

Groton Daily Independent

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UpComing Events

The Groton Transit will be taking the transit bus to the girls basketball game to Flandreau Indian on Monday, Feb. 14. Anyone needing a ride should call the transit at 605-397-8661.

Monday, Feb. 14

GBB at Flandreau Indian - Varsity only, 6 p.m.

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 15

Boys Basketball at Sisseton

C game at 5 p.m. in the Practice Gym; JV at 5 p.m. in the varsity gym followed by Varsity game

Junior High Boys Basketball hosts Tiospa Zina. 7th Grade at 5:30 p.m. followed by 8th grade game.

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 16

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

Thursday, Feb. 17

Parent-Teacher Conference, 4-8 p.m.

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

Friday, Feb. 18

NO SCHOOL

Parent-Teacher Conferences, 8 a.m. to Noon
Basketball Double-Header at Deuel (Clear Lake).

JV games start at 4 p.m.

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

Saturday, Feb. 19

Region Wrestling at Britton

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

Sunday, Feb 20

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

Monday, Feb. 21

NO SCHOOL - President's Day

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla. - RETURNING

Boys Basketball hosts Tiospa Zina - C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity

Junior High Basketball vs. Warner. 7th grade game at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade game

Tuesday, Feb. 22

Girls Basketball regions begin

Thursday, April 7: Groton CDE

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 13, 2022

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM
Sunday School - Singing during Worship 11:10 AM

Monday, February 14, 2022

PEO - outside group 7:30 PM

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

Newsletter Items Due
Bible Study - Slightly Bad Girls of the Bible Starts
10:00 AM

Conde Ad Council 5:00 PM

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

Community Coffee Hour 9:30 AM
Confirmation Snack Time 3:30 PM
Confirmation 4:00 PM

Groton Ad Council 7:00 PM

Sunday, February 20, 2022

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
NO Sunday School 10:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, Feb. 13

9am Worship / milestones, 1st & 4th gr.
10:15am Sunday School & Grace Alone Study
Super bowl of Caring

Monday, Feb. 14

6:30am Bible Study

Wednesday, Feb. 16

6:00pm Confirmation

Saturday, Feb. 19

10:00am Worship at Rosewood Court

Sunday, Feb. 20

9:am Worship / Communion
10:15am Grace Alone Study
NO SUNDAY SCHOOL
Newsletter deadline

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. 13

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

Wednesday, Feb. 16

3:45 p.m.: Confirmation

Sunday, Feb. 20

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

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

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Wolves Unable to Fend Off Fourth Quarter Rally by Golden Eagles

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State women’s basketball team dropped a 79-73 contest to Minnesota Crookston on Saturday afternoon, as the Wolves were unable to hold off a late rally by the Golden Eagles.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 73, UMC 79

Records: NSU 11-13 (8-11 NSIC), UMC 3-17 (2-12 NSIC)

Attendance: 2622

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Laurie Rogers and Kailee Oliverson each knocked down a jumper in the paint to get Northern State out to an early 4-0 lead, the four point margin for the Wolves was the largest lead for either team in the first period

- After trailing by five points halfway through the second period, Lexi Roe knocked down a 3-pointer and another jumper, while Kailee Oliverson converted an and-one for a 7-0 run and NSU regained a 33-30 lead

- Northern State and Minnesota Crookston exchanged leads seven different times and were tied 11 times throughout the first half, leading to a 43-42 Crookston lead entering the halftime break

- The Wolves opened the second half with Kailee Oliverson, Rianna Fillipi, and Haley Johnson making 3-pointers on their first three possessions of the half to take a six point lead

- Northern used a 13-0 run midway through the third quarter to extend their lead to 15 points, their largest lead of the game

- After taking a 68-55 lead into the final quarter of play, Minnesota Crookston out-scored Northern 24-5 in the fourth quarter

- Northern State shot the ball 50.0 percent from the field, 33.3 percent from 3-point range, and 70.0 percent from the free throw line

- The Golden Eagles out-rebounded the Wolves 29-25 in the game, NSU was held to their lowest rebounding output of the season

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Kailee Oliverson: 25 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 blocks

- Lexi Roe: 17 points, 4 rebounds, 5 assists

- Haley Johnson: 12 points, 3 rebounds, 1 assist

- Rianna Fillipi: 11 points, 7 rebounds, 6 assists, 3 steals

UP NEXT

The Northern State women’s basketball team will return to Wachs Arena one final time this regular season when they host Minot State on Thursday night, prior to traveling to UMary on Saturday. The Wolves and Beavers are scheduled for a 5:30 p.m. tip-off on Thursday night, and the Wolves and Marauders are set for a 2 p.m. start on Saturday afternoon.

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Wolves Tally Second Straight Double Figure Victory

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men’s basketball team completed the weekend sweep on Saturday, downing Minnesota Crookston by nearly 20 points. The Wolves improved to 11-3 from Wachs Arena with one regular season home game remaining.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 81, UMC 64

Records: NSU 17-11 (11-9 NSIC), UMC 8-16 (5-13 NSIC)

Attendance: 3464

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern tallied 34 points in the first and 47 points in the second, en route to their 17-point victory over Crookston
- The two teams traded the lead early on, however the Wolves broke away as the first half ticked down
- NSU shot 46.7% from the floor, 25.9% from the 3-point line, and 85.7% from the foul line in the win
- They held the Golden Eagles to 37.5% from the floor and 38.9% from beyond the arc
- Northern added a game high 36 points in the paint, 22 points off the bench, 19 second chance points, and 17 points off turnovers
- The Wolves tallied 14 assists, seven made 3-pointers, six blocks, and five steals, while out-rebounding the Golden Eagles 35-33
- Cole Bergan led three Wolves in double figures with a career high 19 points, going a perfect 6-of-6 from the floor

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Cole Bergan: 19 points, 7 rebounds, 3 assists
- Sam Masten: 15 points, 7 rebounds, 5 assists
- Jacksen Moni: 15 points, 5 rebounds, 2 blocks, 2 steals
- Kailleb Walton-Blanden: 8 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists

UP NEXT

Northern closes out the regular season home slate on Thursday versus Minot State. The Wolves will tip-off at 7:30 p.m. versus the Beavers.

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Boys varsity and girls junior varsity beat Mobridge-Pollock

Groton Area hosted Mobridge-Pollock in a double header Saturday with the boys varsity team and the girls junior varsity team both posting wins. The boys varsity team won, 71-39, the junior varsity boys team lost, 51-45, the girls varsity team lost, 45-38 and the girls junior varsity team won, 32-28.

The girls junior varsity team started out the afternoon with a 7-0 lead, but Mobridge-Pollock would come back to take the lead during the second quarter and led it at half time, 17-16. Mobridge-Pollock held the upper hand for the third quarter, leading it, 26-18 after three periods. Groton Area staged a come-back in the fourth quarter and took the lead with 1:33 left in the game, 29-28. Kennedy Hansen put the icing on the cake with her basket with 10 seconds left and added a free throw in the closing seconds as Groton Area won.

Hansen led the Tigers with nine points followed by Brooklyn Hansen with six, Faith Traphagen five, Jerica Locke and Jaedyn Penning each had four points and Laila Roberts and Elizabeth Fliehs each had two points.

Sophie Overland led Mobridge-Pollock with six points while Charley Henderson had five, Grace Overland four, and Emily Hatzenbuehler, Gretchen Olson and Faith Heil each had two points.

The boys junior varsity game was tied seven times with the lead changing hands seven times. Groton Area took a 13-9 lead after the first period, then fell behind right at the closing seconds of the first half, 22-18. Mobridge-Pollock opened up a 10-point lead early in the third period, 28-18, but Groton Area would then go on a 12-point run to take the lead, 30-28. Mobridge-Pollock would make a long three-pointer at the buzzer to reclaim the lead at the end of the third period, 38-37. Mobridge-Pollock would get the upper hand in the fourth quarter and would go on for the 51-45 win.

Cole Simon led the Tigers with 18 points followed by Teylor Diegel with nine, Dillon Abeln seven, Logan Ringgenberg had six, Braxton Imrie had three and Cade Larson had two.

Michael Wald led Mobridge-Pollock with 23 points while Holden Eisemann had 11, Kody Keller five, Simon Fried four, Turner Pfitzer and Coy Hinsz each had three and Shane Henderson added two points.

The girls varsity team played again without Gracie Traphagen as she is under concussion protocol. The Lady Tigers fought hard and nearly pulled out a win over the 11-3 Mobridge-Pollock Tigers. Groton Area held a 7-4 first quarter lead and Mobridge-Pollock held a 21-19 lead at half time. The game was tied twice and there were a couple of lead changes late in the third quarter before Mobridge-Pollock took a 27-26 lead into the fourth quarter. Foul trouble plagued Groton Area with three players eventually fouling out and Mobridge-Pollock got the upper hand in the fourth quarter for the 45-38 win.

Alyssa Thaler led Groton Area with 13 points while Sydney Leicht and Kennedy Hansen each had seven. Mariah Goehring led Mobridge-Pollock with 13 points and Heidi Olson and Landyn Henderson each had 11.

Allyssa Locke - 4 points, 1 rebound, 5 fouls.

Alyssa Thaler - 13 points, 5 rebounds, 3 assists, 3 fouls, 1 block

Brooke Gengerke - 3 points, 6 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal, 4 fouls

Sydney Leicht - 7 points, 1 rebound, 1 assist, 2 steals.

Aspen Johnson - 7 rebounds, 5 fouls.

Jerica Locke - 2 points, 7 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal, 1 foul.

Jaedyn Penning - 2 points, 4 rebounds, 3 fouls.

Brooklyn Hansen - 1 rebound.

Kennedy Hansen - 7 points, 6 rebounds, 1 assist, 2 steals, 5 fouls.

Faith Traphagen - 1 foul.

Tate Larson had his second double-double of the year with 15 points and 10 rebounds as the boys easily defeated Mobridge-Pollock. Groton Area led at the quarterstops at 15-8, 33-22 and 57-29 en route to the 71-39 win. Groton's defense held Mobridge-Pollock to its lowest scoring game of the year. Three other players hit double figures for Groton Area with Kaden Kurtz leading all scorers on the night with 16 points while Lane Tietz had 13 and Wyatt Hearn had 12.

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Jackson Eisemann led Mobridge-Pollock with 14 points and Brady Bauer had seven.

Groton Area made 12 of 25 field goals for 48 percent, two of 20 three-pointers for 10 percent, eight of 12 free throws for 67 percent, had 38 rebounds, 16 turnovers, eight assists, six steals, 27 team fouls and 1 block.

Jayden Zak - 4 points, 2 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 steals, 4 fouls.

Lane Tietz - 13 points, 3 assists, 2 steals, 2 fouls.

Jacob Zak - 8 points, 1 rebound, 2 assists, 1 steal, 4 fouls.

Tate Larson - 15 points, 10 rebounds, 4 assists, 2 steals, 2 fouls.

Kaden Kurtz - 16 points, 4 rebounds, 1 assist, 6 steals.

Cole Simon - 1 point, 2 rebounds, 1 steal.

Wyatt Hearnen - 12 points, 3 rebounds, 2 assists, 2 steals, 3 fouls.

Colby Dunker - 2 rebounds.

Logan Ringgenberg - 1 rebound.

Taylor Diegel - 2 points, 1 rebound, 3 assists.

Groton Area made 22 of 30 field goals for 73 percent, six of 21 three-pointers for 29 percent, made nine of 13 free throws for 69 percent, had 26 rebounds, 13 turnovers, 18 assists, 16 steals and 15 team fouls.

All of the games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The girls junior varsity was sponsored by Steve and Betty Dunker. The boys junior varsity was sponsored by VanderHemel Construction of Woonsocket. The varsity games were sponsored by Allied Climate Professionals with Kevin Nehls, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, the John Sieh Agency, Groton Ford and Dacotah Bank.

The boys varsity team is now 14-2 on the season and will travel to Sisseton on Tuesday. Mobridge-Pollock falls to 7-5. The girls varsity team is now 9-9 and will travel to Flandreau Indian School on Monday. Mobridge-Pollock goes to 12-3.

- Paul Kosel

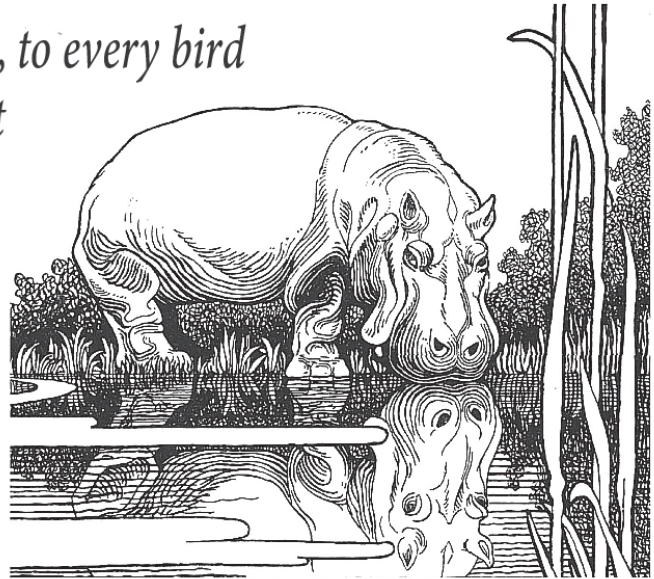
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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

“Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food,” and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.



GENESIS 1: 30, 31 ©

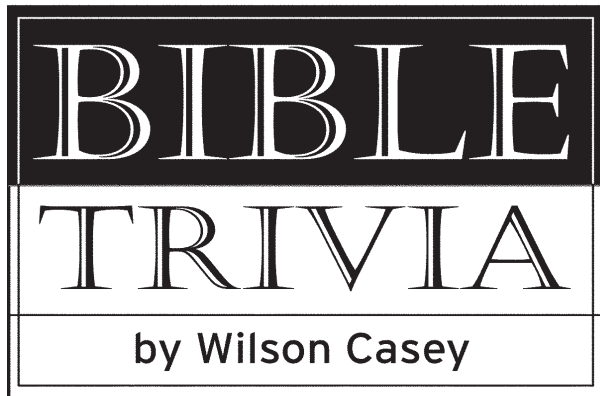
“Die Buecher der Bibel” by E. M. Lilien (1912)

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1. Is the book of Valentin in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. According to Paul, what kind of giver does God love? *Loving, Generous, Cheerful, Reluctant*
3. Which Old Testament book reads like a love story? *Ruth, Daniel, Habakkuk, Song of Solomon*
4. How many times did Jesus ask Peter, "Do you love me?" *2, 3, 7, 10*
5. I Corinthians 13 is known as the chapter of ... ? *Faith, Hope, Love, Pardon*
6. Where do you find the phrase, "God is love"? *Genesis, Nehemiah, Hebrews, 1 John*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Cheerful; 3) Song of Solomon; 4) 3; 5) Love; 6) 1 John (4:8, 16)

"Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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Sunny Mexico -- where the warm blue sky is never-ending and the "spiciness" of the food can be as "hot" or as "mild" as you want it to be.

- 1/2 cup salsa (mild, medium, hot or extra-hot)
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- Sugar substitute to equal 1 tablespoon, suitable for baking
- 3/4 cup shredded reduced-fat Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup coarsely crushed baked nacho chips
- 1 1/2 cups diced cooked chicken breast
- 1 (15-ounce) can cut green beans, rinsed and drained

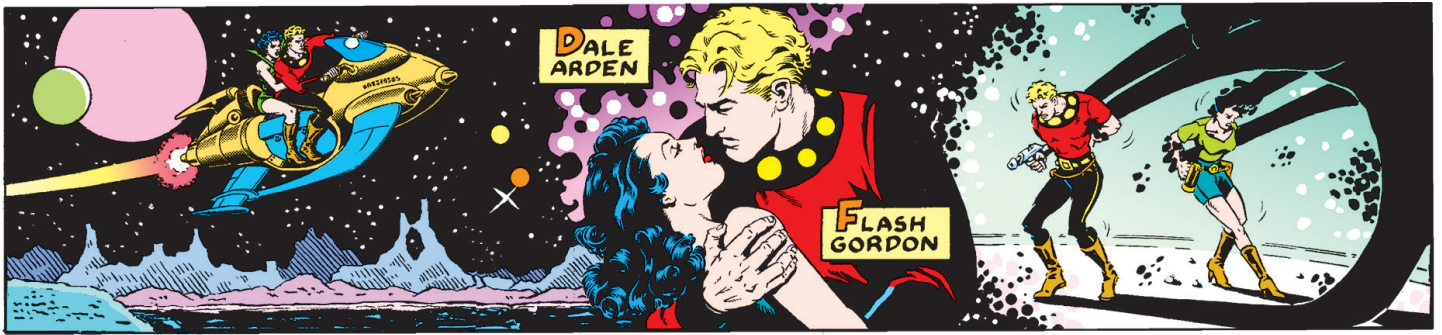
1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray an 8-by-8-inch baking dish with butter-flavored cooking spray.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine salsa, tomato sauce and sugar substitute. Stir in Cheddar cheese. Cook over medium heat for 5 minutes or until cheese melts, stirring often.
3. Evenly arrange half of chips in prepared baking dish. Layer chicken and green beans over chips. Pour hot salsa mixture evenly over beans. Evenly sprinkle remaining chips over top.
4. Bake for 25 minutes. Remove from oven and place baking dish on a wire rack and let set for 5 minutes. Makes 4 servings.

* Each serving equals: 262 calories, 6g fat, 26g protein, 26g carb., 921mg sodium, 3g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 3 Meat, 2 Vegetable, 1 Starch/Carb.

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FLASH GORDON

2-6

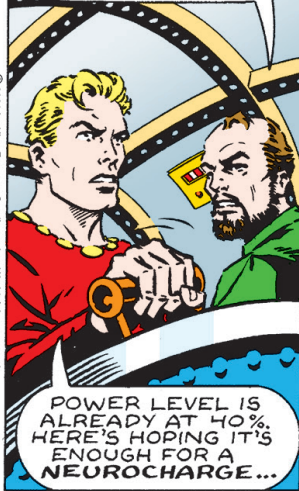
By JIM KEEFE

AS THE HATCHLINGS ATTACK THE SHIP...



...DR. HANS ZARKOV WORKS FEVERISHLY TO MAKE REPAIRS.

THE ENGINES ARE BACK ONLINE, BUT IT'LL TAKE TIME FOR THEM TO FULLY CHARGE.



POWER LEVEL IS ALREADY AT 40%. HERE'S HOPING IT'S ENOUGH FOR A NEUROCHARGE...

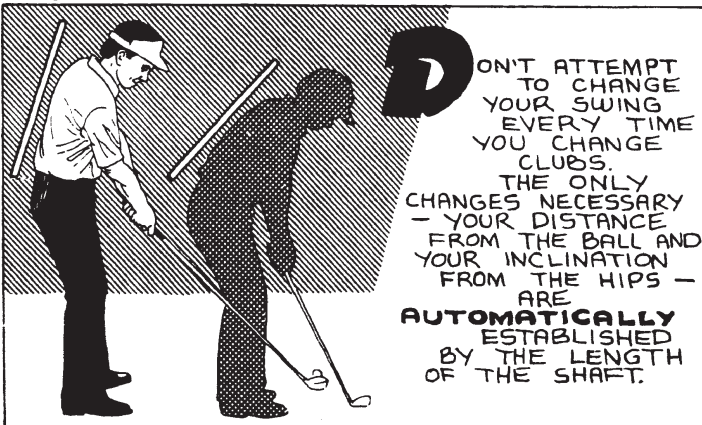


THE GROUND TREMBLES AS THE GIGANTIC BEAST APPROACHES.

ITS SOLE INTENT... TO DESTROY THE OBJECT WHICH HAS THREATENED ITS YOUNG!

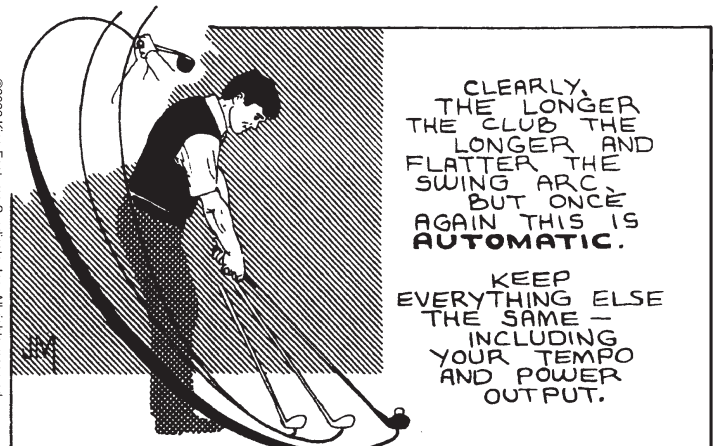


Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



DON'T ATTEMPT TO CHANGE YOUR SWING EVERY TIME YOU CHANGE CLUBS. THE ONLY CHANGES NECESSARY - YOUR DISTANCE FROM THE BALL AND YOUR INCLINATION FROM THE HIPS - ARE AUTOMATICALLY ESTABLISHED BY THE LENGTH OF THE SHAFT.

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CLEARLY, THE LONGER THE CLUB THE LONGER AND FLATTER THE SWING ARC BUT ONCE AGAIN THIS IS AUTOMATIC.

KEEP EVERYTHING ELSE THE SAME - INCLUDING YOUR TEMPO AND POWER OUTPUT.

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How Much Popcorn Is Too Much?



DEAR DR. ROACH: I love popcorn, but when you look close there are so many hard hulls! Are they hard on the stomach? Can you eat too much?
-- G.P.P.

ANSWER: Popcorn has a lot of fiber, include the nondigestible bran of the kernel (also called the hull). Fiber is generally healthy for you, aiding in digestion and making you feel fuller, and foods high in fiber may reduce risk of some chronic diseases.

However, too much fiber, especially if your system is not used to it, is absolutely a potential problem. It can cause bloating and gas, and in rare instances can cause an obstruction in the bowel. This is not likely with any reasonable amount of popcorn.

Doctors used to think that in people with diverticulosis, which is little outpouchings in the wall of the colon, popcorn could cause diverticulitis (inflammation and infection). However, recent studies have shown this is unlikely.

Finally, enjoy popcorn air-popped, without oil or butter or too much salt, for the healthiest option.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I was recently worked up for an autoimmune disease that now seems to be osteoarthritis. I was placed on 10 mg of prednisone for 14 days with amazing relief from my painful shoulder and arms. I am severely allergic to aspirin and do not want to take opioids. The physician has ordered prednisone 2.5-5 mg daily to control symptoms. Is it safe to take this low dose of prednisone daily for pain control? -- M.O.

ANSWER: It sounds to me that the physician may not have communicated as effectively as I might have hoped. Osteoarthritis, although a widespread cause of joint pain, is not an autoimmune disease, and it is not treated with prednisone. Instead, it sounds very much like you may have polymyalgia rheumatica.

PMR is found in women more often than in men and rarely in people under 50, most commonly in a person's 70s. Hallmark symptoms are joint pain, especially of the shoulders and upper arms, that is much worse in the morning. PMR also is very sensitive to prednisone 10-20 mg: If it doesn't respond dramatically to those kinds of doses, it probably isn't PMR. A laboratory finding, the erythrocyte sedimentation rate, is almost always very elevated (92%-94%) in PMR. A different blood test for inflammation, C-reactive protein, is abnormal in 99% of people with the condition.

Treatment is low-dose prednisone, usually given at 10-20 mg per day to start, as long as it is controlling symptoms. About half of people will be able to come off of medication after a year or two, but some people continue on treatment for six years or more. Unfortunately, even at these low doses, roughly half of people can develop a side effect due to the steroids, especially cataracts. People on long-term steroids should have careful monitoring of blood pressure, sugar and cholesterol levels, as well as bone density. Alternate treatments that don't rely on steroids are in development.

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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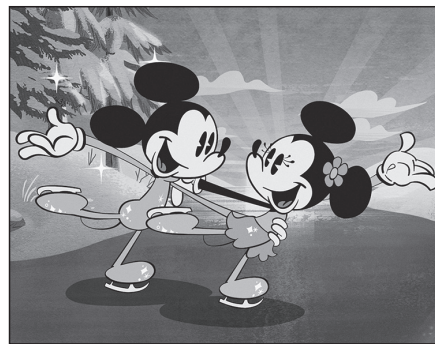
The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel (Season 4) After two excruciatingly long, lonely years, the realization of the fourth season of this Amazon Original series is nigh! Emmy and Golden Globe winner Rachel Brosnahan returns to the groundbreaking role of Midge Maisel, the bold, fashionable and quick-witted stand-up comedian shaking up smoky comedy clubs in the late 1950s. When last we saw Midge, she had just been cut from opening for singer Shy Baldwin's concert tour after some of her jokes exposed Baldwin's private love preference. Devastated, she and plucky manager Susie (played by Alex Borstein) are left standing on the airport tarmac, suddenly jobless. Worse yet, Midge had recently ended her engagement to dreamy doctor Benjamin in order to pursue her career. Loveless, incomeless and with multiple people relying on her livelihood, Midge has a lot to figure out this season. Premieres Feb. 18. (Prime Video)

Icahn: The Restless Billionaire — From his modest beginnings in the borough of Queens to earning high honors at Princeton University, and eventually becoming the most feared man on Wall Street, corporate shaker-upper Carl Icahn has a long history of ingenuity and brilliance. So why is a man who has overtaken and sold countless corporations and amassed a person fortune of over \$16 billion never satisfied? Watch and find out. (HBOMax)

The Wonderful Winter of Mickey Mouse — If you enjoy watching others participate in winter sports and fun, but the Olympics are too competitive for your taste, glide on over to Disney+. This new winter-themed special stars Mickey and Minnie skating, skiing and romping, but a lot of

the old Disney gang make appearances, too. The program's animation has an old-school look to the characters, so artistic aficionados will enjoy that aspect. This special is a sequel to "The Wonderful World of Mickey Mouse" and will be followed by other seasonal adventure episodes later this year. (Disney+) Premieres Feb. 18.

Fishbowl Wives — Cross one of the "Real Housewives" franchises with a Japanese anime-style comic-book story and this is the result. Six women in what they believe are marriages with their perfect soulmates all live in one luxury high-rise building. One by one, each finds herself cheating on her marriage, and each is tormented



Disney+

Scene from "The Wonderful Winter of Mickey Mouse"

by their own actions and the demise of the lives they were building. This is a very adult show in theme and situations, so take heed if kids are within viewing distance (subtitles don't hide nudity!). (Netflix)

Lincoln's Dilemma — Narrated by Jeffrey Wright, this four-part documentary series explores the plight of President Abraham Lincoln to end slavery at any cost, and what that meant to different populations and locations of the United States at the time. Addressing not only the effect on enslaved people, but economic and humanitarian aspects as well, the series is based on a variety of scholarly and journalistic sources and includes an array of archival artifacts. Also starring Leslie Odom, Jr. as Frederick Douglass and Bill Camp as Lincoln. Premieres Feb. 18. (Apple TV+)

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1. What time is the train in BTO's "Takin' Care of Business"?

2. Which song was Barry Gibb's first try at falsetto?

3. Name the band that released albums titled "Equinox" (1975), "Crystal Ball" (1976) and "The Grand Illusion" (1977).

4. What was Bobby Vinton's "Mr. Lonely" about?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Darling, look both ways before you cross me, You're headed for the danger zone."

Answers

1. 8:15. Songwriter Randy Bachman said he wrote it about a music technician's trip into the city every morning.

2. "Nights on Broadway," in 1975, from the Bee Gees "Main Course" album. The song was cut from 4:25 minutes to 2:52 by taking out the slow part.

3. Styx. Those albums did well, but it wasn't until their 1981 "Paradise Theatre" album that they topped the charts.

4. Vinton started writing the song while serving in the Army, lamenting the fact that he was far away from home and never got letters in the mail.

5. "The Love You Save," by the Jackson 5 in 1970. Oddly enough for a young teen song, it mentions historical references, such as Benjie (Ben Franklin), Christopher (Christopher Columbus) and Isaac (Isaac Newton).

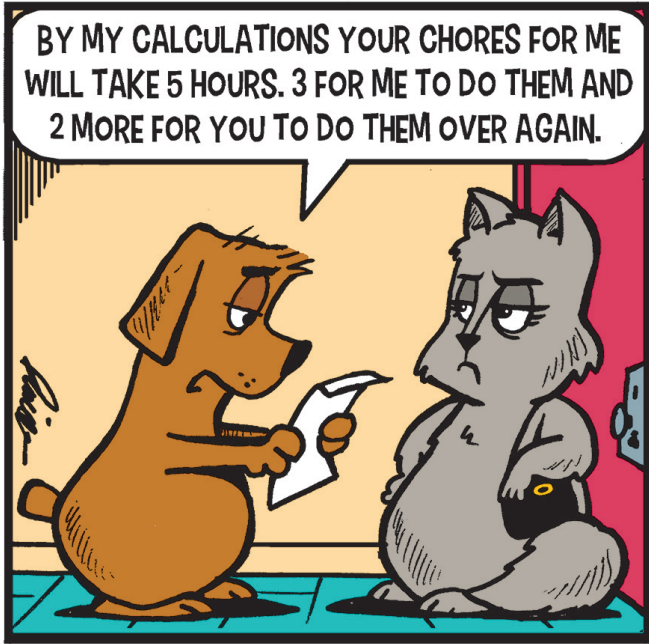
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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}

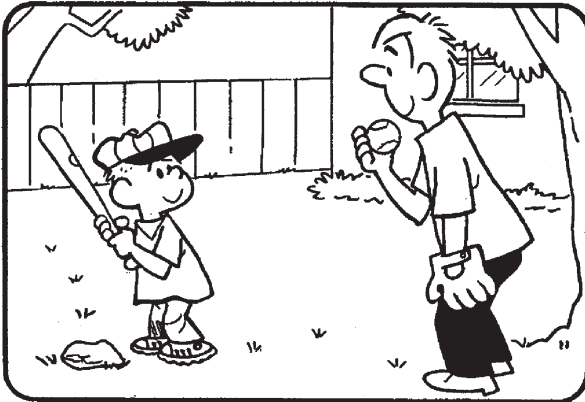


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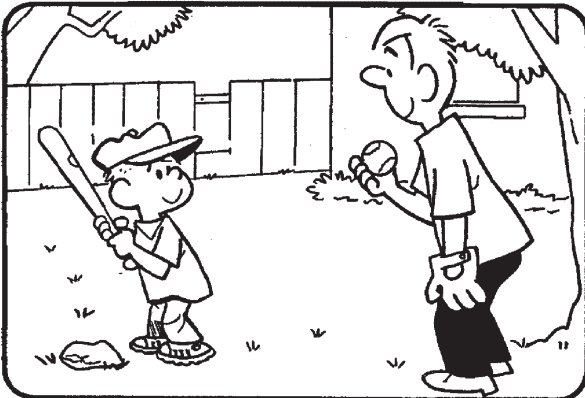
"I will defend you to the death ... yours, that is."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Cap is different. 2. Shirt is slimmer. 3. Fence board is missing. 4. Arm is lowered. 5. Pans are missing. 6. Glove is different.



