the century" and says its policies have resulted in an end to separatist violence. Critics say the result has been a traumatized population, cultural dislocation and continuing abuses.

China's policies in Xinjiang should have elicited a stronger response from the international community, including a total boycott of the Games, said Kamaltürk Yalqun, a Uyghur was one of several students chosen to help carry the Olympic flame ahead of the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing.

"It should be a collective responsibility when such kind of atrocities are happening," he said. "It's heart-

breaking for me to see such a cold response from people.”

Whether Yilamujiang sees a political role for herself isn't clear. Her social media posts have focused entirely on her desire to compete successfully.

Born in Xinjiang's far-northwestern Altay prefecture that borders Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia, she was first coached by her father, himself a pioneer in Chinese cross-country skiing. The practice of using felt-lined skis to travel and hunt in the region is believed to date back thousands of years.

In recent years, Yilamujiang has competed extensively abroad and began her Beijing Olympics campaign Saturday.

The fact her parents are both government employees provides the right sort of background to receive the government's political and financial support required by virtually all elite Chinese athletes.

That, said Byler, “really protects the family.”

Among the Chinese public, information about Xinjiang is derived mainly from government propaganda that emphasizes economic development and social harmony, while dismissing all outside criticism.

At a park just north of the stadium Saturday, Beijing residents told The Associated Press they saw Yilamujiang's participation as a show of ethnic unity devoid of any political message.

“When I saw two athletes, my first reaction was gender equality,” said Jiang Miya, adding she perceived no real link to the issue of Xinjiang or politics in general.

Another resident, Wang Yang, said the event sent a message of “unity and progress” that shouldn't be tainted by politics.

“Don't magnify or politicize this kind of issue,” Wang said. “We should separate sports and politics, enjoy the Olympics wholeheartedly, and talk less about politics.”

EXPLAINER: How to stage Olympics in a snow-challenged city

By KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Dry Beijing barely gets any winter precipitation, making this year's Winter Games the first to rely almost entirely on artificial snow. Organizers are touting the event's green credentials, but experts do worry about the environmental impact of such a massive snowmaking operation given the huge amounts of water and electricity it takes.

At Yanqing north of Beijing, where organizers built the alpine ski venue from scratch, the slopes stand out as ribbons of white contrasting starkly against the surrounding brown hillsides. Snowmakers have also been deployed farther north in Zhangjiakou, which is hosting freestyle skiing, ski jumping and biathlon.

All of it is the product of months of snowmaking using sophisticated European equipment.

Here's a closer look at the Olympic snowmaking operation:

HOW IT WORKS

Natural snow is formed high up in the clouds when water vapor molecules cling to tiny particles like pollen or dust. In scientific lingo, these specks are dubbed nucleators. They create a snow nucleus that then attracts more water molecules to form snowflakes.

Snowmaking equipment tries to duplicate this process, artificially, by spraying atomized water into the air along with mechanically created nucleators — tiny ice crystals — that act as seeds for the manufactured snowflakes. This process has been around for decades: simulated snow was first used at the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid, New York.

SNOW GUNS

TechnoAlpin won the bid to supply the Beijing games with snowmaking equipment, a contract worth \$22 million.

The Italian company has blanketed the slopes with 272 snowmaking fan guns and another 82 stick “lances” to produce “technical snow” for the Winter Olympics skiing and snowboarding venues. They're all hooked up to a system of high pressure pumps and pipes that carry water chilled by cooling towers up the slopes.

TechnoAlpin's fan guns resemble small jet engines or oversized hair dryers, with nozzles spraying either atomized water or ice crystals mounted around the edge of a turbine. The guns, which can be aimed remotely using Bluetooth, blast the mixture dozens of meters into the air to cover broad downhill slopes.

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"And while it's falling to the ground, snow is created," said Michael Mayr, TechnoAlpin's China sales manager.

Snow lances, meanwhile, are up to 10 meters tall and don't have fans, instead using gravity to carry the snowmaking mixture to the ground, making it a bit more like natural snowfall.

