

# Groton Daily Independent

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## UpComing Events

### Monday, March 28

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

FFA CDE at Tri-Valley

### Tuesday, March 29

Indoor Track Meet at Northern State University

### Friday, April 1

FFA CDE at SDSU, Brookings

### Saturday, April 2

ACT testing in Groton, 8 a.m. to Noon

### Sunday, April 3

2 p.m. and 5 p.m., POPS Concert

### Tuesday, April 5

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting

### Thursday, April 7

8:34 a.m. to 3 p.m.: FFA CDE in Groton

6 p.m.: FFA Banquet

### Friday, April 8

11:30 a.m.: Track meet in Miller

### Saturday, April 9

Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park

Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm

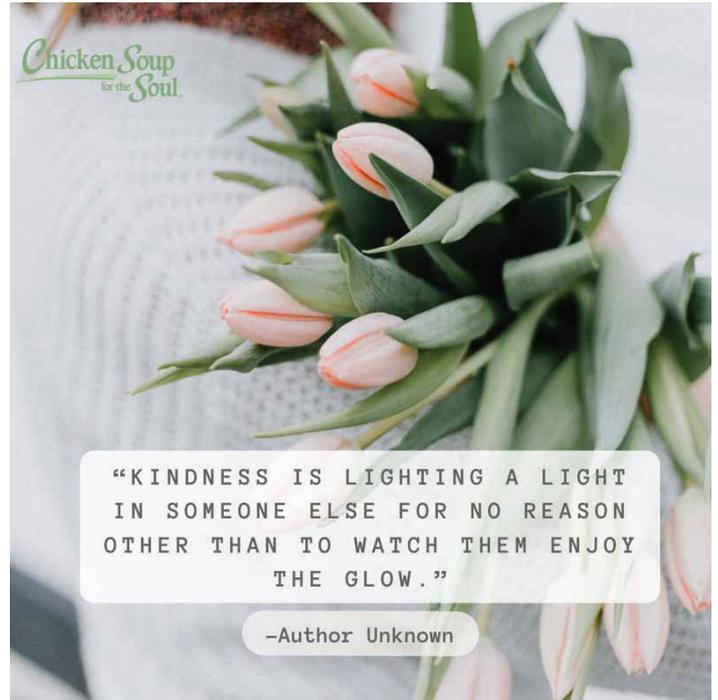
### Monday, April 11

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

### Tuesday, April 12

11 a.m.: Track meet in Groton

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



### Wednesday, April 13

7 p.m.: "Way of the Cross" at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church

### Friday, April 15 - Good Friday

No School, Groton City & States offices closed

### Monday, April 18 - Easter Monday

No School, Groton City & State offices closed

10 a.m.: Girls Golf at Whetstone Creek GC in Milbank

### Tuesday, April 19

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting

### Wednesday, April 20

6 p.m.: FCCLA Banquet in GHS Arena Lobby

### Thursday, April 21

Track Meet in Redfield

## Truss Pros Help Wanted

Truss Pros in Britton is looking to hire a CDL driver to deliver trusses in the tri-state area. Home every night. Competitive wage! Full benefit package!

To apply call 605-277-4937 or go to [www.uslbm.com/careers](http://www.uslbm.com/careers) and search for jobs in Britton, SD.

## 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, March 27, 2022

UMCOR Sunday

Conde Worship 9:00 AM

Sunday School 10:00 AM

Groton Worship 11:00 AM

### Monday, March 28, 2022

Pastor Brandon Lent Study 7:00 PM

PEO - outside group 7:30 PM

### Tuesday, March 29, 2022

Bible Study 10:00 AM

Pastor Brandon Lent Study in Conde 6:00 PM

### Wednesday, March 30, 2022

UMW Serving Bars/Cookies at Table Talks

Community Coffee Hour 9:30 AM

### Saturday, April 2, 2022

Madsen Baby Shower - Mitchell & Megan baby  
due end of May 10:00 AM

### Sunday, April 3, 2022

Conde Worship 9:00 AM

Sunday School 10:00 AM

Groton Worship 11:00 AM

## Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

### Sunday, March 27

9 a.m.: Worship/Milestones

10:15 a.m.: Sunday school

10:15 a.m.: Grace Alone Study

7 p.m.: Choir

### Monday, March 28

6:30 a.m.: Bible Study

### Wednesday, March 30

6 p.m.: Soup Supper (League hosts)

7 p.m.: Lenten Service

### Sunday, April 3

9 am Worship/Communion

10:15 Sunday School

10:15 1st Communion class

7 pm Choir

## 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

### Confessions:

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

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

## St. John's Lutheran Church

Groton

### Sunday, March 27

8 a.m.: Bible Study

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

10 a.m.: Sunday School

11 a.m.: Zion Lutheran Worship

### Wednesday, March 30

7 p.m.: Lent Service

### Sunday, April 3

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](mailto:news@grotonsd.net)

## 2022 Groton Area Elementary

**Kindergarten Roundup (Screening) for children turning**

**5 on or before September 1, 2022**

**Friday, April 1, 2022**

**If your child is currently attending Junior Kindergarten at Groton Area Elementary school, please DISREGARD this notice. Your teacher will be sending information if necessary.**

**Packets are being sent home this week with information regarding KG Roundup. These would apply to families who have children eligible for KG and JK this coming 2022-2023 school year who are not currently enrolled in our school. Please contact the school if you do not receive a packet. We do not have all children in our census. Thank you!!!**



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## March Students of the Month

**Back left: Colt Williamson (7th), Claire Heinrich (10th), Ethan Clark (11th), Axel Warrington (9th)**

**Front Left: Kyleigh Kroll (6th), Mia Crank (8th), Madeline Fliehs (12th)**

These students have been named the March Students of the Month.

Groton Area School works to ensure that all levels of academic instruction also include the necessary life skills teaching, practicing, and modeling that encourages essential personal life habits that are universally understood to facilitate helping our students become good human beings and citizens.

It is learning with our heads, hearts, and hands to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to effectively problem solve, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens, and to be empathetic and ethical individuals.

Students are selected based on individual student growth in the areas of: positive behavior, citizenship, good attendance, a thirst for knowledge, and high academic standards.

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**Vendor Fair Held Saturday**  
The Vendor Fair was held Saturday at the Groton Community Center. A good crowd came and went throughout the day and there were a lot of vendors on hand. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



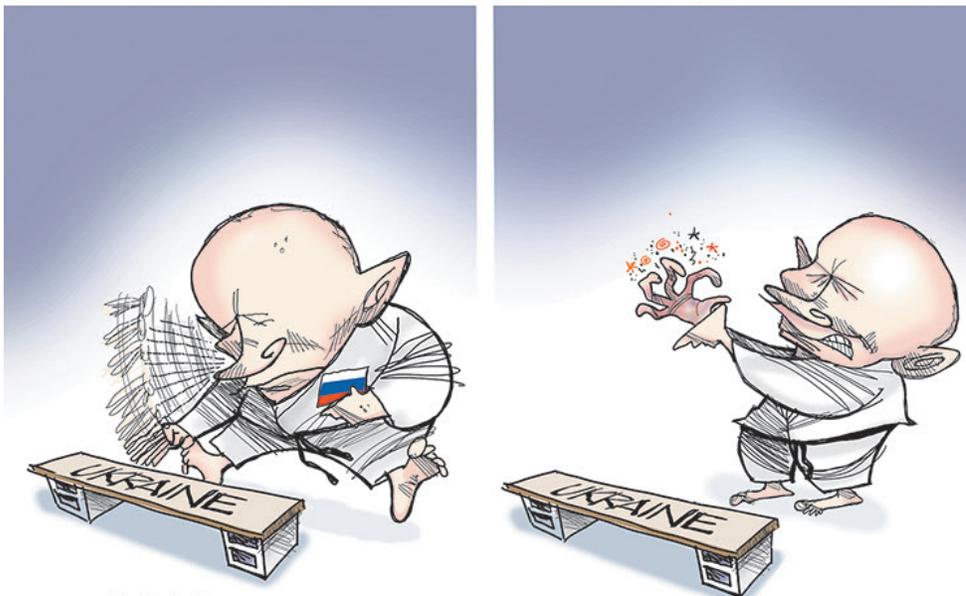
"Adnyamathanha Man"  
by Charles Mount (1937)

*...He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us...*

🌀 Acts 17: 26, 27 🌀

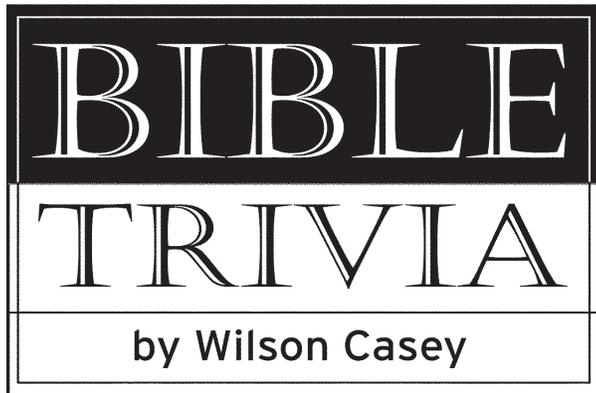
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### THE BLACK BELT



KIRK

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

2. From Deuteronomy 18, who prophesied that Jesus would speak all the Father commanded? *Abraham, Aaron, Moses, Noah*

3. Where did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead? *Smyrna, Bethany, Antioch, Cana*

4. In Hebrews 7, which priest was the "King of peace"? *Ezekiel, Seraiah, Melchisedec, Haggai*

5. How old was Methuselah at his death? *200, 617, 969, 1,102*

6. From 2 Samuel 8, who was commander of David's army? *Amasa, Joab, Joshua, Julius*

ANSWERS: 1) New; 2) Moses; 3) Bethany; 4) Melchisedec; 5) 969; 6) Joab

*Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online.*

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When you think of salad, you probably think of a lettuce salad with store-bought dressing drizzled over top. Well, you'll never think that way again when you put this delicious green bean salad on the menu!

2 (15-ounce) cans whole green beans, rinsed and drained

1/2 cup sliced fresh mushrooms

1/4 cup chopped walnuts

1/4 cup fat-free mayonnaise

2 tablespoons fat-free sour cream

1 tablespoon Dijon country mustard

1/8 teaspoon black pepper

1. In a large bowl, combine green beans, mushrooms and walnuts. In a small bowl, combine mayonnaise, sour cream, mustard and black pepper. Add mayonnaise mixture to bean mixture.

2. Mix gently to combine. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Gently stir again just before serving. Makes 4 (1 cup) servings.

\* Each serving equals: 104 calories, 4g fat, 4g protein, 13g carbs., 886mg sodium, 4g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Vegetable, 1 Fat.

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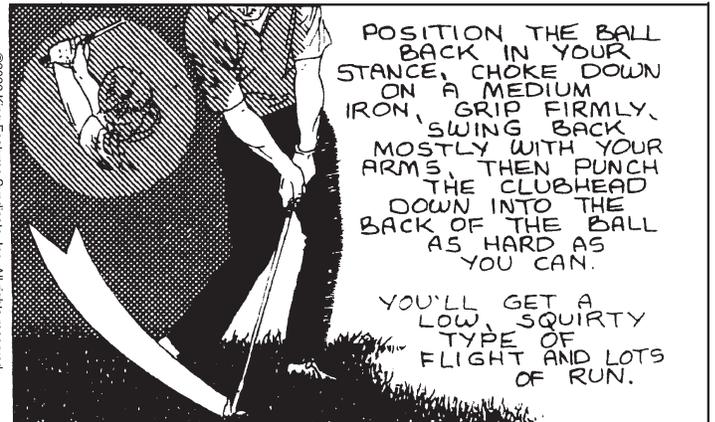


## FLASH GORDON

3-20 By JIM KEEFE



## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



## Diet Is a Powerful Tool to Improve Heart Health



---  
DEAR DR. ROACH: I have a strong history of premature heart disease in my family, and I have been having some unpleasant side effects of blood pressure medicine. I decided to try a completely plant-based diet: grains, vegetables, legumes, fruit, seeds and nuts.

After about a month on the new diet, my total cholesterol dropped 44 points to 159, and the other numbers went from borderline to normal, as measured by my cardiologist. My blood pressure, which was often high in the mornings (typically 150+/90), was 118/68 this morning. I've only lost about 5 pounds in the past couple of months, and I'm probably still 8-10 pounds overweight.

I am pleased with the results, but why didn't any of my doctors recommend this? -- J.S.B.

ANSWER: Diet is a powerful tool for improving overall health, especially heart health. I believe it is underemphasized by most physicians.

Changing from a meat-based diet to a mostly plant-based diet often prompts improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol and weight. Your results are better than most, but by no means unheard of. You haven't said how you feel, but many people feel more energetic as well. Many others are able to come off of some (occasionally all) of their medications, which of course reduces side effects.

Why don't physicians recommend it? I think it's a combination of reasons. Some doctors don't realize how powerful the effects of dietary change can be. A good deal of patients are highly resistant to making changes, so physicians are used to their dietary advice failing. Also, taking the time to get an accurate diet history is hard, personalizing dietary advice is harder, and writing a prescription is easy.

It is not necessary to have a 100% vegan diet like yours to experience a benefit. A mostly plant-based diet has substantial benefits. It's easier for some people to make incremental changes.

\*\*\*

DEAR DR. ROACH: You wrote that you had seen doctors and nurses with "DNR" tattooed on their chests. Were they still on the job, or retired and not in good health? -- P.

ANSWER: The two health care professionals I recall with these tattoos were young and healthy. Both of them watched many people undergo long, painful, expensive hospital courses that ended in a death without dignity. It was in response to these bad outcomes that they made a request against attempts at cardiopulmonary resuscitation with the "Do Not Resuscitate" tattoos.

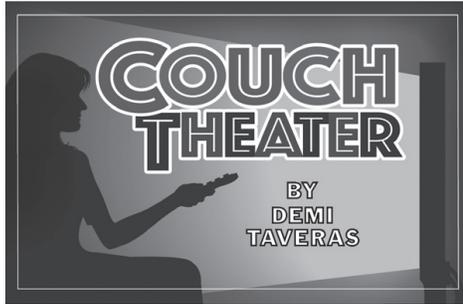
I disagree with the tattoo. It is not considered a legal document, and it is worthwhile to make a legally binding document. I recommend [www.agingwithdignity.org](http://www.agingwithdignity.org) and [www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org) as good places to start. There are many others, including attorneys who specialize in end-of-life issues.

There are many cases in which an attempt at resuscitation is appropriate! A person who has a heart attack can be revived with CPR and have an excellent quality of life for years thereafter. DNR orders are most appropriate for people with chronic medical illnesses, and most legal documents specify whether the order is applicable only in the event of an illness judged likely to be terminal. It's important to have a living will and a health care proxy identified long before there is a crisis. It is critical for a person to discuss their wishes with their proxy.

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](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).

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**The Oscars (NR)** — If you missed the 94th Academy Awards live premiere on ABC, it's now available to stream. This year, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences had a much larger film collection to select nominations from than the previous year, due to a smaller number of films being released because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The Power of the Dog" leads with 12 nominations, followed by "Dune," "West Side Story" and "Belfast." In the Best Picture category, 10 films were nominated, but only five of the directors of those 10 films were nominated for Best Director. With beautiful movies to celebrate and the first performance of the hit song "We Don't Talk About Bruno" from "Encanto," the highly esteemed award show finally makes its way back to its normal state (much like the rest of us). (Hulu)

**Thermae Romae Novae (NR)** — Now available for streaming, "Thermae Romae Novae" is an anime based on the Japanese manga series by Mari Yamazaki. Lucius, an architect from ancient Rome, gets tasked with building a bathhouse, yet he's unable to think of any worthwhile ideas. Suddenly, Lucius gets sucked into a time-traveling tunnel that leads him into a bathhouse in modern Japan. Overwhelmed with all the new inventions that have appeared over centuries and centuries of time, Lucius gets inspired to return to his home and build a bathhouse the ancient Romans never could have imagined in their wildest dreams. (Netflix)

**driving home 2 u (NR)** — Pop superstar Olivia Rodrigo got her

start on Disney+ with a main role on "High School Musical: The Series," and she's back on the streaming platform — this time in a documentary film showcasing her experience creating her very first album, "SOUL." Rodrigo owned the charts last year as a force in pop music that hasn't been seen in a while, and "SOUL" was an incredible success, with her first three singles dominating radio stations and music streaming platforms. Get to know a different, more humanized side of this young songwriter in "driving home 2 u." (Disney+)



Disney+

Olivia Rodrigo in "driving home 2 u"

**The Fairly Oddparents: Fairly Odder (TV-Y7)** — As the second longest-running television show on Nickelodeon, "The Fairly Oddparents" became a true staple for millennials and Gen Z. While the original animated show wrapped in 2017, a live-action series was put into the works; thus, "The Fairly Oddparents: Fairly Odder" was born. "Fairly Odder" follows Vivian "Viv" Turner, Timmy Turner's cousin, who begins a new life after her family becomes blended in with her father's new wife and her new stepbrother, Roy. From the now older Timmy, she receives a gift to help her navigate her new life: our favorite, very odd, fairy godparents, Cosmo and Wanda! Premieres March 31. (Paramount+)

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## FLASH BACK POP, ROCK & SOUL TRIVIA BY MICK HARPER

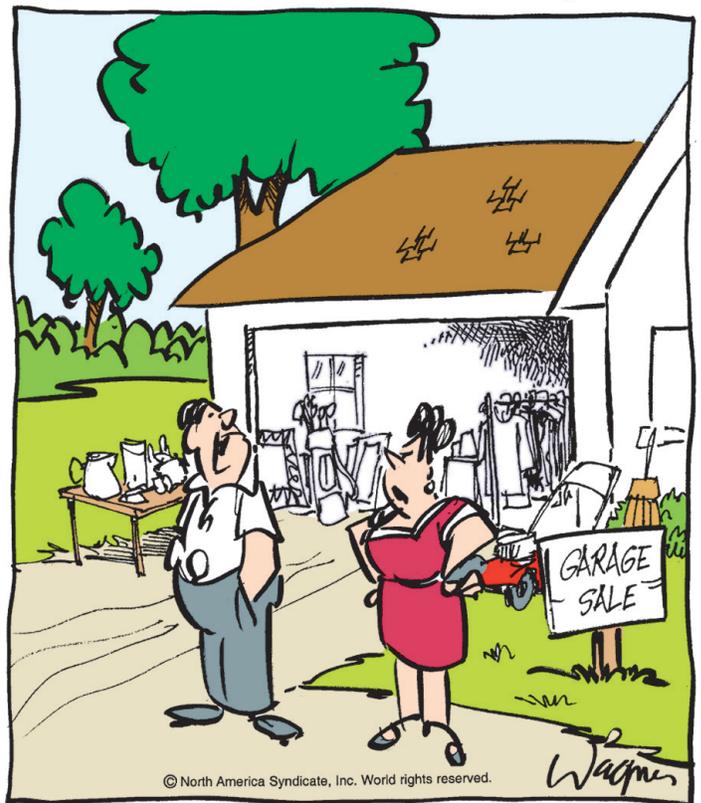
1. What was "Hootenanny" in the Sixties?
2. Who originally released "I'll Take You There"?
3. Name the group that released "Sowing the Seeds of Love."
4. Who wrote and released "Bring on the Night"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Talking is cheap, people follow like sheep, Even though there is nowhere to go."