- Store plastic wrap in the refrigerator, or even the freezer, to keep it from sticking to itself.

- “Take your medication tablets on a spoonful of your favorite yogurt! Place the pills on top of yogurt and they slide down. Follow with a second spoonful and smile.” — *A Reader in Pennsylvania*

- Do you have a screw loose ... in your eyeglasses? This is an easy fix. Paint the screw with a dab of clear nail polish and quickly re-screw. It works like glue. Dab the top of the screw for a little extra insurance.

- “I purchased a roll of reflective tape to mark our basement stairs. It reflects the light from the open doorway at the top of the stairs, and I can turn the downstairs lights off before heading up. I had some left over, so I put a strip on my dog’s collar. When I let him out at night, I can shine a flashlight and spot him instantly, since the tape is more visible in the night.” —

V.R. in Pennsylvania

- If you’re leaving your home for a few days, make sure you don’t turn off the heater altogether. Set it at a low 55 degrees F and open up the cabinets that have pipes exposed. This way, air will circulate, and it won’t get too cold to allow the pipes to burst. Have a neighbor turn your faucets to a trickle if below-freezing weather is expected.

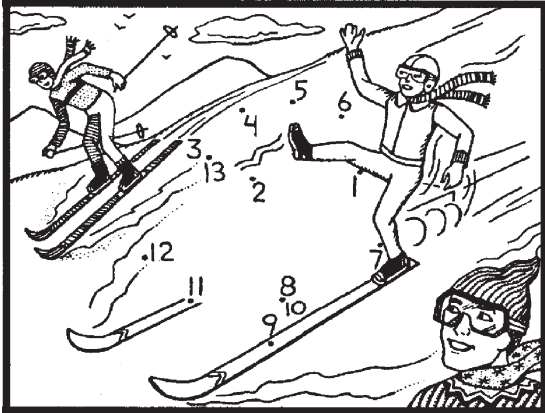
- Wrap the metal collar of your paintbrush with masking tape before painting. Then you can peel it off and there’s no stuck-on paint.

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

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SKI DOIN'! Our snow slope pal has a leg up on things. Or has he? Draw dot-to-dot to complete the picture.

Junior Whirl

by Hal Kaufman



BYE, BYE, WORDIE FILL-IN EXERCISE

ONE MEMBER of the trio of birds at left is out of the picture. So are various and sundry word members of trios suggested in expressions below. Let's see if you can identify absentees.

1. Reading, 'Riting and —.
 2. Hop, skip and —.
 3. Stop, look and —.
 4. Man, woman and —.
 5. Here, there and —.
 6. Good, bad and —.
 7. Small, medium, —.
 8. Tom, Dick and —.
 9. Curly, Larry and —.
 10. Shake, rattle and —.
 11. Burger, drink and —.
 12. Going, going, —.
- Ten right is pretty good.

ON TAPE! See if you can translate these abbreviations attributed to a supermarket checkout tape: SK MLK, WW BRD, CR CH, TOM SCE, GFT RED, GRPS RED.

P.S.: All are edibles.

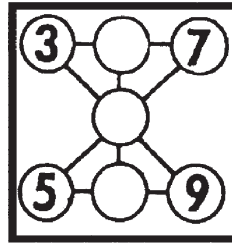
Skim milk, whole-wheat bread, cream cheese, tomato sauce, grapes red, grapes red.

THREE OUT! You are asked to insert just three numbers—4, 6 and 8—in blank circles of the diagram shown so that each row of three numbers has the same total, which is left up to you to determine.

Insert the right number at center, and you can hardly miss.

How quickly can you comply?

Place 6 at center; 8 at top; 4 at bottom.

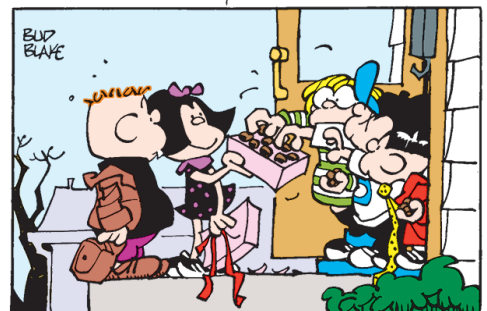
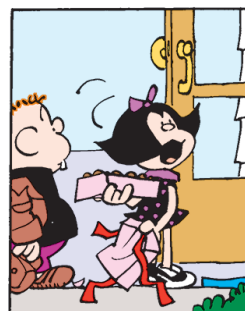
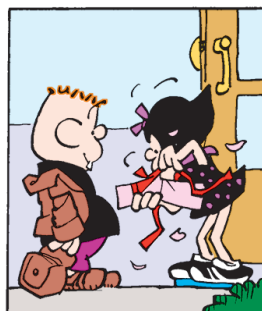
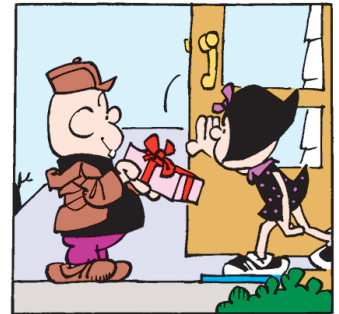
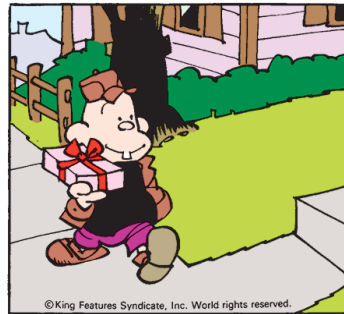
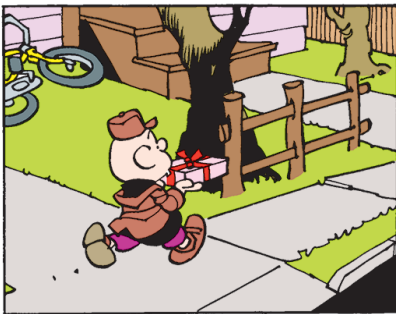


ELEVEN UP! Any three-digit number whose first and third digits total the middle digit may be divided by 11. Dubious? Give it a try.

1. Rhythmic. 2. Jump. 3. Listen. 4. Child. 5. Everywhere. 6. Indifferent. 7. Large. 8. Harry. 9. Moe. 10. Roll. 11. Fries. 12. Gone.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Fine, to NASA
- 4 "Misery" star James
- 8 Garbage barge
- 12 — -mo (replay speed)
- 13 Taj Mahal city
- 14 Ocean motion
- 15 Sunbather's goal
- 16 Insect organ
- 17 Oklahoma city
- 18 Patsy Cline song
- 21 Shoe width
- 22 Little rascal
- 23 Brilliance
- 26 6 on a phone
- 27 Gaiety
- 30 "Dream on!"
- 31 Ginormous partner
- 32 Flintstones' pet
- 33 Abolish "La —"
- 34 Curse
- 35 Summoned with a beeper
- 36 Frenzied
- 37 Jewel
- 38 Words of empathy
- 45 Made into lumber
- 46 Drescher or Tarkenton
- 47 TV schedule abbr.
- 48 Currier's

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		

- 8 Precipitous action?
- 9 Title akin to POTUS
- 10 "Garfield" dog
- 11 Marries
- 19 Piece of lettuce
- 20 "As I see it," via text
- 23 Hearing thing
- 24 Hit CBS series
- 25 Cover
- 26 Blend
- 27 Pear-shaped fruit
- 28 French article
- 29 Affirmative
- 31 Adipose tissue
- 32 Slightly wet
- 34 Chum
- 35 Anise-flavored liqueur
- 36 High-IQ group
- 37 Sentry
- 38 Egyptian deity
- 39 Top choice, for short
- 40 Pitcher
- 41 Crunchy cookie
- 42 \$ dispensers
- 43 "Yeah, right"
- 44 Not even one

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

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

LAFF - A - DAY



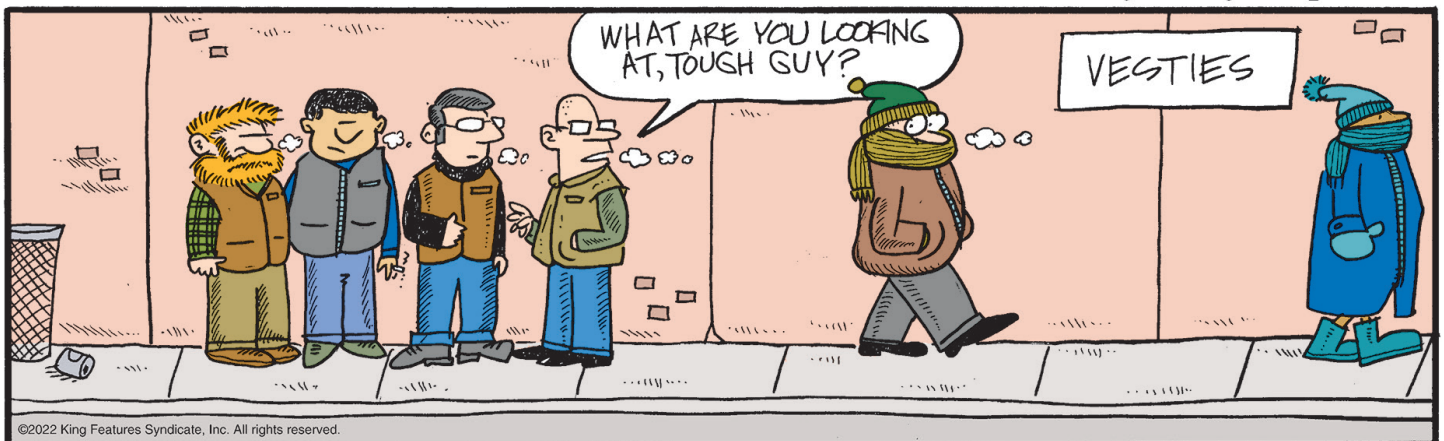
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BURESCH

"Why is it every time we discuss something, you have to put in your two cents' worth?"

Out on a Limb

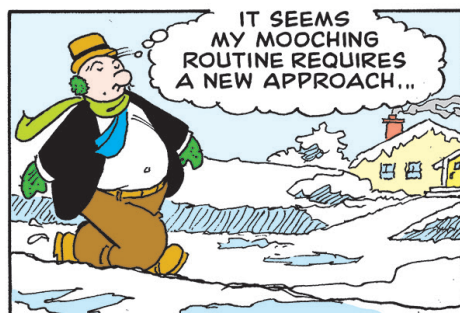
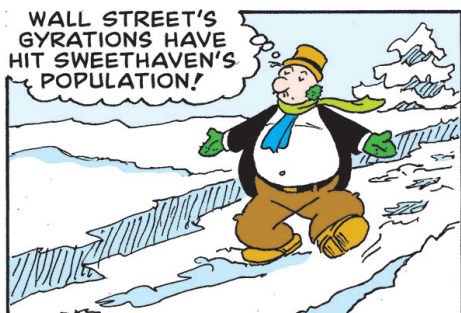
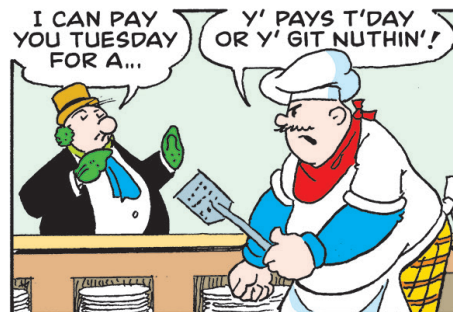
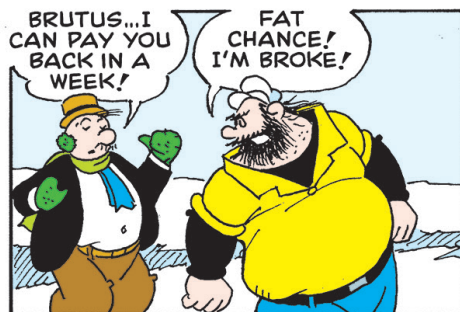
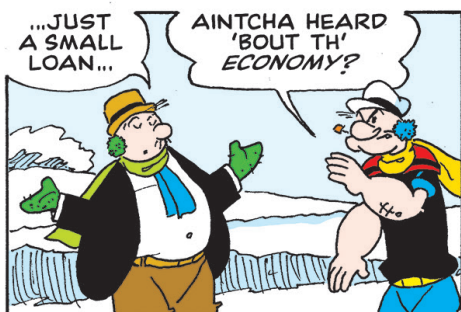
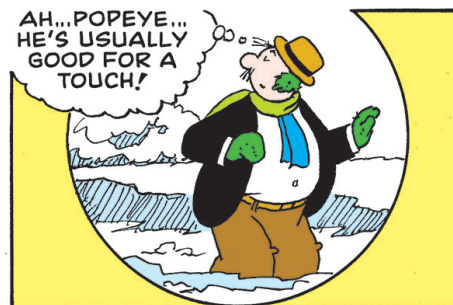
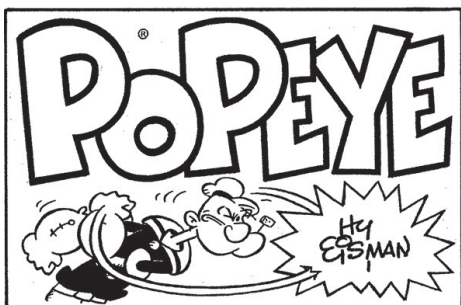
by Gary Kopervas



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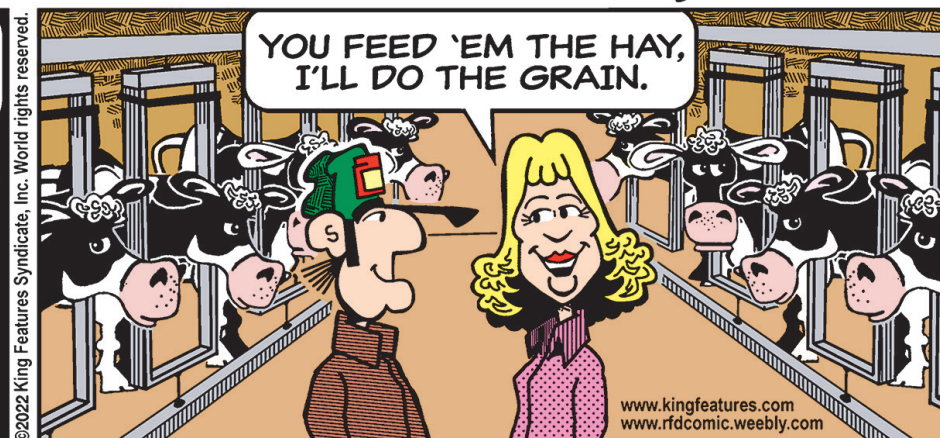
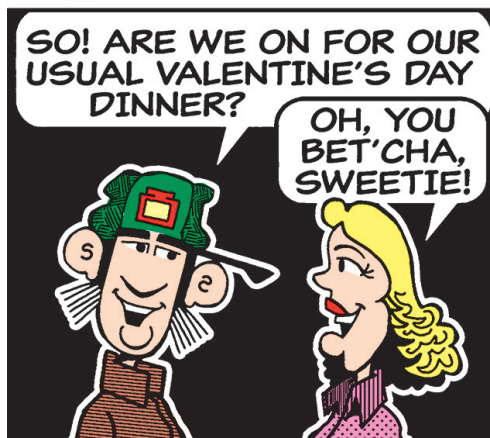
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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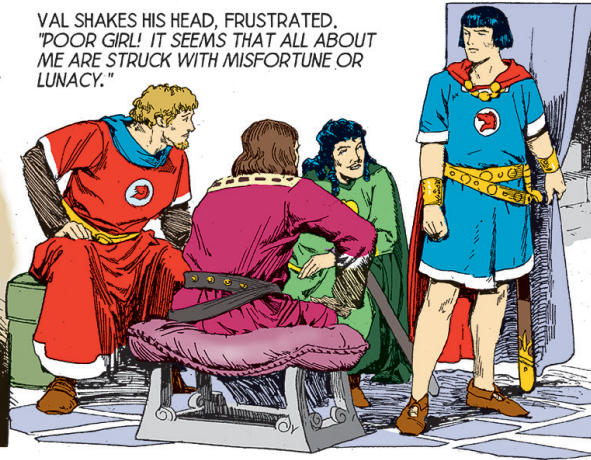
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Hal Foster's BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant

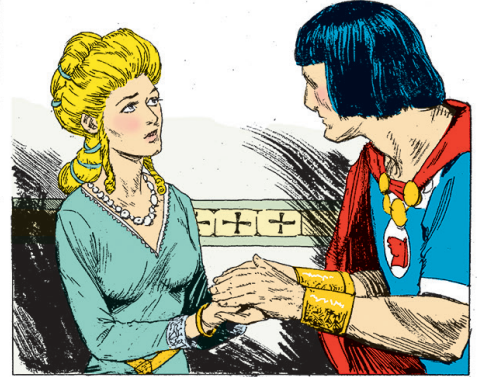
ARN FINISHES HIS REPORT: "MOTHER'S HANDMAIDEN ENTERED THE CAVE, LEFT A SIGN OF HER DEVOTION, AND DISAPPEARED."



VAL SHAKES HIS HEAD, FRUSTRATED. "POOR GIRL! IT SEEMS THAT ALL ABOUT ME ARE STRUCK WITH MISFORTUNE OR LUNACY."

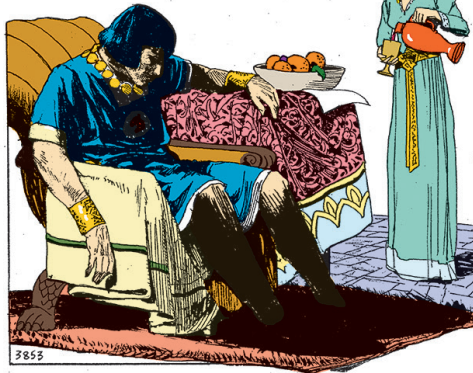


AND SO HE DRAGS HIMSELF BACK TO CHAMBERS TO TELL ALETA OF MAD PRUDENCE'S APPARENT PURSUIT OF IG BACK INTO THE UNDERWORLD.

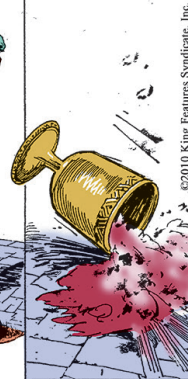


"THIS LATEST MISFORTUNE IS IN ADDITION TO THE ACCIDENT OF THE YOUNG SQUIRE AND THE DEATH OF SIR TROLLENBURG. ALSO WE HAVE THE DAMAGE WROUGHT BY THE SEA BEAST TO CONTEND WITH."

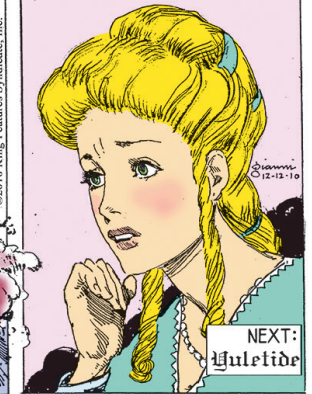
"AND, OH YES- THAT SCOUNDREL DRACO HAS TAKEN A WIFE AND RISEN TO POWER. IT'S AS IF WE'VE BEEN - CURSED."



ALETA STARTS - AND HER FINGERS GO NERVELESS.



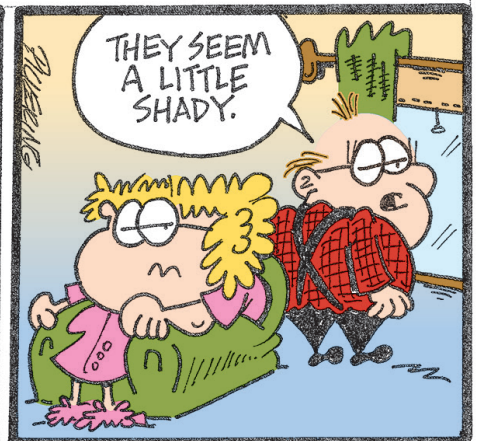
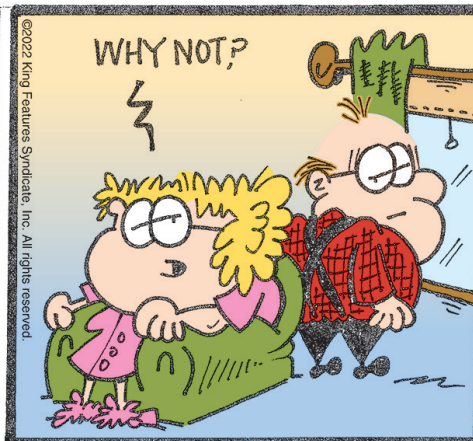
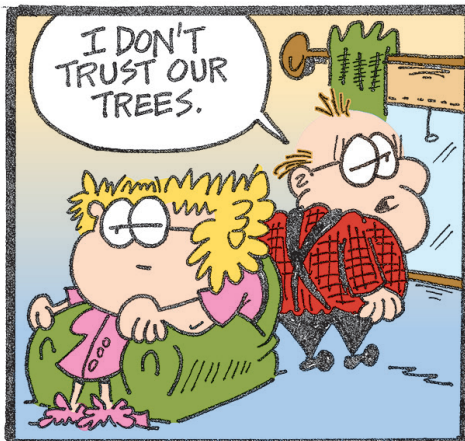
"WHY-WHY WOULD YOU SAY SUCH THINGS?" SHE GASPS.



NEXT: **Hulde**

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Dealing With Empty Store Shelves

There's been a shift in food availability across the country. If your area is just now getting hit with empty store shelves, this concept is shocking and new to you. For those of us who have lived with this for a long time (for over a year in my area), it's more of the same, but worse now. Here are a few thoughts to help you get through this.

Ask your store manager about any missing item. If he says that he's no longer able to order it, that likely means the item isn't on the store's list anymore. In that case, call the manufacturer. You might well discover that they're no longer making that particular item.

If, however, the reply is that he doesn't know when certain stock will be arriving on a truck, at least there's hope it will reappear. That's when you need to be proactive.

Team up with a few friends and equip each one with a list of a few must-have

items for each person. For one it might be distilled water for a C-pap machine. For another it might be one certain brand of low-sugar canned fruit. Then, when you shop, keep an eye out for those items. If you spot something, make a call and ask if you should pick it up while it's right there in front of you.

If you're desperate for a particular item you know is in stock, call the store manager and ask for it to be put it at the customer-service counter. If you don't do this too often, chances are you'll be accommodated.

If your store finally gets a missing item back in stock, don't hoard. At most, take just one extra if you'll use it within several weeks. That will buy you a little time if it goes missing again.

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1. Which of the placekicking Zendejas brothers had the most career NFL regular-season field goals made: Max, Joaquin or Luis?

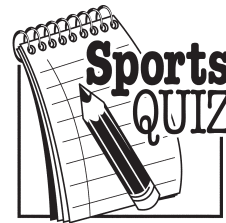
2. Name the Baseball Hall of Famer and five-time World Series champion who pitched a perfect game on May 8, 1968, while a member of the Oakland A's.

3. In what 1984 fantasy film did Basketball Hall of Famer Wilt Chamberlain play a warrior named Bombataa?

4. What Buffalo Sabres player won the Vezina Trophy for best goaltender six times from 1993-2001?

5. Since 1977, what sporting goods manufacturer has supplied the official baseball used by Major League Baseball?

6. Name the soccer legend from the Netherlands who is credited with saying, "If you can't win, make sure you don't lose."



7. What team defeated Stanford 49-0 in the inaugural Rose Bowl game held in 1902?

Answers

1. Luis, with 37 (Max had 34, Joaquin had zero).

2. Jim "Catfish" Hunter.

3. "Conan the Destroyer."

4. Dominik Hasek.

5. Rawlings.

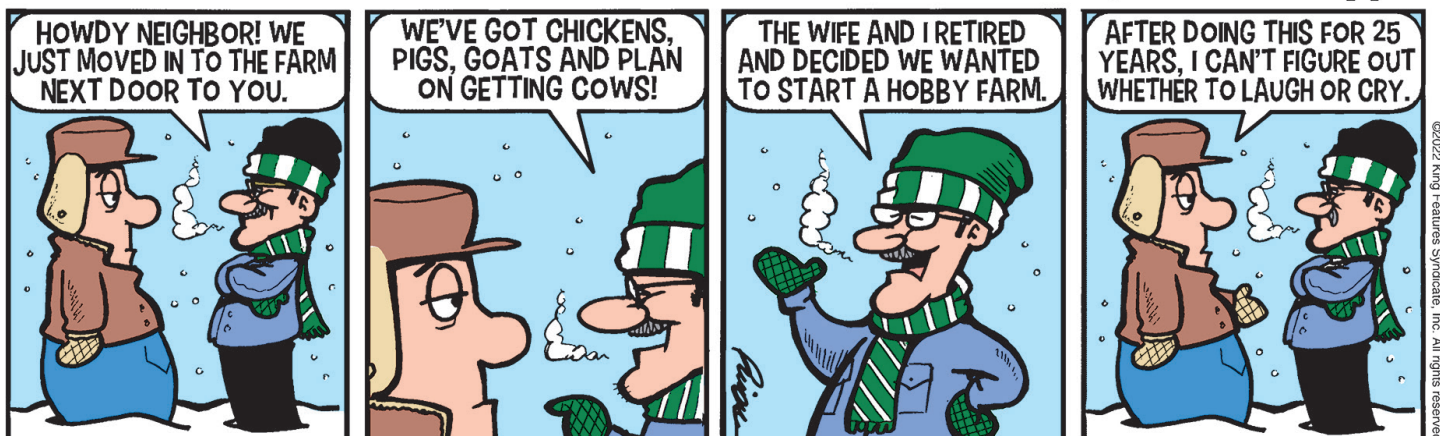
6. Johan Cruyff.

7. The Michigan Wolverines.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





More Tips for Finding Out-of-Stock Pet Food

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I wanted to respond to Casey H.'s concerns about finding the right pet food in the midst of these supply problems. We and some of our friends have experienced the same shortage. Our cat is on a prescription canned and dry food to treat her cystitis. Eating the wrong food could cause real problems for her. When we went to PetSmart to renew our supply, the shelf was almost empty. We talked to the in-store veterinarian, who said the main problem was a quality issue — the manufacturer had to throw away a huge amount of cat food and start again. That, plus the slowdown in truck deliveries, plus short staffing, are all contributing to this mess.

Casey may want to call or email

the pet-food company, or talk to the manager of the store that it's usually purchased from. Another option is to make your own pet food. My mother was a dog breeder for 30 years and she made her own dog food. It's not an option for us because of our cat's medical issue, but it may be a solution for others. Your veterinarian can guide you on ingredients, and there are plenty of books with recipes that provide balanced nutrition. — *Colleen R., East Rochester, New York*

DEAR COLLEEN: That's great advice! Store managers and the pet food manufacturers themselves can provide more insight when a specific pet food is not available. You can usually find contact information for the manufacturer on the can, bag or box of pet food. Veterinarians also can help guide you to alternative pet foods, which is especially important when specific formulations are needed.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

heads are too heavy.

* Actual corpses were on the set and going to be used during the filming of "Apocalypse Now." However, the man who supplied them turned out to be a grave robber and was arrested.

* Oceans around the world contain about 20 million tons of gold in the water itself, worth hundreds of trillions of dollars at current prices.

* In 1997, Motley Crue created a soda called "Motley Brue" to help promote their new album "Generation Swine." For additional fun, they added enough blue dye to turn the drinker's urine green.

* Walt Disney accidentally "kidnapped" Richard Nixon by dispatching his monorail train before the Secret Service could get on.

* When added together, the numbers on a roulette wheel add up to 666.

* M&Ms were created so military soldiers could enjoy heat-resistant and easily transportable chocolate during war.

* If your arm or hand falls asleep, try rocking your head from side to side. This will release the pressure on the nerves in your neck and wake up the limb.

* In 2003, PepsiCo offered Estonia \$25 million dollars to change the spelling of one of its lakes, Lake Peipsi, to Lake Pepsi, but was turned down.

* A man legally named Santa Claus was elected to the city council in North Pole, Alaska.

Thought for the Day: "I cannot believe the path to victory lies in staining our souls so black we become indistinguishable from those we fight." -- Anthony Ryan

Editor's Note: In the 6th factoid, there are accents over the "o" in both "Motley" and the "u" in "Crue" and "Brue."

* Rapper Snoop Dogg tried to rent the country of Lichtenstein for a music video, but was rejected.

* The Vatican has its own telescope staffed by priests, and has even received awards for the pursuit of scientific research.