WATER WORRIES

Beijing and Zhangjiakou are both not far from the Gobi Desert and are "highly water stressed," China Water Risk, a Hong Kong-based consultancy, said in a 2019 report.

The International Olympic Committee even noted the issue in its own 2015 evaluation of Beijing's bid, saying the two districts "have minimal annual snowfall" and that the Winter Games would have to rely completely on fake snow.

The "Beijing – Zhangjiakou area is becoming increasingly arid" because of climate change and other factors, the IOC said, adding that Beijing's bid "underestimated the amount of water" needed for snowmaking.

China has reportedly estimated that snowmaking at the Winter Games is expected to use 49 million gallons of water — the equivalent of 74 Olympic swimming pools — but some experts think that number vastly underestimates the amount needed.

SUSTAINABILITY

The IOC now says snowmaking in Beijing was developed "to high technical and environmental standards."

"The regions where the snow sport events will be held are constantly very cold," the IOC said in a statement. "This allows a very efficient snow production and does not require the constant reproduction of snow," like ski resorts elsewhere with fluctuating temperatures that cause snowmelt.

Snowmaking can raise other environmental concerns, including over the chemicals sometimes used to help water freeze at higher temperatures, and the electricity needed to power the systems, which could mean a bigger carbon footprint. The IOC says all venues and facilities are powered by wind and solar energy and that no chemicals are used because of the region's cold temperatures.

"Of course we are using a lot of energy of making snow," Bernhard Russi, chair of the International Ski Federation's alpine committee, said at a press briefing Saturday. But he added that the challenge is how to store the snow over the summer for the next season — something already being done in Europe, allowing resorts to save up to half of it.

WHAT THE ATHLETES SAY

Athletes have voiced their concerns about competing on fake snow, saying it brings new risks.

Skiers and experts say manmade snow has more moisture, which means it ices up faster. Estonian Olympic biathlete Johanna Taliharm told The Associated Press last month that artificial snow is "faster and more dangerous" because of the icing.

Russi, the 1972 downhill gold medalist in Japan, acknowledged that "of course ski racers and we organizers, we prefer to have natural snow," but added that using machines to make snow allows them to get it to the right "hardness" for each discipline.

The IOC said artificial snow is used regularly at World Cup ski competitions and denied that it makes courses more dangerous: "To the contrary, it creates a more consistent surface from the top to bottom, or start to finish, of a course."

As the Winter Games begin, Russi said "the snow we find right now on the courses is absolutely perfect, you cannot have it better."

Olympic teams raise concerns over quarantine hotels

By JAMES ELLINGWORTH AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Not enough food. Inedible meals. No training equipment. Some Olympic athletes unlucky enough to test positive for the coronavirus at the Beijing Olympics feel their quarantine conditions are making a bad situation much worse.

"My stomach hurts, I'm very pale and I have huge black circles around my eyes. I want all this to end. I cry every day. I'm very tired," Russian biathlon competitor Valeria Vasnetsova posted on Instagram from

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one of Beijing's so-called quarantine hotels.

Her problem wasn't with any symptoms of the virus. It was the food.

Vasnetsova posted a picture Thursday of what she said was "breakfast, lunch and dinner for five days already" — a tray with food including plain pasta, an orange sauce, charred meat on a bone, a few potatoes and no greens.

She said she mostly survived on a few pieces of pasta because it was "impossible" to eat the rest, "but today I ate all the fat they serve instead of meat because I was very hungry." She added she lost a lot of weight and "my bones are already sticking out."

The quarantine hotels are increasingly the target of criticism from athletes and their teams, who are lobbying organizers for improvements. There's a lack of transparency, too, with only some virus-positive athletes forced into quarantine hotels where their teams don't have access, while teammates in similar situations are allowed to isolate within the Olympic village.

The rules for athletes who test positive say those without symptoms go to a dedicated hotel for isolation. Anyone who has COVID-19 with symptoms will go to a hospital. In both cases, they'll be unable to compete until cleared for discharge.