### Answers

1. An ABC television musical variety show, hosted by Jack Linkletter, running from April 1963 to September 1964. It ran into problems when it started banning left-wing performers such as Pete Seeger, leading to boycotts by other entertainers.
2. The gospel group The Staple Singers, in 1972. The song was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999, and Chevrolet used it in their Malibu ads.
3. Tears for Fears, in 1989. The song reached Top 10 charts around the globe and the video won awards in multiple categories, including Best Special Effects.
4. Sting and the Police, in 1979.
5. "Silence Is Golden," by the Four Seasons in 1964 and the Tremeloes in 1967. The Four Seasons' original (as a B-side to "Rag Doll") didn't do as well as the Tremeloes' version, which went to No. 1 in numerous countries.

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## GRIN and BEAR IT<sup>®</sup> Wagner



"How was I to know you wanted to keep your car?"

## Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Hat is different. 2. Bush is missing. 3. Arm is missing. 4. Shirt is different. 5. Valentine is missing. 6. Poster is missing.



- When you make a meringue, be sure to spread it all the way to the crust on all sides. If you do, it will not shrink.

- After your dishwasher has run its course, open up the door and let the dishes air dry. On cold days, there's the added bonus of humidifying the house with the steam that escapes.

- Research says that the best time of day to exercise is in the morning, but the truth is that the best time for YOU to exercise is when you will go through with it. So, try out different times of the day, and when you find one that fits, schedule it in your daily planner and block the time out at least three times per week.

- Making your own flavored yogurt is cheap and much better for you. You can avoid a lot of added sugar. Start with plain, unflavored yogurt and add: pureed fruits, toasted oats, honey, vanilla or almond extract, or plumped-

up raisins (add enough hot water to cover a tablespoon of raisins and let sit for a minute or two). Yummy.

- “If you stick the end of your celery stalks in a cup of water and rocks (or in some very damp dirt), they will begin to regrow. This is a great way to have a never-ending supply of celery. You also can regrow scallions from the root end.” —*Y.L.J. in Missouri*

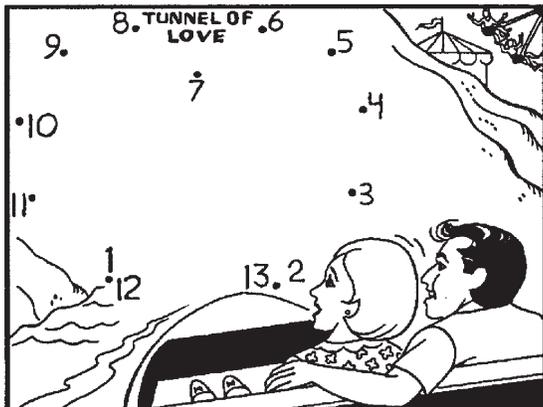
- Metal shower hooks can be used in the sewing basket to hold safety pins. They can be used in a jewelry box to corral costume rings as well.

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

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**TUNNEL VISION!** Just a few lines are needed to complete this amusement park scene. Add them quickly from dot to dot.

**TIME WARP!** A clock indicates the hour as 11:45. Question: If hands remain stationary and entire dial is shifted clockwise five minutes, what time will it be?

It will still be 11:45, but clock will show 10:40.

**SOUND OUT!** Seven skeletonized words in the diagram at right bear sounds similar to seven other words having different meanings. No. 1, for instance is WEIGHS, which has the same sound as WAYS. Challenge: See how quickly you can sound out subs for all seven.

1. Ways 2. Mite 3. Ate 4. Him
5. Isle 6. Doe 7. Phlox

It shouldn't take more than 30 seconds to answer. Remember, words are soundalikes.

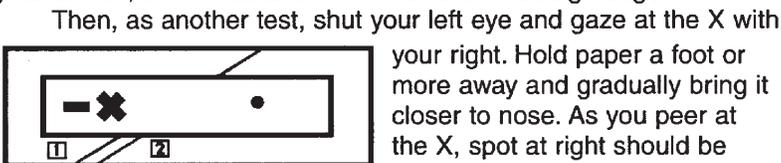
1. Weighs. 2. Mite. 3. Eight. 4. Dough. 5. Aisle. 6. Hymn. 7. Flocks.

## Junior Whirl

by Hal Kaufman

### SEE HERE, AND/OR THERE

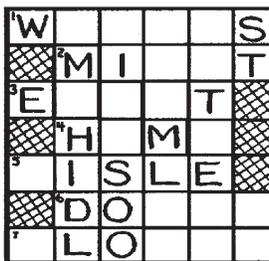
SEE if you can decide which of the two slanted lines, (1) or (2), is a continuation of the slanted line that appears at top. After making your choice, check out answer with a ruler or straightedge.



Then, as another test, shut your left eye and gaze at the X with your right. Hold paper a foot or more away and gradually bring it closer to nose. As you peer at the X, spot at right should be apparent, too, up to a point, whereupon it is likely to disappear. Move paper away and spot should return. Turn paper upside down and try it with other eye. Test is akin to an eye exam of one's visual field.

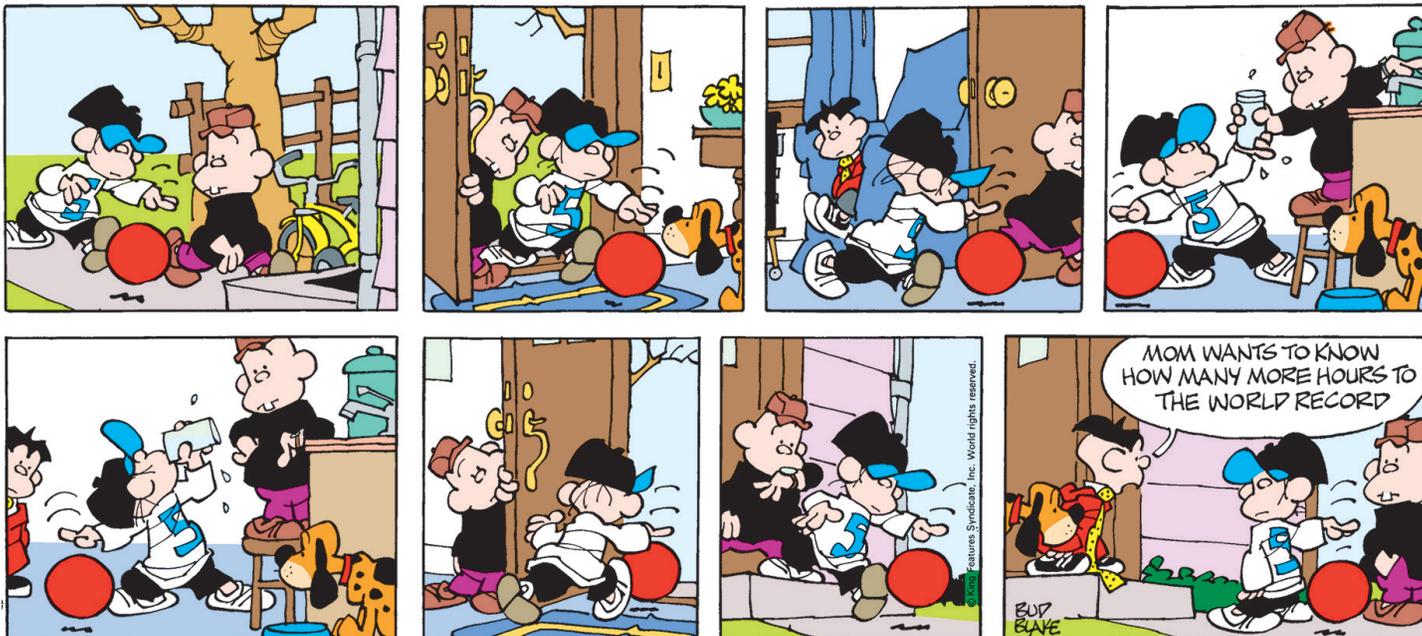
**MONEY TALKS!** The \_\_\_ postcard, \_\_\_ cigar, \_\_\_ novel, and \_\_\_ watch have all disappeared. Fill blanks with monetary amounts. Answer in 30 seconds, if you can.

Answer: Penny postcard, five-cent cigar, dime novel, dollar watch will do it.



## TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Bar legally
- 6 Decorator's theme
- 11 Floodgate
- 12 Apple music service
- 14 Maidens of myth
- 15 Nap
- 16 Doctrine
- 17 Varieties
- 19 Up to
- 20 Casual tops
- 22 — Paulo
- 23 Optimum
- 24 Passover repast
- 26 Heller and Conrad
- 28 Chips go-with
- 30 Small barrel
- 31 High-ranking angels
- 35 Nintendo princess
- 39 Neural transmitter
- 40 Snitch
- 42 Eye drop
- 43 Spasm
- 44 Croc's kin
- 46 GI's address
- 47 Runs off to wed
- 49 Transforms (into)
- 51 Safe and sound

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

- 52 Dawn-of-mammals epoch
- 53 Ninnies
- 54 "— you!" (challenger's cry)
- DOWN**
- 1 Parisian palace
- 2 Tallied
- 3 Bit of advice
- 4 Folksinger Phil
- 5 Mexican money
- 6 Identified incorrectly
- 7 Elevator name
- 8 Calendar abbr.
- 9 Foot part
- 10 Fixation
- 11 Tizzies
- 13 Mariners
- 18 British rule of India
- 21 Auto style
- 23 Sire
- 25 Shred
- 27 "— who?"
- 29 Sentence parts
- 31 Fills up
- 32 Driven out
- 33 Highly ornate
- 34 Perched
- 36 Figure skater, at times
- 37 Author du Maurier
- 38 Got up
- 41 Actress Marisa
- 44 Richard of "Chicago"
- 45 Crucifix
- 48 Young dog
- 50 HDTV brand

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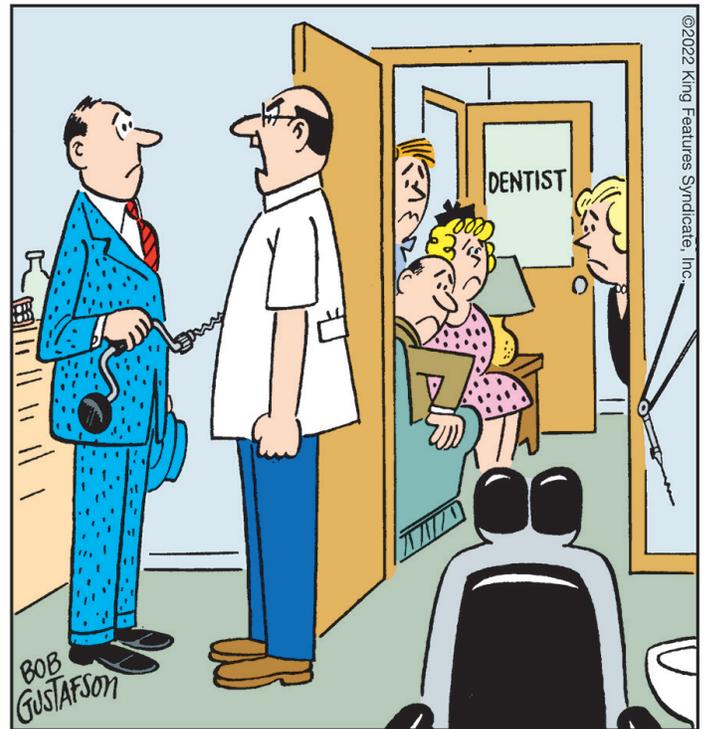
## — King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

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

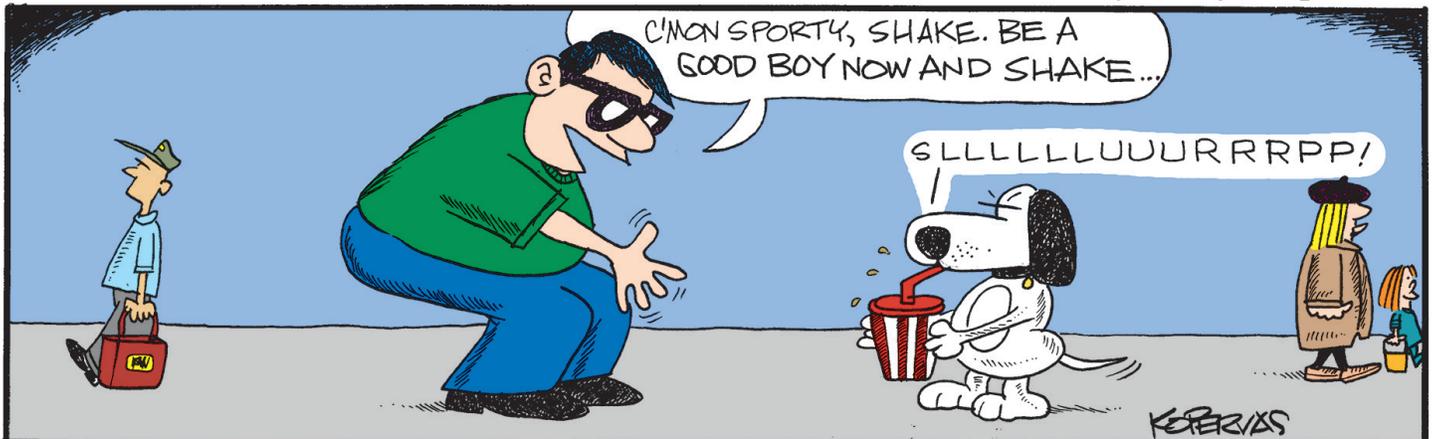
## LAFF - A - DAY



"I'd appreciate it, Peters, if you didn't return my woodworking tools during office hours!"

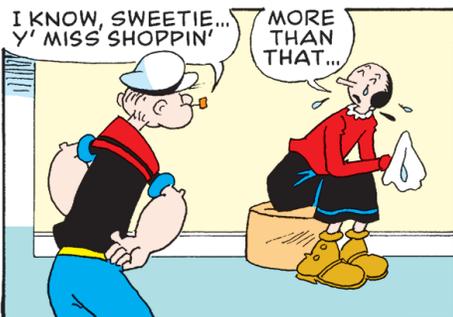
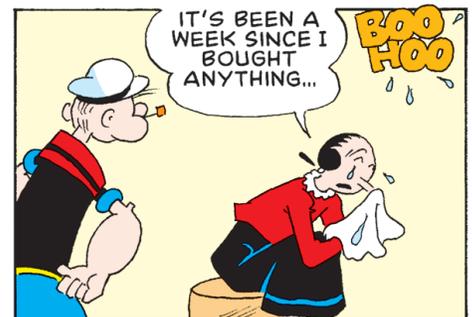
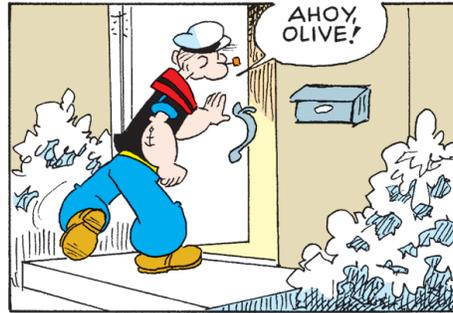
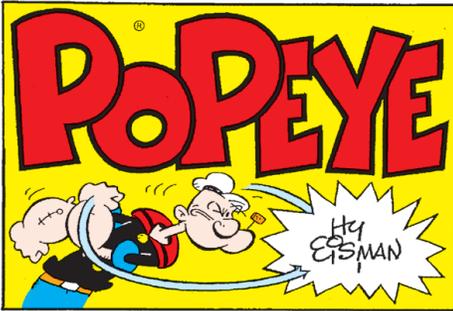
## Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



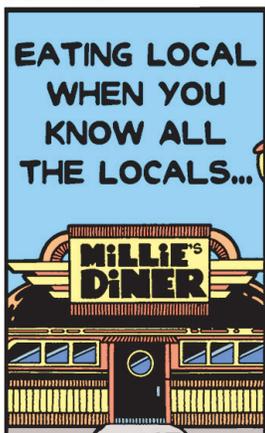
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## R.F.D.

by Mike Marland

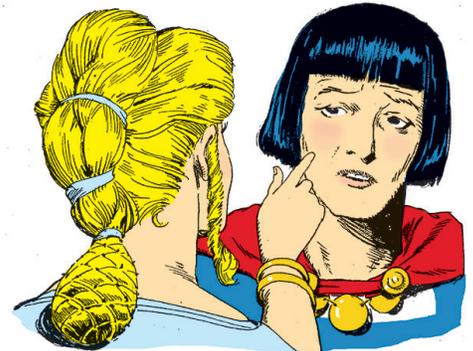


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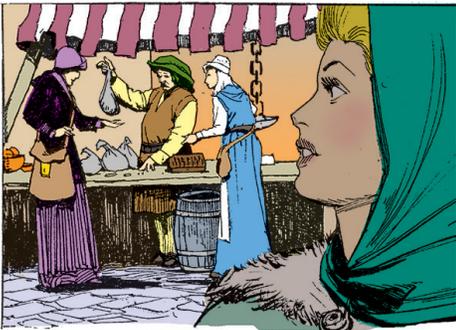
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VAL, STUNNED: "I HAVE NO WORDS..." ALETA, EXASPERATED: "NOR, APPARENTLY, HAVE YOU EYES. LIKE MOST MEN, YOU'RE BLIND TO THE OBVIOUS- MOST WOMENFOLK WORK THE ANCIENT CRAFT..."