* Until they are large enough to sleep upright, baby owls sleep on their stomachs because their

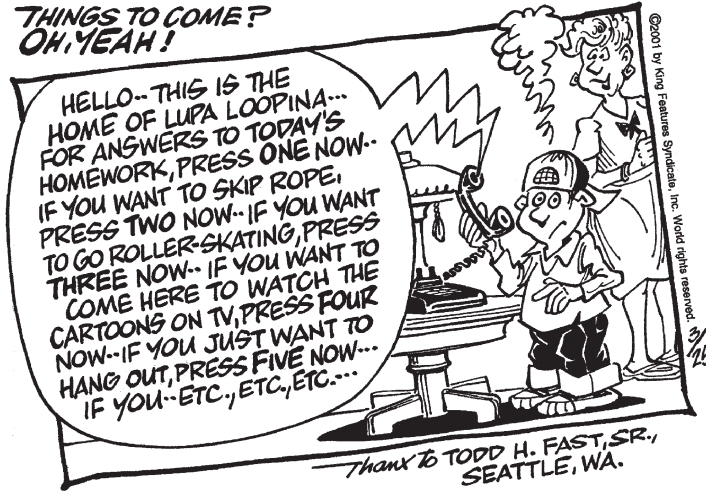
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

THINGS TO COME?
OH, YEAH!



Thank to TODD H. FAST, SR., SEATTLE, WA.

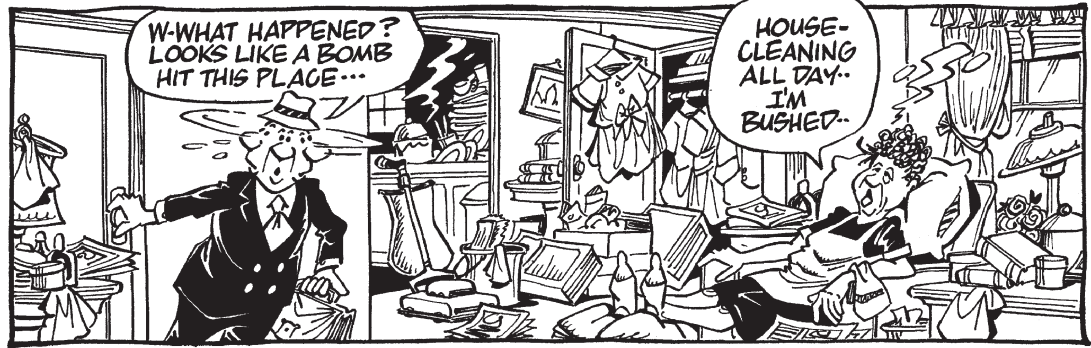
BY AL SCADUTO

BIG LIE NO. 1,753 - (SUPERMARKET DEPT.)



Thank to SIMI SIEGEL, ORMOND BEACH, FL.

NOTHING COOKING ON THE STOVE.. LAST NIGHT'S DINNER DISHES PILED IN THE SINK.. HOWCUM?



Thank to GERT DRAIZEN, TOMS RIVER, N.J.

The Garden Bug

Planting dahlias



Dahlia tubers can go directly into the ground in the spring when there is little chance of frost, but they can also be planted as late as mid-June in most parts of the country. They require good drainage and partial to full sun. Put one tuber in each hole, several inches deep, with the "eye" facing up. The tubers should be separated by about 2 feet to give each plant room to grow. Install one stake for each tuber as you plant it. - Brenda Weaver

Source: www.dahlia.org

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

TeleHealth Visits Avoid COVID Delays at VA

The deployment of the new electronic health record at one of the Department Veterans Affairs health systems has been delayed. As of now, so many employees are sick with COVID-19 and unable to work that the rollout has been moved from March 5 to April 30.

That particular system, with multiple VA locations in 15 counties, currently has a COVID positivity rate of over 30% with one county seeing an increase of 150% in the past two weeks.

Think about that, and ask yourself: Can your next appointment at the VA be accomplished via TeleHealth? While the VA was one of the first agencies to mandate that all their employees be vaccinated against COVID, facts and figures show that it's not complete protection.

TeleHealth uses computers, phones and tablets to connect you with your

medical team in real-time video or a phone call. Accessing care this way means you don't have physically go in. This can be especially helpful if you are in a rural area far from a VA facility or are disabled, older or very ill. You can even talk to specialists via TeleHealth.

If you're not signed up, start here: telehealth.va.gov. Scroll down to See How It Works. On that same page, click on My HealthVet. From there you can track appointments, get messages from your care team, view or print your medical records or refill your prescriptions.

Don't miss the VA Mobile Apps link. That's where you can get your Video Connect app for iOS, web or Android. Note that AT&T, SafeLink by TracFone, T-Mobile and Verizon will help you avoid data charges when using the VA Video Connect app. You'll also find the 24/7 help desk to get your app going (866) 651-3180 and a test site to try a practice session.

The VA has gone all out in battling COVID-19. Consider doing your part and ask if your next appointment can be accomplished from home via TeleHealth.

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



America's Drug Crisis

In 2021, the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (USCBP) seized 11,201 pounds of fentanyl—a 234% increase from 2020. This amount of fentanyl is enough to kill every American seven times. Fentanyl is the deadliest drug in the United States and is 50 times more powerful than heroin. This lethal drug has made its way into our homes and communities, accounting for 64,000 of the over 100,000 drug overdose deaths in 2021—the highest number ever. Drug overdoses from fentanyl skyrocketed last year, and it is now reported as the number one cause of death for Americans ages 18-45. Fentanyl has killed more young adults in America than COVID-19, car accidents, suicide, cancer, heart disease, or homicide. Last September, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issued its first public safety alert in six years due to the “alarming increase in the lethality and availability of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl.”

In addition to fentanyl, USCBP seized over 41,000 pounds of marijuana, and over 8,500 pounds of cocaine—almost double what was seized in Fiscal Year 2020. America is facing a drug crisis and it has to be addressed at every level.

Earlier this week, I met with Moody County Sherriff Troy Wellman to discuss the opiate and border crises. Sherriff Wellman told me that in December 2021, his deputies assisted in a drug bust of an organization that was bringing in 20 pounds of meth into South Dakota per week. This meth was initially smuggled across our southern border.

The White House needs to start by securing the border. I have taken additional measures to contain our border and keep our nation secure by supporting the REMAIN in Mexico Act. This bill requires immigrants who claim asylum but fail the “credible fear test” to remain in Mexico while a decision is made about their asylum claim. I am also a cosponsor of the Finish the Wall Act which directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to resume construction of the border wall.

The drug crisis also has to be combatted at the local level. Like my conversation with Sherriff Wellman shows—drugs coming across our border don't stay in the border states, they are traveling over 1,000 miles to get to states like South Dakota. We need local law enforcement prepared to handle situations the drug crisis is presenting. That's why I am a cosponsor of the Invest to Protect Act, a bill that makes critical investments in local police departments, for training, body cameras, mental health resources, recruitment & retention that are needed to be resources for help in our local communities.

Fentanyl and related substances must be permanently classified as Schedule I drugs—drugs that are not accepted for medical use and have a high potential for abuse. This week, Congress extended the Schedule I classification for fentanyl related substances from February 18 to March 11, 2022. It is incredibly dangerous if the DEA and Biden Administration allow this classification to expire. The current situation at the border is unacceptable. I will continue to work with my colleagues to find viable solutions to protect the health and safety of our communities.

South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Mandate Freedom

When the federal government oversteps its bounds, it is up to states to protect individual liberties. In South Dakota, we take action to defend the personal choice to get the COVID-19 vaccine—or not. And with good reason.

In December 2020, President-elect Joe Biden told Americans that he would not mandate COVID-19 vaccines. “No, I don’t think they should be mandatory. I wouldn’t demand it to be mandatory,” he said.

Anthony Fauci sang the same tune. He said of vaccine mandates, “I don’t see it on a national level, merely because of all the situations you have encroaching upon a person’s freedom to make their own choice of their own health.”

Six months ago, White House press secretary Jen Psaki reiterated the Biden Administration’s opposition to vaccine mandates, saying, “That’s not the role of the federal government.”

The Biden Administration’s supposed opposition to COVID-19 vaccine mandates may be one of the biggest lies ever told. Now we know what the president really believed.

Weeks later, President Biden wildly changed course and announced wide-ranging and unconstitutional federal mandates that would force more than 100 million Americans to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Americans fought back against President Biden’s unprecedented power grab. Individuals said “NO,” and some state governments backed them up. I told President Biden, “We will see you in court.” We joined four lawsuits to stop the unconstitutional mandates. The good news is last month the Supreme Court blocked the OSHA mandate. In the face of defeat, the Biden Administration backed down and withdrew its vaccine mandate for large businesses. And we are making progress on the other mandates, as well.

But we have already seen President Biden betray his promises to the American people on this issue. He could very well do it again and attempt to reinstate another mandate. The threat of more COVID-19 vaccine mandates has not gone away.

If you give big government bureaucrats an inch, they will take a mile. That won’t happen on my watch.

Individuals should be able to make a personal choice whether to get the COVID-19 vaccination. More

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than 70% of eligible South Dakotans have received at least one dose. We know that these vaccines can help keep patients out of the hospital. But it should be a choice. I issued an executive order to protect the right to religious and medical exemptions for state employees. Now I have introduced a bill to protect those exemptions for the rest of the citizens of South Dakota, too, if they face a COVID-19 vaccine mandate from their employer.

The proposed law includes three exemptions that an employer must honor if they mandate the COVID-19 vaccine: for medical reasons, such as when an employee has a medical condition that would advise against getting this vaccine; for religious reasons, if a person objects to the COVID-19 vaccine on religious grounds, which includes their moral or ethical beliefs and principles; or if an individual is naturally immune following an infection from COVID-19 and can provide a test result that shows positivity for the COVID-19 antibodies.

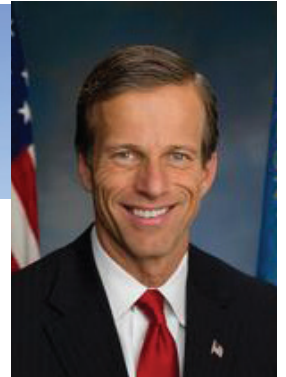
No person should be forced to put their health in jeopardy because of COVID-19 vaccine mandates. No one should be forced to abandon their religious principles. And no one should be forced to get a COVID-19 vaccine if they have natural immunity to the disease.

South Dakota has set an example for the nation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We protected lives, and we also protected freedom. We didn't shut down our state; we didn't destroy our economy. We gave our citizens the information they needed to make decisions to protect themselves and their families. And we are thriving as a result. With this law, we will once again defend our people's right to decide for themselves how to protect against COVID-19—and we will continue to fight unconstitutional mandates from Washington, DC.

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John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Listen, Understand, and Deliver

I recently held a tele-town hall with thousands of South Dakotans, and it was great hearing from folks from all across the state. I've always said that South Dakotans are, and continue to be, my most trusted advisors, and I value all of the advice, feedback, and suggestions that I get when they call, write, or stop to see me. My recent tele-town hall was no different.

What I heard during the call reaffirms what I've been hearing during my meetings and visits throughout the state over the last few months. South Dakotans are concerned about the direction our country is heading, and they are particularly worried about the ongoing supply chain and inflation crises and the high volume of illegal drugs that are coming across the porous southern border.

On inflation, the single most important step the federal government can take to reduce it is to stop dumping billions of unnecessary government dollars into our economy. Inflation is a real problem for families, businesses, and farm and ranch operations. Nearly everyone is facing higher prices that are stretching family budgets to the limit. I'm taking proactive steps to address this issue, too. My Inflation Prevention Act would help prevent reckless spending legislation like the Democrats' so-called "Build Back Better Act" when the inflation rate is as high as it is now – the highest in 40 years, to be exact.

I received several questions about the supply chain bottlenecks that are driving up prices and hitting South Dakota's agriculture industry particularly hard. There are holes on grocery store shelves and long delays in receiving items that have been ordered. South Dakota businesses are also struggling to maintain their profit margins and meet the demands of their customers – especially small businesses, which have fewer resources to fight supply chain problems.

Instead of imposing new, unnecessary regulations, it would be nice to see the administration focus on meaningful measures to address the supply chain crisis, like those in the bipartisan legislation I introduced last week with Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), our neighbor to the east. For some time now, I've heard reports of ocean carriers refusing to transport certain goods – often American agricultural products – in favor of more lucrative cargos. My bill, the Ocean Shipping Reform Act, is designed to address this problem and create a more level playing field, benefitting South Dakota producers, small businesses, and consumers.

Many people are rightfully upset about the ongoing southern border crisis and the danger it poses to non-border states like South Dakota. In fact, it was the top issue people raised during a poll I conducted during my tele-town hall. In particular, people are worried about the drugs that are pouring into the country. 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.

Also front of mind for many South Dakotans is the rising price of energy. Winters in South Dakota are no joke, and the month-to-month cost to heat homes is through the roof. Everything from higher heating costs to the highest gasoline prices in eight years, families, businesses, and farms are bearing the brunt of the Biden administration's narrow focus on electric vehicles and its discouragement of developing America's

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abundant energy resources. South Dakota is a leader in clean energy, from hydropower on the Missouri River to wind farms across the state to biofuel production, but the president's nearsighted policies are leaving the United States more dependent on foreign oil while keeping domestic production on the bench.

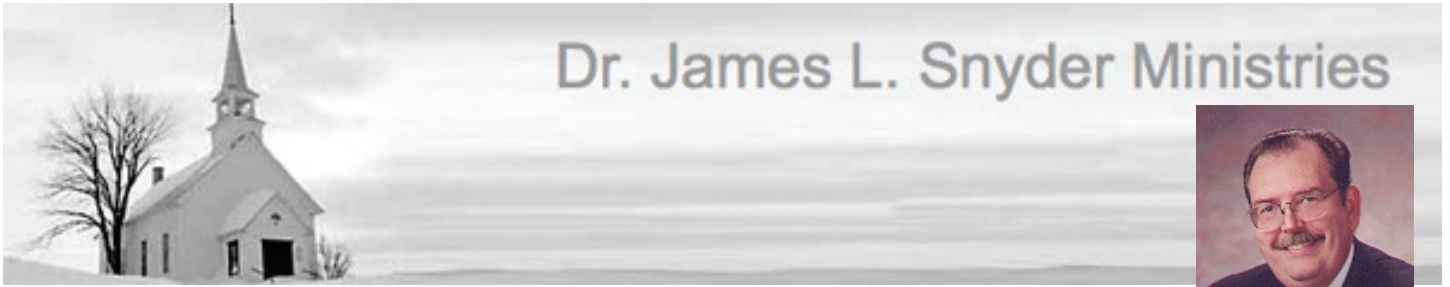
I have found that the more input and feedback I get from you, the more effective I can be on your behalf. South Dakota is hands-down the best place to live, raise a family, and make a living. It is the honor of a lifetime to represent you in Congress, and I hope that you will continue reaching out if I can ever be of any assistance to you.

My team and I are in the business of customer service, and we stand ready to assist you in dealing with the federal government, including on issues related to the VA, Social Security, Medicare, immigration, passport emergencies, and the IRS, to name a few. I have offices in Sioux Falls, Aberdeen, Rapid City, and Washington, D.C., and you're always welcome to call or stop by. If you would like to email me, you can head to my website, www.thune.senate.gov, and click "contact."

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Where in the World Does Time Go?

I remember my grandfather telling me that the older you get the faster time flies. Laughing at him at the time I thought it was another of his little stories he loved telling.

Just the other day I caught myself telling one of my grandchildren, "The older you get the faster time flies." Then it occurred to me. I am my grandfather. I am not sure how I got here, but here I am.

It is hard keeping up with things, especially when time ticks by so fast. Just when you think you are all caught up, you realize you have to start it all over again.

I was complaining about this the other day to the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Normally, I try not to do any complaining in her presence. She has the ability of turning my complaint upside down and confusing me to the extent that I have no idea what I am complaining about.

In my complaint I said, "Where does time go?"

"Where," my wife said rather sarcastically, "do you want time to go?"

I had to stop and think about that one. In fact, I am still trying to think about that one. To be rather honest, I do not know where I want time to go. The only thing I do know is, I do not want it to go by so fast. Why can't time slow down just a little bit, especially as I get older.

In my confused state of mind my wife said, "Would you do me a favor and go to the grocery store and pick up some items? I just don't have enough time to do it myself."

Whenever my wife asked me to do her a "favor," I believe there should be some kind of a recompense for my time. After all, my time is valuable, at least to me it is.

So, I said, "Would you mind..." and my wife interrupted, "Yes, I would, just get what is on the list. I need it tonight."

Being of a husband mentality, all I really heard her say was "yes."

As I was headed out the door, I heard her say, "And hurry, I need that stuff for this evening."

I looked at the list and there were about 12 items she wanted me to get at the grocery store.

Because time was of the essence, I tried to hurry us much as I could. In Pennsylvania we have an old saying that says, "The hurrier I go the behinder I get." Believe me, much of my life has been in the

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behinder category.

Before starting out, I glanced at the list to make sure I knew what she wanted. I got to the grocery store, parked my vehicle and then went in and got a shopping cart and started my journey of shopping. Which I really, really hate. Shopping is not a favorite thing of mine.

Starting up the first aisle, I grabbed for the shopping list to see what my first item would be. I checked my shirt pocket, no shopping list. I searched all of my pockets and much to my chagrin, no shopping list.

I may have left it in my vehicle, but since time was of the essence, I did not have time to go back to try to look for it. I thought I could do everything from memory. After all, I do not use my memory that often so I should be in good standing.

I threw about six items in the shopping cart and then looked at my watch. I was running out of time. Time goes so quickly when you are trying to remember something, especially your wife's shopping list.

Knowing there were around 12 items on the shopping list I sank into panic mode. What were those other six items? For the life of me, I could not remember.

I did have an option I thought about. I could call my wife on my cell phone and ask her to text me the list. Then, I would be in trouble because I would not have enough time to call her and then get the items and get home in time.

I tried to put in things I thought were on the list, but it was getting late. Time was running out.

Then I did something I would later regret. Headed towards the checkout line, I passed the bakery where they had Apple fritters on sale. Without even stopping, because time was getting away from me, I grabbed two apple fritters and threw them in the shopping cart.

Why I did that, who knows.

When I brought all the items from the grocery store and put them on the kitchen table, my wife looked them over and informed me that I only got two items on her list. "Why didn't you get the rest of the items?"

All I could say was, "I'm sorry, time got away from me." Believe me when I say, that will be the last time I use that excuse.

I could not help but think of a verse of Scripture. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Everybody has the same amount of time; it's how you use that time that really makes the difference. Time, as I have discovered, is no excuse for not getting something done.

EARTHTALK ™



Are plastic-eating microorganisms the solution to our plastic pollution woes? And if so do we have to slow down our production of plastic? Credit: pexels.com

Dear EarthTalk: Is there any truth to claims that we need not worry about plastic pollution because nature will evolve microorganisms to break it all down?

-- C. Davis, Sacramento, CA

Humans have long aimed to maximize efficiency and convenience in everyday life. Plastic has fueled the growth of today's post-industrial world: From food preservation and textile production to construction and machinery, plastic has made elements of everyday life more convenient. Consequently, the planet is inundated with plastics like Polyethylene terephthalate (PET). Around the world over 70 million tons of PET plastic is manufactured, and only 19 percent of it is recycled. The World Economic Forum estimates that the planet is on track to have as much plastic by weight as fish in the ocean by 2050.

Scientists and environmental advocates alike are focused on addressing global plastic pollution. In 2016 Japanese scientists at the Kyoto Institute of Tokyo took samples outside of a recycling facility in Osaka and made a revolutionary discovery: microorganisms capable of breaking down PET plastic. They use enzymes that allow degradation of plastics into component pieces in only six weeks, compared to the 450 years it takes for plastic to break down on its own. This discovery gave rise to the question of how people can harness and utilize these microorganisms, as the naturally occurring microorganisms broke down plastic at a rate far too slow to be efficient for practical use. In response, scientists created a "super enzyme"—a mutant of the naturally-occurring organisms—capable of speeding the rate of plastic degradation so that 90 percent of a sample can be broken down in 10 hours.

Plastic-eating microorganisms are an amazing example of the resilience and adaptability of our planet. However, they are unlikely to be our saving grace to rid the Earth of the plastic pollution scourge. Current recycling systems are inefficient; most of the plastic we put in recycling bins ends up in landfills. Also, the products that are recycled are unappealing to manufacturers due to their dark, gray coloration. Nonetheless, thanks to these microorganisms, recycled plastic can now rival the quality of virgin plastics.

But even with the help of super enzymes, microorganisms that break down plastics do so far too slowly to keep up with current production levels of plastic production and disposal. Additionally, it is crucial to understand the broad impacts of plastic pollution even as it is broken down. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) associates 78 percent of priority pollutants with plastic pollution. Plastics contain contaminants and harsh chemicals absorbed in the manufacturing process which are released into the environment as they break down. This means that we will see an increase in the effects of chemical leaching impacting marine life by causing respiratory problems, chemical accumulation in fatty tissues, disruption of endocrine function, and death.

The discovery of these microbes may very well be the future of recycling, but we are still years away from adequately scaling up this potential use. In the meantime, addressing the amount of plastic making its way into the environment is still an important global issue; reducing plastic use and disposal is the best tool we have to address the problem at hand.

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South Dakota COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

325

Active Cases

14,615
-10,437

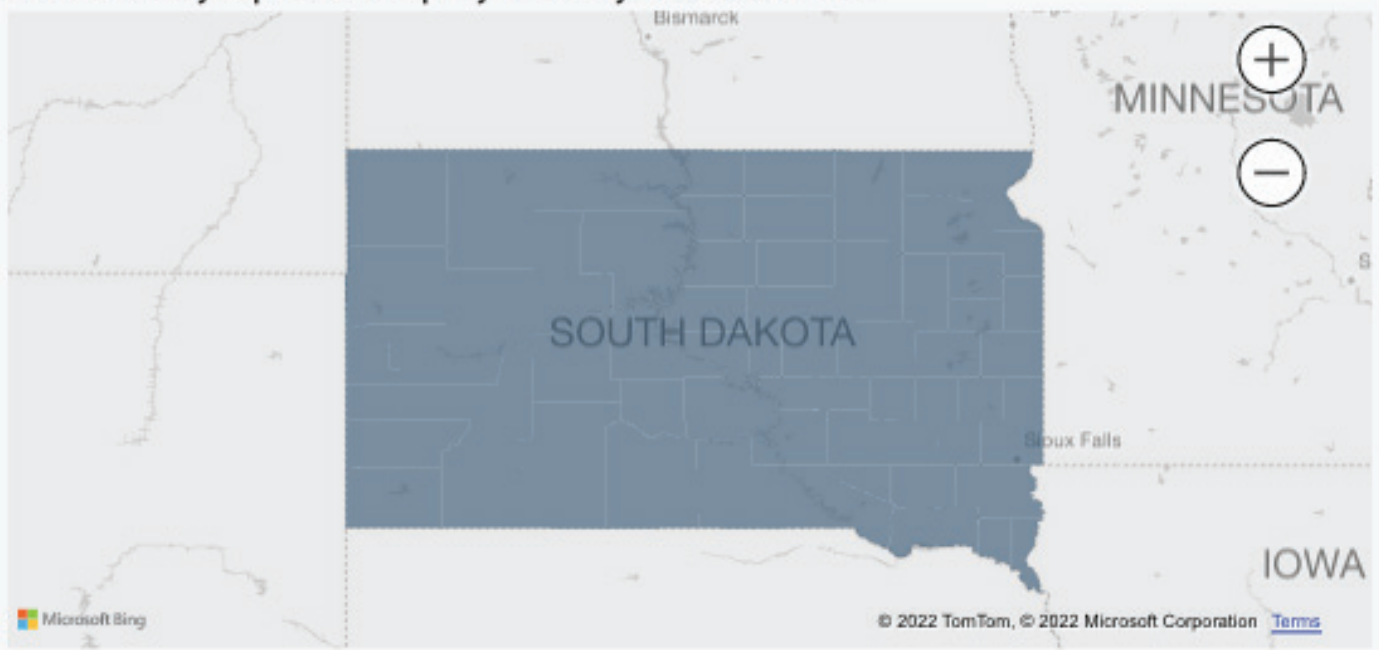
Recovered Cases

215,380

Currently Hospitalized

294

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

232,725

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

21.0%

2/3/2022 - 2/9/2022

Total Tests

2,054,831

Ever Hospitalized

10,373

Deaths Among Cases

2,730

% Progress (December Goal: 44233 Tests)

259%

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

423%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

75%

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Brown County COVID-19 Report

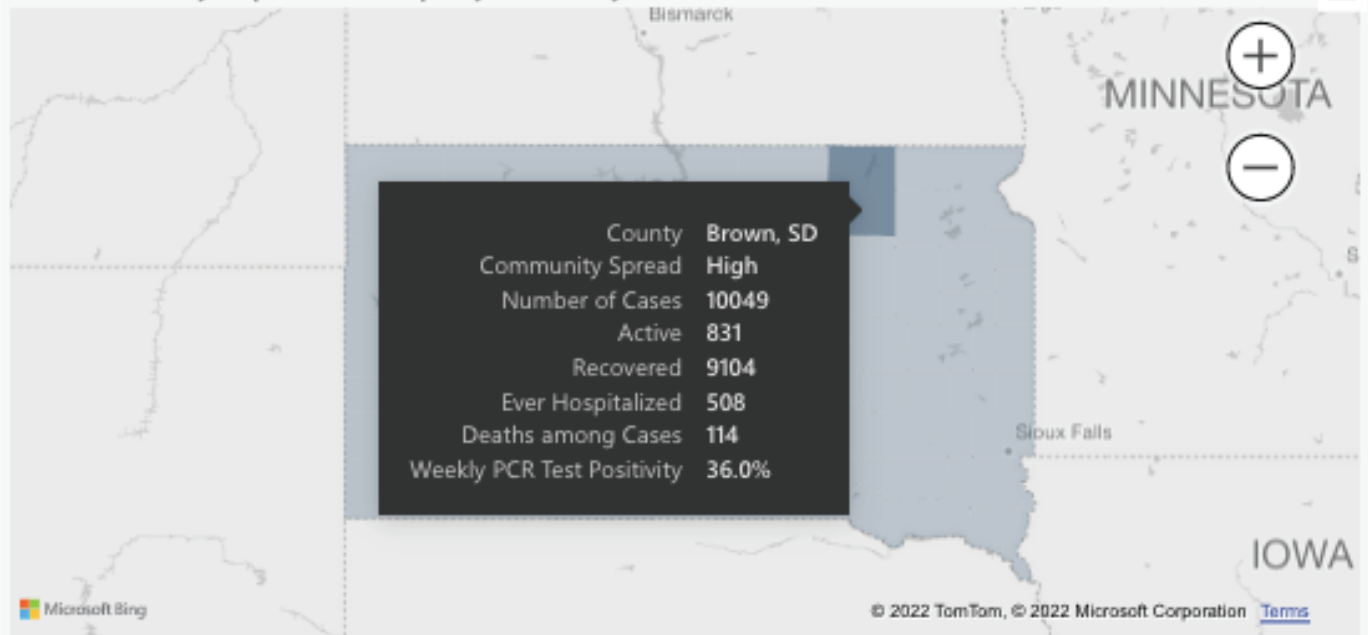
New Confirmed and Probable Cases
325

Active Cases
831
-459

Recovered Cases
9,104

Currently Hospitalized
294

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
10,049

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days
30.5%
2/3/2022 - 2/9/2022

Total Tests
98,613

Ever Hospitalized
508

Deaths Among Cases
114

% Progress (December Goal: 44233 Tests)
259%

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)
423%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)
75%

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Day County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

3

Active Cases

106
-54

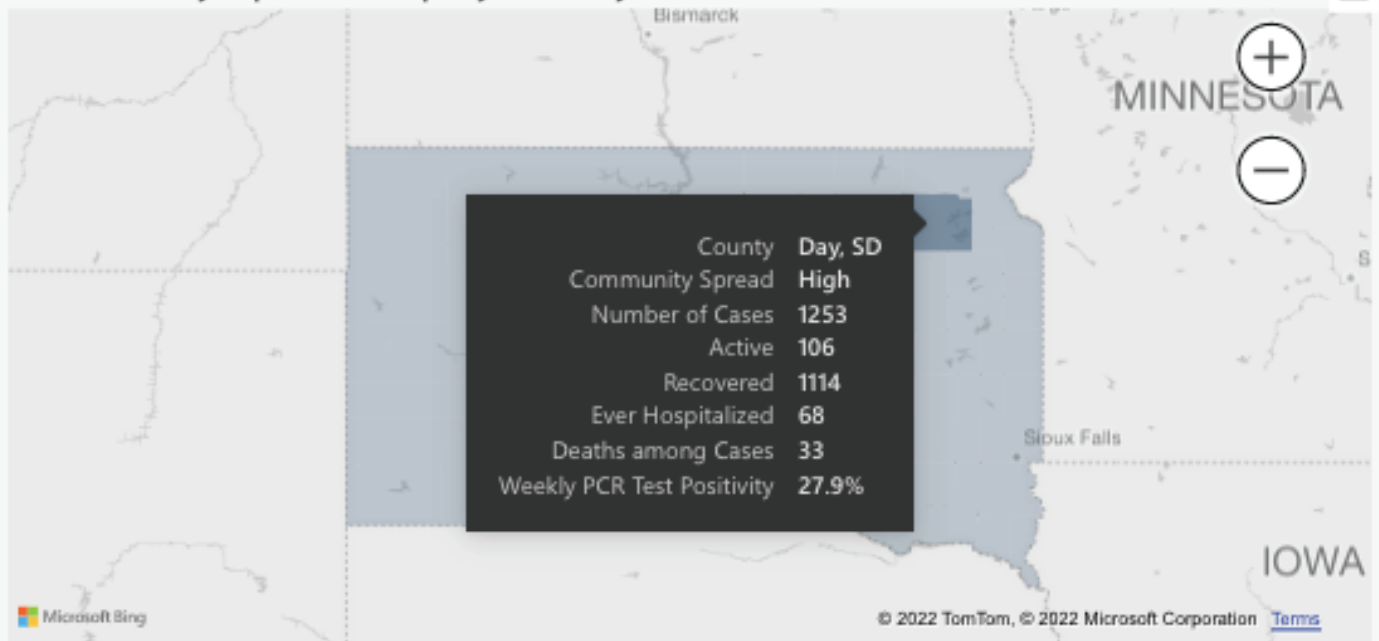
Recovered Cases

1,114

Currently Hospitalized

294

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

1,253

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

37.5%

2/3/2022 - 2/9/2022

Total Tests

16,090

Ever Hospitalized

68

Deaths Among Cases

33

% Progress (December Goal: 44233 Tests)