Teams have started going public with criticism.

After Eric Frenzel, a three-time gold medalist in Nordic combined, tested positive, German delegation head Dirk Schimmelpfennig lambasted the "unreasonable" living conditions. Germany wants larger, more hygienic rooms, and more regular food deliveries so athletes who are eventually released are still fit to compete, Schimmelpfennig said in comments reported by the FAZ newspaper.

The pressure can pay off. Belgian skeleton racer Kim Meylemans was brought back from a quarantine hotel to isolation in the athletes' village after she made a tearful post on social media. Her main gripe was the lack of information. She was loaded into an ambulance and transported from one quarantine facility to another on a day she thought she was being released.

Vasnetsova passed her time in quarantine with a little detective work. When fetching the food left outside her door, she took a glance at the boxes left outside other rooms in her corridor, whose doors were labeled with signs to distinguish Olympians from other people working at the Games who tested positive, such as team staff.

She concluded the athletes were getting worse food, and underlined it with a picture of food served to her team doctor, who had also tested positive and was living two floors below. He had fresh fruit, a salad and prawns with broccoli.

"I honestly don't understand, why is there this attitude to us, the athletes?!" she wrote.

Two days on from her criticism, Vasnetsova is still in quarantine but things are looking up.

Russian biathlon team spokesperson Sergei Averyanov posted a picture of what he said was an improved meal delivered to Vasnetsova's room including salmon, cucumbers, sausages and yogurt. A stationary bike will be delivered soon, he added.

Vasnetsova, he wrote, "is already smiling, and that's the main thing."

A year after Trump purge, 'alt-tech' offers far-right refuge

By DAVID KLEPPER and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

Philip Anderson is no fan of online content moderation. His conservative posts have gotten him kicked off Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Two years ago, Anderson organized a "free speech" protest against the big tech companies. A counterprotester knocked his teeth out.

But even Anderson was repulsed by some of the stuff he saw on Gab, a social media platform that's become popular with supporters of former President Donald Trump. It included Nazi imagery, racist slurs and other extreme content that goes way beyond anything allowed on major social media platforms.

"If you want Gab to succeed then something has to be done," Anderson, who is Black, wrote in a recent Gab post. "They are destroying Gab and scaring away all the influential people who would make the platform grow."

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The responses were predictable — more Nazi imagery and crude racial slurs. “Go back to Africa,” wrote one woman with a swastika in her profile.

A year after Trump was banned by Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, a rowdy assortment of newer platforms have lured conservatives with promises of a safe haven free from perceived censorship. While these budding platforms are mounting some ideological competition against their dominant counterparts, they have also become havens for misinformation and hate. Some experts are concerned that they’ll fuel extremism and calls for violence even if they never replicate the success of the mainstream sites.

App analytics firm SensorTower estimates that Parler’s app has seen about 11.3 million downloads globally on the Google and Apple app stores, while Gettr has reached roughly 6.5 million. That growth has been uneven. Parler launched in August 2018, but it didn’t start picking up until 2020. It saw the most monthly installs in November 2020 when it hit 5.6 million.

While new platforms may be good for consumer choice, they pose problems if they spread harmful misinformation or hate speech, said Alexandra Cirone, a Cornell University professor who studies the effect of misinformation on government.

“If far-right platforms are becoming a venue to coordinate illegal activity — for example, the Capitol insurrection — this is a significant problem,” she said.

Falsehoods about the 2020 election fueled the deadly attack on the U.S. Capitol last year, while research shows far-right groups are harnessing COVID-19 conspiracy theories to expand their audience.

While Facebook and Twitter serve a diverse general audience, the far-right platforms cater to a smaller slice of the population. The loose to nonexistent moderation they advertise can also create hothouse environments where participants ramp each other up, and where spam, hate speech and harmful misinformation blooms.