"... BECAUSE WE MUST, IF WE ARE TO KEEP OUR FAMILIES SAFE FROM THE SPELLS AND WEIRDINGS OF OTHERS! I SAW DRACO'S WIFE IN THE MARKET, AND I KNEW YOUR COMPLAINTS OF CURSES WERE WELL FOUNDED -"

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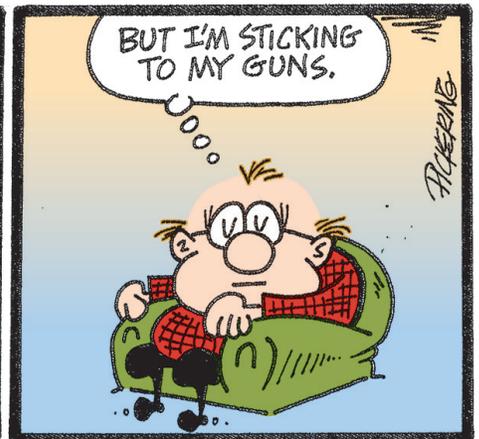
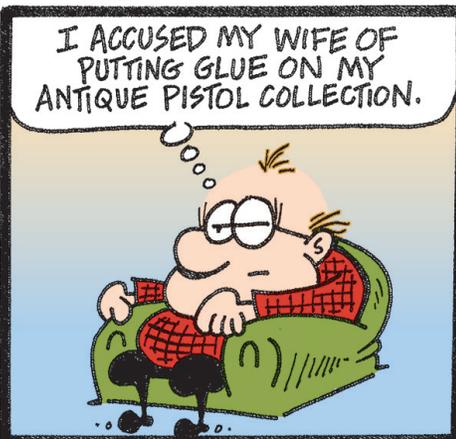


EVEN AS ALETA SPEAKS, UNDER A FULL MOON, BENEATH OAK AND MISTLETOE, MALDUBH CONJURES...

NEXT: *Something wicked*

## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Living on Social Security

We've now experienced our 2022 Social Security benefit amount for a couple of months, the 5.9% increase. How are you doing?

The problem is that the COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) is calculated from July to September the year before. Yes, prices were inching up then, but by December, we were seeing the writing on the wall when the annual Consumer Price Index was already up 7%.

Add to that the hefty Medicare Part B increase to cover the cost of Aduhelm, the Alzheimer's drug most of us will never take. Even though the price was forced down (from \$56,000 per patient per year to \$28,200 per year), our increased Medicare cost per month won't come down.

Seniors, especially those who only have Social Security for income, are struggling, and not only at the grocery store. Heating costs, gas for our vehicles, furniture, clothing ... they've all gone up.

The dilemma, some say, is that the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (which establishes the Cost of Living Adjustment) doesn't take into consideration our spending patterns. We don't have the same needs as wage earners and clerical workers, and spend much more on medical and housing, for example.

If you haven't retired yet or if you still have a paycheck coming in, reconsider any plans you have for retirement until your savings are substantial. When you think you have enough, do an experiment before you stop working: Calculate your expected Social Security benefit per month and live on that amount for a long time, at least several months. Six months would be better. What looks fine on paper might not actually be fine when it comes to living on those limited dollars.

And remember that the longer you wait before claiming Social Security, the higher your benefit will be when you do.

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1. What college football team has the longest home winning streak entering the 2022 season?

2. In what combat sport do Vasily “Dumpling” Khamotiskiy, Koa “Da Crazy Hawaiian” Viernes and Dawid “Zales” Zalewski compete?

3. How many consecutive free throws did the Minnesota Timberwolves’ Micheal Williams make in regular-season games from March to November 1993?

4. What horse racing track, located in Queens, New York, is the site of the Gotham Stakes?

5. The CBS sitcom “How We Roll” was inspired by the life and career of what PBA Tour bowler?

6. Trackhouse Racing Team, which made its NASCAR debut in 2021, is owned by former racecar driver Justin Marks and what pop-music superstar?

7. What former heavyweight boxing champion was elected mayor of Kyiv,



by Ryan A. Berenz

Ukraine, in 2014?

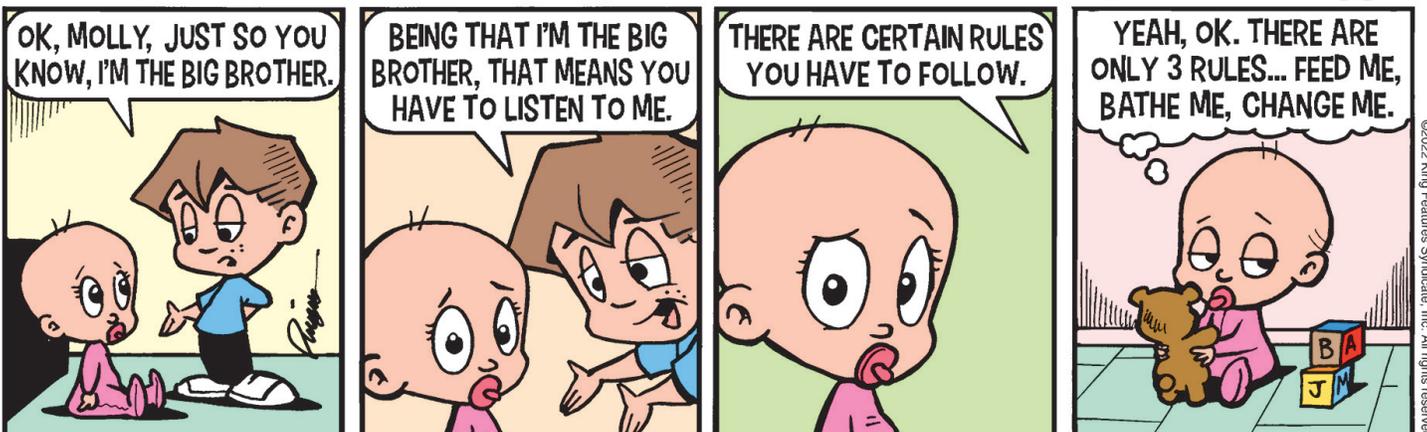
## Answers

1. The Clemson Tigers, with 34.
2. Slap fighting.
3. 97, an NBA record.
4. Aqueduct Racetrack.
5. Tom Smallwood.
6. Pitbull.
7. Vitali Klitschko.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





## Roommate Stuck With Unwanted Kitten

**DEAR PAW'S CORNER:** The local shelter in our college town does not allow college students to adopt pets. However, my roommate managed to get around the rule by using her boyfriend's address, and she brought a kitten into our dorm. I told her to take it back, as pets are not allowed in the dorm (except for service animals). She ignored me. Two weeks later, she dropped out of school and moved in with her boyfriend, leaving behind most of her stuff — and the kitten! If I tell our R.A. I could get in trouble. What can I do? I don't want anyone to know what college I'm at, so sign me — *Beth in Boston*

**DEAR BETH:** Honesty is the best policy here, and the welfare of the kit-

ten is at stake. Contact the shelter right away. Explain what happened with your roommate, that you're caring for the kitten as she's abandoned it, but that you aren't allowed to keep it.

Next, tell your R.A. what happened. Call your parents, too, so they're aware of the problem and will support you if there's an issue with the school.

Your roommate used either her name or her boyfriend's name and his address. The shelter will have this on file, so they can verify that you're not the one who's responsible for the kitten.

They'll give you instructions on how to bring the kitten back and surrender it to them. If there's a surrender fee, they should bill the boyfriend and your ex-roommate. Likewise, any penalties assessed by the college should fall on your ex-roommate.

*Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).*

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## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

\* Maurice Sendak's beloved kids' classic "Where the Wild Things Are" was originally titled "Where the Wild Horses Are." Why the change in title? Sendak realized he was unable to draw horses.

\* Rapper Lil' Wayne originally went by the moniker "Shrimp Daddy."

\* Not ones to marry in haste and repent at leisure, a Paraguayan couple set up housekeeping in 1933. After 80 years, eight children and 50 grandchildren, the 103-year-old groom finally said a formal "I do" to his 99-year-old bride.

\* The prize money for winning the Monopoly World Championship is \$20,580 -- the same amount of money there is in the game's bank.

\* Modern students who complain about the amount of homework they're issued might well wish they'd lived in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when doctors crusaded against it because they believed it was causing children to become wan, weak and nervous. In 1901, California even banned homework for anyone under the age of 15.

\* Over a 24-year career, Roman charioteer Gaius Appuleius Diocles amassed an astonishing fortune worth 35,863,120 sesterces (an ancient Roman coin), or roughly \$15 billion in today's dollars, making him the highest-paid athlete of all time.

\* In January 2021, the first commercial 3D-printed house in the U.S. went on sale for \$299,000.

\* The term "rum bubber," which originated in the 16th century, referred to a thief who specialized in stealing silver tankards from inns and pubs.

\* An actual "chill pill," which could even be made at home, was used in the late 1800s to remedy chills associated with a high fever.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "We should live, act, and say nothing to the injury of anyone. It is not only best as a matter of principle, but it is the path to peace and honor." -- Robert E. Lee

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## THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

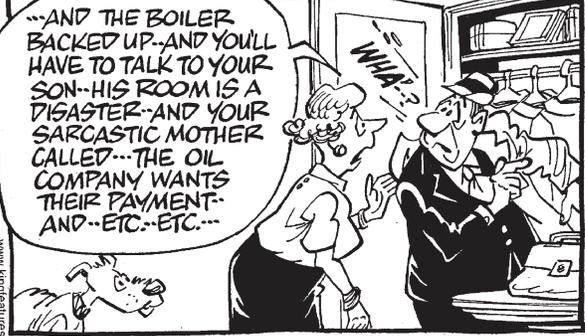
FAMOUS LAST WORDS--"MY MOTHER-IN-LAW IS ONLY GOING TO STAY THREE DAYS..."



THANKS TO SHAWN DOROCIAC, SARASOTA, FL.

## BY AL SCADUTO

BIG MEN AT HOME--THE DEPARTMENT-STORE COMPLAINT MANAGER COMES HOME TO A QUIET, PEACEFUL EVENING... OH, YEAH: RI-I-I-GHT!



THANKS TO R. CANNOFER, CLEVELAND, OHIO

LOOK WHO'S TALKING DEPT--THE TWO-PACK-A-DAY MAN IS FOREVER PREACHING HEALTH HINTS... AFTER LIGHTING UP ANOTHER CIGGIE, OF COURSE...



THANKS TO NO NAME, NO ADDRESS, NO NOTHING



## Flowers for Easter decorating

- Lilies
- Daisies
- Tulips
- Hydrangeas
- Daffodils
- Azaleas
- Hyacinths
- Orchids
- Bluebells
- Roses
- Sweet Peas
- Chrysanthemums

These colorful beauties make wonderful table centerpieces, small place setting markers, door wreaths, windowbox drama, potted scenery for your patio, mailbox brighteners or gifts for loved ones.

- Brenda Weaver

Source: www.bustle.com

## VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

### Contaminated Drinking Water at U.S. Bases

We've known for years about the dry-cleaning chemicals and leaking fuel tanks contaminating the water at Camp Lejeune. It went on for decades (1953-1987) with multiple generations being affected before the Department of Veterans Affairs finally allowed claims for disability from all the illnesses caused by the water. But Lejeune isn't the only one.

Last year, word started surfacing about chemicals in the water at the Pease Air Base with enough of a hue and cry that health officials called for people to sign up in a health study by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Then there's Fort Ord. It was put on the Superfund's National Priorities List in 1990 due to leaking petroleum tanks underground.

Now there's news from Hawaii, where families at Pearl Harbor-Hickam Field are concerned about petroleum and lead in the drinking water, including in a child-development center. Then there's the fuel in the drinking water in 9,000 of their homes, leading to families being cleared out and sent to motels. Even after the lines were flushed, petroleum remained. Now residents are asking that the VA cover them as Camp Lejeune was (finally) covered, except they don't want to wait for so many years.

If you and your family were stationed at any military base (especially if it had an airport and the use of fire-suppressant foam) and if any of you have health problems, dig into the cause. Start online with the Environmental Working Group (EWG.org) and put "military bases" in the search box. Find the map showing 678 military installations with suspect PFAS in the water, and click on any base on the map to see test results for that location.

Do a search online for bases with contaminated water. You'll be shocked at the list.

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



## National Ag Week—Thank a Farmer!

As you may know, this week is National Ag Week. Agriculture is the number one industry in South Dakota and the lifeblood of not only our state, but our country and our world.

Farmers, ranchers, and producers work hard every day, and almost never get a day off. They toil not to simply provide for their family, but to provide food and other basic materials to sustain human life—your life. It is often a thankless task and goes unnoticed by many—in 2020, 54% of young Americans reported they've never seen a cow in real life.

The farmers I know want the best for their animals and work to keep them safe and healthy. They know they must be good stewards of the land and environment because they are the ones who will be working on it for years to come. The average producer views farming and ranching as a way of life, not just a paycheck. That is especially clear now, when most farmers and producers are facing increased prices for feed, seed, fertilizer, and pesticides. Their income relies on market prices, and the market is incredibly volatile.

This week, I had the privilege of meeting some of our producers when I toured the Kasemeister Creamery in Frankfort. I learned about the ingenuity that drives the process of ensuring quality dairy products. I also had the opportunity to talk to farmers across the state when I joined a town hall with producers to discuss the important role U.S. agricultural exports have in supporting the rural economy. Ag exports topped \$177 billion last year, and this number only keeps increasing. American farmers are feeding the world.

Farmers deserve our support because they support us. If the volatility in the economy for the past two years has impacted you in any way—you can bet it has impacted our farmers and producers just as much, if not more. Their dedication to agriculture and unwavering steadfastness to produce our basic needs cannot be overlooked.

Next time you see one, remember to thank a farmer.

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## Taking Care of People

South Dakota is in the middle of a healthcare boom. While the strain of the pandemic has challenged this industry across the country, our state has remained resilient.

A new study from WalletHub ranked South Dakota the No. 1 best state for doctors to work in. Last year, that same firm ranked our state in the Top 10 for work environment for nurses.

South Dakota must continue to raise the bar for other healthcare workers. We can do that by meeting the needs of the industry. Last fall, I joined our state's largest healthcare providers in recruiting nurses to move to our state. But we also need to generate home-grown talent.

This session, I fought for funding to expand healthcare programs at our colleges and universities. Today, I joined Southeast Technical College in celebrating its forthcoming Health Sciences Clinical Simulation Center. The state is providing the funding for cutting-edge simulation equipment and learning laboratories to support the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN), Registered Nursing (RN), Sonography, and Surgical Technologist programs.

We are also expanding our accelerated nursing program through a partnership with South Dakota State University and Northern State University. Strengthening this career pipeline will help us ensure we provide opportunities for our children and grandchildren to succeed in this field. But South Dakotans also need better healthcare today.

That's why I supported purchasing cutting-edge equipment for EMTs. This new technology will save lives. We're expanding telehealth capabilities to allow EMTs to connect patients with doctors and deliver that care faster.

In the last three years, our state has made great strides to increase access to healthcare. We created a robust telehealth system. We recognized licenses for out-of-state healthcare professionals moving to South Dakota. We guaranteed transparent prices for South Dakotans when dealing with their insurance companies. We launched a successful campaign to increase awareness of available substance use disorder treatment.

And thanks to \$15 million in federal funding, South Dakota will soon be one step closer to expanding Appropriate Regional Facilities to each of five regions where people experiencing mental health crises can get the short-term care they need. Our state is leading the way. We want to help people get the care they need at a place that is close to home. In the process, we will prevent our jails from becoming mental health holding centers.

On March 18th, I signed into law several bills focused on taking care of people in South Dakota. These bills range from strengthening our fight against opioid addiction to prohibiting discrimination in organ transplants. The state is helping Lyman County to build a new nursing facility, and we are constructing a new state public health lab to support our state's healthcare industry.

Together, we will raise the bar and set a new standard of healthcare in South Dakota.

**John Thune**  
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



## Protecting Your Hard-Earned Money

Tax Day 2022 is knocking on the door. If you asked the South Dakotans who are diligently prepping their tax returns, I doubt the IRS is viewed favorably by few, if any of them. In fact, not that people sit at home and rank their favorite federal agencies, but if they did, my guess is that the tax-enforcing agency, which often looms large over the American people, would rank near the bottom. It has unfortunately gained a reputation for its overzealous authority and poor customer service – the inability to simply answer phone calls, for example – and last tax filing season was particularly miserable for taxpayers.

In addition to bad customer service, serious concerns have been raised about the agency's inability to properly handle confidential taxpayer information. In fact, as recently as last year, the IRS faced a massive leak or hack of private taxpayer information – information that somehow ended up in the hands of ProPublica, an outfit that promotes progressive causes, which last June went on to publish taxpayers' private information. Now, nearly one year later, neither the Treasury Department nor the IRS have provided any meaningful follow-up about the apparent data breach, nor has anyone been held accountable for this major breach of trust.

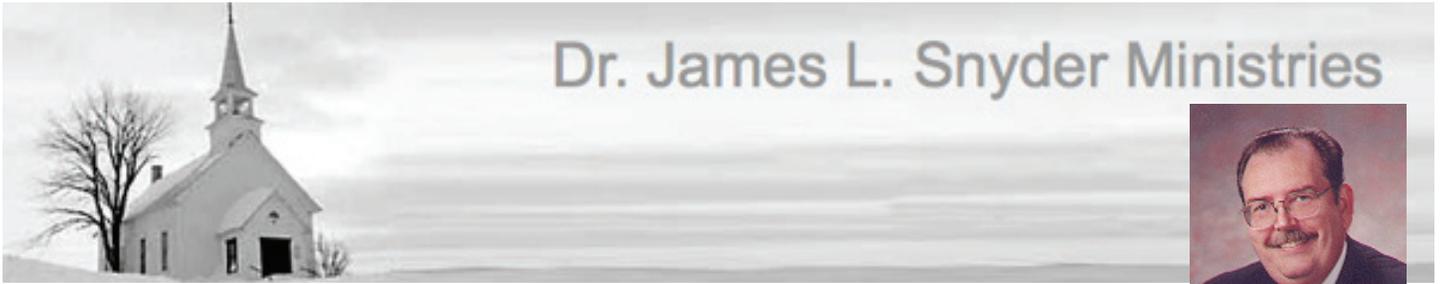
Rather than prioritizing accountability and efficiency, Democrats instead focused on massively expanding the IRS – both in the number of agents and the agency's reach into private citizens' lives. They wanted to require banks, credit unions, and other financial service providers to report to the IRS when a business or customer made total deposits or withdrawals that exceeded a certain amount – \$600 if the president had his way. Essentially, anyone who has a job or has saved a bit of money could have been subject to a Washington bureaucrat snooping through his or her checking account. Clearly, these partisan proposals had little to do with improving taxpayer services or increasing agency accountability. Democrats' main interest in handing the IRS a supersized budget increase – proposing to nearly double the agency's size – was to help pay for their partisan tax-and-spending spree.