259%

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

423%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

75%

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COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Currently Hospitalized	-60	294
Deaths Among Cases	+43	2730
Ever Hospitalized		10373
Active Cases		14615
Recovered Cases		215380
Total Cases		232725

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	122957	1241
Male	109768	1489

VARIANT CASES OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Variant	# of Cases
Delta (B.1.617.2 & AY lineages)	1422
Omicron (B.1.1.529 & BA lineages)	315
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	15378	2
10-19 years	28255	1
20-29 years	40958	11
30-39 years	39677	47
40-49 years	32748	73
50-59 years	29989	210
60-69 years	24599	437
70-79 years	12836	636
80+ years	8285	1313

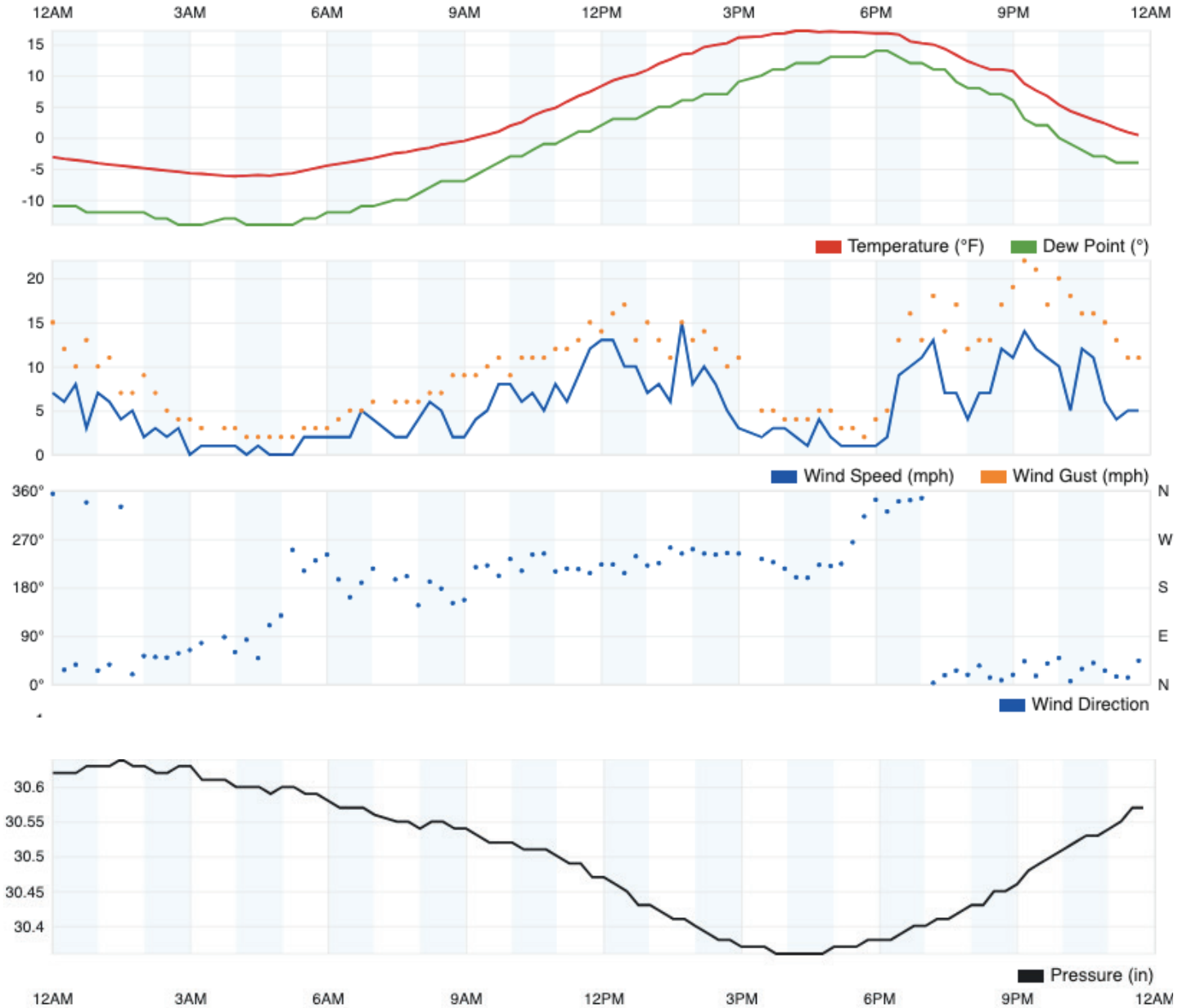
RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian / Pacific Islander	3107	1%
Black	5707	2%
Hispanic	9887	4%
Native American	28605	12%
Other	2329	1%
Unknown	6200	3%
White	176890	76%

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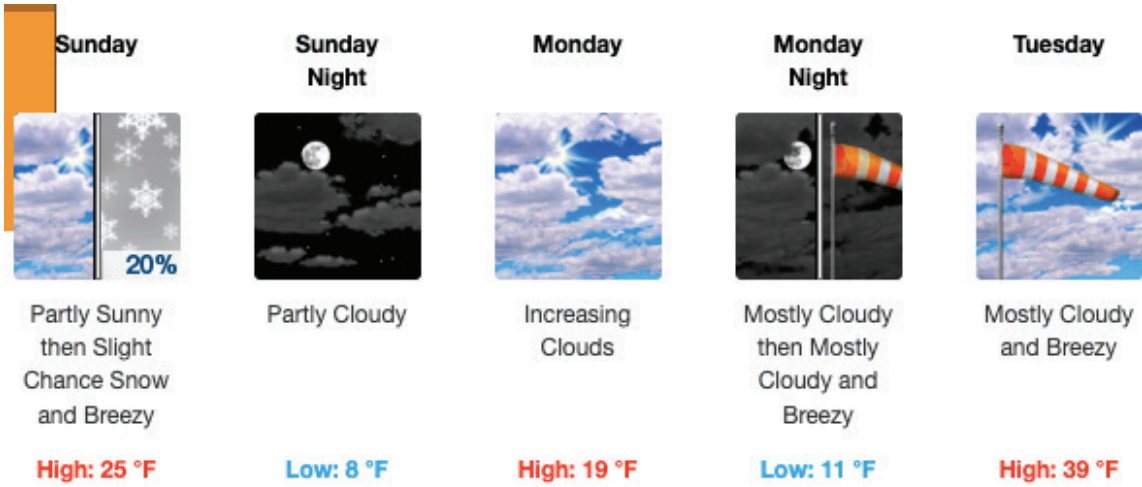
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

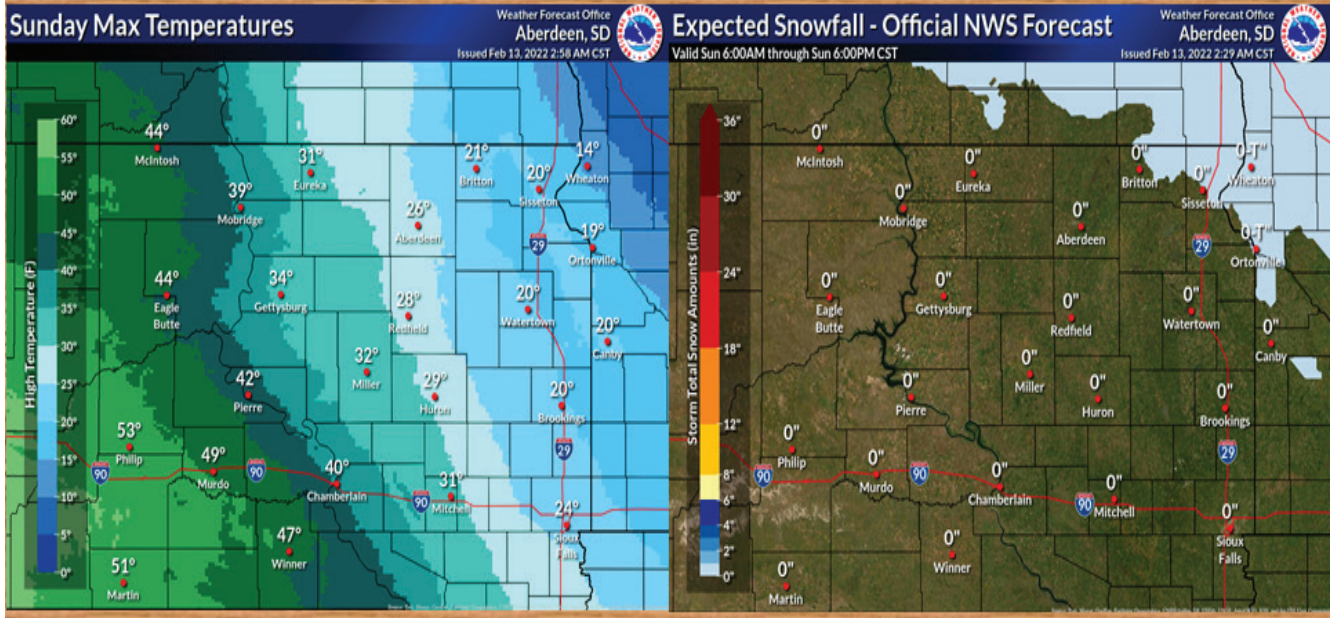


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Today's Forecast



A clipper system moves in today bringing increasing clouds and the possibility of light snow showers, mainly across northeastern South Dakota into western Minnesota this afternoon and evening. Otherwise, clouds on the decrease tonight with lows ranging from the single digits above zero to the mid to upper teens across the area.

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Today in Weather History

February 13, 1995: Snow fell over a broad strip from southwest to northeast South Dakota. The snow began as freezing rain in the northeast, and there were several vehicle accidents attributed to the icing. The most substantial snow was at Custer in the Black Hills, with 14 inches. A few six to eight inches amounts were reported over the southwest, central, and northeast South Dakota plains. In addition, strong winds caused some blowing and drifting snow in northeastern South Dakota.

The low temperature at Vinita, Oklahoma, plummeted to 27 degrees below zero. The temperature would be tied at Watts in January 1930 and Blackwell and Medford in February 2011. The negative 27-degree reading is cold enough to be the 2nd lowest temperature on record in Oklahoma. The coldest is currently 31 degrees below zero, recorded at Nowata on February 10, 2011.

1784 - Ice floes blocked the Mississippi River at New Orleans, then passed into the Gulf of Mexico. The only other time this occurred was during the "Great Arctic Outbreak" of 1899. (David Ludlum)

1885 - The "Friday the 13th" avalanche at Alva, UT, killed sixteen persons, and left thirteen others buried for twelve hours before being rescued. (David Ludlum)

1889 - It was the coldest morning of record along the Gulf Coast. The temperature dipped to 7 above zero at New Orleans LA and Pensacola FL, and plunged to -1 degree at Mobile AL. The mercury dipped to -2 degrees at Tallahassee, the coldest reading of record for the state of Florida. (David Ludlum)

1905: Freezing temperatures were recorded over the states of Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri. Morning lows of 29 degrees below zero at Gravette, Arkansas, 40 below at Lebanon, Kansas, and 40 below at Warsaw, Missouri, established all-time records for those three states.

1987 - A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy rain over central California. Chews Ridge reported nearly eleven inches of rain in 24 hours, and extensive flooding occurred in San Benito County. The Mount Rose ski resort in Nevada experienced a "white-out" with 60 mph winds and 36 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds in the wake of a storm in the northeastern U.S., gusting to 60 mph at Oswego NY, produced six foot snow drifts in northeastern Ohio. High winds in the mountains of Utah, gusting to 106 mph at the Snowbird ski resort, contributed to a forty car pile-up on Interstate 15, near the town of Bluffdale. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms produced locally heavy rain and flash flooding from central Texas to western Pennsylvania. Up to ten inches of rain deluged western Kentucky in two days, with five day totals ranging up to 13.16 inches at Gilbertsville Dam KY. Flooding caused tens of millions of dollars damage, including 18 million dollars damage at Frankfort KY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A slow moving cold front brought heavy snow to Utah, Colorado and Wyoming. Big Horn WY reported 15 inches of snow, and up to 22 inches was reported in Utah. In Colorado, 8 to 12 inches of snow fell over the northwest suburbs of Denver, while 16 to 22 inches was reported in the high mountain elevations west of Fort Collins. Strong winds accompanied the heavy snow, and bitter cold weather followed in its wake. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995: A National Weather Service Survey Team concluded a weak (F1) tornado occurred at the General Motors Desert Proving Grounds facility in Mesa, Arizona. Moderate damage was observed. A roof was damaged, and about 20 vehicles were destroyed and moved around. One car was lifted, moved several feet, and set down inside a roped-off area containing solar exposure equipment. The tornado traveled northeast and lasted about five minutes. The image below is from the February 1995 Storm Data.

2000: Late in the day and into the early morning hours of the 14th, severe thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes over southwestern Georgia that killed 19, injured 202, and caused \$35 million in damages. An F3 tornado hit southern Camilla, killing 11 people and wounding 175 others in the town.

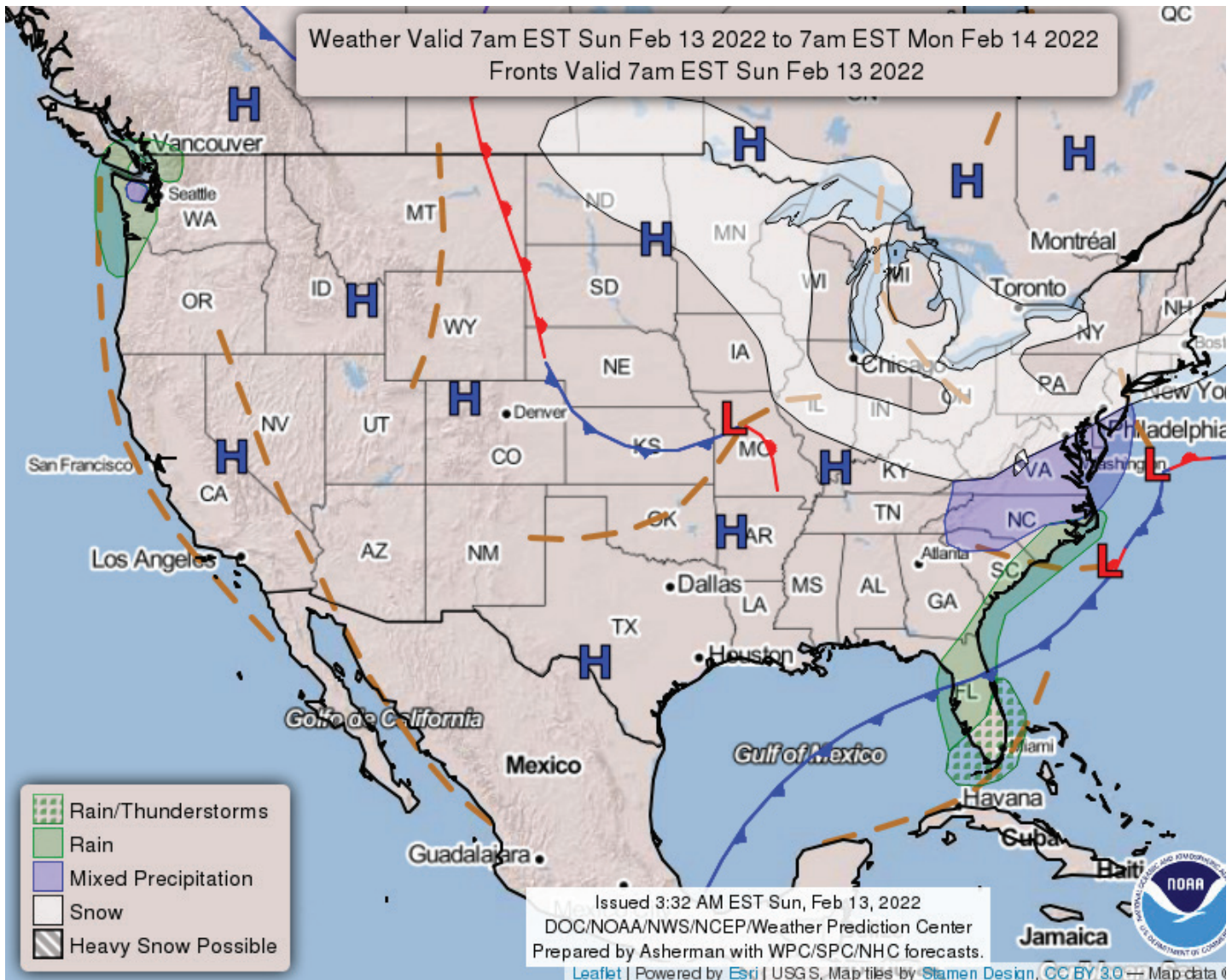
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 17.2 °F at 4:30 PM
Low Temp: -6.2 °F at 4:00 AM
Wind: 22 mph at 9:15 PM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 60 in 1901
Record Low: -34 in 1905
Average High: 28°F
Average Low: 5°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.26
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.81
Precip Year to Date: 0.59
Sunset Tonight: 5:58:10 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:33:25 AM



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Where's Worth?

"What's this diamond worth?" he asked the salesperson.

"Well, it all depends," came the reply.

"Depends on what?" he asked as though the salesperson was playing a game with him.

"Many different things," he responded. "Its size and weight, its cut and clarity to begin with. But in the end, its worth depends on what you would pay for it."

Worth is a purely personal thing. And the more desire we have for some "thing," the more we are willing to give something up for it or make a sacrifice to get it.

This section of Psalm 119 is very interesting. Its author has a burning desire to have a close relationship with God. His desire for this relationship is very clear: "Teach me...give me...direct me...turn my heart..." are pleas he makes to God to enable him to "live" God's "words" in his life. He speaks of God's decrees, His laws, His commands, and His statutes. And, then he adds one very profound statement: "Turn my eyes away from worthless things, preserve my life according to Your word." He realized the fact that his eyes were the gateway into his mind and that the things he looked at were the things that could draw him away from God's Word and turn his attention to things that are worthless and most often destructive.

Someone has wisely said that "What the eyes do not see, the heart does not crave. But what the eyes admire, the heart desires."

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to keep our mind on Your words and our eyes focused on things above. Help us set our priorities and hold them faithfully. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Psalm 119:36

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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,
04/07/2022 Groton CDE
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

04-13-27-28-34

(four, thirteen, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, thirty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

01-14-28-42-47, Star Ball: 8, ASB: 3

(one, fourteen, twenty-eight, forty-two, forty-seven; Star Ball: eight; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$7.5 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$53 million

Powerball

08-10-21-41-62, Powerball: 7, Power Play: 3

(eight, ten, twenty-one, forty-one, sixty-two; Powerball: seven; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$172 million

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Canton 55, Madison 53

Castlewood 72, Hitchcock-Tulare 36

Deubrook 68, Chester 57

Elk Point-Jefferson 44, Ponca, Neb. 42

Elkton-Lake Benton 48, Garretson 44

Ethan 60, Menno 40

Flandreau 71, Clark/Willow Lake 53

Flandreau Indian 83, Takini 49

Groton Area 71, Mobridge-Pollock 39

Harrisburg 74, Rapid City Stevens 64

Ipswich 58, Wilmot 44

Jones County 71, St. Francis Indian 47

Kadoka Area 53, Edgemont 17

Lakota Tech 67, Custer 53

Lemmon 66, New Underwood 44

Oelrichs 68, Wakpala 49

Red Cloud 52, Hot Springs 46

Sioux Falls Lincoln 57, Brookings 35

Sioux Valley 62, Parker 56

Stanley County 62, Wall 50

Tri-Valley 66, Milbank 57

Webster 52, Leola/Frederick 49

Yankton 59, Rapid City Central 39

DWU/Culver's Classic=

Aberdeen Christian 73, Howard 53

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Gregory 46, Bridgewater-Emery 42
Hanson 59, Platte-Geddes 39
Lower Brule 75, Freeman Academy/Marion 60
Potter County 71, Viborg-Hurley 47
St. Thomas More 52, Dell Rapids 41
Waubay/Summit 56, Lyman 39
White River 61, Canistota 50
Wolsey-Wessington 52, McCook Central/Montrose 36

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Alliance, Neb. 75, Oelrichs 15
Brandon Valley 46, Sioux Falls Lincoln 40
Castlewood 69, Hitchcock-Tulare 33
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 57, Little Wound 39
Deubrook 68, Chester 56
Douglas 45, Lead-Deadwood 10
Faith 64, McLaughlin 11
Flandreau 57, Clark/Willow Lake 41
Garretson 56, Elkton-Lake Benton 27
Kadoka Area 46, Bison 40
Lemmon 42, New Underwood 35
Mobridge-Pollock 45, Groton Area 38
Newell 63, Tiospaye Topa 32
Ponca, Neb. 41, Elk Point-Jefferson 24
Rapid City Stevens 48, Harrisburg 38
Sioux Falls Christian 58, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 47
Sioux Valley 67, Parker 52
Sisseton 55, Lisbon, N.D. 47
Todd County 45, Miller 33
Tri-Valley 46, Milbank 36
Wall 63, Stanley County 36
Webster 51, Leola/Frederick 33
Yankton 38, Rapid City Central 36

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

Mayo scores 21 to lift S. Dakota St. past Omaha 82-61

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Zeke Mayo matched his season high with 21 points as South Dakota State extended its win streak to 14 games, romping past Omaha 82-61 on Saturday.

Douglas Wilson had 19 points and seven rebounds for South Dakota State (23-4, 14-0 Summit League). Luke Appel added 12 points. Baylor Scheierman had eight rebounds and six assists.

Nick Ferrarini had 14 points for the Mavericks (4-22, 3-12), who have now lost four games in a row. Darius Hughes added 11 points. Frankie Fidler had 10 points.

The Jackrabbits improve to 2-0 against the Mavericks on the season. South Dakota State defeated Nebraska Omaha 95-86 on Jan. 13.

Archambault leads South Dakota over Denver 84-76

DENVER (AP) — Mason Archambault had 25 points as South Dakota defeated Denver 84-76 on Saturday. Kruz Perrott-Hunt had 15 points for South Dakota (15-10, 8-6 Summit League). Erik Oliver added 11

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points. Damani Hayes had 10 points.

KJ Hunt had 19 points and six rebounds for the Pioneers (9-19, 5-10). Coban Porter added 15 points. Michael Henn had 14 points.

The Coyotes improve to 2-0 against the Pioneers for the season. South Dakota defeated Denver 80-71 on Jan. 13.

Police: Sioux Falls man robbed of car, green card

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A 77-year-old Sioux Falls man told authorities he was tased, tied up and robbed of his car and green card by two women in late January.

The Argus Leader reports victim was found by two people at his apartment on Jan. 23. His hands and legs were bound up in yellow rope, according to court documents.

According to police, the man said the suspect and a friend had knocked on his door and he allowed them in because he knew the suspect.

The two women went into a back room to smoke a cigarette, where he could hear them talking but did not understand what they were saying because he doesn't speak English.

Olympics Live: China's Ren out of men's 500m in short track

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

Ren Ziwei of China is out of the men's 500 meters in Olympic short track speedskating.

Ren finished third in his quarterfinal on Sunday night, and that wasn't enough to advance to the semi-finals. He earlier won the 1,000 in Beijing.

Most of the other big names moved on: defending champion Wu Dajing of China, 2018 silver medalist Hwang Daeheon of South Korea, 1,500 silver medalist Steven Dubois of Canada and Liu Shaoang of Hungary.

American Ryan Pivrotto was eliminated, along with John-Henry Krueger of Hungary and Liu's older brother, Liu Shaolin Sandor.

There was just one crash in the quarterfinals, with Jordan Pierre-Gilles of Canada going down.

Marte Olsbu Røiseland earned her third gold medal of the Beijing Olympics, and fourth medal overall, by winning the women's biathlon 10-kilometer pursuit race Sunday.

The Norwegian started the race with a lead because of her win in the sprint race and hit 19 of her 20 targets. Despite strong winds and blowing snow, Røiseland held her focus and shot cleanly in the last standing stop to win in 34 minutes, 46.9 seconds.

Elvira Öberg of Sweden, who was second in the sprint race and started 31 seconds behind Røiseland, had three misses in her second and third shooting bouts, but cleaned the last standing to finish 1:36.5 behind for silver.

Tiril Eckhoff of Norway also missed three targets but came in 1:48.7 behind her teammate for the bronze medal.

Røiseland previously won gold in the mixed relay as well as the sprint. She also won bronze in the individual race.

Just like in the women's cross-country ski race, the Russian team opened a lead on the first leg of the men's relay on Sunday and then held on for the Olympic gold medal.

Sergey Ustiugov maintained more than a minute lead on the last lap over the two-man chasing group of Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo of Norway and Maurice Manificat of France.

Ustiugov grabbed a flag on his way to the finish line and won the 10-kilometer relay in 1 hour, 54 minutes, 50.7 seconds. Klaebo pulled away from Manificat for the silver, 1:07.2 back. France took third, 1:16.4 behind the Russians.

Snowy conditions made the ski tracks slow, especially on the first two classic ski legs. Leaf-blowers were

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used to clear the snow out of the ski tracks. By contrast, the winning time in the four-man relay at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics was more than 20 minutes quicker.

Alexey Chervotkin led off for the Russians, with Alexander Bolshunov skiing the second classic leg. Denis Spitsov and Ustiugov took the two freestyle legs.

Ukraine's Olympic team has issued a statement calling for peace against the backdrop of a Russian military build-up on the border between the countries.

So far no other athletes have followed the lead of slider Vladyslav Heraskevych. He held up a sign with the Ukrainian flag and the message "No War in Ukraine" after finishing a run in the skeleton competition.

The Ukrainian team issued a statement Saturday night Beijing time expanding on his gesture.

"The Olympic Team of Ukraine that is competing at the XXIV Olympic Winter Games in Beijing expresses a unanimous call for peace together with the native country," the Ukrainian Olympic Committee wrote on social media.

"Being thousands of kilometers away from the Motherland, mentally we are with our families and friends." The statement doesn't mention Russia or the military situation.

The International Olympic Committee bans most protest gestures at the Games. It isn't taking action against Heraskevych because "'No war' is a message we can all relate to," executive director of the Olympic Games Christophe Dubi said Sunday.

But IOC spokesman Mark Adams says that doesn't mean the IOC wants other athletes to join in.

Marco Odermatt of Switzerland has won gold in the men's giant slalom at the Beijing Olympics.

The 24-year-old Swiss skier plowed through snow and poor visibility Sunday to win.

It was the first time snow fell during an Alpine skiing race at this year's Olympics and the bad weather conditions caused the second run to be postponed by 1 hour, 15 minutes.

Odermatt coped with the conditions and the delay — and a first-run mistake — to post an unofficial combined time of 2 minutes, 09.35 seconds.

Zan Kranjec of Slovenia took silver, 0.19 seconds behind, and world champion Mathieu Faivre of France earned bronze, 1.34 behind.

The skiers had been racing and training on artificial snow until the real thing started to fall on Saturday at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center. A second women's downhill training run was canceled because of the conditions on Sunday.

Slalom gold medalist Petra Vlhova is leaving the Beijing Olympics early due to an inflamed left ankle tendon. She'll miss the Alpine combined event in which she would have been a challenger to Mikaela Shiffrin, the favorite in the race.

Mauro Pini, Vlhova's coach, tells The Associated Press that they didn't want to risk making things worse by trying for a medal in the combined.

By winning the slalom four days ago, Vlhova became Slovakia's first Olympic medalist in Alpine skiing.

Pini added that Vlhova also wants to make sure she has time "to go home and share this medal with those closest to her."

Vlhova had already sat out the super-G and the opening downhill training session.

The Alpine combined is scheduled for Thursday. Vlhova finished second behind Shiffrin in the combined at last season's world championships in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

The second run of the men's giant slalom has been postponed amid heavy snowfall and low visibility at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center.

Marco Odermatt of Switzerland has a lead of 0.04 seconds over Stefan Brennsteiner of Austria and 0.08 over world champion Mathieu Faivre of France after the first run.

It is the first time snow has fallen during an Alpine skiing race at the Beijing Olympics.

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Snow has been falling since Saturday at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center, where athletes had been racing and training on artificial snow. A second women's downhill training run scheduled for Sunday was canceled. The skiers say it is tough to see but good enough to race in.

Fourth-placed Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway says "the light is more than skiable" but adds "it just makes it difficult."

The women's Olympic skiing slopestyle qualifying event has been moved to Monday with the final the following day.

The competition was postponed Sunday due to wind, snow and low visibility.

The men's slopestyle qualification has switched from Monday to Tuesday. The final will now be Wednesday. Eileen Gu, who lives in the United States and represents China, will be going for a second gold medal. She won big air last Tuesday.

Kaillie Humphries has a big lead in the first part of the monobob competition at the Beijing Olympics. Humphries is competing for the first time as an American citizen. It's also the first time monobob, a one-woman bobsled, has been an Olympic event.

The reigning world monobob champion finished two runs Sunday in 2 minutes, 9.10 seconds, giving her a massive lead of 1.04 seconds over second-place Christine de Bruin of Canada. De Bruin's time was 2:10.14.

Laura Nolte of Germany was third in 2:10.32, and three-time Olympic medalist Elana Meyers Taylor of the U.S. is right in the medal hunt — her time of 2:10.42 putting her fourth.

Barring a big mistake by somebody, it looks like four women remain in the mix for the three medals. They'll be decided on Monday morning in Beijing, late Sunday night in the United States. The gap between Meyers Taylor and fifth-place Huai Mingming of China is nearly a half-second.

Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva remains on the preliminary start list for the short program at the Olympic Games, drawing a spot in the final group among 30 figure skaters due on the ice Tuesday night at Capital Indoor Stadium in Beijing.