Gab launched in 2016 and now claims to have 15 million monthly visitors, though that number could not be independently verified. The service says it saw a huge jump in signups following the Jan. 6, 2021, riot, which prompted Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to crack down on Trump and others who they said had incited violence.

By comparison, Facebook has 2.9 billion monthly users and 211 million people use Twitter daily.

“We tolerate ‘offensive’ but legal speech,” site creator Andrew Torba wrote in an email to Gab subscribers recently. “We believe that a moderation policy which adheres to the First Amendment, thereby permitting offensive content to rise to the surface, is a valuable and necessary utility to society.”

Offensive content is easy to find on Gab. A search turns up user names featuring racial epithets, as well as antisemitic screeds, neo-Nazi fantasies and homophobic rants.

Members of far-right groups like the Proud Boys? They’re on Gab. So is the Georgia congresswoman kicked off Twitter for spreading COVID-19 misinformation. Steve Bannon, banned from Twitter for suggesting the beheading of Dr. Anthony Fauci, has 72,000 followers on Gab.

Torba wrote in an email to the AP that he envisions Gab will someday be “the backbone of the consumer free speech Internet” and rival Facebook and Google.

Gettr, a more recent arrival, is aiming for a slightly more moderate product. Helmed by former Trump senior adviser Jason Miller, Gettr launched in July and now has 4.5 million users. While the site is dominated by conservative voices now, Miller said he welcomes all viewpoints.

The site bans racial and religious epithets and violent threats. Nonetheless, a quick search turns up a user whose name includes the N-word as well as pro-Nazi content.

“Hitler had some damn good points,” reads one post.

Gettr’s growing user base in Brazil includes President Jair Bolsonaro, who has been cited by Facebook for breaking rules regarding COVID-19 misinformation and the use of fake accounts.

“I think there’s plenty of room for all of our platforms,” Miller said when asked about competition with other new sites. “It’s much more about us taking away market share from Facebook and Twitter than competing amongst ourselves.”

Another mainstream platform popular with Trump supporters is Telegram, which has a broad global user base. Trump has said he plans to launch his own social media platform.

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There is no indication that far-right users have left Facebook or Twitter in droves. Users can keep their old Facebook account to stay connected with friends while using Telegram or Parler for unmoderated content. "So now social media companies are effectively vying for screen time across users," said Cirone, the Cornell professor.

Anderson, the Texas Trump supporter, said he doesn't know why he was kicked off Facebook and Twitter. He was outside the Capitol during the Jan. 6, 2021, attack, and has supported the Proud Boys. Twitter declined to comment publicly on Anderson; Facebook did not respond to messages seeking comment.

While Facebook, YouTube and Twitter have taken steps to remove extremist material, Cirone said some groups are still evading moderation. And as Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen revealed in leaked internal documents last year, the company has struggled to moderate non-English language content.

There are also limits to content moderation.

"Content will travel, and ideas will evolve. Content moderation has political consequences," said Wayne Weiai Xu, an expert on disinformation and social media at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. "It plays right into the far-right talking point that the big tech is censoring speech and that the liberal elite is forcing the so-called 'cancel culture' onto everyone."

US Jews talk identity, Holocaust after Goldberg's remarks

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO, PETER SMITH and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

The uproar over Whoopi Goldberg's remarks about the Holocaust has catalyzed somber reflections by many American Jews about not only the legacy of the Holocaust but anti-Jewish discrimination in the United States and their sense of a collective identity.

The actor and TV host swiftly apologized for saying this week on ABC's "The View" that the genocide was not about race but rather "man's inhumanity to man," noting in subsequent remarks that she had failed to acknowledge that the Nazis considered Jews an inferior race.

As Goldberg serves a two-week suspension from the show, a range of Jewish leaders have noted the complexity of describing how race fits into the overall concept of Jewish identity. It entails a mix of religion, nationality, ethnicity, culture and history, said Greg Schneider, executive vice president of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, a New York-based group that seeks restitution for Holocaust victims.