Fortunately, the Democrats' partisan crusade has stalled – hopefully permanently. Any resources going to the IRS must be paired with serious reform, including measures to improve customer service, ensure that existing resources are being used efficiently, and promote smarter and more effective audits. I am a cosponsor of a bill, the Tax Gap Reform and IRS Enforcement Act, which would codify additional protections for taxpayers against IRS overreach. This legislation would help ensure that the IRS is not able to target taxpayers for their political and ideological beliefs, and it would prohibit the kind of bank reporting requirements that Democrats sought to impose in their "Build Back Better" spending spree. It would also take steps to improve taxpayer services, increase IRS expertise, and better develop the information we have on the tax gap – the difference between taxes owed and taxes paid.

South Dakota taxpayers hired me to be a good steward of their hard-earned money, and I am doing everything in my power to protect every single dollar that is sent to Washington. I hope we'll be able to move away from Democrats' intrusive and reckless Build Back Better proposals and toward bipartisan efforts to reform the IRS and ensure that taxpayers can reliably depend on the agency.

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## The BOGO Queen Has Left the Building

When it comes to shopping, I am three coupons short of sanity. I have never liked going shopping unless it has to do with books. Then I'm on my turf.

When first married, I did go grocery shopping once but have never since been asked to do it again. I don't want to know the reason; I will just accept the situation.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is a different story, and is why I call her the BOGO Queen. She has earned this title a thousand times.

It took me a long time to understand what the word BOGO meant, then the wife explained it to a leader like me, Buy One Get One.

If anybody knows anything about BOGO, it is my wife. Her whole shopping agenda is based upon this. She will never buy one thing if she can get a second one for free. I like that sort of thing. Anything that is "free" is okay with me.

She will search several times a week for these BOGO coupons on her computer. Every once in a while, I will hear her say, "That's what I'm looking for." Then I will hear several clicks, and soon the printer will be printing out dozens of coupons for the day.

She knows every store within 100 miles and their inventory and when they are going to have a BOGO sale. I understand she knows that by searching the Internet. She knows what BOGO coupon to print and where to go to find them and then where to use them.

The only thing that worries me is when she says, "Honey, could I borrow your truck for the day?"

That's not good news on any level. But then I have a hard time saying no. You can suspect the outcome. That's why I never keep my fuel tank full just in case. If she uses it she has to put gas in it. That's not BOGO that is BINGO.

I must confess that I do have an ice cream fetish. I need to have ice cream at the end of the day or the day is not complete. My favorite ice cream is the one I'm eating at the time.

I'm delighted to say there is enough ice cream in the refrigerator to last two months because of these BOGO coupons. But, of course, I could speed up my eating and bring it down to one month. Nobody would know.

If I am in need of anything, say aftershave, all I need to do is mention the fact that I am out of aftershave. Within the next 10 minutes, the BOGO Queen will have found a dozen BOGO aftershave coupons for her next trip to the store.

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Our cupboards are filled with all kinds of groceries and food items in other things of which I have no idea.

Recently, when the BOGO Queen was out coupon shopping, I ran across a cache of cookies hiding in one of the cupboards. It was a "happy dance" moment for me. Then, with a great deal of caution, I opened one box and took out a cookie.

I surely enjoyed that cookie, knowing that nobody knew that I was enjoying that cookie.

About an hour later, the BOGO Queen came home and put her shopping bags on the kitchen table.

She stopped for a moment, looked at me rather curiously, and said, "You did not find the cookies, did you?"

How she knew I found them, I will never know. I tried to stutter and change the subject and deny everything. But nothing worked.

Then I came up with an idea.

"You bought those cookies with a BOGO coupon, right?"

I smiled as I asked the question.

She looked at me and said, "Yes, I think you're right." And she smiled as she was telling me that.

"I," replying very cautiously, "only ate the free one."

She smiled a rather curious smile at me and did not know what to say.

Whoever came up with this BOGO idea, I would like to congratulate them. And there are several reasons why.

First of all, it keeps my wife busy following through with all these BOGO coupons. How she can find so many at any given time is beyond my imagination. But, she does and spends quite a bit of time finding the coupon and then going to the stores and purchasing those BOGO products.

It's hard to imagine how much money she has saved us these many years.

Second, anything that is free will find welcoming arms with me. I love things that are free as long as they really are free. I love things that occupy my wife in a very positive way. And boy, does she do a good job in this area.

As I was going over this, I thought of a very special Bible verse.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

A generous spirit does have its rewards. What I have is a reflection of what I have given. I have discovered that the more I give the more I get. Of course, if I only give to get I have the wrong attitude.

## EARTHTALK ™



**Waste from disposable personal protective equipment is piling up. What can be done about making and using more sustainable forms of PPE?** Credit: Anna Shvets, Pexels.

Dear EarthTalk: I've heard that PPE waste is a growing environmental burden these days. Is anyone working on ways to solve this problem?  
-- B. Jackson,  
Jewett City, MD

From healthcare workers and teachers, grocery clerks and students, no one has escaped the increased need for personal protective equipment (PPE) the past two years. Though inarguably a critical agent in preventing the spread of disease, PPE has inadvertently created a new "shadow pandemic"—billions of these single-use items now line streets and parking lots and pollute oceans. Globally, it is estimated that 129 billion facemasks and 65 million pairs of gloves are disposed of each month. "Other than burning [PPE], there is really nothing we can do," says Sander Defruyt, head of the plastics team at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a charity aimed at eliminating waste and pollution. "It's designed to be waste."

The issue isn't PPE itself; it's single-use PPE made from non-reusable materials. Designed to be leak-proof and tear-resistant, disposable PPE can't be washed and reused, since the cleaning process would compromise the protective integrity. Deepening an already astounding waste mismanagement problem, these throwaway items end up as potentially contaminated pollution simply because they have to.

Luckily, the problem has not gone unnoticed. In the medical community, the case for reusable PPE has gained traction as institutions have developed methods and materials to lengthen the lifecycle of protective gear. Burlington Medical, a maker of durable, reusable medical garments, increased production of their healthcare clothing supplies by 500 percent during the pandemic. They use sustainable materials in their process and operate an on-site medical laundry facility to sterilize PPE. Studies on mask filtration by the Nonwovens Institute (NWI) at North Carolina State led to a partnership with NatureWorks to develop new technology that allows for mask reuse even after chemical cleaning. Globally, companies are testing science-backed efforts to improve mask viability without compromising safety.

Those outside the medical community have access to a variety of sustainable PPE options. French company Geochanvre makes 100 percent biodegradable face masks from hemp, including a recyclable band. Change Plastic for Good developed an additive to make plastic biodegradable, now used to create masks, and MEDU Protection offers washable medical PPE that can be returned for disinfecting and conversion into scrubs and bags. EcoGreen Communities offers compostable face masks, reusable gloves and reduced carbon medical aprons.

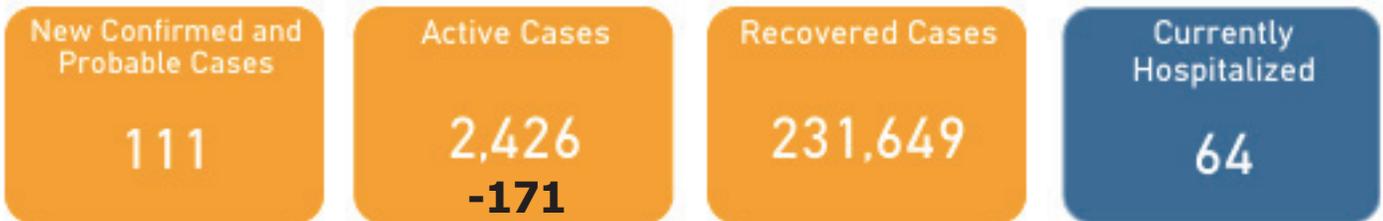
The most sustainable option is undoubtedly reusable PPE, but the use of plastic and other disposable protective gear isn't going away anytime soon. Rather than tossing in the garbage, there is a way to recycle some of these items. TerraCycle offers paid recycling services that collect, inspect and repurpose PPE through a detailed process available through their website, and Thermal Compaction Group (TCG) out of Wales has developed a process that re-engineers specific PPE to resell to the plastics industry.

"Plastics are not the problem; the way the human race discards plastic remains the issue," says Tim Hourahine, compliance manager at TCG. With PPE becoming part of our daily routine, we have alternative solutions to sustain both our health and the environment.

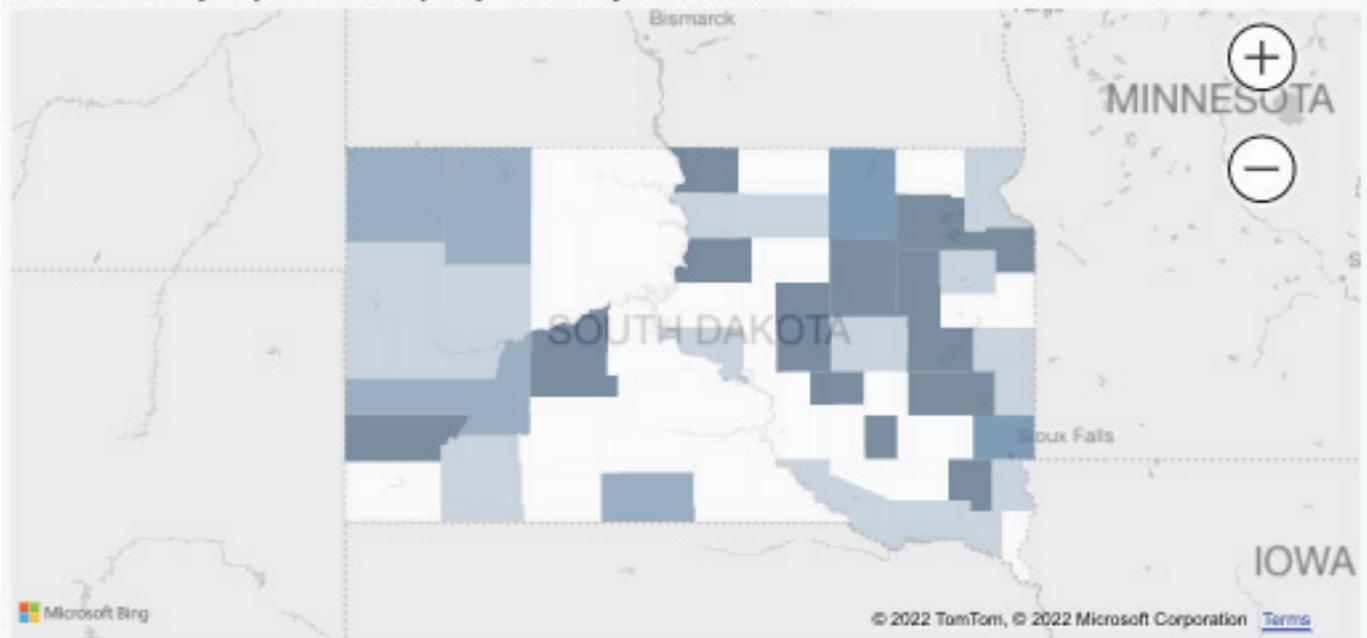
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## South Dakota COVID-19 Report



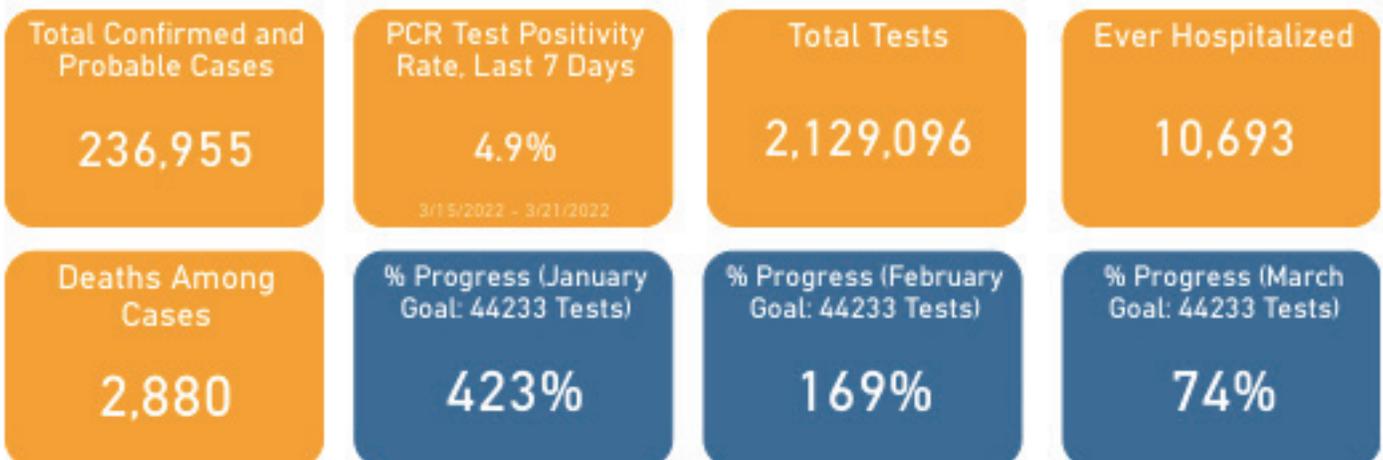
Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread Low Moderate Substantial High

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

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>



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## Brown County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

8

Active Cases

135  
--17

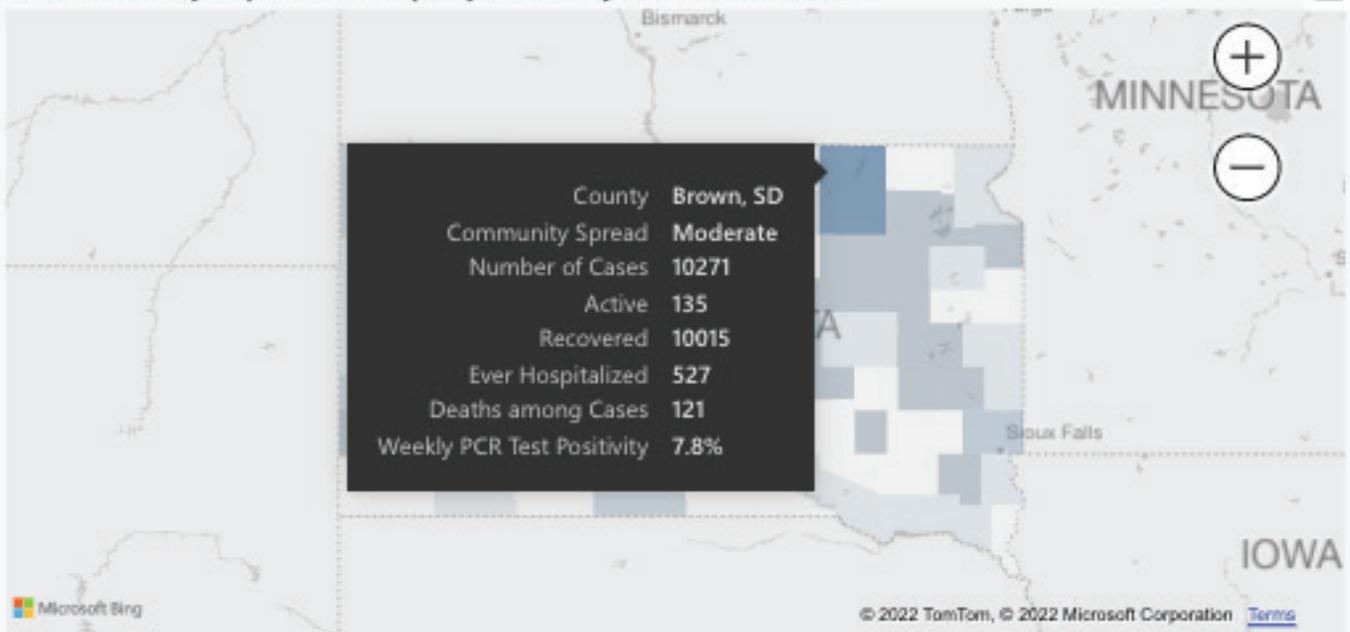
Recovered Cases

10,015

Currently Hospitalized

64

### 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.

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

10,271

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

11.8%

3/15/2022 - 3/21/2022

Total Tests

102,543

Ever Hospitalized

527

Deaths Among Cases

121

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

423%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

169%

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

74%

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## Day County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

0

Active Cases

26  
-1

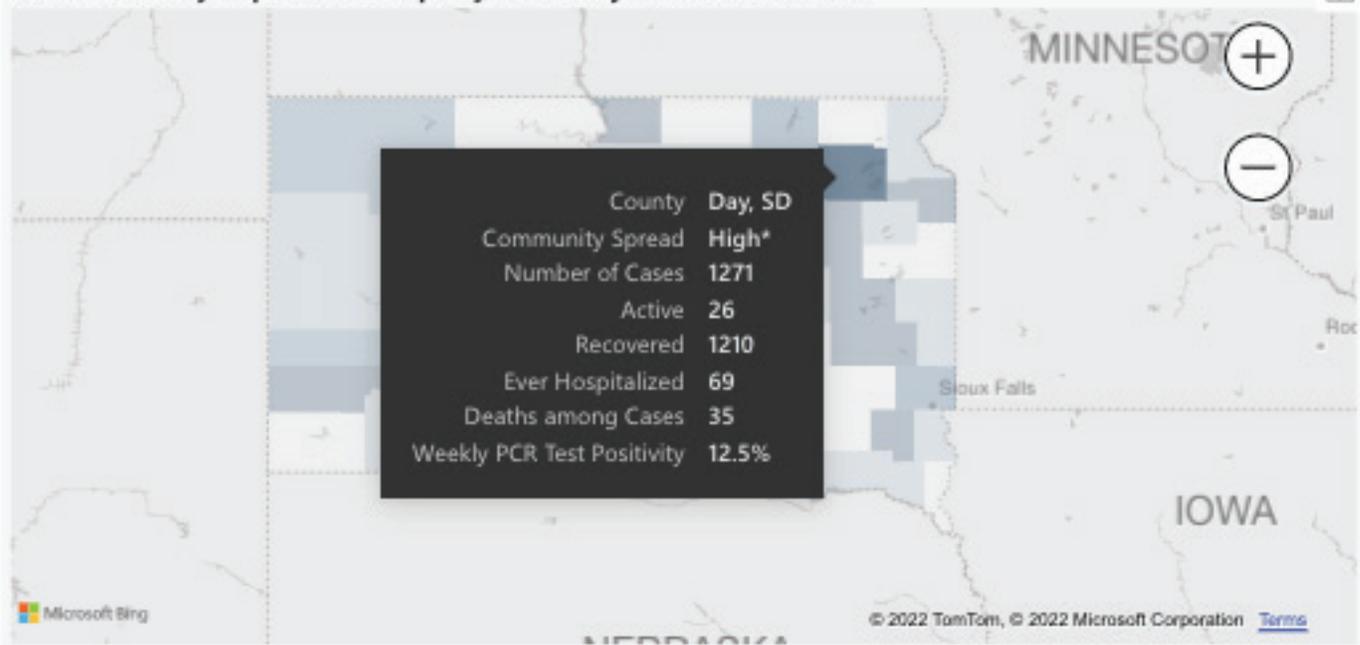
Recovered Cases

1,210

Currently Hospitalized

64

### 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.

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

1,271

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

13.8%

3/15/2022 - 3/21/2022

Total Tests

16,757

Ever Hospitalized

69

Deaths Among Cases

35

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

423%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

169%

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

74%

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## COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Currently Hospitalized	<b>-6</b>	64
Active Cases		2426
Deaths Among Cases	<b>+5</b>	2880
Ever Hospitalized		10693
Recovered Cases		231649
Total Cases		236955

## SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	125247	1306
Male	111708	1574

## VARIANT CASES OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Variant	# of Cases
Delta (B.1.617.2 & AY lineages)	1714
Omicron (B.1.1.529 & BA lineages)	980
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	15869	3
10-19 years	28751	2
20-29 years	41576	14
30-39 years	40264	51
40-49 years	33242	85
50-59 years	30446	221
60-69 years	25113	465
70-79 years	13143	675
80+ years	8551	1364

## RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian / Pacific Islander	3263	1%
Black	5827	2%
Hispanic	10200	4%
Native American	30163	13%
Other	1979	1%
Unknown	4435	2%
White	181088	76%

## Groton Area COVID-19 Report

Groton Area School District

**No reported cases**

Active COVID-19 Cases

Updated March 25, 2022; 1:07 PM

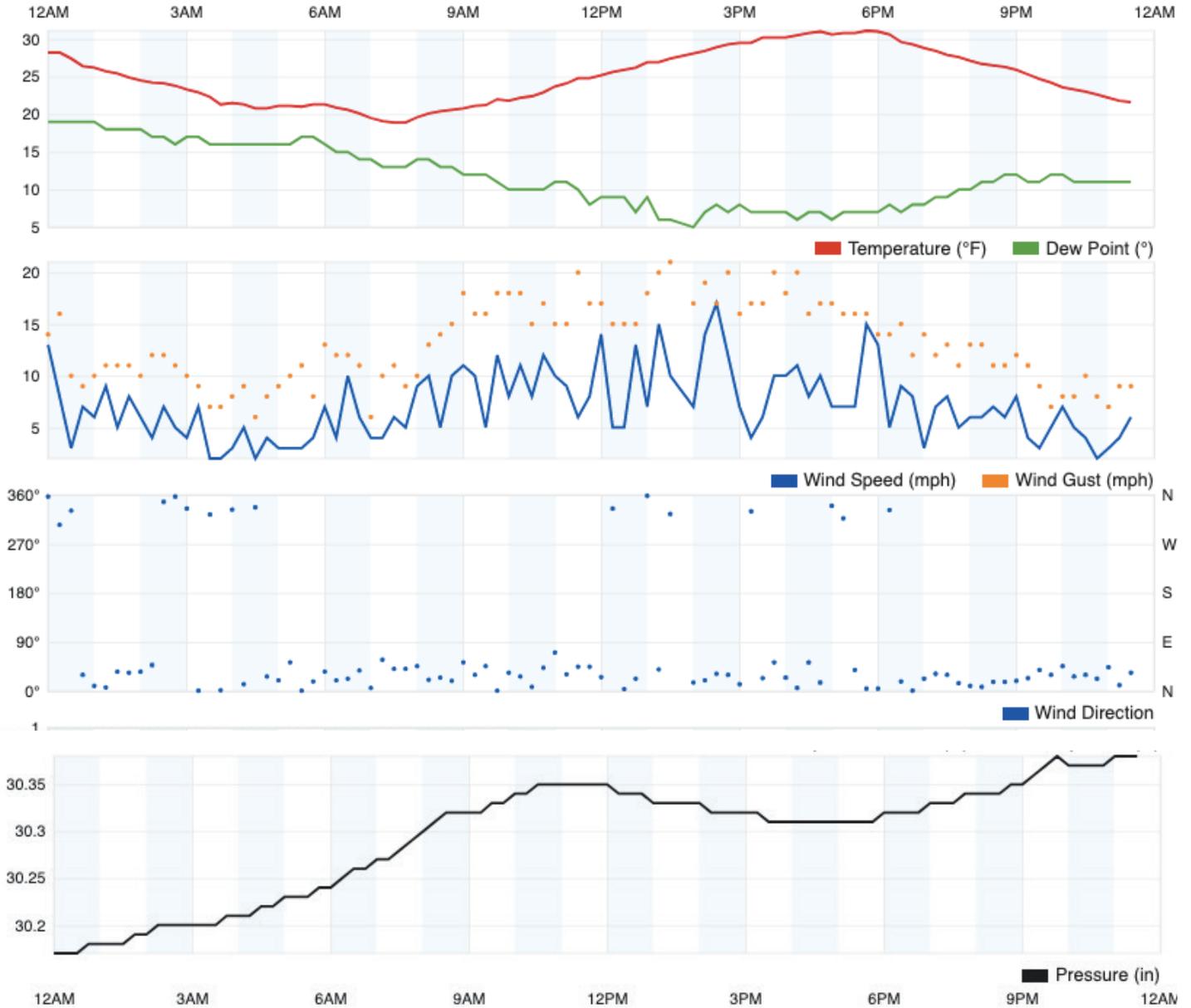
J	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	1	1	S	T
K	G										0	1	2	t	o
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0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Change **-1** 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 **-1** 0 0 0 0 **-2**

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 41 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 26 °F

Monday



Partly Sunny  
and Breezy

High: 54 °F

Monday  
Night



Mostly Cloudy  
and Breezy

Low: 35 °F

Tuesday



Breezy.  
Mostly Cloudy  
then Chance  
Rain

High: 50 °F

## Dry Weather Continues Today

Highs in the lower 30s to the mid 50s

- Coolest across northeastern SD/western MN
- Breezy across west central SD

 *Breezy*



Lows 21 to 34°



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD



[weather.gov/Aberdeen](http://weather.gov/Aberdeen)

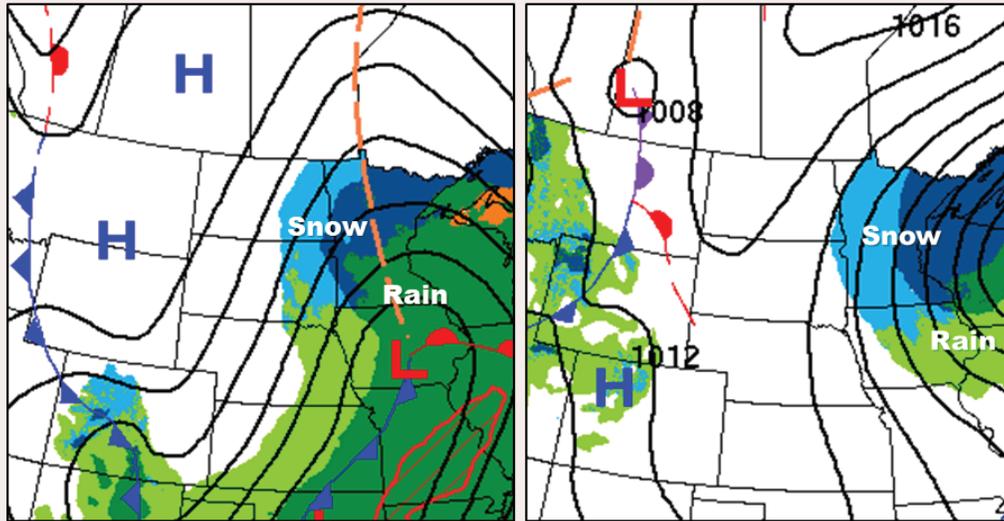
High pressure system over the northern parts of the country will keep the weather quiet again for today. Overnight lows will not be as cold with warmer temperatures expected for Monday!

## Mid-Week Storm System

7am Wednesday

7am Thursday

Updated: 3/27/2022 4:39 AM CT  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



\*Note: Mixed precipitation and windy conditions are probable with this system also

### What We Know

Low pressure moving across the plains Tuesday through Wednesday. Rain changing to snow Tuesday into Tuesday night.

### What We Don't Know

Specific snow amounts, as well as duration of rain and/or snow. Exact precipitation changeover times are also uncertain. Overall impacts uncertain – although likely minor.

### What You Can Do

Keep monitoring the weather forecast Tuesday night through Wednesday.

A storm system will be moving east across the plains Tuesday through Wednesday. This system will likely spread rain into the area Tuesday afternoon and evening, with rain changing to snow later Tuesday night. Snow chances will continue through Wednesday morning, mainly for eastern portions of the forecast area. Snow amounts are somewhat uncertain at this point, given temperatures close to freezing producing a mix of rain and snow, and considering the uncertainty of when rain will actually switch over to snow. Amounts and overall impacts look to be minor at this time. Windy conditions can also be expected as this storm moves across the plains.

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## Today in Weather History

March 27, 1993: Rain and rapid snowmelt caused the Big Sioux and Vermillion Rivers to rise to 1 to 8 feet above flood stage March 26th through March 31st, 1993. The worst of the flooding occurred in far southeast South Dakota where large areas of farmland were under water. The floodwaters closed at least four state highways in southeast South Dakota and blocked dozens of smaller roads in the east. Large chunks of ice on the Big Sioux led to many temporary ice jams. The ice jams took out fences and washed out roads. In some areas, the ice had to be pushed off of the streets with tractors.

1890: The middle Mississippi Valley saw a significant tornado outbreak on this day with 24, estimated F2 or stronger tornadoes impacting the area. Tornadoes killed at least 146 people. The most notable of the tornadoes was an estimated F4 that carved a path from the Parkland neighborhood to Crescent Hill in Louisville, Kentucky. This tornado destroyed 766 buildings and killed an estimated 76 to 120 people. Most of the deaths occurred when the Falls City Hall collapsed.

1931: A blizzard struck western Kansas and adjoining states was called the "worst since January 1888". Twenty children, ages seven to fourteen, were stranded in a makeshift school bus for 33 hours during this blizzard.

1946: Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada thawed out as the mercury soared to 74 degrees, their warmest March temperature on record.

1950 - A three day snowstorm in the High Plains Region finally came to an end. The storm produced 34 inches of snow in 24 hours at Dumont, located in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and a total of 50 inches. (David Ludlum)

1964: Great Alaskan earthquake left at least 100 dead in Anchorage, Alaska. The magnitude 9.2 quake is the largest in US history and the second strongest worldwide. Waves reached 103 feet above the low - tide mark.

1984 - The temperature at Brownsville, TX, soared to 106 degrees, and Cotulla, TX, reached 108 degrees, equaling the March record for the U.S. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - The second blizzard in less than a week hit eastern Colorado and western Kansas. Snowfall totals ranged up to 24 inches at San Isabel CO. Winds gusted to 50 mph at Goodland KS. The high winds piled snow into massive drifts, closing roads for days and killing thousands of cattle. Snow drifts thirty feet high were reported in northwest Kansas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Temperatures rose quickly, then dropped just as rapidly, in the central U.S. Eight cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 80s. In southeastern Colorado, the temperature at Lamar CO reached 91 degrees. Strong southerly winds gusted to 63 mph at Gage OK. Strong northwesterly winds, gusting to 61 mph at Goodland KS, then proceeded to usher much colder air into the area. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in the south central U.S. Two tornadoes were reported, and there were 77 other reports of large hail and damaging winds. Baseball size hail was reported at Willow OK and Bartlesville OK. Twenty-six cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Yankton SD with a reading of 84 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Temperatures dipped into the teens and single numbers in the northeastern U.S. Scranton PA tied their record for the date with a morning low of 18 degrees. Temperatures warmed into the 60s and lower 70s in the Pacific Northwest. The afternoon high of 65 degrees at Astoria OR equalled their record for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1994: The Southeastern Palm Sunday Tornado Outbreak occurred on this date. What began as a peaceful Palm Sunday quickly changed to a historic day in weather history when a powerful tornado ripped through southern Alabama and Georgia. By the time the storm was over, 22 people were dead, and 92 were injured. The F4 tornado cut a 50-mile path from Ragland in St. Clair, County Alabama to the Georgia line. The storm touched down near Ragland at 10:51 am. The storm struck Ohatchee than roared across northeastern Calhoun County, passing near Piedmont and hitting Goshen in Cherokee County. The most disastrous damage occurred at Goshen, where the twister struck the Goshen United Methodist Church at 11:37 am. 20 people were killed at the church, which did not hear the tornado warning issued 10 minutes earlier by the National Weather Service in Birmingham. A tornado watch had been released at 9:30 am. Following the tornadoes, Vice President Al Gore pledged to extend NOAA Weatheradio coverage into the areas affected by the twisters, which had previously been unable to receive the alarm signals.

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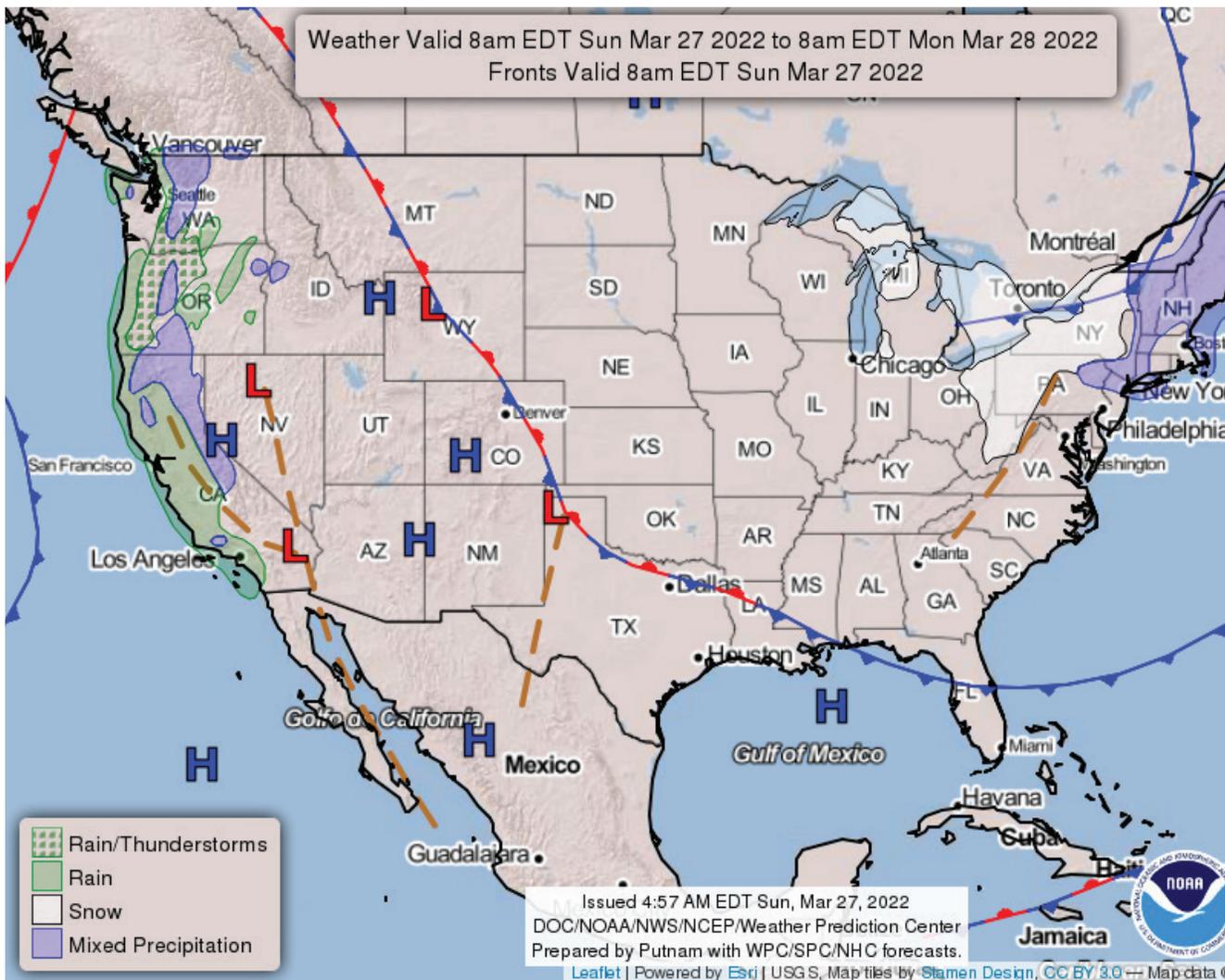
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 31.1 °F at 5:45 PM**  
**Low Temp: 18.9 °F at 7:45 AM**  
**Wind: 21 mph at 1:30 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

Day length: 12 hours, 35 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 83 in 1946  
Record Low: -12 in 1913  
Average High: 48°F  
Average Low: 24°F  
Average Precip in Mar.: 0.74  
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.02  
Average Precip to date: 1.91  
Precip Year to Date: 0.99  
Sunset Tonight: 7:55:23 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:18:03 AM



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## LOOK UP AND BE LIFTED UP!

Wherever we look, we find people who are filled with despair and discouragement. Their hearts have been broken and their optimism beat down. Issues and problems have overcome them. Everywhere they went and everywhere they looked they heard the same message: "Give up! There's nothing here for you."

No doubt most of us have felt that way.

When the lights go out at the end of the day, and we are surrounded by darkness and fear; when there is no place to hide and no arms to embrace us; when we think that we have tried everything and there's nothing left for us to hope for; does anyone anywhere have a word of advice or comfort for us?

Indeed there is: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Notice the words: "lift up!"

All too often it is all too easy to "give up" and not "look up." But the Psalmist reminds us that our God transcends the uncertainties and difficulties, the pain and suffering, the loss and grief of this world. We are on the earth but must look up to heaven. We need help far beyond our own limited resources and the resources of others. We need wisdom that exceeds human wisdom. Unfortunately, we are all infected with a false sense of self-sufficiency.

But when we lift our eyes to heaven, we lift them up to the one Who created the universe. What love He has to bestow upon us and what strength is ours for the asking!