Valieva will start 26th if the Court of Arbitration for Sport, which is meeting later Sunday, allows her to perform. Valieva's status was thrown into question this past week following a flagged drug test taken in December. She's favored to win if she's allowed to compete.

The starting order for the short program is determined by splitting the field in half according to world rankings. The lowest-ranked skaters then draw for the first 15 starting positions and the highest-ranked skaters draw for the second 15, meaning those who have legitimate medal chances will be last to take the ice.

Young You of Korea will follow Valieva before her two Russian teammates, Alexandra Trusova and world champion Anna Shcherbakova. Kaori Sakamoto of Japan drew the final starting number.

Marco Odermatt of Switzerland is leading the first run of the Olympic men's giant slalom with only lower-ranked skiers remaining.

It's the first time snow has fallen on an Alpine ski race at the Beijing Games and visibility has been an issue for skiers.

Stefan Brennsteiner of Austria is 0.04 seconds behind in second and world champion Mathieu Faivre of France is 0.08 behind in third.

The 24-year-old Odermatt is a favorite for the victory, having won four of the five giant slalom races this season in the World Cup. It would be his first gold medal in his first Olympics.

Snow has been falling since Saturday at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center, where athletes have been racing and training on artificial snow until now. A second women's downhill training run scheduled for Sunday has been cancelled.

Italian Luca de Aliprandini said "you can't see anything" after his first run.

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The Olympic skiing slopestyle qualifying event at the Beijing Olympics has been postponed due to high wind, snow and low visibility.

With the flags of different countries whipping in the wind at Genting Snow Park, the organizers made the decision to postpone the qualifying round. They did not immediately announce a plan for rescheduling. The final is currently set for Monday.

Eileen Gu, who lives in the United States and represents China, will be going for a second gold medal. She won big air last Tuesday.

Standout Eileen Gu and the rest of the slopestyle skiers at the Beijing Olympics will have to wait a little bit longer to start qualifying with the competition delayed by weather.

The wind was blowing and the snow falling at Genting Snow Park. The diminishing visibility made performing tricks off the jumps difficult as well. The competition is delayed at least two hours.

Gu, who was born in the U.S. and is competing for China, is trying to win her second gold medal at the Beijing Games. She's already won big air, which was held in Beijing.

The second women's downhill training run for American Mikaela Shiffrin, Italian Sofia Goggia and other Alpine skiers has been canceled because of snowfall.

The men's giant slalom race is still supposed to take place Sunday Beijing time.

A downhill has faster speeds than the giant slalom and so is more dangerous to ski when visibility is poor.

Snow began falling Saturday at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center during the first women's downhill practice session and continued into Sunday morning.

There is another downhill training scheduled for Monday ahead of Tuesday's race.

Russian figure skating superstar Kamila Valieva was at a practice session Sunday, hours before the Court of Arbitration for Sport was scheduled to meet to decide whether she'll be allowed to compete.

The meeting of CAS is scheduled for 8:30 p.m. Sunday and a decision is expected sometime Monday, less than 24 hours before Valieva is scheduled to skate in the women's short program at the Beijing Games.

Valieva has been allowed to practice since Monday, when a drug test she took in December was flagged for traces of a banned heart medication. That was the same day Valieva helped Russia win the team gold medal with a dynamic free skate in which she became the first woman to land a quad lutz in Olympic competition.

The practices have become increasingly uncomfortable, though, as Valieva continues to prepare with dozens of reporters and camera crews watching her every move. She briefly broke down in tears during her Friday session.

Skiers struggle as real snow falls on Winter Olympics

By BERNIE WILSON AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — The Winter Olympics finally look like, well, the Winter Olympics.

Real snow fell in Beijing on Sunday for the first time since the Olympics began, giving the city the appearance and feel of a real Winter Games. There was fresh snow in the mountains as well, where all events have been contested on artificial snow.

While the snow was mostly a welcome sight, up in the mountains it affected visibility and made it tougher for ski racers to make it down the hill, especially in the first run of the two-leg giant slalom.

Marco Odermatt of Switzerland handled the snow and poor visibility better than anyone else and won his first Olympic gold medal.

"I really risked everything in the second run because I wanted not just the medal, I wanted the gold medal," Odermatt said. "It's difficult because you can lose everything but today it paid off."

While a light snow fell Saturday, it came down a lot harder on Sunday, the first time it snowed during

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an Alpine race during the Beijing Olympics. The heavy snow forced the second run to be postponed by 1 hour, 15 minutes. During the delay, workers cleared snow from the course with snow blowers and shovels.

"It was a hard day, with the conditions, with such a long wait between the two runs," Odermatt said. "It was more than five hours for me, it was such a long time to re-think everything and it was hard to stay focused. I tried to sleep some minutes in between.

"I actually never dreamt about it but now it still feels like a dream."

Many other skiers had a rough day on the course known as The Ice River at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center.

"It's a shame what the weather is like. I was hoping for the sun, like on all the other days. Couldn't see anything," said Luca de Aliprandini of Italy, who was sixth after the first run but skied off course and didn't finish the second run. "When I was going down, the flakes were big."

American skier Tommy Ford came in 12th.

"It's great conditions on the course, but you can't see it," Ford said.

"It was difficult for everyone," said Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway, who was eighth overall.

A second women's downhill training run scheduled for Sunday was canceled.

CROSS-COUNTRY RELAY

The snow affected the men's cross-country relay ski race so much that workers used leaf blowers to clear it out of the tracks. The snow made the ski tracks slow, especially on the first two classic ski legs.

Just like in the women's race, the Russian team opened a lead on the first leg and then held on for the gold medal. Sergey Ustiugov maintained more than a minute lead on the last lap over the two-man chasing group of Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo of Norway and Maurice Manificat of France.

Ustiugov grabbed a flag on his way to the finish line and won the 10-kilometer relay 1 hour, 54 minutes, 50.7 seconds. By comparison, the winning time in the four-man relay at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics was more than 20 minutes quicker.

GU'S RACE ON HOLD

Freestyle skier Eileen Gu has to wait a day to try to win a second gold medal at the Beijing Games after gusty wind and snow postponed the qualifying round for women's slopestyle.

Qualifying was pushed back to Monday and the final to Tuesday. The switch avoids putting the gold-medal round directly against the Super Bowl, which is also being televised by NBC.

The men's slopestyle qualification also was switched from Monday to Tuesday, with its final now set for Wednesday.

The 18-year-old Gu was at the top of the hill stretching and getting ready for some warmup runs in the blustery conditions when qualifying was postponed. The snow was blowing sideways and the flags on the bottom of the course were whipping in all directions. Visibility also was low, which makes landing jumps off the massive kickers along the course dangerous.

Gu was born and raised in the United States but chose to compete for China, her mother's home country. Her victory in big air last Tuesday was hugely popular in China.

RUSSIAN DOPING

Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva continued to practice in the hours before the Court of Arbitration for Sport was to decide whether she will be allowed to compete this week. An expedited hearing was scheduled for Sunday, with a ruling expected sometime Monday.

A decision by CAS is expected roughly 24 hours before the 15-year-old Valieva is due on the ice at Capital Indoor Stadium for the short program on Tuesday. The overwhelming favorite, she drew the 26th starting spot Sunday among the 30 in the event.

Valieva has yet to miss a scheduled practice since a drug test taken in December was flagged last Monday for traces of a banned heart medication. That was the same day the reigning European champion helped the Russian skaters win team gold with a dynamic free skate in which she became the first woman to land a quad in Olympic competition.

On several occasions since then, the stress appeared to have gotten to Valieva, including a moment

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during Saturday's practice session when she fell during a triple axel and eventually skated to the boards and tearfully hugged her embattled coach, Eteri Tutberidze.

ROEISELAND'S TRIPLE GOLD

Marte Olsbu Røiseland held her focus in the blowing snow and shot cleanly in the last standing stop to win the women's biathlon 10-kilometer pursuit race. It was her third gold medal of the Beijing Olympics and fourth medal overall.

The Norwegian started the race with a lead because of her win in the sprint race and hit 19 of her 20 targets. She won in 34 minutes, 46.9 seconds.

Once Lebanon's center of glamor, Hamra Street goes dark

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — From his small music shop on Beirut's Hamra Street, Michel Eid witnessed the rise and fall of Lebanon through the changing fortunes of this famed boulevard for more than 60 years.

Hamra Street was the center of Beirut's glamor in the 1960s and 1970s, home to Lebanon's top movie houses and theaters, cafes frequented by intellectuals and artists, and shops selling top international brands. It saw a revival the past decade, thriving with international chain stores and vibrant bars and restaurants.

Now many of its stores are shuttered. Poverty-stricken Lebanese and Syrian refugees beg on its sidewalks. Trash piles up on its corners. Like the rest of Lebanon, the economic crash swept through the street like a destructive storm.

At 88 years old, Eid remembers the bad times, during Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, when Hamra saw militias battling, assassinations at its cafes and, at one point, invading Israeli troops marching down the street. Nothing was as bad as now, Eid says.

"We have hit rock bottom," he said. Few customers come to his Tosca Music Shop and Electronic Supplies, which sells records and a variety of electronic clocks, calculators and watches. His business has dropped 75%.

Lebanon's economic meltdown, which began in October 2019, was the culmination of the country's post-war era. The war's militia leaders became the political leadership and have kept a lock on power ever since. They ran an economy that at times boomed but was effectively a Ponzi scheme riddled with corruption and mismanagement.

The scheme finally collapsed in what the World Bank calls one of the world's worst economic and financial crises since the mid 1800s.

The currency's value evaporated, salaries lost their buying power, dollars in banks became inaccessible, prices skyrocketed in a country where nearly everything is imported. As much as 82% of the population now lives in poverty, according to the U.N. Unemployment is estimated at 40%.

The crisis was made worse by the coronavirus pandemic and a massive explosion at Beirut's port that killed 216 people, wounded thousands and destroyed parts of the capital.

While the economic system collapsed, the political one hasn't. The same leadership, entrenched in power, has done virtually nothing to address the crisis. Refusing basic reforms, they have made no progress in talks with the International Monetary Fund.

A walk through Hamra Street shows the impact.

Many shops have shut down because owners could no longer afford high rents and huge monthly bills for private electricity generators. After nightfall, the shops that are still operating close early. Many streetlights don't work because of electricity cuts. Hamra, which used to stay lively into the night, feels deserted before midnight — even during the recent holiday season.

In Hamra's heyday, in the 1960s and 1970s, the street was lit up with colored lights during Christmas and New Year's, with Santa Clauses up and down the avenue offering candies to passers-by.

This was Lebanon's cosmopolitan pre-war era — and Hamra Street was its elegant heart, Beirut's Champs Elysees. Arab, European and American tourists flocked to its swanky shops, restaurants and bars.

Hamra had the capital's finest movie houses. At its Piccadilly Theater, Lebanon's most beloved singer

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Fayrouz performed. You might see the international diva Dalida strolling down the avenue before one of her shows at the Piccadilly. World stars held concerts in Lebanon, including Louis Armstrong and Paul Anka.

Located in the capital's western neighborhood of Ras Beirut, Hamra was -- and still is -- a place where Christians and Muslims live side by side. Its cafes were hangouts for artists, intellectuals and political activists, caught up in the leftist, secular Arab nationalist spirit of the times.

"Hamra Street is an international avenue," says Mohamad Rayes, who has worked on the street since the early '70s and owns three clothes and lingerie shops in the area.

He spoke sitting in a café that, in the 1970s, was called the Horse Shoe. He pointed to a corner where two of the greatest Arab singers of the time, Abdel-Halim Hafez and Farid el-Atrash, had a regular seat, along with Nizar Qabbani, an iconic romantic poet from Syria.

"It was dizzying, quite honestly, the number of people on Hamra. It was a vibrant, transient piece of life in the city," said David Livingston, an American who lived for decades in Lebanon, speaking from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. A student in Beirut in the 1970s, he remembered how intimidated he was coming into ritzy Hamra Street to buy a leather belt from one of its shops.

The civil war ended that golden era. In 1982, invading Israeli troops marched through Hamra. After they left, militias seized the area in fighting that wreaked heavy damage. Hamra's Commodore Hotel became a popular base for foreign journalists covering the war.

After the war, the center of Beirut's international commerce and shopping moved to a newly renovated downtown. But Hamra Street saw a major facelift in the early 2000s when new water, sewage and electricity systems were installed, and the asphalt was replaced with cobblestones.

That fueled a revival the past 15 years. International chains like Starbucks and Nike opened stores. New restaurants flourished. Syrians fleeing their country's civil war opened restaurants of their own, along with sweets shops and popular shawarma stands.

The new wave pushed aside many of the Hamra area's pre-war icons. Its famed cafe Modca was replaced by a bank. A McDonald's stands in place of Faisal Restaurant, where Arab leftists once huddled over cigarettes, glasses of arak liquor and dishes of appetizers. The Piccadilly Theater was abandoned and recently was damaged by a fire.

But the street attracted a new generation of young people of all sects, bringing the progressive spirit of 2011's frustrated Arab Spring. Once again, the street rang with bars. One club, Metro Medina, drew young crowds with retro live shows of old Arabic music from the past century.

Hamra remains a busy thoroughfare during the day. Thousands come for treatment at its medical centers or to study at the nearby American University of Beirut, one of the Middle East's top educational institutions.

But "Hamra is not the Hamra of the past," said Elie Rbeiz.

The 70-year-old Rbeiz has been a hairdresser for the elite in Hamra since 1962. He counted among his regular clients the late Saudi businessman Adnan Khashoggi, who once flew Rbeiz to London on a private jet for a cut. Rbeiz expanded his business 20 years ago to include men's clothes.

Now in the economic crisis, his sales have plunged.

Still, Rbeiz believes Hamra will bounce back. He said his shop was blown up during the civil war and he renovated and reopened. "I did not surrender then and will not surrender now. Never."

Not everyone is so certain.

"I feel the pain every day because there is more suffering and more poverty," said Naim Saleh.

Saleh is a Hamra Street fixture, selling newspapers, magazines and books at his sidewalk kiosk for the past 52 years.

Now his business is ruined. Foreign magazines are a luxury few can afford. He sells a book or two a month, compared to 50 a day in the past. Saleh watched a young beggar chasing Iraqi tourists nearby. "Look how many beggars there are in the streets. It's like a curse."

Eid opened his music store in Hamra in 1958. He'll close it when he stops working, he said. His two sons live abroad; if they don't want his 4,500 records, many of which are collectors' items, he'll donate them to the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music.

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Will Hamra Street flourish again? "Never, never. Impossible," he said. The Gulf tourists who once fueled its commerce won't come back, they'll turn to Europe.

But he won't leave.

"Hamra Street is the oxygen that I breathe," he said. "I grew up on Hamra Street and will end my life here."

Macron, not candidate but already campaigning for reelection

By SYLVIE CORBET The Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — He has a full campaign team that's fanning out around France, meeting with voters. He makes speeches about his plans for the country in the upcoming years. The problem? Emmanuel Macron hasn't officially declared that he's a candidate for April's presidential election yet.

Critics say he's unfairly using his taxpayer-funded presidential pulpit to campaign for a second term while dragging out his widely expected announcement as long as possible.

Less than two months before April 10's first round, Macron's intention is no mystery. He said last month that he has "the desire" to run for a second term, but he wanted to wait for the COVID-19 situation to improve before making a decision. The deadline to formally declare candidacy is March 4.

Far-right presidential contender Eric Zemmour accused Macron of trying to use the pandemic argument to make French voters forget about what he considers France's decline.

"Is Emmanuel Macron using the health crisis to start campaigning? The answer is yes," Marine Le Pen, the other far-right candidate, charged. Like the U.S. and most European countries, France recently started easing most virus restrictions as the spread of the virus is slowing down.

Macron also explained he wanted to focus on the Ukraine-Russia crisis first. On the flight between Moscow and Kyiv last week, he told reporters that he will "think about" declaring his candidacy later. "Everything comes in due time," he said.

Yet his recent trips across French regions tend to increasingly look like campaign events.

A visit this month to northern France, during which he announced an additional 100 million euros to boost the economy in a former mining area, was followed by dozens of journalists from national and international media, eager to see whether he would adopt a campaigning tone.

A meeting with local officials included a key political rival from The Republicans party, Xavier Bertrand, who is actively campaigning with conservative candidate Valérie Pécresse.

So close to the election, "that visit is a candidate's visit, with lies and untruths. The hypocrisy must stop. An electoral trip cannot be paid for by the Republic," Bertrand said after listening to Macron's plans for the region.

The head of The Republicans' party, Christian Jacob, denounced "misuse of public money" and said he reported the issue to the National Commission on Elections Financing.

France has strict rules about financing a presidential campaign. The amount of money a presidential contender is allowed to spend for the first round is 16.8 million euros (\$19.1 million), with an additional 5.6 million euros (\$6.4 million) for those who qualify for the run-off. After the election, the French state reimburses candidates who won at least 5% of the votes half of their campaign costs.

In 2012, conservative former President Nicolas Sarkozy announced his bid for a second term — which he lost to Socialist Francois Hollande — just over two months before the election. The National Commission on Election Financing later ruled that some expenses he incurred months before to organize a rally in southern France were to be included in campaign counts, even though he had not formalized his candidacy at that time.

Sarkozy was last year sentenced to a year of house arrest for illegal campaign financing. He appealed the ruling.

Macron's party has already launched a so-called "campaign of the presidential majority" that is being deployed across the country via posters and leaflets promoting a website called "With You." The website doesn't mention Macron's name but invites internet users to subscribe to a newsletter to follow "campaign

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news.”

The Constitutional Council recently announced that Macron was the first to receive the 500 signatures from elected officials that are required under French law to allow someone to run in the presidential election. The rule is meant to limit the number of candidates.

Since Jan. 1, French television and radio broadcasters are also required by law to provide “fair” exposure to all candidates and would-be candidates — based on their estimated weight in the campaign. The rule includes Macron himself, yet its implementation is complex because all comments considered part of the political debate are to be counted but those attributed to the role of president are not.

The difference can sometimes seem subtle. On Thursday, Macron went to the eastern town of Belfort to announce the construction of six new nuclear reactors. It is up to the president to decide France’s energy strategy.

In his speech, he also harshly criticized “those who say we don’t need nuclear (energy),” in a reference to the Greens and far-left candidates’ campaign platforms.

“Can you imagine France in 30 years time with 40,000 windmills instead of 8,000 now?,” he asked. “That’s what supporters of phasing out nuclear power are proposing today to the French. It’s not serious.”

Rivals also said Macron, a pro-European, is using France’s six-month presidency of the European Union as a springboard toward reelection.

German leader travels to Russia, Ukraine as tensions grow

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is flying to Ukraine and Russia this week in an effort to help defuse escalating tensions as Western intelligence officials warn that a Russian invasion of Ukraine is increasingly imminent and Germany has called on its citizens to leave Ukraine as quickly as possible.

Ahead of his first visits as chancellor to Kyiv on Monday and Moscow on Tuesday for meetings with the Ukrainian and Russian presidents, Scholz has renewed his warning to Russia, as well as his advocacy of continuing diplomacy in multiple formats.

“It is our job to ensure that we prevent a war in Europe, in that we send a clear message to Russia that any military aggression would have consequences that would be very high for Russia and its prospects, and that we are united with our allies,” Scholz told the German parliament’s upper house on Friday.

“But at the same time that also includes using all opportunities for talks and further development,” Scholz said.

Russia has concentrated more than 100,000 troops near Ukraine’s border and launched a series of military maneuvers in the region, but says it has no plans to invade the nation.

Moscow wants guarantees from the West that NATO won’t allow Ukraine and other former Soviet countries to join as members, and for the alliance to halt weapon deployments to Ukraine and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe. The U.S. and NATO flatly reject these demands.

Scholz has repeatedly said that Moscow would pay a “high price” in the event of an attack, but his government’s refusal to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine or to spell out which sanctions it would support against Russia have drawn criticism abroad and at home and raised questions about Berlin’s resolve in standing up to Russia.

Germany’s reluctant position is partly rooted in its history of aggression during the 20th century when the country’s own militarization in Europe during two world wars led many postwar German leaders to view any military response as a very last resort.

Despite this historic burden, experts say it is of utmost importance now that Scholz stresses Germany is in sync with its European and American allies, especially when he meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“Scholz has to convey a very clear message in Moscow, and it can really only be: There is unity and oneness in the Western alliance. There is no possibility of driving a wedge into the Western alliance, and that must be understood in Moscow. I think that’s the most important message he has to convey there,”

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said Markus Ziener, an expert with the German Marshall Fund.

"At the same time, he has to make it clear that the costs are high," Ziener added. "That's basically the message that is most likely to catch on in Moscow as well. So a military invasion of Ukraine has significant consequences for Russia."

Scholz has not explicitly said what kind of consequences or sanctions Russia would have to face if it invades Ukraine, but it is clear that the future of the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline that seeks to bring Russian natural gas to Germany under the Baltic Sea, bypassing Ukraine, is at stake.

U.S. President Joe Biden threatened last week that the pipeline would be blocked in the case of an invasion.

That would hurt Russia economically but also cause supply problems for Germany. Construction of the pipeline has been completed, but it is not yet operating.

"Germany doesn't have much leverage, except for saying that it won't approve Nord Stream 2, which is the only political leverage," Claudia Kemfert, the head of department of energy, transport and environment at the German Institute for Economic Research, said.

"Otherwise, Germany is very susceptible to blackmail. We can't do too much. We have committed ourselves to getting the gas supplies, unlike other European countries we have not diversified our gas supplies and we have dragged our feet on the energy transition. So we did a lot of things wrong, and now we are paying the price," Kemfert added.

It is not surprising, then, that Scholz has stressed the need to keep some ambiguity about sanctions to press Russia to deescalate and has so far avoided mentioning Nord Stream 2 specifically.

"The hesitancy of Olaf Scholz obviously leads to the fact that one does not really know what the Germans actually want," Ziener said. "With regard to Nord Stream 2, I think there should have been a clear statement that if it comes to a military intervention, then Nord Stream 2 is off the table."

Asked on Friday whether Scholz will be taking any new initiative to Kyiv and Moscow or the positions that are already on the table, his spokesman, Steffen Hebestreit, replied that he will stick with "the positions that we have already set out."

Scholz can only hope that in his talks with Putin he can dissuade him from taking military action with a face-saving solution, says Ziener.

"He can actually only hope that at the end of this whole round of negotiations there will be a success, that the war is prevented. Then Scholz will be praised for his negotiating skills," Ziener added. "If not, the question will be asked: What was actually the line of the German government?"

Swiss voters consider public aid plan for newspapers, media

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — It's a widespread lament: Traditional newspapers, especially small local ones, and other media outlets have seen subscriptions dry up as international internet behemoths have swooped in on the market for advertisements that long helped daily, weekly and monthly publications survive.

In Switzerland, the government has laid out plans to help. Swiss voters get final say Sunday in what polls have suggested is becoming an increasingly tight contest.

Voters were casting ballots on the government's plan, passed in June, to inject more than 150 million francs (about \$163 million) into broadcast and print media every year, including — in a first — support early-morning newspaper delivery and online media to the tune of 70 million francs (nearly \$76 million) annually.

Opponents of the plan pulled together enough signatures in a petition drive to put the issue before the public, part of Switzerland's particular form of democracy that gives voters in the country of 8.5 million a direct say in policymaking several times a year.

Foes of the plan say the cash injection would waste taxpayer money, benefit big newspaper chains and the media moguls who run them and hurt journalistic independence -- by making media outlets more

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dependent on state handouts and thus less likely to criticize public officials. They also say it's discriminatory: Free newspapers, for example, wouldn't benefit.

"A media subsidized by the state is a media under control. As the adage goes: 'Don't bit the hand that feeds you,'" wrote the opponents who pressed for the referendum. They say big print-media groups together took in more than 300 million in profits in 2020, even during the COVID-19 crisis.

Many other countries in Europe and beyond offer support to newspapers such as through postal fee discounts, tax breaks and other measures.

Supporters of the cash injection counter that journalism, especially in local areas that have been ill-served by big media groups, should be considered a public service, as are many public radio and television broadcasters in Switzerland, around Europe.

"Media groups are fighting to survive. Ad revenues for print press haven't stopped declining or are getting swallowed up by giants like Facebook and Google, and subscriptions aren't enough," wrote the Swiss Green party, which supports the measure.

The new money would mostly go toward subsidies or tax breaks on distribution of print media, training for journalists, and support for news agencies in Switzerland. Some of the funds would go publications by associations or non-governmental groups like Swiss-based WWF or the country's best-known automobile association.

Proponents insist that newspapers in Switzerland need help, saying more than 70 have disappeared since 2003. Advertising revenue in all print publications plunged 42% between 2016-2020 in Switzerland.

Some 30 million francs would go to online publications to help make sure readers can get local news through the internet.

The media subsidy measure is one of four issues on ballots nationwide on Sunday. Another considers a government plan to eliminate some legacy fees on corporations — and essentially granting them a tax break. Yet another aims to limit advertising for tobacco products in areas frequented by children.

A fourth issue would ban use of animals and people in tests, with some exceptions — passage of which could have major implications for both imports of some products and research in Switzerland's much-vaunted pharmaceutical industry.

Dry winter drains reservoirs, ruins crops in Spain, Portugal

By EMILIO MORENATTI Associated Press

ACEREDO, Spain (AP) — Roofs peeking out of the water have become a common sight every summer at the Lindoso reservoir in northwestern Spain. In especially dry years, parts would appear of the old village of Aceredo, submerged three decades ago when a hydropower dam flooded the valley.

But never before has the skeleton of the village emerged in its entirety in the middle of the usually wet winter season.

With almost no rain for two months and not much expected any time soon, the ruins of Aceredo are dredging up a mix of emotions for locals as they see the rusted carcass of a car, a stone fountain with water still spouting and the old road leading to what used to be the local bar.

"The whole place used to be all vineyards, orange trees. It was all green. It was beautiful," said 72-year-old José Luis Penín, who used to stop at the bar with pals at the end of a day's fishing.

"Look at it now," said Penín, who lives in the same county, pointing at the cracked, yellow bed of the reservoir. "It's so sad."

While the arid zones of the Iberian Peninsula have historically experienced periods of drought, experts say climate change has exacerbated the problem. This year, amid record levels of low or no rainfall at all, farmers in both Portugal and Spain, who are growing produce for all of Europe, are worried that their crops for this season will be ruined.

In the last three months of 2021, Spain recorded just 35% of the average rainfall it had seen during the same period from 1981 to 2010. But there has been almost no rain since then.

According to the national weather agency AEMET, in this century, only in 2005 has there been a Janu-

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ary with almost no rain. If clouds don't unleash in the next two weeks, emergency subsidies for farmers will be needed, authorities said.

But Rubén del Campo, a spokesman for the weather service, said the below-average rainfall over the last six months is likely to continue for several more weeks, with hopes that spring will bring much-needed relief.

While only 10% of Spain has officially been declared under a "prolonged drought," there are large areas, particularly in the south, which are facing extreme shortages that could impact the irrigation of crops.

The valley around the Guadalquivir River in Spain's southwest was declared under prolonged drought in November. It is now the focus of a fierce environmental dispute over water rights near Doñana National Park, a World Heritage wetland site. The government of the Andalusia region wants to grant water rights to farmers on land near the park, but critics say the move will further endanger a major wildlife refuge that is already drying up.

"The past two, three years have been dry, with the tendency toward less and less rain," said Andrés Góngora, a 46-year-old tomato farmer in southern Almería.

Góngora, who expects the water he uses from a desalinating plant to be rationed, is still better off than other farmers who specialize in wheat and grains for livestock feed.

"The cereal crops for this year have been lost," Góngora said.

Other areas in central and northeast Spain are also feeling the burn.

The leading association of farmers and livestock breeders in Spain, COAG, warns that half of Spain's farms are threatened by drought this year. It says if it does not rain heavily in the coming month, rain-fed crops including cereals, olives, nuts and vineyards could lose 60% to 80% of their production.

But the association is also worried about crops that depend on irrigation, with reservoirs under 40% of capacity in most of the south.

Spain's left-wing government plans to dedicate over 570 million euros (\$647 million) from the European Union's pandemic recovery fund to make its irrigation systems more efficient, including incorporating renewable energy systems.

Spanish Agriculture Minister Luis Planas said this week the government will take emergency measures if it doesn't rain in two weeks. Those would likely be limited to economic benefits to palliate the loss of crops and revenues for farmers.

Neighboring Portugal has also seen little rain since last October. By the end of January, 45% of the country was enduring "severe" or "extreme" drought conditions, according to the national weather agency IPMA.

Rainfall from Oct. 1 through January was less than half the annual average for that four-month period, alarming farmers who are short of grass for their livestock.

Unusually, even the north of Portugal is dry and forest fires have broken out there this winter. In the south, crickets are already singing at night and mosquitoes have appeared — traditional signs of summer.

The IPMA doesn't forecast any relief before the end of the month.

Portugal has witnessed an increase in the frequency of droughts over the past 20-30 years, according to IPMA climatologist Vanda Pires, with lower rainfall and higher temperatures.

"It's part of the context of climate change," Pires told The Associated Press.

And the outlook is bleak: Scientists estimate that Portugal will see a drop in average annual rainfall of 20% to 40% by the end of the century.

US, Japan, South Korea meet in Hawaii to discuss North Korea

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met his Japanese and South Korean counterparts Saturday in Hawaii to discuss the threat posed by nuclear-armed North Korea after Pyongyang began the year with a series of missile tests.

Blinken said at a news conference after the meeting that North Korea was "in a phase of provocation" and the three countries condemned the recent missile launches.

"We are absolutely united in our approach, in our determination," Blinken said after his talks with Japa-

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nese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong.

He said the countries were "very closely consulting" on further steps they may take in response to North Korea, but didn't offer specifics.

The three released a joint statement calling on North Korea to engage in dialogue and cease its "unlawful activities." They said they had no hostile intent toward North Korea and were open to meeting Pyongyang without preconditions.

Hayashi later told Japanese reporters the three ministers had "very fruitful" discussion on the North. He declined to give details on additional measures they may take.