"But the hatred of the Jew is unfortunately not as complicated. It's deep-seated. It's millennia old. We don't seem to have a cure for it," he said. "So it's not so easy to put a label, to put a name on what it is to be Jewish. But it's certainly easy to see what it is to be antisemitic."

Schneider and others expressed hope that the episode reminds people that Jews have historically experienced extensive discrimination in America, such as being barred from purchasing homes in certain areas, excluded from country clubs and denied admission to some universities.

In the past there even were travel guides for Jews with tips on how to avoid discrimination on the road, guidebooks that preceded the 1936 debut of "The Negro Motorist Green Book," which provided similar advice for African Americans.

Rabbi Noah Farkas, president and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, recalled growing up in Plano, Texas, where the handful of Jewish families, including his own, sometimes experienced antisemitism.

"We never saw ourselves in the same category as any of the white Anglo Southern Baptists," he said. "Although we had white skin, we didn't consider ourselves part of the white culture."

The racial equation has only grown more complex as Jews of color — including African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans — account for a growing percentage of the overall Jewish population.

"Jews are multiethnic, multiracial," Farkas said. "We don't consider ourselves just a community of faith."

Farkas said systemic discrimination against Jews in the U.S. has largely faded over the decades, but anti-semitism persists and antisemitic violence over the past five years has been at its highest level in decades.

The deadliest incident was the mass shooting in 2018 at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue, where 11

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worshippers from three different congregations were killed by a gunman who railed against Jews and immigrants they helped, according to prosecutors in his pending hate-crimes trial.

Lauren Bairnsfather, director of the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh, said America has been such “a place of assimilation and opportunity” for Jews that many were blindsided by the massacre.

“People didn’t understand how this was possible to happen in the United States because there’s this illusion of total safety,” said Bairnsfather, whose center hopes to share space with Tree of Life in a renovated synagogue as a statement against antisemitism.

“Race is a made-up construct, but racism is very real,” she added, noting that Adolf Hitler based his racial laws in Nazi Germany partly on Jim Crow laws targeting African Americans in the U.S.

Jonathan Sarna, professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, said that historically, American Jews commonly spoke of themselves as a race — until they saw how the Nazis applied that term as a pseudoscience. Jews then began to speak of themselves as a people or ethnicity, and many accepted the idea that Jews had been absorbed into a larger white majority as had earlier communities such as the Irish.

Thus, Sarna’s students, most of them Jewish, had no firsthand experience to prepare them for the Tree of Life shootings or the antisemitic chants by marchers in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017.

“My students, after Pittsburgh, they were in shock,” Sarna said. They knew about the Holocaust, “but suddenly stuff that had happened in Europe, they saw here.”

While historical awareness of the Holocaust may be common among younger generations of Jews, that’s less true of the broader U.S. population. According to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, 63% of respondents in a 2020 survey of adults under 40 did not know that 6 million Jews were murdered by the Nazis. And 36% thought 2 million or fewer Jews were killed.

Stefanie Seltzer, an 83-year-old Holocaust survivor who as a child was smuggled by her mother out of a ghetto in Poland, has been talking to U.S. students since the mid-1970s about her experiences and said she is alarmed by a pervasive lack of knowledge. In the Goldberg episode, she sees opportunity.

“Maybe it will kick open the door to discussion in school,” Seltzer said.

The controversy has added heat to a simmering debate in eastern Tennessee over a recent decision by the McMinn County School Board to withdraw from its curriculum the graphic novel “Maus,” a Pulitzer Prize-winning work about the Holocaust. Goldberg made her original remarks during a conversation about the board banning the book.

Like Seltzer, Michael Dzik, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Chattanooga, sees an opportunity to educate the community: With support from other organizations, the federation will host a virtual conversation Monday with “Maus” author Art Spiegelman.

“If we’ve learned anything from the Holocaust,” Dzik said, “we must speak out and take action when we think that there’s a wrong out there and what it could lead to.”