Prayer: Lord, we turn our eyes and ears, minds and hearts heavenward to find Your joy and peace. We know our help comes from You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1-2

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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  
01/29/2023 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)

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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

01-20-26-31-33

(one, twenty, twenty-six, thirty-one, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

06-20-22-29-40, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 4

(six, twenty, twenty-two, twenty-nine, forty; Star Ball: nine; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$9.63 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$60 million

Powerball

02-10-50-59-61, Powerball: 6, Power Play: 3

(two, ten, fifty, fifty-nine, sixty-one; Powerball: six; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$181 million

## Hillmon's 17 put Michigan women past S. Dakota in Sweet 16

By CLIFF BRUNT AP Sports Writer

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Michigan earned its chance to keep making history, and believed in it.

The third-seeded Wolverines reached the Elite Eight for the first time with a 52-49 win over tenth-seeded South Dakota on Saturday night, helped by Naz Hillmon's 17 points and 10 rebounds and Laila Phelia's 14 points — including a go-ahead layup in the final minute.

"We have players that came in here with this vision and this belief that they could do something incredibly special," Michigan coach Kim Barnes Arico said. "They wanted to be a part of that Block M and that excellence, and here we are sitting at the table going to the Elite Eight. It's just a dream like you could never imagine, but it's people that came together and created something incredibly special. It's awesome."

Michigan (25-6) will play No. 1 seed Louisville on Monday with a trip to the Final Four at stake. The teams met earlier this season on Dec. 2, when Louisville beat Michigan 70-48.

South Dakota (29-6) was trying to become just the fifth double-digit seed to reach the Elite Eight. The Coyotes had won 27 of 28 and were coming off a stunning upset of No. 2 seed Baylor.

"It's hard to lose," South Dakota coach Dawn Plitzuweit said. "You always want one more. But it certainly wasn't from a lack of effort, lack of anything. We just needed to make one more play in all reality."

Hannah Sjerven had 17 points and eight rebounds before fouling out for the Coyotes. Chloe Lamb, the Summit League Player of the Year who averaged 16 points per game, was held to just six points.

Lamb said the fact that South Dakota had a historic season won't ease her short-term pain.

"Losing sucks for a lot of reasons," she said. "I think one of those being you forget all the good stuff that happened, right?"

The Coyotes nearly pulled off another win. With the crowd overwhelmingly on their side, they held the Wolverines without a field goal for 3:40 to start the game and led for much of the first half.

Back-to-back 3-pointers by Grace Larkins put the Coyotes ahead 25-23 in the second quarter, and they led 26-24 at the break thanks to 11 points from Sjerven. Phelia, who had averaged just under nine points per game for the season, scored 12 in the first half to keep Michigan in the game.

Michigan took a 39-38 lead into the fourth quarter, with Hillmon scoring nine points in the third.

A mid-range jumper by Lamb rattled in to tie the game at 48 with 48.5 seconds remaining.

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Phelia made a layup with 22 seconds remaining, and Brown later made two free throws to put the Wolverines up by four.

South Dakota's Maddie Krull made the first of two free throws to cut Michigan's lead to 52-49 with 7.5 seconds left. She unintentionally missed the second, and there was a scramble for the ball before it went out of bounds. It wasn't immediately clear whom the ball last touched, but South Dakota got it after the referees' review.

But the Coyotes couldn't get a clean look, with Kyah Watson missing a 3 as time expired.

"I think we were probably outsized in every position and maybe out-athleticized in all positions, and to our ladies' credit they kept fighting and competing and found a way to be in that game and have an opportunity," Plitzuweit said. "I'm proud of our young ladies for what they did."

## BIG PICTURE

South Dakota: Lamb, Sjerven and Liv Korngable are super-seniors who came back to make a run. They did that, nearly propelling the Coyotes to the Elite Eight for the first time. The other two starters are freshmen. With that foundation and the support the Coyotes received along the way, the program appears to be in good hands.

Michigan: The Wolverines got off to a rough start in what was essentially a road environment and scraped out a win despite Hillmon — a first-team All-American — going scoreless in the first quarter.

"I think sometimes my defense gets me going ... I knew if I could continue that motor and get my teammates second opportunities by getting offensive boards, that would help me and I can get into the flow of things," she said.

## STAT LINES

Sjerven played 28 minutes and made 7 of 11 shots. She picked up all five of her fouls in the second half and played just nine minutes after the break. When she fouled out, the Michigan bench celebrated wildly.

## CROWD PARTICIPATION

Thousands of South Dakota fans made the trip, and they were active throughout the game. Even after the game, they started a "U-S-D" chant as the Michigan band played its school song. Lamb referred to the crowd as a "sea of red."

## QUOTABLE

Barnes Arico at the postgame media session: "I'm not sure what I look like. I borrowed some clothes to get here because we had a celebration in the locker room."

## North Dakota man dies following boxing match in South Dakota

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A North Dakota man died following following a boxing match in South Dakota.

Laron Peoples, of Dickinson, was a contender in the Elite Male Division at the South Dakota Golden Gloves boxing event in Rapid City on March 19. Following his loss against Sheldon Wright, USA Boxing said Peoples was taken to a hospital, where he died the following day, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Tom Griffie, a South Dakota Golden Gloves organizer, said he was unable to comment on the death.

Peoples was a defensive back as a junior and senior in 2011 and 2012 for the Minot State University football team. He also attended Dakota College at Bottineau.

Minot State University's football roster shows Peoples was originally from Pontiac, Michigan.

## GOP push for state election reviews mixed, but sows distrust

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The push by Republicans to conduct partisan ballot reviews similar to the one that unfolded last year in Arizona has spread beyond the battleground states where former President Donald Trump disputed his loss, an effort that has had mixed legislative success but has sown doubts about whether future elections can be trusted.

While most of the bills are unlikely to become law, the debates and public hearings in GOP-controlled state legislative chambers have added fuel to the false claims that widespread fraud cost Trump reelec-

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tion in 2020.

"They're really tearing down democracy, and they don't think they are," said Scott McDonell, the election clerk in Dane County, Wisconsin, home to the state capital.

The proposals come after flawed Republican-ordered reviews in Arizona and Wisconsin where GOP lawmakers gave the job of examining the previous election to partisan actors.

In Arizona, the contract went to a Florida-based firm with no previous experience in election audits but with a CEO who had expressed support for conspiracy theories surrounding the 2020 presidential results. In Wisconsin, the Republican leader of the state Assembly appointed a retired state Supreme Court justice who declared the election stolen even before he began his review.

Similar efforts are being pursued by Republicans in the presidential battleground states of Michigan and Pennsylvania, also won by Biden.

More than a dozen bills have been introduced this year in seven other states proposing similar reviews of elections and election results, including in states Trump won such as Florida, Missouri and Tennessee, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, which tracks such efforts. That comes after legislation was introduced in eight states last year to review the 2020 results and 12 states considered bills to perform new review processes for future elections.

"It's really not clear to me that there's any realistic, legitimate audit that can be done that will satisfy some of the folks who are calling for this," said Wisconsin state Rep. Mark Spreitzer, a Democrat and member of the Assembly's elections committee. "If I thought there was some additional check we could do that would give voters more confidence, we'd do it."

Forty-four states already conduct some type of postelection audit or take other steps — outlined in state law or through administrative procedures — to verify the accuracy of vote tallies, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. The six states with no such requirements are Alabama, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, New Hampshire and South Dakota.

Those states likely have some kind of canvassing process where election officials certify the results, but there is no check on the voting equipment itself, said Jennifer Morrell, a former elections clerk in Colorado and Utah who now advises state and local election officials.

Bills calling for partisan election reviews have found little success, which is due partly to Republican lawmakers who have criticized the 2020 conspiracy theories and defended their state's elections.

In South Dakota, the Republican-controlled House last month passed a measure to require in-depth reviews of ballots and voting equipment in close presidential elections. Several House Republicans had attended a conference held by MyPillow chief executive Mike Lindell in Sioux Falls last year during which he attempted to prove that voting equipment had been hacked, and the lawmakers echoed those claims during debate.

The bill was later rejected by Republicans in the state Senate who pointed out that it was prompted by baseless claims that the 2020 presidential election was subject to widespread fraud. Trump won the state by a wide margin.

"Uncertainty comes because we have these extremists across America who with the social media can get a forum, and they are raising questions only for the purpose of creating uncertainty about our elections," said Republican state Sen. Lee Schoenbeck. "Regular, normal people don't have those fears at all. They trust those little old ladies that you see when you go to vote here for the first time."

In Virginia, Democrats who control the state Senate defeated a Republican measure that would have required "forensic audits" of an election if certain elected officials or elections officials requested one, or if a group of residents petitioned for one. It also would have initiated a review of the 2020 general election in Virginia.

The bill was sponsored by Republican Sen. Amanda Chase, a prominent promoter of conspiracy theories about the 2020 presidential election who attended the rally in Washington, D.C., that preceded the Capitol insurrection. Chase said during a contentious committee hearing that she filed the measure after hearing concerns from constituents who tried to vote and were told a ballot had already been cast in their name.

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Members of the public were given an opportunity to weigh in, and several speakers in favor of the bill attacked the committee's Democrats.

"I consider it treason to not support this bill," one woman said. Another warned the committee that there would be "eternal consequences" for "your souls" if they didn't "legislate fairly."

Democratic Sen. Adam Ebbin, the committee chairman, said he was offended by the statements.

"We're doing our jobs and we're trying to assess each bill fairly," he said. Ebbin also told the Republican sponsor of the bill that "when public officials sow distrust in elections" it furthers unfounded concerns about widespread problems.

The measure was defeated on a party-line vote, with every Republican on the committee voting in support of it.

In Arizona, Republicans behind that state's flawed election review introduced a bill to require an exhaustive review following every election. The measure hit a snag earlier this month when two Republicans voted against it. That left it short of majority support, though it could be revived in the coming months.

In Pennsylvania, where Senate Republicans are mounting a partisan investigation into the 2020 election lost by Trump, Republicans have pressed legislation to expand the state's postelection reviews. One bill was vetoed last summer by Gov. Tom Wolf, a Democrat, while others are pending in the Republican-controlled Legislature.

While some states are pushing to enact Arizona-style reviews, others are moving in the other direction.

In Maine, a pending Democratic bill would instill safeguards to protect ballots and voting machines from tampering while also keeping ballots out of the hands of partisans. A similar bill is making its way through Colorado's Democratic-controlled Legislature.

Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, a Democrat, said the bill there was "a safeguard against election subversion and will help prevent problems other states like Arizona have had where the integrity of ballots and equipment has been compromised."

Colorado's Democratic Secretary of State Jena Griswold issued a rule last summer banning Arizona-style "sham" third-party reviews. The secretary of state's office after each election conducts its own risk-limiting audit, a rigorous type of audit that relies on statistical methods to validate the results.

While there have been steps to improve official, postelection audits, that work has largely gone unnoticed, said Gowri Ramachandran, senior counsel in the Brennan Center's democracy program.

"Unfortunately, it's been kind of drowned out by some of this negative legislation," she said.

## Zelenskyy: West needs more courage in helping Ukraine fight

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused the West of lacking courage as his country fights to stave off Russia's invasion, making an exasperated plea for fighter jets and tanks to sustain a defense in a conflict that has ground into a war of attrition.

Speaking after U.S. President Joe Biden said in a lacerating speech that Russian President Vladimir Putin could not stay in power — words the White House immediately sought to downplay — Zelenskyy lashed out at the West's "ping-pong about who and how should hand over jets" and other weapons while Russian missile attacks kill and trap civilians.

"I've talked to the defenders of Mariupol today. I'm in constant contact with them. Their determination, heroism and firmness are astonishing," Zelenskyy said in a video address early Sunday, referring to the besieged southern city that has suffered some of the war's greatest deprivations and horrors. "If only those who have been thinking for 31 days on how to hand over dozens of jets and tanks had 1% of their courage."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, now in its 32nd day, has stalled in many areas, its aim to quickly encircle the capital, Kyiv, and force its surrender faltering in the face of staunch Ukrainian resistance — bolstered by weapons from the U.S. and other Western allies.

Britain's defense ministry said Russia's troops looked to be trying to encircle Ukrainian forces directly

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facing the two separatist-held areas in the country's east. That would cut the bulk of Ukraine's military off from the rest of the country.

Moscow claims its focus is on wresting from Ukraine the entirety of the eastern Donbas region, which has been partially controlled by Russia-backed separatists since 2014. A high-ranking Russian military official said Friday that troops were being redirected to the east from other parts of the country.

The leader of one of the separatist-controlled areas of Donbas said Sunday that he wants to hold a vote on joining Russia, words that could indicate a shift in Russia's position. Leonid Pasechnik, the head of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, said it plans to hold a referendum on becoming part of Russia "in the nearest time."

Russia has supported the separatist rebels in Luhansk and neighboring Donetsk since an insurgency erupted there in 2014, shortly after Moscow annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine. In talks with Ukraine so far, Moscow has urged Kyiv to acknowledge the independence of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Ukraine says that to defeat Russia, it needs fighter jets and not just the missiles and other defensive weapons supplied so far by the West. A proposal to transfer Polish planes to Ukraine via the United States was scrapped amid NATO concerns about getting drawn into a military conflict with Russia.

In his pointed remarks, Zelenskyy accused Western governments of being "afraid to prevent this tragedy. Afraid to simply make a decision."

"So, who is in charge of the Euro-Atlantic community? Is it still Moscow, thanks to its scare tactics?" he said. "Our partners must step up their aid to Ukraine."

His plea was echoed by a priest in the western city of Lviv, which was struck by rockets on Saturday. The aerial assault illustrated that Moscow, despite recent assertions that it intends to shift the war eastward, is willing to strike anywhere in Ukraine.

"When diplomacy doesn't work, we need military support," said the Rev. Yuri Vaskiv, who on Sunday reported fewer parishioners than usual in the pews of his Greek Catholic church, likely because of their fear.

Referring to Putin, he said: "This evil is from him, and we must stop it."

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov confirmed that Russian forces used air-launched cruise missiles to hit a fuel depot and a defense plant in Lviv. Konashenkov said another strike with sea-launched missiles destroyed a depot with air defense missiles in Plesetske just west of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.

The strikes came as Biden wrapped up a visit to Poland, where he met Ukraine's foreign and defense ministers, visited U.S. troops and saw refugees from the war. Before leaving, he delivered a forceful and highly personal condemnation of Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying: "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denounced the remark, saying "It's not up to the president of the U.S. and not up to the Americans to decide who will remain in power in Russia."

U.S. officials quickly stressed that Biden was not calling for an immediate change in government in Moscow.

"We do not have a strategy of regime change in Russia, or anywhere else, for that matter," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a visit to Israel. "In this case, as in any case, it's up to the people of the country in question. It's up to the Russian people."

A chemical smell still lingered in the air on Sunday as firefighters in Lviv, about 45 miles (72 kilometers) from the Polish border, trained hoses on flames and black smoke pouring from oil storage tanks hit in the Russian attack.

A security guard at the site, Yaroslav Prokopiv, said he saw three rockets strike and destroy two oil tanks but no one was hurt.

"The third strike threw me to the ground," he said.

Russia's back-to-back airstrikes shook the city that has become a haven for an estimated 200,000 people who have fled bombarded towns and cities. Lviv, which has largely been spared bombardment, also has been a way-station for most of the 3.8 million refugees who have left Ukraine since Russia invaded on Feb. 24.

In the dim, crowded bomb shelter under an apartment block a short way from the first blast site, Olana

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Ukrainets, a 34-year-old IT professional, said she couldn't believe she had to hide again after fleeing from the northeastern city of Kharkiv, one of the most bombarded cities of the war.

"We were on one side of the street and saw it on the other side," she said. "We saw fire. I said to my friend, 'What's this?' Then we heard the sound of an explosion and glass breaking.."

In his video address, Zelenskyy angrily warned Moscow that it was sowing a deep hatred for Russia among the Ukrainian people, as constant artillery barrages and aerial bombings are reducing cities to rubble, killing civilians and driving others into shelters, leaving them to scrounge for food and water to survive.

"You are doing everything so that our people themselves leave the Russian language, because the Russian language will now be associated only with you, with your explosions and murders, your crimes," Zelenskyy said.

A nuclear research facility in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, again came under fire Saturday. Ukraine's nuclear watchdog said that because of ongoing hostilities it was impossible to assess the extent of the damage.

Kharkiv, which is close to the Russian border, has been besieged by Russian forces since the start of the invasion and has come under repeated shelling that has hit residential buildings and critical infrastructure.

Ukrainian authorities have previously reported that Russian shelling had damaged buildings at the facility, but there had been no release of radiation. The International Atomic Energy Agency has said the nuclear material in the facility is always subcritical and the inventory of radioactive material is very low, reducing the risks of radiation release.

Along with the 3.8 million people who have fled Ukraine, the invasion has driven more than 10 million people from their homes, almost a quarter of Ukraine's population. Thousands of civilians are believed to have been killed.

Disruption caused by the conflict, and the West's far-reaching sanctions on Russia, has also driven up food and energy prices around the world. Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, warned that the burden would be borne by the poorest — and that, in turn, could spark unrest.

"When prices jump, and poor people cannot feed their families, they will be on the streets," she said. "One thing we know about trouble in one place, it travels, it doesn't stay there."

## With eye to China investment, Taliban now preserve Buddhas

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

MES AYNAC, Afghanistan (AP) — The ancient Buddha statues sit in serene meditation in the caves carved into the russet cliffs of rural Afghanistan. Hundreds of meters below lies what is believed to be the world's largest deposit of copper.

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers are pinning their hopes on Beijing to turn that rich vein into revenue to salvage the cash-starved country amid crippling international sanctions.

The fighters standing guard by the rocky hillside may once have considered destroying the terracotta Buddhas. Two decades ago when the Islamic hard-line Taliban were first in power, they sparked world outrage by blowing up gigantic Buddha statues in another part of the country, calling them pagan symbols that must be purged.

But now they are intent on preserving the relics of the Mes Aynak copper mine. Doing so is key to unlocking billions in Chinese investment, said Hakumullah Mubariz, the Taliban head of security at the site, peering into the remnants of a monastery built by first-century Buddhist monks.

"Protecting them is very important to us and the Chinese," he said.

Previously, Mubariz commanded a Taliban combat unit in the surrounding mountains battling with U.S.-backed Afghan forces. When those troops capitulated last year, his men rushed to secure the site. "We knew it would be important for the country," he said.

The Taliban's spectacular reversal illustrates the powerful allure of Afghanistan's untapped mining sector. Successive authorities have seen the country's mineral riches, estimated to be worth \$1 trillion, as the key to a prosperous future, but none have been able to develop them amid the continual war and violence.