North Korea has a long history of using provocations such as missile or nuclear tests to seek international concessions. The latest tests come as the North's economy, already battered by decades of mismanagement and crippling U.S.-led sanctions, is hit hard by pandemic border closures.

Many see the tests as an attempt to pressure President Joe Biden's administration into easing the sanctions. The Biden administration has shown no willingness to do so without meaningful cuts to the North's nuclear program, but it has offered open-ended talks.

North Korea has rebuffed U.S. offers to resume diplomacy, saying it won't return to talks unless Washington drops what it says are hostile policies. The North bristles at both the sanctions and regular military exercises the U.S. holds with South Korea.

The tests also have a technical component, allowing North Korea to hone its weapons arsenal. One of the missiles recently tested — the Hwasong-12 intermediate-range ballistic missile — is capable of reaching the U.S. territory of Guam. It was the longest-distance weapon the North has tested since 2017.

North Korea appears to be pausing its tests during the Winter Olympics in China, its most important ally and economic lifeline. But analysts believe North Korea will dramatically increase its weapons testing after the Olympics.

The recent tests have rattled Pyongyang's neighbors in South Korea and Japan. South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who helped set up the historic talks between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and former President Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019, said last month that the tests were a violation UN Security Council resolutions and urged the North to cease "actions that create tensions and pressure."

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

China and Russia, citing the North's economic difficulties, have called for lifting sanctions like those banning seafood exports and prohibitions on its citizens working overseas and sending home their earnings.

Blinken arrived in Hawaii from Fiji, where he met with Acting Prime Minister Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum and other Pacific leaders to talk about regional issues, especially the existential risk posed by climate change. It was the first visit by a U.S. secretary of state to Fiji since 1985.

He started his Pacific tour in Australia, where he met his counterparts from Australia, India and Japan. The four nations form the "Quad," a bloc of Indo-Pacific democracies that was created to counter China's regional influence.

Hayashi and Chung held a separate bilateral meeting Saturday for about 40 minutes before seeing Blinken. Japan's Foreign Ministry said they reaffirmed the importance of cooperating together and with the United States to respond to North Korea and to achieve regional stability.

The ministry said they also "frankly" exchanged views on ongoing disputes between the two countries, including wartime Korean laborers and sexual abuse of Korean women forced into sexual servitude by Japan's imperial army.

Chung proposed the two countries accelerate diplomacy to find solutions to the disagreements, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Blinken also met separately with Chung. He met Hayashi earlier this week in Australia.

Blockades on Canada-US border continue as protests swell

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By ROB GILLIES and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER Associated Press
WINDSOR, Ontario (AP) — Protesters opposed to COVID-19 vaccine mandates and other restrictions withdrew their vehicles from a key U.S.-Canadian border bridge Saturday though access remained blocked while other demonstrations ramped up in cities across Canada, including the capital, where police said they were awaiting more officers before ending what they described as an illegal occupation.

The tense standoff at the Ambassador Bridge linking Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, eased somewhat early in the day when Canadian police persuaded demonstrators to move the trucks they had used to barricade the entrance to the busy international crossing.

But protesters reconvened nearby — with reinforcements — and were still choking off access from the Canadian side late Saturday, snarling traffic and commerce for a sixth day. About 180 remained late Saturday in the sub-freezing cold.

In Ottawa, the ranks of protesters swelled to what police said was 4,000 demonstrators. The city has seen that on past weekends, and loud music played as people milled about downtown where anti-vaccine demonstrators have been encamped since late January.

Early Saturday evening, crews lined concrete traffic barricades between behind a line of police officers that stretched across the main highway leading to the foot of the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor. Officers later withdrew behind the barricades which separated them from protesters. Barricades also were placed along some side streets. Police vehicles had been parked at those streets, preventing motor vehicles from entering the highway.

The protests at the bridge, in Ottawa and elsewhere have reverberated outside the country, with similarly inspired convoys in France, New Zealand and the Netherlands, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security warned that truck convoys may be in the works in the United States.

An ex-Cabinet minister in Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government took the unusual step of calling out her former federal colleagues as well as the province and city for not putting an end to the protests.

"Amazingly, this isn't just Ottawa. It's the nation's capital," Catherine McKenna tweeted. "But no one — not the city, the province or the federal government can seem to get their act together to end this illegal occupation. It's appalling. ... Just get your act together. Now."

Trudeau has so far rejected calls to use the military.

"The Prime Minister stressed that border crossings cannot, and will not, remain closed, and that all options are on the table," Trudeau's office said in a statement late Saturday after he met with senior officials.

Trudeau has called the protesters a "fringe" of Canadian society, and both federal and provincial leaders say they can't order police what to do.

"Safety concerns — arising from aggressive, illegal behavior by many demonstrators — limited police enforcement capabilities," Ottawa police said in a statement late Saturday.

Ottawa police said a joint command center had now been set up together with the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Police earlier issued a statement calling the protest an unlawful occupation and saying they were waiting for police "reinforcements" before implementing a plan to end the demonstrations.

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson declared a state of emergency last week for the capital, where hundreds of trucks remained in front of the Parliament Buildings and demonstrators have set up portable toilets outside the prime minister's office where Trudeau's motorcade usually parks.

Surrounded by dozens of officers in Windsor, a man with "Mandate Freedom" and "Trump 2024" spray-painted on his vehicle left the bridge entrance early in the day as others began dismantling a small, tarp-covered encampment. A trucker honked his horn as he, too, drove off, to cheers and chants of "Freedom!"

But hundreds more arrived to bolster the crowd and settled into a faceoff with police about two blocks away, waving flags and yelling. While there were no visible physical confrontations, the crowd still controlled the road to the bridge, and traffic had not resumed as of the evening.

Windsor police tweeted that no one had been arrested but urged people to stay away from the bridge:

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"We appreciate the cooperation of the demonstrators at this time and we will continue to focus on resolving the demonstration peacefully. Avoid area!"

Protester Daniel Koss said shortly before police advanced that the demonstration had succeeded in bringing attention to demands to lift COVID-19 mandates and he was happy it remained peaceful.

"It's a win-win," Koss said. "The pandemic is rolling down right now, they can remove the mandates, all the mandates, and everyone's happy. The government does the right thing, and the protesters are all happy."

The previous day, a judge ordered an end to the blockade of mostly pickup trucks and cars, and Ontario Premier Doug Ford declared a state of emergency allowing for fines of 100,000 Canadian dollars and up to one year in jail for anyone illegally blocking roads, bridges, walkways and other critical infrastructure.

"The illegal blockades are impacting trade, supply chains & manufacturing. They're hurting Canadian families, workers & businesses. Glad to see the Windsor Police & its policing partners commenced enforcement at and near the Ambassador Bridge," Federal Innovation Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne tweeted Saturday. "These blockades must stop."

The Ambassador Bridge is the busiest U.S.-Canadian border crossing, carrying 25% of all trade between the two countries, and auto plants on both sides have been forced to shut down or reduce production this week. The standoff came at a time when the industry is already struggling to maintain production in the face of pandemic-induced shortages of computer chips and other supply-chain disruptions.

In Ottawa, 31-year-old Stephanie Ravensbergen said she turned out to support her aunt and uncle who have parked their semi in the streets since the beginning of the protest. She opposes vaccine and mask requirements, and said it's important for schoolchildren to be able to see their friends' faces and emotions.

"We want the right to choose," Ravensbergen said. "We want the right to be able to do what everybody else can do."

Protesters on Saturday tore down a fence that authorities put up around the capital's National War Memorial two weeks ago after demonstrators urinated on it. Some later chanted "liberte," French for "freedom."

"Completely unacceptable," Lawrence MacAulay, Canada's veterans affairs minister, tweeted. "This behavior is disappointing and I'm calling on protesters to respect our monuments."

On the other side of the country, protesters disrupted operations at another border crossing between Surrey, British Columbia, and Blaine, Washington, but officials said it was not blocked. Two border crossings, in Alberta and in Manitoba, remained shut down as well.

While the protesters are decrying vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 restrictions, many of Canada's public health measures, such as mask rules and vaccine passports for getting into restaurants and theaters, are already falling away as the omicron surge levels off.

Pandemic restrictions have been far stricter there than in the U.S., but Canadians have largely supported them. The vast majority of Canadians are vaccinated, and the COVID-19 death rate is one-third that of the United States.

Inspired by the Canadian demonstrations, protests against pandemic restrictions were seen in parts of Europe on Saturday.

At least 500 vehicles in several convoys attempted to enter Paris at key arteries but were intercepted by police. Over 200 motorists were ticketed, and elsewhere at least two people were detained amid a seizure of knives, hammers and other objects in a central square.

Police fired tear gas against a handful of people who demonstrated on the Champs Elysees Avenue in defiance of a police order. An Associated Press photographer was hit in the head with a gas canister as police struggled to control the crowd.

In the Netherlands, meanwhile, dozens of trucks and other vehicles ranging from tractors to a car towing a camper arrived in The Hague, blocking an entrance to the historic parliamentary complex. Protesters on foot joined them, carrying a banner emblazoned with "Love & freedom, no dictatorship" in Dutch.

Earlier this week in New Zealand, protesters rolled up to Parliament grounds in a convoy of cars and trucks and set up camp. Police have taken a hands-off approach after initial attempts to remove them resulted in physical confrontations.

Parliament Speaker Trevor Mallard on Friday ordered his staff to turn on the lawn's sprinklers to douse

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them and to play Barry Manilow tunes and the 1990s hit "Macarena" over loudspeakers to annoy them. Protesters responded by playing their own songs, including Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It."

For Asian American women, Olympics reveal a harsh duality

By SALLY HO Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Across two pandemic Olympics set in Asian countries, Asian American women fronting the Games have encountered a whiplashing duality — prized on the global stage for their medal-winning talent, buffeted by the escalating crisis of racist abuse at home.

The world's most elite and international sporting event, which pits athletes and countries against each other, underscores along the way the crude reality that many Asian women face: of only being seen when they have something to offer.

"It's like Asian American women can't win," says Jeff Yang, an author and cultural critic. "Asian American female athletes, like most Asian American women in many other spaces, are seen as worthy when they can deliver ... and then disposed of otherwise."

The issue is playing out at the Beijing Winter Games, the third straight Olympics set in Asia and the second held during the unrelenting global coronavirus crisis — and playing out, too, during a rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans.

Here, U.S. snowboarder Chloe Kim and China's freestyle skier Eileen Gu are the latest additions to the list of American women of Asian descent who have been "It Girls" of the Winter Games, joining icons like American figure skaters Kristi Yamaguchi and Michelle Kwan.

When Kim and Gu earned their gold medals in Beijing, it was the perfect bow on professional narratives that have been covered incessantly leading up to the actual event. Their star power and talent made them two of the de facto spokeswomen for the Olympics.

Meanwhile, other Asian American women like figure skaters Karen Chen and Alysa Liu of the U.S. team and Zhu Yi of the China team have also been promoted by their national teams and scrutinized — sometimes harshly — by Olympic fans.

Commentators have mocked Yi for falling in the team event, as if she deserved the mistake after giving up her U.S. citizenship to compete for her ancestral homeland. Others are angry that she "stole" the Olympic spot from an actual China-born athlete.

Even the winners struggle to feel fully embraced in America.

Kim, who won the halfpipe at the Beijing and Pyeongchang Olympics, has revealed she was tormented online daily. She says she was consumed by fear that her parents could be killed whenever she heard news about another brutal assault on an Asian person.

There have been more than 10,000 reported anti-Asian incidents — from taunts to outright assaults — between March 2020 and September 2021, according to Stop AAPI Hate, a national coalition that gathers data on racially motivated attacks related to the pandemic.

"The experience of hate is withering, and it takes a huge mental health toll," says Cynthia Choi, the coalition's co-founder. "When we think about the Olympics, it's really incredibly powerful to have taken place in Asia three times in a row. That context is very significant, and to have Asian Americans and Asians representing the United States in these games is more than symbolic."

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across the country have endured racist verbal, physical and sometimes deadly attacks for two years now, fueled by the pandemic.

Some perpetrators have based their hate on the fact that the virus was first detected in Wuhan, China. Adding to the mix: former President Donald Trump, who regularly talked about COVID-19 in racial terms.

Gu, the daredevil freestyle skier who placed first in the big air competition, said she'd never been as scared as when a man directed a tirade about the coronavirus' Chinese origins against her and her immigrant grandmother at a San Francisco pharmacy.

The San Francisco native, fashion model and social media figure has also been criticized with anti-China rhetoric for switching from the U.S. team to the China team. Conservative Fox News personalities Tucker

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Carlson and Will Cain even dedicated a segment to berating Gu, saying she was “ungrateful” and is “betraying her country.”

Those racially charged denunciations have been called out on social media for being hypocritical. Phil Yu, who runs the popular Angry Asian Man blog, tweeted succinctly: “Oh sure, it’s always ‘go back to your country’ but not ‘go back to your country and win a gold medal.’”

The dichotomy of the Asian American woman’s existence is not limited to Winter Olympians, though. In October, Hmong American gymnast Sunisa Lee said she was pepper sprayed by someone shouting racist slurs while driving by in a car. At the time, she was standing outside with a group of Asian American friends in Los Angeles while filming the “Dancing with the Stars” TV show.

Lesser-profile Olympians from the Tokyo Games like golfer Danielle Kang and karateka Sukura Kokumai spoke about their experiences with anti-Asian hate last summer.

Kang said she’s fought racism all her life and urged for a broader social studies curriculum that could better capture today’s multicultural America.

“I’ve been told to go back to China. I don’t know why they think China is the only Asian country,” said the Korean American athlete. “I also have heard, ‘Do you eat dogs for dinner?’ It’s nothing new to me. However, the violence was very upsetting. But the violence also has been around. I’ve gotten into fist fights. I’ve grown up like this.”

Kokumai, who is Japanese American, was angry to discover that the same man who had harassed her in April with racist slurs also assaulted an elderly Asian American couple.

Equally painful: colleagues’ silence when the incident was reported. She said Japan’s coach called her about it before members of her U.S. team did.

“It was really hurtful that it took so long for my side of the federation to address it,” Kokumai said last summer.

In July, when Lee became the surprise breakout star of the Tokyo Olympics by winning gold in the all-around event and bronze on uneven bars, Sung Yeon Choimorrow, executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum, said she felt conflicted about seeing Lee on a pedestal given the way Hmong have been marginalized.

“I’m really wrestling with this idea that we’re all ‘American’ only when it comes to us being excellent and winning medals for the country,” Choimorrow said. “Asian American women are hyper-visible in ways that dehumanize us and completely invisible in the ways that humanize us.”

Democratic Senate debates merits of passion vs. pragmatism

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With elections in view and Democrats’ headline domestic bill in a rut, Sens. Bernie Sanders and Chuck Schumer have very different takes on how things are going in their chamber.

“I know we’re spending the week dealing with assistant secretaries of something or other, and that’s terribly important,” Sanders, the progressive firebrand and Vermont independent, said dryly on Wednesday. The Senate confirmed 15 nominees last week for the Federal Maritime Commission, judgeships and other posts.

“It has been a busy, productive and truly bipartisan week here,” Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said the next morning. The New York Democrat cited a sexual harassment bill lawmakers approved minutes later and progress on addressing violence against women, the budget and industrial competitiveness.

The conflicting appraisals of how the party is using its time come as Democrats have run headlong into the limits of running a 50-50 Senate with no votes to spare. It underlines a debate over how to balance passion with pragmatism as Democrats court voters before the November elections, when Republicans have a real chance of capturing House and Senate control.

For some Democrats, it’s time to draw contrasts with Republicans by forcing votes on priorities like helping families afford health care and combating global warming. Others see wisdom in declaring what victories they can and avoiding anything that might complicate efforts to strike deals with their own party’s

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mavericks over broader priorities.

Democrats have just 49 votes for at least the next few weeks while Sen. Ben Ray Luján recuperates from a stroke. Yet even with the New Mexico Democrat, goals such as voting rights, immigration and other issues have faced solid Republican resistance and fallen short of the 60 Senate votes needed to approve most legislation.

For many Democrats, the big prize would be resuscitating a smaller version of President Joe Biden's lead domestic priority: a 10-year, roughly \$2 trillion package of health care, family services and environment initiatives. Moderate Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., effectively killed the measure in December when he said it was too costly, but has said he's open to a more modest alternative.

Democrats have differing assessments of how they've used Senate control so far.

"It's no great secret that for five months, with the exception of the infrastructure bill, we have not been addressing the needs of the American people," Sanders told reporters last week. Biden signed the bipartisan, \$1 trillion package of road, water and other projects in November.

Sanders and Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., said they want the Senate to vote on curbing pharmaceutical prices, one of the sidelined bill's popular elements. Sanders said he would like votes on several of that measure's components, and let Republican opponents explain their votes to constituents.

Americans are "outraged" that with rising inflation, the pandemic, climate change and other problems, "their elected officials are simply not responding," Sanders said on the Senate floor.

Democrats "spent Biden's period of maximum political capital basically just waiting around" for an agreement that never came on the social and environment bill, lamented Adam Jentleson, a progressive strategist and former top Senate aide. Presidents often have the most momentum in the first year or two after taking office.

Underscoring progressives' impatience, the environmental group Evergreen Action launched a 30-second digital ad last week saying Biden, Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., "must deliver" now on Democrats' promises to control global warming. The spot is running in two markets: Washington, D.C., and Brooklyn, New York, Schumer's home.

Moderate Democrats want accomplishments to promote, too.

"It's frankly not important to me what we call it," Democratic Rep. Abigail Spanberger, facing a competitive reelection in central Virginia, said of the measure her party calls "Build Back Better." "It's important to get something done."

Manchin is a defender of his state's coal industry yet has expressed openness to including tax credits and other steps to tackle climate change in a revived package that might include prescription drug price restrictions and other items.

Yet he's said he wants lawmakers to move first on this year's budget and revamping how Congress counts electoral votes in presidential elections. He's also scoffed at the belief that "spending trillions more of taxpayers' money will cure our problems, let alone inflation," signaling negotiations won't be easy.

Any deal with Manchin, if achievable, is expected to take at least until spring. Many Democrats feel there would be nothing gained from quick votes now or other public pressure that could roil him or another party maverick, Arizona Sen. Kyrsten Sinema.

Minutes after Manchin's December rejection of the bill, which had passed the House, White House press secretary Jen Psaki accused him of "a breach of his commitments" to Biden about supporting the effort. Schumer promised a vote on the measure "very early" in 2022 so constituents would know every senator's position.

That's not happened, and Schumer has shown no signs of allowing showdown votes now on the bill's components, either. "We're continuing to have discussions and we will be moving forward" on the legislation, he said this month.

Schumer said that while differences with Republicans "are real," Democrats cannot "ignore the genuine chances for progress" when bipartisanship is possible.

Instead of continuing to openly criticize Manchin, the White House has emphasized how the legislation

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would help voters. Signs promoting it at recent Biden events said, "Lowering costs for families," a tacit nod to soaring inflation, which has helped tank his popularity in polling.

For now, Democrats hope for a compromise bill. It could pass with just 50 votes, under special procedural protections that would let them prevail with Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote.

"I can't help but think that we're not so helpless and incompetent as to be unable to take advantage of" that opportunity, said Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I.

Kodak Black reportedly among 4 shot outside Super Bowl party

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Four people were shot and wounded early Saturday after a fight broke out outside a Los Angeles restaurant hosting a party that followed a Justin Bieber concert, police said.

The gunfire erupted outside The Nice Guy restaurant, striking and injuring four men ages 60, 22, 20 and 19, LAPD Officer Lizeth Lomeli said. Their names were not released, but NBC News reported rapper Kodak Black was among the wounded.

Officers who responded to the scene found two victims. Paramedics took them to the hospital for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries, police said in an updated statement Saturday afternoon.

Two additional victims went to hospitals on their own, according to the statement. All four victims were listed in stable condition.

Detectives asked witnesses to come forward to help them identify the gunman.

Videos posted on TMZ.com and on social media show Black posing for photos with a group of people outside the restaurant when the brawl broke out. Black is among several people involved in the brawl when shots rang out, sending everyone at the scene running for cover.

Law enforcement sources told NBC News that Black, whose legal name is Bill Kapri, was among the people shot and injured. A message to his publicist at Atlantic Records has not been returned.

The party followed Bieber's private concert at the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood, California as part of a Super Bowl-week party dubbed "Homecoming Weekend." The guests at the star-studded event included Jeff Bezos, his girlfriend TV host Lauren Sánchez, "Hamilton" actor Anthony Ramos and NFL Hall-of-Famer Tony Gonzalez.

The Hollywood Reporter reports that Bieber and his wife Hailey Baldwin, Drake, Khloe Kardashian and Tobey Maguire were also among the celebrities seen entering the afterparty.

Biden warns Putin of 'severe costs' of Ukraine invasion

By JIM HEINTZ and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden told Russia's Vladimir Putin that invading Ukraine would cause "widespread human suffering" and that the West was committed to diplomacy to end the crisis but "equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House said Saturday. It offered no suggestion that the hourlong call diminished the threat of an imminent war in Europe.

Biden also said the United States and its allies would respond "decisively and impose swift and severe costs" if the Kremlin attacked its neighbor, according to the White House.

The two presidents spoke a day after Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, warned that U.S. intelligence shows a Russian invasion could begin within days and before the Winter Olympics in Beijing end on Feb. 20.

Russia denies it intends to invade but has massed well over 100,000 troops near the Ukrainian border and has sent troops to exercises in neighboring Belarus, encircling Ukraine on three sides. U.S. officials say Russia's buildup of firepower has reached the point where it could invade on short notice.

The conversation came at a critical moment for what has become the biggest security crisis between Russia and the West since the Cold War. U.S. officials believe they have mere days to prevent an invasion and enormous bloodshed in Ukraine. And while the U.S. and its NATO allies have no plans to send troops to Ukraine to fight Russia, an invasion and resulting punishing sanctions could reverberate far beyond the former Soviet republic, affecting energy supplies, global markets and the power balance in Europe.

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"President Biden was clear with President Putin that while the United States remains prepared to engage in diplomacy, in full coordination with our Allies and partners, we are equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House statement said.

The call was "professional and substantive" but produced "no fundamental change in the dynamic that has been unfolding now for several weeks," according to a senior administration official who briefed reporters following the call on condition of anonymity.

The official added that it remains unclear whether Putin has made a final decision to move forward with military action.

Yuri Ushakov, Putin's top foreign policy aide, said that while tensions have been escalating for months, in recent days "the situation has simply been brought to the point of absurdity."

He said Biden mentioned the possible sanctions that could be imposed on Russia, but "this issue was not the focus during a fairly long conversation with the Russian leader."

Before talking to Biden, Putin had a telephone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, who met with him in Moscow earlier in the week to try to resolve the crisis. A Kremlin summary of the call suggested that little progress was made toward cooling down the tensions.

Putin complained in the call that the United States and NATO have not responded satisfactorily to Russian demands that Ukraine be prohibited from joining the military alliance and that NATO pull back forces from Eastern Europe.

In a sign that American officials are getting ready for a worst-case scenario, the United States announced plans to evacuate most of its staff from the embassy in the Ukrainian capital. Britain joined other European nations in urging its citizens to leave Ukraine.

Canada has shuttered its embassy in Kyiv and relocated its diplomatic staff to a temporary office in Lviv, located in the western part of the country, Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said Saturday. Lviv is home to a Ukrainian military base that has served as the main hub for Canada's 200-soldier training mission in the former Soviet country.

The timing of any possible Russian military action remained a key question.

The U.S. picked up intelligence that Russia is looking at Wednesday as a target date, according to a U.S. official familiar with the findings. The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly and did so only on condition of anonymity, would not say how definitive the intelligence was.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he told his Russian counterpart Saturday that "further Russian aggression would be met with a resolute, massive and united trans-Atlantic response."

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy tried to project calm as he observed military exercises Saturday near Crimea, the peninsula that Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014.

"We are not afraid, we're without panic, all is under control," he said.

Ukrainian armed forces chief commander Lt. Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhny and Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov issued a more defiant joint statement.

"We are ready to meet the enemy, and not with flowers, but with Stingers, Javelins and NLAWs" — anti-tank and -aircraft weapons, they said. "Welcome to hell!"

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu, also held telephone discussions on Saturday.

Further U.S.-Russia tensions arose on Saturday when the Defense Ministry summoned the U.S. Embassy's military attache after it said the navy detected an American submarine in Russian waters near the Kuril Islands in the Pacific. The submarine declined orders to leave, but departed after the navy used unspecified "appropriate means," the ministry said.

Adding to the sense of crisis, the Pentagon ordered an additional 3,000 U.S. troops to Poland to reassure allies.

The U.S. has urged all American citizens in Ukraine to leave the country immediately, and Sullivan said those who remain should not expect the U.S. military to rescue them in the event that air and rail transportation is severed after a Russian invasion.

The Biden administration has been warning for weeks that Russia could invade Ukraine soon, but U.S.

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officials had previously said the Kremlin would likely wait until after the Winter Games ended so as not to antagonize China.

Sullivan told reporters on Friday that U.S. intelligence shows that Russia could take invade during the Olympics. He said military action could start with missile and air attacks, followed by a ground offensive.

"Russia has all the forces it needs to conduct a major military action," Sullivan said, adding that "Russia could choose, in very short order, to commence a major military action against Ukraine." He said the scale of such an invasion could range from a limited incursion to a strike on Kyiv, the capital.

Russia scoffed at the U.S. talk of urgency.

"The hysteria of the White House is more indicative than ever," said Maria Zakharova, a Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman. "The Anglo-Saxons need a war. At any cost. Provocations, misinformation and threats are a favorite method of solving their own problems."

Zakharova said her country had "optimized" staffing at its own embassy in Kyiv in response to concerns about possible military actions from the Ukrainian side.

In addition to the more than 100,000 ground troops that U.S. officials say Russia has assembled along Ukraine's eastern and southern borders, the Russians have deployed missile, air, naval and special operations forces, as well as supplies to sustain a war. This week, Russia moved six amphibious assault ships into the Black Sea, augmenting its capability to land marines on the coast.

Biden has bolstered the U.S. military presence in Europe as reassurance to allies on NATO's eastern flank. The 3,000 additional soldiers ordered to Poland come on top of 1,700 who are on their way there. The U.S. Army also is shifting 1,000 soldiers from Germany to Romania, which like Poland shares a border with Ukraine.

Russia is demanding that the West keep former Soviet countries out of NATO. It also wants NATO to refrain from deploying weapons near its border and to roll back alliance forces from Eastern Europe — demands flatly rejected by the West.

Russia and Ukraine have been locked in a bitter conflict since 2014, when Ukraine's Kremlin-friendly leader was driven from office by a popular uprising. Moscow responded by annexing the Crimean Peninsula and then backing a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine, where fighting has killed over 14,000 people.

A 2015 peace deal brokered by France and Germany helped halt large-scale battles, but regular skirmishes have continued, and efforts to reach a political settlement have stalled.

Hugo Torres, Nicaragua ex-rebel leader Ortega jailed, dies

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A former Sandinista guerrilla leader who once led a raid that helped free then rebel and now President Daniel Ortega from prison has died, his family announced Saturday, eight months after Ortega's government arrested him and dozens of other Nicaraguan opposition leaders.

Hugo Torres died at age 73, relatives said.

Torres was the first of a large group of opposition leaders rounded up in a 2021 crackdown to die. It was unclear if his death was hastened by conditions in prison. He died at a hospital in Managua, the capital, "of illnesses he had," according to a statement by government prosecutors.

Torres was a leading commander of the 1970s Sandinista revolution who broke with Ortega more than 20 years ago to found the Sandinista Renovation Movement.

Torres was one of 46 opposition figures and presidential hopefuls jailed by Ortega in May and June, to clear the way for his almost unopposed re-election on Nov. 7.

Three of Torres' children issued a statement announcing their father's death. They did not give a cause, and said that, in accordance with their father's wishes there would no public funeral or ceremony.

The prosecutors office said that when it learned Torres was seriously ill, the office "asked judicial authorities to suspend the start of his oral public trial for humanitarian reasons."

The trials in fact are not public and are held in prison, in many cases with only the defendant's lawyer allowed to be present. Some trials last only a few hours.

Prosecutors had justified Torres' arrest by charging him, along with most of the other imprisoned op-

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position leaders, with "conspiracy to undermine national integrity."

On June 13 last year, Torres predicted his own arrest in an interview with The Associated Press after seeing drones flying around his home. "This interview may be the last one I give," Torres said. "I am here, waiting for them to come for me."

"It's not just potential candidates any more, it's political leaders," Torres said of those being arrested. "This is not a transition to dictatorship; it is a dictatorship in every way."

Torres was a guerrilla commander who fought alongside Ortega during Nicaragua's civil war and later a general with the Nicaraguan army. He was part of the effort to transform the Sandinista Popular Army created after the rebels' 1979 victory into a professional Nicaraguan Army in the 1990s.

His death may prove to be a major embarrassment to Ortega; Torres got Ortega sprung from jail in 1974 by raiding the home of a close ally of then-dictator Anastasio Somoza. Ortega had been jailed for a botched bank robbery in Managua, the capital, years before.

In a video he posted hours before his arrest in June, Torres said "46 years ago I risked my life to get Daniel Ortega and other political-prisoner colleagues out of prison."

"I am 73, and I never thought that at this stage of my life I was going to be fighting against another dictatorship, now more brutal, more unscrupulous, more irrational and more autocratic than the Somoza dictatorship," Torres said.

After leading a revolutionary government following the guerrilla's victory, Ortega served as president from 1985 to 1990 and was reelected to power in 2007.

He has not relinquished power since then, and his rule has become increasingly harsh, crushing any demonstration or opposition with police and soldiers. International organizations have called the November 2021 elections a farce.

Ortega's Sandinista Front and its allies control Nicaragua's congress and all government institutions.

A string of recent trials of opposition figures has been carried out in the infamous Chipote prison. The defendants have only been permitted to have their lawyers present. All the trials so far have resulted in convictions and sentences of 13 to 15 years.

Relatives of jailed opposition activists have said prisoners have been subjected to isolation, constant interrogations and insufficient food, affecting their health.