Farkas, of the Los Angeles Jewish federation, said U.S. Jews should resist letting antisemitism define their identity and strive to live meaningful, joyous lives, including standing in solidarity with other groups who have faced discrimination.

“From slavery and Jim Crow to Japanese interment, America has yet to realize the dreams of so many,” he said. “We can all do a better job learning and listening from each other — that is where healing begins.”

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Feb. 6, the 37th day of 2022. There are 328 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Feb. 6, 1952, Britain’s King George VI, 56, died at Sandringham House in Norfolk, England; he was succeeded as monarch by his 25-year-old elder daughter, who became Queen Elizabeth II.

On this date:

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In 1778, during the American Revolutionary War, the United States won official recognition and military support from France with the signing of a Treaty of Alliance in Paris.

In 1788, Massachusetts became the sixth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1815, the state of New Jersey issued the first American railroad charter to John Stevens, who proposed a rail link between Trenton and New Brunswick. (The line, however, was never built.)

In 1862, during the Civil War, Fort Henry in Tennessee fell to Union forces.

In 1899, a peace treaty between the United States and Spain was ratified by the U.S. Senate.

In 1911, Ronald Wilson Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, was born in Tampico, Illinois.

In 1922, Cardinal Archille Ratti was elected pope; he took the name Pius XI.

In 1933, the 20th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the so-called "lame duck" amendment, was proclaimed in effect by Secretary of State Henry Stimson.

In 1993, tennis Hall of Famer and human rights advocate Arthur Ashe died in New York at age 49.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton signed a bill changing the name of Washington National Airport to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. Carl Wilson, a founding member of The Beach Boys, died in Los Angeles at age 51.

In 2000, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton launched her successful candidacy for the U.S. Senate.

In 2008, the Bush White House defended the use of the interrogation technique known as waterboarding, saying it was legal — not torture as critics argued — and had saved American lives.

Ten years ago: The U.S. closed its embassy in Syria and Britain recalled its ambassador to Damascus in a new Western push to get President Bashar Assad to leave power and halt the murderous grind in Syria.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump accused the media of deliberately minimizing coverage of the threat posed by the Islamic State group; the president did not immediately offer evidence to support his claim, made during the new commander in chief's first visit to the headquarters of U.S. Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. Irwin Corey, the wild-haired comedian and actor known for his improvisational riffs and nonsensical style, died in New York at age 102.

One year ago: The Wyoming Republican Party voted overwhelmingly to censure U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney for voting to impeach President Donald Trump over his role in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. California Gov. Gavin Newsom's office issued revised guidelines for indoor church services after the Supreme Court lifted the state's ban on indoor worship during the coronavirus pandemic but left in place restrictions on singing and chanting. George P. Shultz, who was President Ronald Reagan's secretary of state as part of a long career in public service, died at his California home; he was 100. Peyton Manning, a quarterback who helped redefine offense in the 21st century, was among the former players elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Mamie Van Doren is 91. Actor Mike Farrell is 83. Former NBC News anchorman Tom Brokaw is 82. Singer Fabian is 79. Actor Gayle Hunnicutt is 79. Actor Michael Tucker is 77. Producer-director-writer Jim Sheridan is 73. Actor Jon Walmsley is 66. Actor Kathy Najimy is 65. Rock musician Simon Phillips (Toto) is 65. Actor-director Robert Townsend is 65. Actor Barry Miller is 64. Actor Megan Gallagher is 62. Rock singer Axl Rose (Guns N' Roses) is 60. Country singer Richie McDonald is 60. Singer Rick Astley is 56. Rock musician Tim Brown (Boo Radleys) is 53. ABC News anchor Amy Robach is 49. Actor Josh Stewart is 45. Actor Ben Lawson is 42. Actor Brandon Hammond is 38. Actor Crystal Reed (TV: "Teen Wolf") is 37. Actor Alice Greczyn (GREH'-chihn) is 36. Actor Anna Diop is 34. R&B singer/actor Tinashe is 29.