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Now, multiple countries, including Iran, Russia and Turkey are looking to invest, filling the vacuum left in the wake of the chaotic U.S. withdrawal.

But Beijing is the most assertive. At Mes Aynak, it could become the first major power to take on a large-scale project in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, potentially redrawing Asia's geopolitical map.

## TOP PRIORITY

In 2008, the administration of Hamid Karzai signed a 30-year contract with a Chinese joint venture called MCC to extract high-grade copper from Mes Aynak. Studies show the site holds up to 12 million tons of the mineral.

But the project got tied up in logistical and contract problems, and it never got past some initial test shafts before it ground to a halt when Chinese staff left in 2014 because of continued violence.

Mere months after the Taliban seized Kabul in August, consolidating power over the country, the group's newly installed acting Minister for Mining and Petroleum Shahbuddin Dilawar urged his staff to re-engage Chinese state-run companies.

Ziad Rashidi, the ministry's director of foreign relations, approached the consortium made up by MCC, China Metallurgical Group Corporation and Jiangxi Copper Ltd. Dilawar has had two virtual meetings with MCC in the last six months, according to company and ministry officials. He urged them to return to the mine, terms unchanged from the 2008 contract.

A technical committee from MCC is due in Kabul in the coming weeks to address the remaining obstacles. Relocating the artifacts is key. But MCC is also seeking to renegotiate terms, particularly to reduce taxes and slash the 19.5% royalty rate by nearly half, the percentage owed to the government per ton of copper sold.

"Chinese companies see the current situation as ideal for them. There is a lack of international competitors and a lot of support from the government side," Rashidi said.

China's ambassador to Afghanistan has said talks are ongoing, but nothing more.

Acquiring rare minerals is key for Beijing to maintain its standing as a global manufacturing powerhouse. While stopping short of recognizing the Taliban government, China has stood out from the international community by calling for the unfreezing of Afghan assets and has kept its diplomatic mission running in Kabul.

For Afghanistan, the contract at Mes Aynak could bring in \$250-300 million per year to state revenues, a 17% increase, as well as \$800 million in fees over the contract's length, according to government and company officials. That's a significant sum as the country grapples with widespread poverty, exacerbated by financial shortfalls after the Biden administration froze Afghan assets and international organizations halted donor funds. Some has since resumed.

## GRAVEYARD OF EMPIRES

At Mes Aynak, a 2,000-year-old Buddhist city sits uncomfortably alongside a potential economic engine. Afghanistan's tumultuous modern history has gotten in the way of both exploring the archaeology and developing the mines.

Discovered in the 1960s by French geologists, the site was believed to have been an important stop along the Silk Road from the early centuries AD.

After the Soviet invasion in the late 1970s, Russians dug tunnels to investigate the copper deposit; the cavernous bore holes are still visible. These were later used as an al-Qaida hideout, and at least one was bombed by the U.S. in 2001.

Looters then pillaged many antiquities from the site. Still, archaeologists who came in 2004 managed a partial excavation, uncovering remnants of a vast complex, including four monasteries, ancient copper workshops and a citadel. It became clear the area had been a major Buddhist settlement, a crossroads for traders coming from the west, and pilgrims from afar, even China.

To the shock of the non-Taliban technocrats in his own ministry, Dilawar is committed to saving the site and told MCC's director in Beijing it was an important part of Afghanistan's history, according to two officials present in one virtual meeting.

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He dismissed open-pit mining schemes that would raze the site entirely. The alternative option of underground mining was judged too pricey by MCC. The Culture Ministry has been tasked with presenting a plan to relocate the relics, most likely to the Kabul Museum.

"We have already transferred some (artifacts) to the capital, and we are working to transfer the rest, so the mining work can begin," Dilawar told The Associated Press.

While the ministry is optimistic a deal can be reached, MCC officials are cautious and pragmatic.

They did not speak to the AP on record, citing sensitivities around the talks happening while international sanctions still prohibit dealings with the Taliban.

They expressed concerns over the feasibility of other contractual obligations, including building a railway to the Pakistan border at Torkham, a coal-fired power plant, and community amenities such as a hospital and schools.

Another issue is how to compensate residents of three villages near Mes Aynak cleared out a decade ago.

Mullah Mera Jan, a 70-year-old local elder, said he is still waiting for funds promised to him by ministry officials after being forced out of his village of Wali Baba.

Still, he too hopes mining will start soon. Villagers were promised 3,000-4,000 direct and 35,000 indirect jobs. The men from his village are on top of the hiring list.

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS

In the ministry's labyrinthine halls, hopeful investors stand in line, documents ready to stake their claim of Afghanistan's untapped mineral riches, including large iron deposits, precious stones and -- potentially -- lithium.

Knocking on Rashidi's office door these days are Russians, Iranians, Turks and of course, the Chinese.

All are "in a great hurry to invest," he said. Chinese interest is "extraordinary," he said. Rashidi has also reached out to China's CNPCI to revamp an oil contract to explore blocks in Amu Darya near the Turkmenistan border, terminated in 2018.

Dozens of small-scale contracts have been handed out local investors, many of whom have joint ventures with international companies, mainly Chinese and Iranian.

Ministry revenues have increased exponentially, from 110 million afghanis (\$1.2 million) in the year preceding the Taliban takeover, to \$6 billion afghanis (\$67 million) in the six months since the Taliban assumed power, according to documents seen by the AP. Most of that, however, appears to be from more aggressive taxing, as the Taliban merged their informal tax economy with that of the government. Apart from coal, it not clear if actual mining production has increased.

Ironically, it was the Taliban that hindered work in Mes Aynak for over a decade.

An MCC official recalled how the road leading to the mine was laden with IEDs targeting Afghan forces and NATO allies. An entire Afghan regiment guarded Chinese engineers at the site compound. Mubariz, now the security chief, said he remembered watching them from the mountains where he plotted attacks.

The MCC official said that when his Taliban hosts told him they had restored safety so work could resume, he replied in jest, "Wasn't it you who was attacking us?"

The men, machine-guns slung around their necks, laughed too.

## Live updates: Pope steps up pleas for talks to end fighting

By The Associated Press undefined

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis has stepped up his pleas for negotiations to end the fighting in Ukraine. Francis told the public in St. Peter's Square on Sunday that "this cruel and senseless war" continues after more than a month, representing "a defeat for all."

He lamented that parents are burying their children, and "the powerful decide and the poor die." Once again, he didn't cite Russia by name as the aggressor.

Referring to reports that about one-half of all the children in Ukraine have been displaced by the conflict, Francis said that "war doesn't just devastate the present but also the future of society."

The pontiff reiterated his condemnation of war as barbarous and sacrilegious. He said that "humanity

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must understand that the moment has come to abolish war, to cancel war from the history of man before it cancels man from history.”

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

- Zelenskyy: West needs more courage in helping Ukraine fight
  - ‘My personal tragedy’: Ukrainians brace for an attack on Odesa
  - Ukrainians have been welcomed in Hungary but an Afghan student was not
  - War shakes Europe’s path to energy independence, climate goals
  - Without Russia, science going solo on world’s woes, dreams
- Go to <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine> for more coverage

## OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin has praised Russia’s National Guard on the sixth anniversary since its creation.

Putin specially addressed the service staff of the National Guard units involved in the military operation in Ukraine.

“Comrades, indeed, combat conditions involve increased risk. I am well aware of how you act in this situation: highly courageously and professionally, skillfully and fearlessly. You resolve the most complicated tasks set before you competently and precisely while showing personal heroism,” Putin said in a video statement issued Sunday.

The National Guard, which numbers over 300,000 personnel, was established by Putin in 2016 as an internal military force to fight terrorism and organized crime, guard state facilities, control weapons turn-over and to provide riot control.

The service reports directly to the president.

“Our entire vast country is rightly proud of each of you,” Putin said. “I want to thank you for your stamina and your impeccable service to Russia, for your loyalty to our Fatherland, to your oath of allegiance and your duty.

KYIV, Ukraine — A manager at a UNESCO world heritage site in Kyiv says bombings in the capital are being felt in the landmark building and could threaten its foundations.

“We and the landmark feel the vibrations,” said Vadim Kyrylenko, an engineer who now is the most senior on-site manager at the St. Sophia Cathedral. “It’s a minimal threat but we feel it. If there would be a strike nearby as I say it would be a point of no return for our landmark because it is very fragile and vulnerable.”

The site shut its doors to visitors as soon as the war in Ukraine started last month. Kyrylenko said that the only people left on site apart from him are a cook, a carpenter and engineers who are keeping the main functions running.

The Orthodox shrine dates back nearly 1,000 years to the dawn of Christianity in the region. It is considered the heart of Ukrainian spiritual and national identity. The grand structure survived despite being in the crosshairs of numerous invaders and armies.

A separatist leader in eastern Ukraine says that his region wants to hold a vote on joining Russia.

Leonid Pasechnik, the head of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People’s Republic, said Sunday that it could hold a referendum “in the nearest time” asking voters whether they support making the region part of Russia.

Russia has supported the separatist rebels in Luhansk and the neighboring Donetsk regions since an insurgency erupted there in 2014 shortly after Moscow’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Moscow recognized their independence on Feb. 21 and then cited their call for military assistance to launch the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

In talks with Ukraine, Moscow has urged it to acknowledge Russia’s sovereignty over Crimea and the

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independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Pasechnik's statement could herald a shift in the Russian position.

**BERLIN** -- Germany's president is hosting a "solidarity concert" with Ukraine featuring musicians from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

The Berlin Philharmonic was playing pieces by Ukrainian, Russian and Polish composers at President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's Bellevue palace in Berlin. Steinmeier — who addressed the event by video because he tested positive for the coronavirus last week — described it Sunday as a "signal for freedom and peace."

Steinmeier said: "Let us be vigilant against sweeping animosities, and let us not succumb to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's pseudo-historical nationalist delusion. Let us not allow Putin's hatred to become a hatred between people ... in our own society either."

However, Ukraine's ambassador to Germany tweeted that he had spurned an invitation. Andriy Melnyk wrote that "ONLY RUSSIAN (!) SOLOISTS" were performing, "no Ukrainians." He added: "An affront. Sorry, I'm staying away."

**JERUSALEM** — Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the U.S. is not trying to topple Russian President Vladimir Putin, despite its harsh condemnations of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Blinken spoke a day after President Joe Biden said of Putin during a speech in Warsaw: "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power."

At a news conference in Jerusalem, Blinken said Biden's point was that "Putin cannot be empowered to wage war or engage in aggression against Ukraine or anyone else."

He said the U.S. has repeatedly said that "we do not have a strategy of regime change in Russia, or anywhere else for that matter."

"In this case, as in any case, it's up to the people of the country in question. It's up to the Russian people," Blinken said.

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**KYIV, Ukraine** — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has again urged the West to provide Ukraine with warplanes and air defense missiles.

Speaking in a video address early Sunday, Zelenskyy said that "our partners have all that, and it's just collecting dust. And in fact it's necessary not just for Ukraine's freedom, but for the freedom of Europe."

Zelenskyy warned that the Baltic states, Poland and Slovakia could eventually face a Russian attack "just because they will have kept in their hangars just 1% of all NATO warplanes and 1% of all NATO tanks. Just 1%! We aren't asking for more and we have been waiting for that for 31 days!"

He said that "our partners must step up their aid to Ukraine."

The president said that "Ukraine can't shoot down Russian missiles with shotguns and machine guns that have accounted for the bulk of supplies. And we can't unblock Mariupol without the necessary number of tanks, other armor, and warplanes. All defenders of Ukraine know about it."

He added that the United States and "all European politicians" also know that.

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**DOHA, Qatar** — The head of the International Monetary Fund is warning that the global economic strain caused by Russia's war in Ukraine could stoke civil unrest in the Middle East and beyond.

Speaking at the Doha Forum in Qatar on Sunday, Kristalina Georgieva said Russia's invasion and the resulting sanctions on Moscow have forced the world's poorest to bear the worst of the crisis as they grapple with inflated food costs and scarcer jobs.

Georgieva hinted that the current situation evoked the lead-up to the 2011 uprisings known as the Arab Spring, when skyrocketing bread prices fueled anti-government protests across the Middle East.

"When prices jump, and poor people cannot feed their families, they will be on the streets," she said. "One thing we know about trouble in one place, it travels, it doesn't stay there."

Georgieva called for greater global cooperation to fill the gaps in commodity and energy supplies.

"Please, work together," she said. "Oil producers, gas producers and food producers today are in a position to help reduce this uncertainty."

She cited Ukraine's importance as a top wheat exporter in urging a swift resolution to the war.

"The faster the tanks are out, the faster the tractors will be in," she said. "We need by July the harvest in Ukraine to contribute to the stability of food prices."

**NEW YORK** — The Russian military says it has struck Ukrainian military facilities with long-range missiles.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said in statement on Sunday that the air-launched cruise missiles hit a fuel depot and a defense plant in Lviv near the border with Poland a day earlier.

Konashenkov said another strike with sea-launched missiles destroyed a depot with air defense missiles in Plesetske, just west of the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv.

**ODESA, Ukraine** — The Black Sea port of Odesa is mining its beaches and rushing to defend its cultural heritage from a feared Mariupol-style fate in the face of growing alarm that the strategic city might be next as Russia attempts to strip Ukraine of its coastline.

The multi-cultural jewel, dear to Ukrainian hearts and even Russian ones, would be a hugely strategic win for Russia. It is the country's largest port, crucial to grain and other exports, and headquarters for the Ukrainian navy.

Bombardment from the sea last weekend further raised worries that the city is in Russia's sights.

Residents say Russian President Vladimir Putin would be insane to take Odesa with the brutal approach that has left other Ukrainian cities in ruins. Once a gilded powerhouse of the Russian empire, Odesa includes one of the finest opera houses in Europe and the famed Potemkin Steps between the city and the sea, featured in Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 silent film masterpiece "Battleship Potemkin."

**LONDON** — The Russian military appears to be trying to encircle Ukrainian forces fighting in the separatist regions in the eastern part of the country, Britain's Ministry of Defense says.

Russian forces are advancing southward from the area around Kharkiv and north from Mariupol, the ministry said in an intelligence briefing released Sunday morning.

Battlefields in northern Ukraine remain "largely static," with Ukrainian counterattacks hampering Russian efforts to reorganize their forces, the ministry said.

In an earlier briefing released overnight, the ministry said Russia continued to strike targets across Ukraine, including many in densely populated areas, the ministry said.

Russia is relying on "stand-off" missiles launched from within its own territory to reduce aircraft exposure to Ukrainian anti-aircraft fire, the ministry said. But it said limited stocks of these weapons will force Russia to "revert to less sophisticated missiles or accepting more risk to their aircraft."

**LVIV, Ukraine** — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy angrily warned Moscow that it is sowing a

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deep hatred for Russia among his people, as constant artillery barrages and aerial bombings are reducing cities to rubble, killing civilians and driving others into shelters, leaving them to scrounge for food and water to survive.

"You are doing everything so that our people themselves leave the Russian language, because the Russian language will now be associated only with you, with your explosions and murders, your crimes," Zelenskyy said in an impassioned video address late Saturday.

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's nuclear watchdog says that a nuclear research facility in Kharkiv again has come under shelling by Russia and the fighting makes it impossible to assess the damage.

The State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate said that the neutron source experimental facility in the Kharkiv Institute of Physics and Technology came under fire Saturday.

Ukrainian authorities have previously reported that Russian shelling damaged buildings at the Kharkiv facility, but there has been no release of radiation. The newly built neutron source facility is intended for the research and production of radioisotopes for medical and industrial needs. The International Atomic Energy Agency has said that the nuclear material in the facility is always subcritical and the inventory of radioactive material is very low, reducing the risks of radiation release.

Kharkiv has been besieged by Russian forces since the start of the invasion and has come under repeated shelling of its residential buildings and critical infrastructure.

Ukraine's nuclear facilities have been threatened by the Russian invasion.

LVIV, Ukraine — The governor of the Lviv region says a man was detained on suspicion of espionage at the site of one of the two rocket attacks that rattled the city on Saturday.

Maksym Kozytskyy said police found the man had recorded a rocket flying toward the target and striking it. Police also found on his telephone photos of checkpoints in the region, which Kozytskyy said had been sent to two Russian telephone numbers.

Rockets hit an oil storage facility and an unspecified industrial facility, wounding at least five people. A thick plume of smoke and towering flames could be seen on Lviv's outskirts hours after the attacks.

## EU envoy in Tehran amid hopes to restore nuclear agreement

By AMIR VAHDAT and LUJAIN JO Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — A leading European Union diplomat held talks in Tehran on Sunday, Iran's state-run media reported, amid hopes that an agreement to restore Iran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers could be completed.

The meetings between the EU's envoy, Enrique Mora, and top Iranian officials come at a sensitive moment for talks to revive the deal, as the glimmers of a resolution to some of the thorniest issues in the negotiations have emerged.

The report on the talks in Tehran gave scant detail, saying only that the diplomats discussed the latest on the nuclear agreement, with Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani repeating that Iran believed a deal was within reach if America was "realistic" in its demands.

Former President Donald Trump abandoned the nuclear deal in 2018 and re-imposed crushing sanctions. Iran gradually breached the agreement with a massive expansion of its nuclear work.

Nuclear talks broke off earlier this month as last-minute wrangles in Vienna coincided with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and financial sanctions imposed by the West on Moscow.

But officials have since made encouraging noises. Russia appeared to back down from its earlier demand that its trade with Iran be exempted from Western sanctions.

And for the first time, Iran's top diplomat on Saturday publicly signaled flexibility over Tehran's demand that Washington stop designating the country's Islamic Revolutionary Guard, its powerful paramilitary force, as a foreign terrorist organization.

The prospect of the designation's removal had alarmed America's Mideast allies, such as Israel, which

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fiercely opposed the original nuclear deal and argued that easing sanctions on the Revolutionary Guard would embolden Iranian-backed militant groups from Hezbollah in Lebanon to the Houthis in Yemen.

In a visible sign that shared regional anxiety over a renewed nuclear deal was growing, the Israeli government hastily arranged an unprecedented summit of top diplomats from Arab countries that have normalized ties with Israel along with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

"We are both committed, both determined that Iran will never acquire a nuclear weapon," Blinken said alongside Israel's foreign minister, seeking to reassure his jittery counterparts before the gathering.

Remarks on Sunday by the U.S. special envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, underscored the U.S. limitations that have frustrated allies. He declined to discuss details of the nuclear negotiations, but reiterated that America had failed to secure a broader deal with Iran that would restrict its ballistic missiles program and curb its regional military policies.