The families complained they were not allowed to bring the prisoners blankets and said some were kept in cells with lights on 24 hours a day, while others were kept in darkness. They said most of the cells were small, with concrete bed slabs covered by worn-out mattresses.

Thousands have fled into exile since Nicaraguan security forces violently put down antigovernment protests in 2018. Ortega says the protests were actually an attempted coup with foreign backing, and many of those on trial have been accused of working with foreign powers for his overthrow or encouraging foreign nations to apply sanctions on members of his family and government.

Afghans protest US move to unfreeze \$3.5B for 9/11 victims

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Demonstrators in Afghanistan's capital on Saturday condemned President Joe Biden's order freeing up \$3.5 billion in Afghan assets held in the U.S. for families of America's 9/11 victims — saying the money belongs to Afghans.

Protesters who gathered outside Kabul's grand Eid Gah mosque asked America for financial compensation for the tens of thousands of Afghans killed during the last 20 years of war in Afghanistan.

Biden's order, signed Friday, allocates another \$3.5 billion in Afghan assets for humanitarian aid to a trust fund to be managed by the U.N. to provide aid to Afghans. The country's economy is teetering on the brink of collapse after international money stopped coming into Afghanistan with the arrival in mid-August of the Taliban.

Afghanistan's Central Bank called on Biden to reverse his order and release the funds to it, saying in a statement Saturday that they belonged to the people of Afghanistan and not a government, party or group.

Torek Farhadi, a financial adviser to Afghanistan's former U.S.-backed government, questioned the U.N.

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managing Afghan Central Bank reserves. He said those funds are not meant for humanitarian aid but "to back up the country's currency, help in monetary policy and manage the country's balance of payment."

He also questioned the legality of Biden's order.

"These reserves belong to the people of Afghanistan, not the Taliban ... Biden's decision is one-sided and does not match with international law," said Farhadi. "No other country on Earth makes such confiscation decisions about another country's reserves."

White House officials said there is no simple way to make all the frozen assets available quickly to the Afghan people.

Sept. 11 victims and their families have legal claims against the Taliban and the \$7 billion in the U.S. banking system. Courts would have to sign off before the release of humanitarian assistance money and decide whether to tap the frozen funds for paying out those claims.

In all, Afghanistan has about \$9 billion in assets overseas, including the \$7 billion in the United States. The rest is mostly in Germany, the United Arab Emirates and Switzerland.

"What about our Afghan people who gave many sacrifices and thousands of losses of lives?" asked the demonstration's organizer, Abdul Rahman, a civil society activist.

Rahman said he planned to organize more demonstrations across the capital to protest Biden's order. "This money belongs to the people of Afghanistan, not to the United States. This is the right of Afghans," he said.

Misspelled placards in English accused the United States of being cruel and of stealing the money of Afghans.

Taliban political spokesman Mohammad Naeem accused the Biden administration in a tweet late Friday of showing "the lowest level of humanity ... of a country and a nation."

Biden's Friday order generated a social media storm with Twitter saying #USA_stole_money_from_afghan was trending among Afghans. Tweets repeatedly pointed out that the 9/11 hijackers were Saudi nationals, not Afghans.

Obaidullah Baheer, a lecturer at the American University in Afghanistan and a social activist, tweeted: "Let's remind the world that #AfghansDidntCommit911 and that #BidenStealingAfgMoney!"

Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was brought to Afghanistan by Afghan warlords after being expelled from Sudan in 1996. Those same warlords would later ally with the U.S.-led coalition to oust the Taliban in 2001. However, it was Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar who refused to hand over bin Laden to the U.S. after the devastating 9/11 attacks that killed thousands.

Still, some analysts took to Twitter to question Biden's order.

Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the U.S.-based Wilson Center, called Biden's order to divert \$3.5 billion away from Afghanistan "heartless."

"It's great that \$3.5B in new humanitarian aid for Afghanistan has been freed up. But to take another \$3.5B that belongs to the Afghan people, and divert it elsewhere--that is misguided and quite frankly heartless," he tweeted.

Kugelman also said the opposition to Biden's order crossed Afghanistan's wide political divide.

"I can't remember the last time so many people of such vastly different worldviews were so united over a US policy decision on Afghanistan," he tweeted.

Keep it clean and the Lombardi Trophy could be yours

By BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Stay clean. Avoid the critical mistakes.

That's a mantra both the Cincinnati Bengals and Los Angeles Rams should have adopted as they head to Sunday's Super Bowl.

Limit the turnovers and costly penalties. Don't waste timeouts, particularly in the second half. Get physical rather than fancy. Being efficient can trump being spectacular.

All they need to do is look back to the last time the Los Angeles area hosted a Super Bowl nearly three decades ago. That game at the Rose Bowl became an almost laughable rout as the Buffalo Bills kept sur-

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rendering the ball to the Dallas Cowboys.

"Just going to go out there and impose our will and play physical and let the chips fall where they may," Bengals cornerback Eli Apple said.

Echoed Rams All-Pro cornerback Jalen Ramsey: "Do our thing and do it the best we can. That's winning football."

Sure, the Super Bowl is America's biggest sporting event; some would argue it is America's biggest event of any kind. It's splashy, it's overhyped, with a weeklong publicity machine by the league, the teams, the host city, the network televising it.

In the end, it's a football game. And most football games are won by the team that minimizes miscues.

The Rams are 4-point favorites, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, but they might not even be in this Super Bowl in their new \$5 billion SoFi Stadium had 49ers safety Jaquiski Tartt not dropped an easy interception late in the NFC title game. Bringing in veteran Matthew Stafford at a hefty price in draft picks — along with a younger quarterback, Jared Goff, who was part of the LA team that lost in the 2019 Super Bowl, when he struggled mightily — has paid off richly for the Rams. Stafford's 49,995 yards passing and 323 TD passes are the most for a QB making his first Super Bowl appearance. Stafford needs 209 yards passing to become the sixth player to reach 6,000 in a single season.

But he also puts the ball up for grabs at times. That needs to be limited on Sunday.

"We went out and got him because we thought it was a chance to be able to get a great player of his magnitude," Rams coach Sean McVay said of Stafford, who spent a dozen seasons playing well without winning in Detroit. "What he's done, he's elevated everybody around him. He's made me a better coach. He's made his teammates better."

So has the guy on the other side, Joe Burrow. Like Stafford, Burrow was the top overall draft pick. His rookie season was curtailed after 10 games by a knee injury, but his second year has been so terrific he won NFL Comeback Player of the Year. His most recent production has been magnificent. And nearly spotless.

Burrow has gone from No. 1 overall pick to starting quarterback in the Super Bowl faster than anyone else. He has 15 touchdown passes and just two interceptions in his last seven games, while averaging 331.1 yards passing per game.

Rarely has Burrow gambled in the last two months, and look how that has paid off.

Of course, this matchup is about a lot more than when and where the quarterbacks throw the ball. It's about Cincinnati's offensive line — which allowed Burrow to be the most-sacked passer in the league, 51 times, nine more in a playoff victory at Tennessee — bowing up against a generational talent such as Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald, and other top pass rushers Von Miller and Leonard Floyd.

"This is a special group of talented guys on this defense," said Miller, who won the 2015 NFL championship in Denver, when he was Super Bowl MVP. "I'm talking about one of the best groups I've ever been fortunate enough to be a part of. We work together as a team, and it just gets better each week."

It's about Ramsey being a shutdown cover guy against Offensive Rookie of the Year Ja'Marr Chase, and the rest of the Los Angeles secondary handling Chase's compatriots, Tee Higgins and Tyler Boyd. And about the same on the other side, with Apple and fellow defensive backs trying to slow down Offensive Player of the Year Cooper Kupp, Odell Beckham Jr. and Van Jefferson.

It's about the kicking games, which have been very solid in the postseason, continuing to perform on the sport's biggest stage.

Same for the coaches: McVay, who is accustomed to the glaring spotlight after taking the Rams to the playoffs in four of his five seasons, and Taylor, his former assistant, in his first postseason as a head man. McVay did not perform well, nor did his team, in that Super Bowl three years ago, looking uncomfortable against Tom Brady and the Patriots.

As difficult as it may be — and it is very difficult — it's about treating the Super Bowl in the cliched phrasing players use: just another game. There's plenty of truth to that.

"You got a job to go out there and execute and try to lead your team," Stafford said. "The game begins, and it's football. That's what we're here for."

Paris police fire tear gas to disperse banned virus protest

By THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Paris police fired tear gas Saturday against a handful of demonstrators on the Champs-Elysees Avenue who defied a police order by taking part in a vehicle protest against virus restrictions inspired by Canada's horn-honking truckers.

In the Netherlands, dozens of trucks and other vehicles — ranging from tractors to a car towing a camping van — arrived in The Hague for a similar virus-related protest Saturday, blocking an entrance to the historic Dutch parliamentary complex.

But a threatened blockade of Paris failed to materialize Saturday, despite days of online organizing efforts.

Police set up checkpoints into the French capital on key roads and said they successfully stopped at least 500 vehicles from heading to the banned protest, but a few dozen vehicles were able to slip in and disrupt traffic on the boutique-lined Champs-Elysees. Authorities fired tear gas as they demanded that the demonstrators disperse, some of whom climbed onto their vehicles in the middle of the road to create chaos.

An Associated Press photographer was hit in the head with a tear gas canister as police struggled to control the crowd. Police at the scene were growing increasingly tense, and fired the tear gas after several photographers took photos of officers kicking and subduing a protester.

Police detained 54 people and handed out 300 tickets to motorists involved in the protest. Police also seized knives, hammers and other objects in a central Parisian square.

Protesters railing against the vaccination pass that France requires to enter restaurants and many other venues have converged in recent days toward Paris from the north, south, east and west, waving and honking at onlookers as they drove by. Some convoys sought to avoid police detection by traveling on local roads instead of the major highways leading into the capital.

Waving French flags and shouting "Freedom!," the protesters were galvanized in part by truckers who have blockaded the center of Ottawa, Canada's capital, and blocked border crossings to the U.S.

Most of the French convoys appeared small, and it is unclear how many people participated. The protest came as months of demonstrations against French government vaccination rules have been waning and as the government is relaxing virus restrictions. Nearly all French adults are vaccinated against COVID-19 and the protests have represented a small minority.

In the Dutch protest, protesters on foot joined the truckers, carrying a banner emblazoned with the Dutch words "Love & freedom, no dictatorship." Police urged the protesters to move to a nearby park and warned the public about traffic problems.

Online chat groups, meanwhile, are encouraging French and Dutch protesters to join an attempted blockade convoy on Monday in Brussels, capital of Belgium and the 27-nation European Union.

Belgian federal police were urging people to avoid Brussels on Monday, including commuters, and said all vehicles coming to demonstrate will be escorted to a giant parking lot north of town where a protest will be authorized.

S Carolina push to be 49th state with hate crime law stalls

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — It took South Carolina lawmakers only two months to act when a female college student was kidnapped and killed by a man posing as an Uber driver. The Legislature acted swiftly to prevent such crimes in the future.

By comparison, state Rep. Wendell Gilliard says, more than six years have passed since the racist murders of nine African Americans at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, and the Legislature has yet to take action to add punishment to victims of crimes motivated by bias against a particular group. That makes South Carolina one of only two states — the other being Wyoming — without a hate crimes law.

"It was wrong what happened to that young woman," Gilliard said of the college student. "Nobody should ever meet their demise in such a way. But when you look at the Mother Emanuel Nine, we have this bill

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that has been waiting patiently now for six years.”

The “Clementa C. Pinckney Hate Crimes Act” is named for the pastor who died in the attack. Pinckney was also a state senator. The bill would add up to five years in prison for someone convicted of murder, assault or other violent crime fueled by hatred of the victim’s race, sexual orientation, gender, religion or disability.

The bill currently sits in the Senate. The clock is ticking. If senators don’t approve the proposal by the end of their session in May, everything goes back to square one.

“We have great senators over there,” Gilliard said. “But now we need them to stand up. Show a little backbone.”

Efforts to pass a hate crimes law in Wyoming, where the killing of gay college student Matthew Shepard led to the federal hate crimes law, have repeatedly failed including in 2021. There is no indication the issue will come up in the session that starts Monday.

Arkansas passed a hate crime law in 2021, although some advocates for the laws argue it is too weak to be considered under the category. Georgia passed its own law in 2020 — four months after the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man, after three white men chased him around a neighborhood before cornering him with a shotgun.

Democratic state Sen. Marlon Kimpson of Charleston, singling out eight of the 29 Republicans who have kept the bill from coming up for debate, asked them to “dig deep in your heart to let us have this debate.” The Charleston Democrat noted Thursday the Senate had just spent time debating a bill on whether to make it illegal to allow trucks to be altered so the front is several inches higher than the rear.

“If we can spend 30 minutes debating electric dump trucks, we can spend some time debating arguably one of the most dangerous crimes that occur,” said Kimpson, whose district includes Emanuel AME.

Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey has said the hate crimes bill isn’t a priority for Republicans who make up all but 16 of the current 45 senators. Massey said the federal hate crimes law was adequate in prosecuting the shooter at the Charleston church, who is currently on federal death row.

“The way this bill is drafted, it doesn’t do anything to protect anybody. It doesn’t make anybody’s life better,” said Massey, a Republican from Edgefield.

Other conservatives have said they worry a hate crime bill could be used to prosecute Christians who speak out against gay marriage or other LGBTQ issues.

Proponents of the proposed state law have some influential backers. Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott said last year he wished there was a hate crime statute in place to give harsher punishment to men who exchanged text messages that said “Let’s go get some Mexicans tonight” as they planned 17 robberies over three weeks targeting Hispanics — something not likely to reach the level of a federal prosecutor.

The state Chamber of Commerce has said it fears large companies might not want to locate or expand in a state that didn’t show it valued all people.

“We have to demonstrate to the world that hate will not be tolerated here,” Tim Arnold, chairman of the state Chamber’s Board of Directors, told reporters last year.

In Sumter, a 17-year-old was arrested last month after police said he altered a changeable traffic message sign to say “honk if you hate,” ending with a racist slur against Black people. The teenager is charged with aggravated breach of the peace. But Sumter Mayor David Merchant and Sumter County Council Chairman James McCain Jr. contend the charges don’t go far enough. because the crime was an attack on every African American and equality-seeking person in the area.

“Those who commit hateful acts and are motivated by certain biases seek to terrorize not just an individual but an entire community,” they wrote in a letter to their local state Sen. Thomas McElveen.

The bill as originally written would have allowed additional punishment for the harassment. But the House removed vandalism and harassment from the proposal before passing it last year.

Judge in Russian Olympic doping worked on Sharapova case

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

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BEIJING (AP) — One of the lawyers that will judge Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva's doping case at the Beijing Olympics on Sunday is an American who was once picked by Maria Sharapova's legal team for her appeal over a similar performance-enhancing drug.

Jeffrey Benz was named Saturday by the Court of Arbitration for Sport to sit on the three-judge panel for the urgent case of Valieva, a 15-year-old Russian who tested positive for a banned heart medication at an event in December.

The verdict from Benz and his fellow judges, who are from Italy and Slovenia, is expected Monday and will decide if the sport's new star can compete a day later at the start of the women's individual event. She would be favored to win gold on Thursday.

The panel for the closed-door, video-link hearing was picked by the court, known as CAS, from a select group of nine judges made available for special duty at the Beijing Olympics.

Neither side in the Valieva case was allowed to pick a preferred judge — as they would in a typical case outside the Olympics — but the Russians might be happy with the American.

Benz was an elite figure skater, competing in ice dance at the national level in the United States, and has been picked for several cases involving Russian sports as one of the most in-demand judges at CAS.

In Sharapova's appeal at the Switzerland-based court in 2016, Benz was chosen on behalf of the Russian tennis star to serve on the three-judge panel. She had been banned for two years after testing positive for the banned heart medication meldonium at the Australian Open. CAS ruled she was not entirely at fault and her ban was cut to 15 months.

Valieva tested positive for another banned heart medication, trimetazidine.

Another skating case at CAS in 2017 saw Benz picked by the Russian national federation and RUSADA, the anti-doping agency which is a party in the Valieva hearing on Sunday.

That time, Benz and his fellow judges extended the ban for Russian short track speedskater Alexandra Malkova. She served a 20-month ban instead of three months.

The Valieva case is also not the first involving Russian athletes and Benz as a judge for Olympic eligibility.

A group of 67 track and field athletes took a fast-track case to CAS in July 2016 amid fallout from the Russian doping scandal and frenetic legal activity ahead of the Rio de Janeiro Olympics. The judges upheld the rules of track's governing body, which excluded the Russians.

On Sunday, the CAS judges will examine an appeal — filed by the IOC, World Anti-Doping Agency and International Skating Union — to have Valieva excluded from the women's competition. They argue RUSADA's ruling on Wednesday to lift an interim ban on Valieva was wrong.

The unusual case has caused havoc at the Olympics. The skater's positive test came from a sample taken six weeks earlier and was flagged by a laboratory in Sweden only on Monday — after she skated and helped the Russian team win gold in the team event. The United States took silver.

Benz once worked as a lawyer for the United States Olympic Committee, but the case he will hear Sunday has no impact on the team event, where the Americans would stand to be elevated to gold if the Russians are disqualified. RUSADA will separately investigate the original doping case against Valieva because it happened at the Russian national championships.

In an effort to dispel any notion that Benz may be conflicted as a judge in the case, CAS noted Saturday that "any party which has objective reasons to challenge the composition of the panel may file a petition against any member of this panel."

No challenge had been filed late Saturday against Benz or his fellow judges, panel chair Fabio Iudica and Vesna Bergant Rakočević.

Queries on doping, harassment, ineptitude at Olympics

By JAKE SEINER AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — The biggest questions at the Beijing Olympics on Saturday hardly centered on who would win the six gold medals up for grabs.

Not with the fate of 15-year-old figure skater Kamila Valieva still undecided. Will the Russian be allowed

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to compete after testing positive for a ban substance? Can the ROC really keep the gold she helped win in the team event?

Grave inquiries emerged in the mountains, too, when a former U.S. Olympian alleged harassment by her former coach and teammate — both of whom are at the Beijing Games.

Even the oh-so-friendly Canadians have stepped into controversy, a tiff between countrymen stemming from a blown ruling by Olympic judges.

The story of the Beijing Games has been the stunning revelation and ensuing legal battle regarding Valieva, who tested positive for a banned heart medication on Dec. 25. The doping case came to light shortly after Valieva helped the ROC win team gold.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport confirmed it will hear appeals Sunday from the International Olympic Committee and the World Anti-Doping Agency challenging Valieva's status as a medalist and her right to compete in the upcoming women's program.

Valieva is still preparing as if she'll perform, but broke down in tears Saturday after an emotional practice session. Valieva fell trying a triple axel — a jump she typically executes without a problem — while doing a run-through of her short program. She later landed two combos, a triple flip-triple toe loop and a triple lutz-triple toe loop before skating to the boards and giving her coach, Eteri Tutberidze, an emotional hug.

SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS

U.S. Ski & Snowboard is investigating charges that longtime Olympic coach Peter Foley took naked pictures of female athletes and that Olympic snowboard racer Hagen Kearney used racist language to provoke a teammate.

Former snowboardcross rider Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, a member of the 2010 Olympic team, wrote in an Instagram post that in addition to taking the photos, Foley had made inappropriate comments, and that Kearney repeatedly used the N-word to "intentionally get under my skin."

Chythlook-Sifsof is from Alaska and describes herself as Yupik and Inupiaq.

Both Foley and Kearney were in China this week for the Beijing Games.

In a text to The Associated Press, Foley said he was surprised by the allegations and denied them.

TRUE NORTH SQUABBLE

Slopestyle gold medalist Max Parrot said fellow Canadian snowboarder Mark McMorris apologized Saturday for saying Parrot only won because of questionable Olympic judging.

Parrot acknowledged to The Associated Press that he failed to fully execute a grab on the first jump of the slopestyle course Monday and said he was lucky the judges didn't see it. He maintains he still had the best run of the day and earned his first Olympic gold.

McMorris finished third but told CBC on Friday he deserved to beat Parrot and Chinese silver medalist Su Yiming.

Parrot said there were no hard feelings over McMorris' comments.

"He actually came to me earlier today and he apologized for his non-sportsmanship," Parrot said. "I told him no worries."

THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT

A young and inexperienced U.S. hockey team went toe to toe with Canada in a bruising matchup between the longtime rivals and grinded out a 4-2 victory to remain unbeaten in two games at the Olympics.

"We didn't back down from their physical play," said captain Andy Miele, who led the U.S. with a goal and an assist. "I love the way our team responded."

Thanks to Miele's response goal 70 seconds after Canada scored and 35 saves by Strauss Mann, the U.S. is in the driver's seat to earn a spot in the quarterfinals. Beating Germany on Sunday would put the Americans first in the group and could make them the top seed in the knockout round.

OLDIES BUT GOODIES

Lindsey Jacobellis won her second gold medal of the Olympics as she teamed with 40-year-old Nick Baumgartner for the title in the new event of mixed snowboardcross.

At 40 years, 57 days, Baumgartner, a concrete worker-contractor from Michigan, becomes the oldest

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snowboarder to win an Olympic medal. At 36 years, 177 days, Jacobellis, the author of a children's book, is the second-oldest.

"You're never too late to take what you want from life," Baumgartner said.

HOME GOLD

Gao Tingyu thrilled the host country by becoming the first Chinese man to claim an Olympic gold medal in speedskating, winning the 500 meters. Gao added to the bronze medal he took in the 500 at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games.

The silver went to Cha Min Kyu of South Korea, whose time of 34.39 gave him a matching medal to the silver he won four years ago in Pyeongchang. Wataru Morishige of Japan took the bronze in 34.49.

DANCING OUT AHEAD

Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron broke their own world record in the rhythm dance at the Beijing Olympics, scoring 90.83 points to begin the ice dance event. That gave the four-time world champs from France a cushion over Russian rivals Victoria Sinitsina and Nikita Katsalapov heading into the free dance.

Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue were in third, and their American teammates Madison Chock and Evan Bates were in fourth place. The medals will be decided with the free dance Monday morning in Beijing.

Many faith leaders wary of religious exemptions for vaccine

By DAVID CRARY and PETER SMITH Associated Press

By the thousands, Americans have been seeking religious exemptions in order to circumvent COVID-19 vaccine mandates, but generally they are doing so without the encouragement of major denominations and prominent religious leaders.

From the Vatican, Pope Francis has defended the vaccines as "the most reasonable solution to the pandemic." The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America declared categorically that its followers would not be offered religious exemptions. Robert Jeffress, the conservative pastor of a Baptist megachurch in Dallas, voiced similar sentiments.

"Since there is no credible biblical argument against vaccines, we have refused to offer exemptions to the handful of people who have requested them," Jeffress told The Associated Press via email. "People may have strong medical or political objections to government-mandated vaccines, but just because those objections are strongly felt does not elevate them to a religious belief that should be accommodated."

Rabbi Sholom Lipskar of The Shul of Bal Harbour, an Orthodox synagogue in Surfside, Florida, says he tells congregation members that vaccination should be a matter of free choice.

"But I always recommend that they get a medical opinion from a competent professional," he added. "In a serious matter, they should get two concurring medical opinions."

Within the U.S. Catholic Church, there are divisions – even though Pope Francis has been clear in his support for vaccinations. While some bishops have forbidden their priests from assisting in seeking exemptions, other bishops and priests have provided template letters for people claiming conscientious objections from the vaccines on Catholic grounds.

"We have had many requests and have helped quite a number process their letter/request," the Rev. Bob Stec of St. Ambrose Catholic Parish in Brunswick, Ohio, said via email.

"Vaccination is not a universal obligation and a person must obey the judgment of his or her own informed and certain God-given conscience," says one of the letters provided by Stec. "If a Catholic comes to an informed and sure judgment in conscience that he or she should not receive a vaccine, then the Catholic Church acknowledges that the person ... has the right to refuse the vaccine."

It's different in New Jersey's Archdiocese of Newark, which has advised its priests not to support religious exemptions for their parishioners.

"I have been asked about six times and have declined," said the Rev. Alexander Santora, pastor of Our Lady of Grace & St. Joseph Parish in Hoboken.

Candice Buchbinder, a spokesperson for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said the denomination is currently studying the question of religious exemptions. She noted that previous ELCA documents

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opposed broad religious exemptions and viewed medicine as “a gift of God for the good of the community.”

Even before the pandemic, the Episcopal Church’s Executive Council made clear its stance – adopting a resolution in June 2019 calling for stronger government vaccination mandates.

“The Executive Council recognizes no claim of theological or religious exemption from vaccination for our members,” the resolution said.

However, someone from a denomination that encourages vaccines can still seek an exemption based on individual conscience, said Bruce Ledewitz, a law professor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

Ledewitz said he would advise a client wanting a religious exemption to say simply, “I have prayed about this, and I have come to the conclusion that God does not want me to take this vaccine.”

Employers have adopted widely varying approaches to such arguments – some granting many exemptions while others, including the U.S. military services, have granted very few.

While reasons for seeking religious exemptions vary, many Christians have cited the COVID-19 vaccines’ remote connection to past abortions. Laboratory-grown cell lines descended from fetuses that were aborted decades ago were used to test the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and to grow viruses used to manufacture the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. None of those vaccines contain fetal cells.

The Vatican has stated that receiving these COVID-19 vaccines is morally acceptable. While it opposes abortion-related research, it said any vaccine recipient is not culpable for involvement in it, given how remote they are from the abortions involved.

While the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has echoed the Vatican teaching, several bishops have assisted people seeking religious exemptions. So has the National Catholic Bioethics Center, a think tank with prominent bishops on its board.

The center’s template letter says individual Catholics may interpret church teachings to conclude that it’s wrong for them to accept any medical product with a connection to abortion.

The Rev. Tad Pacholczyk, ethicist and director of education at the center, noted that the Vatican specifies that vaccines “must be voluntary.”

The church “strongly encourages the safeguarding of conscience rights” he said in a statement, criticizing a “one size fits all” approach to employer mandates.

“Such decisions properly belong in the hands of the individual patient, who can assess his or her on-the-ground situation more meaningfully than any federal agency, politician or employer,” he said. “Conscience exemptions to vaccine mandates need to be liberally available not only to Catholics but to all individuals.”

The claiming of religious exemptions frustrates some who suspect there are non-religious motivations.

“There is no distinctively Catholic objection to receiving any of the COVID-19 vaccines available,” said Michael Deem, assistant professor of bioethics and human genetics at the University of Pittsburgh.

He said the Vatican has provided detailed moral guidance on the vaccines’ acceptability — considering such things as the lack of alternative vaccines and the benefits of corralling a deadly pandemic.

The relatively low vaccination rate among white evangelicals frustrates Curtis Chang, a theologian whose Redeeming Babel organization launched a Christians and the Vaccine project with evangelical and health-care groups, promoting the COVID-19 vaccines on biblical principles.

Seeking religious exemptions for many “is a hijacking of religion to justify political or cultural stances, and that’s very dangerous,” Chang said. “There is no genuine religious reason for seeking an exemption, especially from employer mandates.”

He knows of pastors who favor vaccines but are pressured by congregants to give them letters justifying their vaccine refusal on religious grounds. “I’m encouraging pastors not to give in to that.”

The move for such exemptions is “a danger ultimately to the long-term cause of religious liberty,” he said, because employers and courts may discount the sincerity of employees when they face genuine situations where their faith needs to be accommodated.

GOP pushes US schools to post all class materials online

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and CASEY SMITH Associated Press

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COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Republican state lawmakers across the U.S. are trying to require schools to post all course materials online so parents can review them, part of a broader national push by the GOP for a sweeping parents bill of rights ahead of the midterm congressional elections.

At least one proposal would give parents with no expertise power over curriculum choices. Parents also could file complaints about certain lessons and in some cases sue school districts.

Teachers say parents already have easy access to what their children learn. They worry that the mandates would create an unnecessary burden and potentially threaten their professional independence — all while dragging them into a culture war.

The bill “insinuates there’s some hiding happening,” said Katie Peters, a high school English teacher in Toledo. “It makes me a little defensive, because I’m like — no, wait a minute, we’re not hiding anything. The transparency is always there, and the parents who have cared to look have always had access.”

The bills arose from last year’s debate over the teaching of race, diversity and sexuality. The GOP insists the changes are needed to give parents a measure of control over what their children see and hear in class.

“I don’t think anybody disagrees that more information is better for parents,” said Brett Hillyer, a Republican state representative in Ohio who is co-sponsoring such a bill. He said the proposal could quell disagreements between parents, teachers and school boards before they get too far.

Educators don’t take issue with keeping parents informed, but they see a risk that the so-called curriculum-transparency requirements will invite censorship, professional burnout and resignations.

Other states considering some version of the idea include Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, North Carolina and West Virginia.

The Ohio bill would affect public, private and charter schools, as well as colleges and universities that participate in the state’s dual-enrollment program for seventh through 12th graders.

A panel of three Ohio teachers recently sat down with The Associated Press to discuss the proposal. They said they already post syllabuses, textbook information, course materials and sometimes notes for parents and students — at least at the middle- and high-school levels.

None of them could recall ever denying a parent’s request for additional information.

Juliet Tissot, a mother of two from the Cincinnati suburb of Madeira, said elementary classrooms are a different story. The nonprofit worker and volunteer said schools stopped sending home textbooks years ago and often fail to provide curriculum details when asked. That leaves parents groping for information when helping kids with homework.

“Children are with their parents a lot more than they’re with their teachers, and it’s bad that parents don’t know what’s going on — and they don’t anymore,” she said. “I’m surprised this didn’t happen sooner, but it seems like it’s finally coming to a head.”

Tissot also supports policing teachers’ behavior more closely, including requiring them to wear body cameras.

The Ohio teachers said parents of older children occasionally pull a student from class — say, when evolution or the Big Bang is being taught in science — or request an alternate assignment when offended by a selected reading, and those interactions generally go smoothly.

“That’s the thing that this law misses. It’s painted as broad-swath, as if there are these improprieties going on,” said Dan Greenberg, who teaches high school English in the Toledo suburb of Sylvania. “You’re talking to people who are right there in the trenches, and we always have a really good partnership with parents.”

The GOP acted after conservatives complained about public schools’ responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial reckoning that followed the death of George Floyd, the Black man killed by a white Minneapolis police officer in 2020. Some states and local school boards have banned books about race relations, slavery and gender.

The Ohio teachers say the Republican efforts could ultimately erode their ability to make professional judgments and stifle the spontaneity that brings their classrooms to life, while adding to workloads that have already taken a serious toll on school staffing.

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"I'm worried it's sort of a Trojan horse to get into the classroom to pick through what they see and point us in different directions or stop us from doing things," said Robert Estice, a middle school science and critical thinking teacher in the Columbus suburb of Worthington.

Emerson Sykes, a staff attorney at the ACLU Speech, Privacy and Technology Project, called the bills "thinly veiled attempts at chilling teachers and students from learning and talking about race and gender in schools."

Hillyer said he does not intend for parents to be able to censor school materials.

The proposed parents bill of rights calls for access to classroom materials and academic, medical and safety records, as well as certain entry privileges to school buildings and more. An effort last year to politicize normally sleepy school board races was considered by some as a dress rehearsal to drive 2022 turnout among Republicans.

Chris Rufo, a senior fellow at the conservative Manhattan Institute who is pushing curriculum transparency, said in a Twitter message last month that the proposals will "bait the Left" into appearing to oppose transparency. He said that will raise the question of what Democrats have to hide — which will help Republican candidates.

"The strategy here is to use a non-threatening, liberal value — 'transparency' — to force ideological actors to undergo public scrutiny," Rufo tweeted, explaining that the GOP proposals will "give parents a powerful check on bureaucratic power."

Democratic governors in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin have vetoed curriculum-transparency bills. A Utah lawmaker pulled a bill last month after it faced a fierce backlash from teachers.

In places where the bills are moving forward, some sponsors of the legislation have had to backtrack following criticism.

During debate on a Republican-backed package of education reforms in Indiana, Republican state Sen. Scott Baldwin said maintaining neutrality on contentious issues required teachers to be "impartial" when discussing Nazism and other political ideologies.

After widespread criticism, Baldwin walked back the comments, saying in a statement that he "unequivocally" condemns Nazism, fascism and Marxism and agrees that teachers should do the same.

Indiana conservatives regrouped and added provisions ensuring that educators can still discuss "social injustices" and "teach that Nazism is bad." But the legislation gives local parent committees with no expertise power over which curriculum teachers use, and parents could file complaints and lawsuits if they believe teachers have violated a ban on certain "divisive concepts."

Teachers describe the Indiana legislation as so cumbersome that it would probably force some to leave the profession.

"I'm struggling to see how I'm going to put some of the language that is currently in these bills into my classroom and still be able to teach kids to be critical thinkers," said Suzanne Holcomb, who teaches fifth grade in Elkhart. Lawmakers should understand "just how much this is asking of a lot of people who are already on the verge of walking out and being done."

Scott DiMauro, president of Ohio's largest teachers union, is concerned that such bills will add to the spike in resignations and retirements triggered by the stress of teaching in the COVID-19 era.

Teachers, he said, have "felt caught up in a culture war that they didn't create."

Olympics Live: Germany's Neise captures skeleton gold

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

Germany has a new sliding champion.

Hannah Neise has never won a World Cup medal. Or a medal at the world championships. Or a medal from the European championships.

She's got an Olympic medal now. And it's the one that everybody wants.

Neise is the Olympic skeleton women's champion, a bit of a surprise winner. Neise, the 21-year-old who

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won the junior world title last year, became the first German woman to capture the gold medal in Olympic skeleton by rallying in the final two heats at the Beijing Games on Saturday night.

Jaclyn Narracott of Australia was second. Kimberley Bos of the Netherlands was third.

Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron broke their own world record in the rhythm dance, scoring 90.83 points to give the four-time world champions from France the lead heading into Monday's free dance at the Beijing Games.

Papadakis and Cizeron finished second four years ago in Pyeongchang to Canadians Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir, who have since retired. And they appeared intent on making it to the top step this time around, earning Level 3 marks for their midline step and pattern dance but Level 4s everywhere else.

The current world champs, Victoria Sinitsina and Nikita Katsalapov of Russia, were second with 88.84 points with two American teams also in the mix. Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue were third with 87.13 points, followed closely by teammates Madison Chock and Evan Bates with 84.14 points.

Marius Lindvik of Norway has won Olympic gold in ski jumping on the large hill by holding off Ryoyu Kobayashi of Japan.

Lindvik jumped 140 meters Saturday on his final jump and earned 296.1 points overall to become the first Norwegian to win the event since Toralf Engan in 1964.

Kobayashi earned silver after winning on the normal hill on Sunday. Karl Geiger of Germany finished third.

Two-time defending champion Kamil Stoch of Poland was fourth. He came up short on his shot to become the first to win three straight Olympic titles on the large hill.

Two-time gold medalist Andreas Wellinger is unable to compete in China because he tested positive for COVID-19.

The men will be back on the large hill on Monday for a team competition. Norway, Germany and Austria have won the last three Olympic team events. The trio of traditional powers will likely contend for medals again, trying to hold off Slovenia and Japan.

Russian ice dancers Gleb Smolkin and Diana Davis, the daughter of controversial figure skating coach Eteri Tutberidze, qualified for the free dance with a strong performance in the rhythm dance portion of the competition Saturday night.

Smolkin and Davis received a score of 71.66 points to their program, set to "Boom Boom Pow" by the Black Eyed Peas and "Bom Bidi Bom" by Nick Jonas and Nicki Minaj. That's not enough to threaten for a spot on the podium, but it was easily enough to make the cutoff for the top 20 dancers to advance to Monday's free dance.

Davis was born in Las Vegas and holds dual citizenship with the United States and Russia.

Tutberidze has come under fire during the Beijing Games for her work with 15-year-old Kamila Valieva, the favorite to win individual gold. Valieva tested positive for a banned medication in December and is now awaiting a decision from the Court of Arbitration for Sport on Monday to see whether she can continue competing in the Olympics.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport says it expects to announce Monday whether figure skater Kamila Valieva can compete in the women's individual event at the Beijing Olympics.

CAS says a closed-door appeal hearing will start at 8:30 p.m. local time Sunday at a hotel in Beijing.

A three-judge panel will aim to notify all the parties of its verdict Monday afternoon. That's less than 24 hours before Valieva is due back on the ice to start the individual event, where she's the strong favorite.

Russia's anti-doping agency provisionally banned Valieva on Tuesday because she failed a doping test in December. After an appeal, the agency lifted the ban Wednesday.

The IOC, World Anti-Doping Agency and International Skating Union have challenged the lifting of the ban.

The 15-year-old skater's positive test was announced only after she helped the Russian Olympic Com-

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mittee team win gold in the team event.

Johannes Thingnes Boe of Norway skied fast enough to win the gold medal in the biathlon sprint race despite missing one target.

Boe covered the 10-kilometer course in 24 minutes, 0.4 seconds. It's his third medal of the Beijing Games. He also won gold in the mixed relay and bronze in the individual race.

Quentin Fillon Maillet of France also missed one target but couldn't match Boe's ski speed. He won silver, 25.5 seconds back. He won gold in the individual and silver in the mixed relay, where he was outsprinted by Boe. He's also the overall World Cup leader.

Tarjei Boe, who had a single miss on the day, won bronze, 38.9 seconds behind his younger brother.

Estonia's Kristjan Ilves has been released from isolation and cleared to train on the Beijing Games' cross-country course.

Ilves, the world's sixth-ranked Nordic combined skier, previously tested positive for COVID-19 and that knocked him out of the normal hill competition and 10K cross-country race on Wednesday night.

He was one of four Nordic combined stars to miss the first of three medal events in China.

Three-time world champion Jarl Magnus Riiber of Norway was still in isolation on Sunday.

Fifth-ranked and three-time Olympic champion Eric Frenzel of Germany and teammate Terence Weber, who is ranked seventh, were still in isolation as of Saturday night.

Gao Tingyu thrilled the home crowd in Beijing by becoming the first Chinese man to claim an Olympic gold medal in speedskating, winning the 500 meters.

Gao added to the bronze medal he took in the 500 at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games.

Zhang Hong had been the only Chinese gold medalist at the oval. She won the women's 1,000 eight years ago in Sochi.

Now, she's got company.

Gao skated in the seventh of 15 pairs, setting an Olympic record of 34.32 seconds. Then he waited nervously on the infield as 16 other skaters took aim at his time.

None could beat it. The silver went to South Korea's Cha Min Kyu, whose time of 34.39 gave him a matching medal to the silver he won four years ago in Pyeongchang. Wataru Morishige of Japan took the bronze in 34.49.

Russian Sports Minister Oleg Matytsin says there will be no hearing until Sunday on whether figure skater Kamila Valieva can keep competing at the Beijing Olympics.

In comments carried by the state news agency Tass, Matytsin says that the Court of Arbitration for Sport will hear the case Sunday.

Valieva tested positive for the heart drug trimetazidine in a sample taken at the Russian national championships on Dec. 25.

The CAS hearing will not decide whether she doped, only whether she can keep competing until there is a full disciplinary hearing later on. The women's competition starts Tuesday and Valieva is the heavy favorite for gold.

Russia's gold medal in the team competition, where Valieva competed, could also be at risk, but that won't be decided until later.

Snowboarding icon Shaun White's next big contest is the Super Bowl. He was bound for the airport less than 24 hours after he took his final competitive halfpipe ride at the Olympics.

He's headed from Beijing to Los Angeles to watch his first Super Bowl in person.

White said his girlfriend, actress Nina Dobrev, has been suggesting he make a list of things he wants to do in retirement "so I'm not sitting around twiddling my thumbs."

"I've been to the house parties and stuff. Never been to the game, so I'm excited to check that off the

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list," White said in a phone interview with The Associated Press, as he rode to Beijing on Saturday to catch a late-night flight.

After that, he'll take some time to relax.

The build-up to his last contest, then the tear-stained aftermath of his fourth-place finish, have been an emotional roller coaster for the three-time champion.

"I woke up this morning and I just felt this peacefulness," White said. "It was amazing to know I have so much ahead of me."

The Russian team started strong and finished strong Saturday in the women's four-person relay, winning another Olympic gold medal in cross-country skiing.

Yulia Stupak broke away early with nine women chasing. On the next leg, Natalia Nepryaeva was chased down by Katharina Hennig of Germany.

The Germans briefly took the lead on the last lap, with Russian skier Veronika Stepanova just behind Sofie Krehl. But Stepanova pulled away on the final climb and won in 53 minutes, 41 seconds. Germany took silver, 18.2 seconds behind. Sweden edged Finland for bronze.

Tatiana Sorina skied the third lap for the Russian team, which is competing at the Beijing Games under the acronym ROC — short for Russian Olympic Committee.

The four-person relay began as a mass-start with 18 racers. Each woman skied two laps on a 2.5-kilometer (1.5-mile) course. The first two skiers raced in the classic style and the last two in freestyle.

The start of the men's 500 meters is being delayed at the Olympic speedskating oval.

The ice was all set for the sprint race when workers came out to remove some of the lane markers and repair a section of the outer lane in the corner. One of the Zambonis was reappeared and made two trips around to smooth over that area.

Fifteen pairs are competing in the race.

Japan has set an Olympic record in the quarterfinals of the women's speedskating team pursuit at the Beijing Olympics.

Japan broke its own Olympic mark Saturday with a time of 2 minutes, 53.61 seconds, advancing to the semifinals as the top qualifier.

The Japanese will face the fourth-fastest qualifier, the Russian Olympic Committee (2:57.66). Canada (2:53.97) and the Netherlands (2:57.26) also advanced and will meet in the other semifinal.

China and Norway were relegated to the C final. Belarus and Poland will meet in the D final.

The United States men's hockey team beat Canada, its biggest rival, 4-2 in a preliminary round game at the Beijing Olympics.

Andy Miele responded to Canada's early goal by tying it 70 seconds later and Brendan Brisson scored his second of the Olympics.

The Americans are now in the driver's seat to earn a spot in the quarterfinals of the men's hockey tournament.

Sean Farrell also set up Ben Meyers to give him three assists and six points and goaltender Strauss Mann made 35 saves to help the U.S. improve to 2-0 in the preliminary round. Beating Germany on Sunday would put the U.S. first in the group and could make it the top seed in the knockout round.

The boom or bust potential of the youngest team in the tournament was on full display against Canada, a bigger, stronger and more experienced opponent.

The U.S. — with 12 college players on the ice — went hit for hit with Canada and used a combination of offensive skill and bad opposing goaltending to take control of the game.

Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva was in tears after a shaky practice Saturday at the Beijing Olympics that included a fall on a triple axel — a jump she typically executes without a problem.

Valieva was doing a run-through of her short program when she fell. She later landed two combos, a

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triple flip-triple toe loop and a triple lutz-triple toe loop, before skating to the boards and giving her coach, Eteri Tutberidze, an emotional hug.

Valieva has continued to practice while the Court of Arbitration for Sport considers whether a failed doping test will keep the 15-year-old sensation out of the women's competition. The event begins Tuesday in Beijing.

Valieva helped Russia win team gold last weekend. Then on Monday, a test taken in December was flagged for traces of the banned heart drug trimetazidine, putting the medal won by her entire team in possible jeopardy.

The inaugural Olympic monobob starts Sunday at the Beijing Games. In monobob, there's only one woman in the bobsled.

Americans Kaillie Humphries and Elana Meyers Taylor are expected to be among the top contenders in the new event. Medals will be awarded Monday and the traditional two-woman competition starts Friday night.

Humphries is the reigning world champion in the event and Meyers Taylor is this season's monobob World Series overall champion.

Humphries and Meyers Taylor were both fighting COVID-19 in recent weeks, yet recovered just in time to keep their Olympic hopes going.

Men compete in the four-man bobsled and Humphries and Meyers Taylor hoped the Olympics would add a women's event, but most countries besides the U.S. and Canada don't have enough female bobsledders to compete. So monobob was added instead.

Defending Olympic champion Sofia Goggia of Italy appeared content after completing the opening downhill training session at the Beijing Games less than three weeks after injuring her left leg and knee in a crash.

Goggia finished 1.55 seconds behind leader Priska Nufer of Switzerland.

Mikaela Shiffrin was slightly quicker in ninth and 1.33 back.

Two more training sessions are scheduled before Tuesday's race.

Goggia did not enter the super-G and arrived late in China to get in some extra rehab at home in Italy. She sprained her left knee, partially tore a cruciate ligament, had a "minor fracture" of the fibula bone in her leg, plus some tendon damage, after the crash in a super-G in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, on Jan. 23.

There was light snowfall and fog on the top of the course.

Lindsey Jacobellis has won her second gold medal of the Olympics, teaming with 40-year-old Nick Baumgartner for the title in the new event of mixed snowboardcross.

The 36-year-old Jacobellis took gold earlier this week in the women's event; it came 16 years after a late showboat move as she was cruising in for an apparent win cost her the title at the Turin Games.

After a slow start, the U.S. now has five gold medals and 11 overall at the Games. Jacobellis accounts for two, while snowboarder Chloe Kim has another.

The Italian team of Omar Visintin and Michela Moioli came in second and the Canadian duo of Eliot Grondin and Meryeta O'Dine finished third.

Finally, a real sign of winter at the Winter Olympics: real snow in the mountains used for Alpine skiing.

Just a light flurry, mind you.

Still, actual flakes are dropping on the hills of the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center, about 55 miles northwest of Beijing's city center.

It is the first precipitation since ski racing competition began last week -- the absence of snow is not much of a surprise, given how dry the season usually is in these parts.

All of the snow that American star Mikaela Shiffrin and others have been skiing on is manufactured.

There are no Alpine medals at stake Saturday, just a chance for Shiffrin and other women to take training runs for the downhill along the course known as The Rock. The race is scheduled for Tuesday.

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More snow is in the forecast for Sunday, when the men are supposed to contest the giant slalom -- and even continuing through Monday morning. A total of about 3 1/2 inches (9 centimeters) is expected at the Alpine skiing venue.

German pairs skaters Nolan Seegert and Minerva Fabienne Hase practiced for the first time Saturday, 10 days after Seegert tested positive for COVID-19 upon his arrival in Beijing and was put into quarantine.

Seegert and Hase were forced to withdraw from the team competition, which meant Germany received no points for the pairs short program. That made it impossible for the longshots to advance to the medal round of the event.

The individual pairs competition begins Friday night, so they still have nearly a week to prepare.

The women's session is later Saturday at the same practice rink near Capital Indoor Stadium. It's unclear whether Kamila Valieva, who is at the center of a Russian doping controversy, will be on the ice again. She is awaiting a ruling from the Court of Arbitration for Sport on whether she can continue in Beijing with the women's event beginning Tuesday.

In 2nd Floyd killing trial, judge seeks speed, not emotion

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — When a witness to George Floyd's killing choked up while testifying during the trial of three former Minneapolis police officers, U.S. District Judge Paul Magnuson quickly stepped in, granting a defense attorney's request for a sidebar that defused the moment.

It was an example of how the 84-year-old judge has exerted a tight grip on proceedings, occasionally frustrating prosecutors with his determination to keep emotion to a minimum and move the case against Tou Thao, J. Alexander Kueng and Thomas Lane forward as quickly as possible amid a pandemic.

Through three weeks of testimony, Magnuson has been quick to cut off attorneys when he thinks they've gone too far — sometimes with a curt, "No thank you," or even just a firm, "No," to requests for time-consuming sidebars. He has admonished them to cooperate on routine matters such as replaying videos, ordered them to reduce their planned exhibits and questioned how many witnesses they need.

The judge also sped jury selection along in a single day — a sharp contrast to the more than two weeks it took to seat a jury in the state trial in which former Officer Derek Chauvin was convicted of murder in Floyd's death. His desire for speed amid the pandemic was brought home when one defendant tested positive for the virus, halting the trial for three days.

Thao, Lane and Kueng are charged with willfully depriving Floyd of his constitutional rights while acting under color of law. Chauvin — the white officer who pinned Floyd under his knee for 9 1/2 minutes while the Black man was handcuffed, facedown — pleaded guilty to a civil rights count in December.

The federal trial is playing out much more quietly than Chauvin's state trial, in part because of Magnuson's refusal to allow livestreaming. The state trial did, allowing viewers worldwide the ability to follow testimony in a killing that triggered global protests and a reexamination of racism and policing.

Structural differences are also playing a part.

Floyd's girlfriend, Courteney Ross, provided some of the most compelling testimony in Chauvin's trial as she painted a portrait of a warm and good man who struggled with addiction. Minnesota is unusual in allowing such "spark of life" testimony during the guilt phase of a trial to humanize a victim. Federal courts don't permit it, and prosecutors aren't going to call Ross to the stand this time.

That's making it hard for the government to show the human side of the man jurors have seen on video moaning and pleading "I can't breathe" and calling "Mama."

Magnuson served early notice that he wanted emotion kept to a minimum in his courtroom, warning attorneys against questions that might be aimed at eliciting sympathy from jurors.

Charles McMillian, who witnessed Floyd's killing, wept openly when he testified at the state trial. When he showed signs of doing so in Magnuson's courtroom, the judge granted a request for a sidebar, where a defense attorney suggested it might be time for a pause.

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During a subsequent break, prosecutor LeeAnn Bell expressed frustration at the limits on questions she could ask, saying it's impossible to keep emotion out of testimony.

Magnuson moved on.

When one potential juror questioned whether the color of his skin should disqualify him from serving, Magnuson proclaimed to the pool that the trial has "absolutely nothing" to do with race or ethnicity. Legal experts said that was accurate from a legal perspective, with the officers not accused of targeting Floyd because he was Black. But on another level, they said, the case has everything to do with race given the way police brutality has historically fallen harder on African Americans.

One of Magnuson's priorities has been to keep the trial on track despite the COVID-19 pandemic. He seated six alternates — four more than usual — in case any jurors get sick. He had hoped to limit the trial to two weeks before later conceding it would likely to be closer to four — a target that he has since indicated they're likely to overshoot.

The judge chewed out prosecutor Bell one day when a witness' illness left her with only one for the afternoon's testimony. Magnuson said Bell should have had others ready to go.

"When we've got this long a trial, we can't afford to be down any longer than we have to," Magnuson said.

Citing COVID-19 concerns, Magnuson has also restricted courtroom access to a degree that has prompted legal challenges from media organizations, including The Associated Press. Magnuson wouldn't allow televised coverage of the trial, given that federal courts don't. Also, he permits no more than four reporters in the courtroom at a time. Others and the public can watch from overflow rooms.

Tom Heffelfinger, a former U.S. attorney in Minnesota who is now in private practice, said Magnuson is fair to both sides, and said his COVID-19 concerns are reasonable.

"He runs a tight courtroom. He's in charge," Heffelfinger said. "But he also respects the needs of lawyers from both sides to do their work."

Though he has often seemed crotchety during the trial, Magnuson — who still handles a full caseload after taking senior status some two decades ago — sometimes shows a softer side.

As corner store cashier Christopher Martin testified early in the trial — and appeared uncomfortable about doing so — he acknowledged to a defense attorney that he would rather be in school and had homework to do.

When the defense was done cross-examining the 20-year-old college student, Magnuson excused him and said, "Go do your homework."

On voting rights, Biden's power to act on his own is limited

By COLLEEN LONG, CHRIS MEGERIAN and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Republicans impose new restrictions on ballot access in multiple states, President Biden has no easy options for safeguarding voting rights despite rising pressure from frustrated activists.

Unlike on other issues such as immigration or environmental protection, the White House has little leverage without congressional action as the November elections creep up.

"If there were some sort of easily available presidential power on this, others would have done it," said Nicholas Stephanopoulos, a Harvard Law School professor who researches election law. "There is no significant unilateral authority here."

Nine months before elections that will determine control of Congress, voting rights advocates are worried there's not enough time to fend off state laws and policies that make it harder to vote. They view the changes as a subtler form of past ballot restrictions such as literacy tests and poll taxes that were used to disenfranchise Black voters, a vital Democratic constituency.

Biden did issue an executive order last March that expanded access to voter registration and election information. The order is designed to make it easier for people in federal custody to register to vote, improve tracking of military ballots and provide better access for Americans with disabilities.

But to do more than that, Biden would have to rely on obscure and controversial constitutional provisions that probably could not take effect in time anyway, Stephanopoulos said. And the farther Biden were to

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go to push the issue of voting rights, the more he could face criticism for overstepping his authority.

"It's very hard for a president to weigh in," said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University. "Everything is being done at a state-by-state level."

So while Biden may be able to take some small actions around the edges, Brinkley said, "if he tries something extraordinary, it will be tied up in the courts for years."

Americans have grown accustomed to seeing presidents act unilaterally when they hit roadblocks in Congress. President Barack Obama resorted to a wave of executive actions branded as "we can't wait." He flexed his authority to increase environmental regulations and shield from deportation young immigrants who were brought to the country illegally.

There's no equivalent legal leverage for Biden to advance voting rights policies.

Marc Morial, leader of the National Urban League, was skeptical that executive actions — which can be reversed by a future president as quickly as they were imposed by a predecessor — could be sufficient anyway.

"An executive order or an executive action is not a replacement or a substitute or even a credible alternative to legislation to protect voting rights and democracy," he said.

But so far, legislation has not been a workable option for Democrats.

Democrats have written voting legislation that would usher in the biggest overhaul of U.S. elections in a generation by striking down hurdles to voting enacted in the name of election security. The plan would create national election standards that would trump state-level laws and restore the ability of the Justice Department to police election laws in states with a history of discrimination.

Republicans said the proposed changes were not aimed at fairness but at giving Democrats an advantage in elections. And Democrats were unsuccessful at changing Senate rules to allow the slim Democratic majority in the chamber to pass the laws on their own.

Republicans last year pushed through 33 laws creating new voting limits in 19 states, and five other states have bills that seek to restrict voting. The effort is motivated in part by a growing and widespread denial of President Donald Trump's 2020 election loss.

Republicans who have fallen in line behind Trump's election lies are separately promoting efforts to influence future elections by installing sympathetic leaders in local election posts and by backing for elective office some of those who participated in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Democrats and voting rights advocates are looking to the Justice Department as their best chance to ensure elections are free and fair. But there's a political divide over what "free and fair" means in a country where millions believe false claims that the 2020 election was stolen.

The department has lawyers dedicated to enforcing civil voting statutes, and Attorney General Merrick Garland has made it a priority.

But the department is limited in what it can do, following a 2013 Supreme Court decision that dismantled part of the civil rights-era Voting Rights Act, which required states with a history of discrimination to get approval for changes to election laws.

Separately, the Justice Department also has a role in ensuring fair elections but that, too, has been complicated by politics in recent years.

There has been increasing skittishness among election administrators over the department's role after then-Attorney General William Barr told prosecutors to investigate election fraud claims before the 2020 election was certified. Barr cited concern over potential widespread voter fraud because of an increase in mail ballots during the pandemic, but he later declared there had been no widespread fraud.

Garland's Justice Department has sued Georgia over the state's new election law, alleging Republican state lawmakers rushed through a sweeping overhaul with an intent to deny Black voters equal access to the ballot. The Justice Department has also brought a suit against Texas over its newly drawn congressional districts.

But the Supreme Court this past week signaled a willingness to side with the GOP on such issues.

The high court put on hold a lower court ruling that Alabama must draw new congressional districts be-

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fore the 2022 elections to increase Black voting power. The court's action means the upcoming elections will be conducted under a map drawn by Alabama's Republican-controlled Legislature that contains one majority-Black district in a state in which more than one-quarter of the population is Black.

The three-judge lower court, which includes two judges appointed by Trump, had ruled that the state had probably violated the federal Voting Rights Act by diluting the political power of Black voters.

NAACP President Derrick Johnson said the Supreme Court has undercut the ability of the federal government to protect voting rights, and he still believes the best chance for long-term change is to get legislation through Congress.

"The Justice Department is doing as much as they can with one hand tied behind their back," he said. He noted the Voting Rights Act only became law after previous attempts failed.

"We don't stop because the first attempt didn't work."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Feb. 13, the 44th day of 2022. There are 321 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 13, 1935, a jury in Flemington, New Jersey, found Bruno Richard Hauptmann guilty of first-degree murder in the kidnap-slaying of Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., the 20-month-old son of Charles and Anne Lindbergh. (Hauptmann was later executed.)

On this date:

In 1633, Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei arrived in Rome for trial before the Inquisition, accused of defending Copernican theory that the Earth revolved around the sun instead of the other way around. (Galileo was found vehemently suspect of heresy and ended up being sentenced to a form of house arrest.)

In 1933, the Warsaw Convention, governing airlines' liability for international carriage of persons, luggage and goods, went into effect.

In 1939, Justice Louis D. Brandeis retired from the U.S. Supreme Court. (He was succeeded by William O. Douglas.)

In 1965, during the Vietnam War, President Lyndon B. Johnson authorized Operation Rolling Thunder, an extended bombing campaign against the North Vietnamese.

In 1980, the 13th Winter Olympics opened in Lake Placid, New York.

In 1991, during Operation Desert Storm, allied warplanes destroyed an underground shelter in Baghdad that had been identified as a military command center; Iraqi officials said 500 civilians were killed.

In 1996, the rock musical "Rent," by Jonathan Larson, opened off-Broadway less than three weeks after Larson's death.

In 2000, Charles Schulz's final "Peanuts" strip ran in Sunday newspapers, the day after the cartoonist died in his sleep at his California home at age 77.

In 2002, John Walker Lindh pleaded not guilty in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, to conspiring to kill Americans and supporting the Taliban and terrorist organizations. (Lindh later pleaded guilty to lesser offenses and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He was released in September 2019 after serving 17 years of that sentence.)

In 2011, Egypt's military leaders dissolved parliament, suspended the constitution and promised elections in moves cautiously welcomed by protesters who'd helped topple President Hosni Mubarak.

In 2013, beginning a long farewell to his flock, a weary Pope Benedict XVI celebrated his final public Mass as pontiff, presiding over Ash Wednesday services inside St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican.

In 2016, Justice Antonin Scalia, the influential conservative and most provocative member of the U.S. Supreme Court, was found dead at a private residence in the Big Bend area of West Texas; he was 79.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama unveiled a record \$3.8 trillion election-year budget plan, calling for stimulus-style spending on roads and schools and tax hikes on the wealthy to help pay the costs.

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Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire signed a measure making her state the seventh to legalize same-sex marriage.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump's embattled national security adviser, Michael Flynn, resigned following reports he had misled Vice President Mike Pence and other officials about his contacts with Russia. Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, died after two women smeared a nerve agent on his face at an airport terminal in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (Murder charges against the women were eventually dropped, and they returned home to Vietnam and Indonesia; four North Koreans who fled Malaysia on the day after the killing were named as co-conspirators.)

One year ago: Former President Donald Trump was acquitted by the Senate at his second impeachment trial, the first to involve a former president, in which he was accused of inciting the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6; seven Republicans joined all 50 Democrats in voting to convict, but it was far from the two-thirds threshold required. Although he voted "not guilty," Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell delivered a scalding denunciation of Trump in a speech from the Senate floor, calling the former president "morally responsible" for the attack on the Capitol.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Kim Novak is 89. Actor Bo Svenson is 81. Actor Stockard Channing is 78. Talk show host Jerry Springer is 78. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., is 76. Singer Peter Gabriel is 72. Actor David Naughton is 71. Rock musician Peter Hook is 66. Actor Matt Salinger is 62. Singer Henry Rollins is 61. Actor Neal McDonough is 56. Singer Freedom Williams is 56. Actor Kelly Hu is 54. Rock singer Matt Berninger (The National) is 51. Country musician Scott Thomas (Parmalee) is 49. Singer Robbie Williams is 48. Singer-songwriter Feist is 46. R&B performer Natalie Stewart is 43. Actor Mena Suvari (MEE'-nuh soo-VAHR'-ee) is 43. Actor Katie Volding is 33. Michael Joseph Jackson Jr. (also known as Prince Michael Jackson I) is 25.