"It would have been better, but (the nuclear deal) was not intended to, it wasn't able to address the other issues," Malley told the Doha Forum, a Middle East policy conference in Qatar. "Many in the region view the IRGC in the same way we do. ... But we know this is not a deal that's going to address that."

However, Malley was quick to stress that no matter what happens to the Guard's terrorism designation, separate sanctions over its ballistic missile development and alleged human rights violations would remain.

Anxieties over a restored deal also were on stark display in Tehran, laying bare deep fissures in Iran's divided political system.

Hard-liners opposing any hint of rapprochement with the West appeared to fret about possible Iranian compromises after Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian told state TV that the Revolutionary Guard had accepted that the terrorist designation would stay in place so that Iran could pursue "whatever is necessary for the interests of the country."

Hossein Shariatmadari, appointed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as editor-in-chief of hard-line Kayhan daily, rebuked Amirabdollahian's remarks as "unexpected and strange."

In an interview late Saturday with the semiofficial Fars news agency, Shariatmadari insisted that the foreign minister had misunderstood the Revolutionary Guard when he spoke on the force's behalf.

"Attributing this statement to Guard commanders does not correspond to any of the well-known characteristics of Guard commanders," he said, adding that Amirabdollahian had falsely given the impression of the Guard's "surrender."

From the Doha Forum, Sayyid Kamal Kharrazi, a foreign policy advisor to Iran's supreme leader, also struck a tough line, rejecting the United States' continued sanctions on the Revolutionary Guard.

"A national army cannot be listed as a terrorist group," Kharrazi told the audience. "That is very important for Iranians to have the IRGC removed from the list. ... They are not going to compromise on that."

In an Instagram post, Amirabdollahian expressed regret that his comments had been "misinterpreted" and tried to assuage domestic unease by promising he had not backed down from any Iranian "red lines."

Still, ambiguity prevailed as Malley and Kharrazi offered starkly different assessments from Doha about the chances of the deal's looming revival.

"It's imminent," said Kharrazi.

Malley appeared more skeptical.

"I can't be confident it's imminent," he said. "It's not just around the corner and it's not inevitable."

## Second 'black box' found in China Eastern plane crash

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The second "black box" from a China Eastern Boeing 737-800 was found Sunday, raising hopes that it might shed light on why the passenger plane nosedived into a remote mountainous area in southern China last week, killing all 132 people on board.

Firefighters taking part in the search found the flight data recorder on a mountain slope about 40 meters (130 feet) from the point of impact and 1.5 meters (5 feet) underground, state media said. Experts confirmed it was the second black box. The impact of the crash created a 20-meter- (65-foot-) deep pit

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in the side of the mountain and scattered debris widely.

Searchers had been looking for the data recorder after finding the cockpit voice recorder four days ago. The two black boxes should help investigators determine what caused the plane to plummet from 29,000 feet (8,800 meters) about one hour into the flight and shortly before it would have begun its descent.

The remote setting and rainy and muddy conditions have complicated the search for the black boxes and wreckage. Images posted by CGTN, the international arm of CCTV, showed an official holding an orange cylindrical object on site with the words "FLIGHT RECORDER" and "DO NOT OPEN" written on it. It appeared slightly dented but intact.

The search was paused Sunday afternoon for a three-minute moment of silence for the 123 passengers and nine crew members. Emergency workers took off their helmets and police and soldiers their caps. Standing in groups in formation, they bowed their heads as sirens blared.

Flight MU5735 crashed Monday en route from the city of Kunming in southeastern China to Guangzhou, a major city and export manufacturing hub near Hong Kong. An air traffic controller tried to contact the pilots several times after seeing the plane's altitude drop sharply but got no reply, officials have said.

The cockpit voice recorder, also an orange cylinder, was found two days later on Wednesday. It has been sent to a Beijing lab for examination and analysis, and the flight data recorder was also being sent to the Chinese capital for decoding.

Search teams have been combing the site outside the city of Wuzhou for days with shovels and other hand tools. Construction excavators have been brought in to remove earth and clear wider passageways to the site, and pumps are being used to drain collected water from the rain. Officials said monitors have been installed to detect possible landslides from the rain and search activity that could endanger the workers.

Officials announced late Saturday that there were no survivors. DNA analysis has confirmed the identities of 120 of the people on board, they said. Searchers have found ID and bank cards belonging to the victims.

The Boeing Co. said in a statement that a Boeing technical team is supporting the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board and the Civil Aviation Administration of China, which will lead the investigation into the crash.

China Eastern, one of China's four major airlines, and its subsidiaries have grounded all of their Boeing 737-800s, a total of 223 aircraft. The carrier said the grounding was a precaution, not a sign of any problem with the planes.

## Oscars set for return to normal, except all the changes

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — For the first time in two years, the Academy Awards are rolling out the red carpet at Los Angeles' Dolby Theatre for what the film academy hopes will be a back-to-normal Oscars. Except for all the stuff that's changed.

The telecast for the 94th Academy Awards will begin, as usual, at 8 p.m. EDT on ABC. But little else about how this year's Oscars will get underway is traditional. An hour before the broadcast begins, attendees will assemble in the Dolby for the presentation of eight awards and acceptance speeches that will be edited into a broadcast that producer Will Packer has promised will be a tight three hours.

It's one of many shifts, both slight and tectonic, around this year's ceremony. After two years of pandemic — and a socially distanced 2021 edition with record-low ratings — the Academy Awards will try to recapture their exalted place in pop culture with a revamped telecast that's expected to see a streaming service win best picture for the first time.

It won't be easy. The film industry recovered significantly from the pandemic in 2021, but despite one of the biggest hits in years in "Spider-Man: No Way Home," the rebound has been fitful. The global movie industry sold about half the tickets last year as it did two years ago, \$21.3 billion in 2021 compared to \$42.3 billion in 2019, according to the Motion Picture Association. Hollywood pushed more of its top films directly into homes than ever before; half of this year's 10 best-picture nominees were streamed at or very near release. Even the film academy shifted entirely to a streaming platform for voters, rather than

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DVD screeners.

Then there are the challenges of commanding worldwide attention for a night of Hollywood self-congratulation after two years of pandemic and while Russia's war ravages Ukraine. Packer has said the war in Ukraine will be respectfully acknowledged during the broadcast.

Netflix's "The Power of the Dog," Jane Campion's gothic western, comes in with a leading 12 nominations and a good chance of snagging the top award. But all the momentum is with Sian Heder's deaf family drama "CODA," which, despite boasting just three nods, is considered the favorite. A win would be a triumph for Apple TV+, which acquired the movie out of the Sundance Film Festival last year and has spent big promoting it to academy members.

But expect the most awards on the night to go to "Dune," Denis Villeneuve's sweeping science fiction epic. It's the odds-on-favorite to clean up in the technical categories.

After several years sans-host, the Oscars will turn to the trio of Amy Schumer, Wanda Sykes and Regina Hall to emcee the broadcast, which is also streaming on platforms including Hulu Live TV, YouTubeTV and on ABC.com with provider authentication. Producers have also lined up a star-studded group of performers including Billie Eilish and Beyoncé to sing nominated songs, while the "Encanto" cast will perform Lin-Manuel Miranda's breakout hit "We Don't Talk About Bruno."

It will be a staggered start, with stars making their way into the Dolby at different times. ABC's red carpet preshow will run 6:30 to 8 p.m., with the first hour of awards happening inside the theater between 7-8 p.m. News of those winners will spread first on social media and later be woven into the telecast. To accommodate the shift, the red carpet will also open an hour earlier than usual, at 4 p.m. Eastern.

The rejiggered approach, which has been deeply unpopular with some academy members, should make for some complicated red-carpet logistics. The academy, wanted to give each winner an uncompromised moment, is urging attendees to be in their seats by 7 p.m. Some stars, like "The Eyes of Tammy Faye" nominee Jessica Chastain, have said they won't do red carpet interviews if it means missing the presentation of awards like best hair and makeup, for which the artists of "Tammy Faye" are nominated.

That's one of the eight pre-show categories to be handed out during what producers are calling the "golden hour." The others are: film editing, sound, original score, production design, live-action short, animated short and documentary short.

Earlier this month, more than 70 Oscar winners, including James Cameron, Kathleen Kennedy and Guillermo del Toro, warned that the change would turn some nominees into "second-class citizens."

Behind the change is alarm over the Oscars fast-falling ratings. While drops have been common to all major network award shows, last year's show attracted only about 10 million viewers, less than half of the 23.6 million the year before. A decade ago, it was closer to 40 million.

To help restore the Oscars' position, some argued in the lead-up to this year's awards that a blockbuster like "Spider-Man: No Way Home" should have been nominated for best picture. It's up for just visual effects.

Instead, a wide gamut of films are in the hunt, ranging from the much-watched Netflix apocalyptic comedy "Don't Look Up" and the roundly acclaimed three-hour Japanese drama "Drive My Car."

One thing producers have promised: the night's final award will be best picture. Last year's show concluded awkwardly with the unexpected presentation of best actor to a not-present Anthony Hopkins.

## Myanmar leader vows to 'annihilate' opponents of army rule

By JERRY HARMER Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Myanmar's leader vowed Sunday to intensify action against homegrown militia groups fighting the military-run government, saying the armed forces would "annihilate" them.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, speaking at a military parade marking Armed Forces Day, also urged ethnic minorities not to support groups opposed to army rule and ruled out negotiations with them.

The military seized power last year from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Security forces used lethal force to suppress mass nationwide protests, resulting in the deaths of more than 1,700 civilians, according to a detailed tally compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

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Forced to turn away from peaceful protests, many of those opposed to military rule took up arms, forming hundreds of militia groups called People's Defense Forces — better known as PDFs. In some parts of the country, they've joined forces with well-organized, battle-hardened ethnic armed groups, which have been fighting for greater autonomy for decades.

Min Aung Hlaing, speaking to thousands of military personnel at the annual Armed Forces Day parade in the capital Naypyitaw, said he would not negotiate with "terrorist groups and their supporters for killing innocent people" and threatening peace and security.

He said the military — known as the Tatmadaw — "will annihilate them to (the) end," according to an official translation of his speech.

His government has declared major resistance organizations — regardless of whether they are directly engaged in armed struggle — as terrorist groups. Membership or even contact with them carries harsh punishment under law.

"I would like to highlight that there are no governments or armies worldwide that negotiate with any terrorist groups," he said.

Despite a huge advantage in equipment and numbers, Myanmar's military has struggled to crush the new militia units. Outgunned and outmanned, the PDFs have relied on support from local communities and knowledge of the terrain to carry out often surprisingly effective attacks on convoys, patrols, guard posts, police stations and isolated bases in remote areas.

The military is currently conducting operations in Sagaing, in upper central Myanmar, and in Kayah State, in the country's east, using airstrikes, artillery barrages and the burning of villages. The army recently seems to have expanded its offensive into Chin State in the west and Kayin State in the southeast as well.

Last year's Armed Forces Day was the single bloodiest since the military's Feb. 1, 2021, seizure of power. Security forces across the country opened fire on demonstrators, killing as many as 160 people.

Anti-military protests called were held Sunday despite the risks in Yangon, the country's biggest city, and elsewhere. To avoid arrest or injury, urban street protests usually involve flash mobs, which can run away before security forces crack down.

The main opposition group, the self-styled National Unity Government, urged people to join a "Power Strike" Sunday night by switching off the lights and their televisions for 30 minutes while the military parade is broadcast on state-run TV channels.

The group said the strike also is intended to protest daily power outages. The blackouts started several months ago, and the government blames them on high gas prices and damage to power lines caused by sabotage.

The United States, the European Union and 20 other countries issued a statement marking Armed Forces Day by recalling "those killed and displaced by violence over the last year, including at least 100 people killed on this day alone one year ago."

It called on the military to cease its violence and return to democratic rule, and urged countries not to supply arms to Myanmar.

The U.S., Britain and Canada on Saturday imposed the latest in a series of coordinated sanctions on senior military officials and business leaders who allegedly act as arms dealers for Myanmar's army.

The new measures targeted three senior military officers including the newly appointed chief of the air force and four alleged arms dealers as well as the companies linked to them. Washington also imposed sanctions on the army's 66th Light Infantry Division, which was accused of burning at least 30 civilians in their cars in Kayah State on Christmas Eve last year.

The fresh sanctions came the same week that the U.S announced it had determined the military's actions in a crackdown on the Rohingya Muslim ethnic group in 2017 constituted genocide. A brutal counterinsurgency campaign compelled more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee from western Myanmar to Bangladesh, where virtually all remain.

The atrocities committed by the army against the Rohingya have been well documented by U.N. investigators, and the World Court is considering a charge of genocide against the Tatmadaw.

## Without Russia, science going solo on world's woes, dreams

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Without Russian help, climate scientists worry how they'll keep up their important work of documenting warming in the Arctic.

Europe's space agency is wrestling with how its planned Mars rover might survive freezing nights on the Red Planet without its Russian heating unit.

And what of the world's quest for carbon-free energy if 35 nations cooperating on an experimental fusion-power reactor in France can't ship vital components from Russia?

In scientific fields with profound implications for mankind's future and knowledge, Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine is causing a swift and broad decaying of relationships and projects that bound together Moscow and the West. Post-Cold War bridge-building through science is unraveling as Western nations seek to punish and isolate the Kremlin by drying up support for scientific programs involving Russia.

The costs of this decoupling, scientists say, could be high on both sides. Tackling climate change and other problems will be tougher without collaboration and time will be lost. Russian and Western scientists have become dependent on each other's expertise as they have worked together on conundrums from unlocking the power of atoms to firing probes into space. Picking apart the dense web of relationships will be complicated.

The European Space Agency's planned Mars rover with Russia is an example. Arrays of Russian sensors to sniff, scour and study the planet's environment may have to be unbolted and replaced and a non-Russian launcher rocket found if the suspension of their collaboration becomes a lasting rupture. In that case, the launch, already scrubbed for this year, couldn't happen before 2026.

"We need to untangle all this cooperation which we had, and this is a very complex process, a painful one I can also tell you," the ESA director, Josef Aschbacher, said in an Associated Press interview. "Dependency on each other, of course, creates also stability and, to a certain extent, trust. And this is something that we will lose, and we have lost now, through the invasion of Russia in Ukraine."

International indignation and sanctions on Russia are making formal collaborations difficult or impossible. Scientists who became friends are staying in touch informally but plugs are being pulled on their projects big and small. The European Union is freezing Russian entities out of its main 95 billion euro (\$105 billion) fund for research, suspending payments and saying they'll get no new contracts. In Germany, Britain and elsewhere, funding and support is also being withdrawn for projects involving Russia.

In the United States, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology severed ties with a research university it helped establish in Moscow. The oldest and largest university in Estonia won't accept new students from Russia and ally Belarus. The president of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, Tarmo Soomere, says the breaking of scientific connections is necessary but also will hurt.

"We are in danger of losing much of the momentum that drives our world towards better solutions, (a) better future," he told the AP. "Globally, we are in danger of losing the core point of science — which is obtaining new and essential information and communicating it to others."

Russian scientists are bracing for painful isolation. An online petition by Russian scientists and scientific workers opposed to the war says it now has more than 8,000 signatories. They warn that by invading Ukraine, Russia has turned itself into a pariah state, which "means that we can't normally do our work as scientists, because conducting research is impossible without full-fledged cooperation with foreign colleagues."

The growing estrangement is being pushed by Russian authorities, too. An order from the Science Ministry suggested that scientists no longer need bother getting research published in scientific journals, saying they'll no longer be used as benchmarks for the quality for their work.

Lev Zelenyi, a leading physicist at the Space Research Institute in Moscow who was involved in the now-suspended collaboration on the ExoMars rover, described the situation as "tragic" and said by email to the AP that he and other Russian scientists must now "learn how to live and work in this new non-enabling

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environment.”

On some major collaborations, the future isn't clear. Work continues on the 35-nation ITER fusion-energy project in southern France, with Russia still among seven founders sharing costs and results from the experiment.

ITER spokesman Laban Coblentz said the project remains “a deliberate attempt by countries with different ideologies to physically build something together.” Among the essential components being supplied by Russia is a massive superconducting magnet awaiting testing in St. Petersburg before shipment — due in several years.

Researchers hunting for elusive dark matter hope they'll not lose the more than 1,000 Russian scientists contributing to experiments at the European nuclear research organization CERN. Joachim Mnich, the director for research and computing, said punishment should be reserved for the Russian government, not Russian colleagues. CERN has already suspended Russia's observer status at the organization, but “we are not sending anyone home,” Mnich told the AP.

In other fields as well, scientists say Russian expertise will be missed. Adrian Muxworthy, a professor at London's Imperial College, says that in his research of the Earth's magnetic field, Russian-made instruments “can do types of measurements that other commercial instruments made in the West can't do.” Muxworthy is no longer expecting delivery from Russia of 250 million-year-old Siberian rocks that he had planned to study.

In Germany, atmospheric scientist Markus Rex said the year-long international mission he led into the Arctic in 2019-2020 would have been impossible without powerful Russian ships that bust through the ice to keep their research vessel supplied with food, fuel and other essentials. The Ukraine invasion is stopping this “very close collaboration,” as well as future joint efforts to study the impact of climate change, he told the AP.

“It will hurt science. We are going to lose things,” Rex said. “Just lay out a map and look at the Arctic. It is extremely difficult to do meaningful research in the Arctic if you ignore that big thing there that is Russia.”

“It really is a nightmare because the Arctic is changing rapidly,” he added. “It won't wait for us to solve all of our political conflicts or ambitions to just conquer other countries.”

## Ukrainians welcome in Hungary but Afghan student was not

By JOVANA GEC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — When Russia launched its war, Hungary opened its borders for the tens of thousands of refugees escaping Ukraine. Other refugees have been left with no help in a field in Serbia.

After studying in Hungary for three years, Hasib Qarizada sought asylum there after his native Afghanistan unraveled in chaos last August. But rather than receiving refuge, Hungarian authorities whisked Qarizada over the border six months ago into neighboring Serbia, kicking him out into a country he didn't even know.

“Police just came over and handcuffed me,” Qarizada told The Associated Press in Belgrade, the Serbian capital. “They told me ‘Don't try to run away, don't try to fight with us, don't do anything stupid.’”

Left all alone in a field in Serbia with no one in sight for miles, the 25-year-old Qarizada had no idea where he was, where to go or what to do.

“I was a student, and they just gave my life a totally different twist,” he said. “They didn't give me a chance to grab my clothes, my (phone) charger or my laptop or anything important that I would need to travel.”

He told the AP he “had no idea where Serbia was, what language they speak, what kind of culture they have.”

Hungarian police haven't immediately responded to AP's request for a comment on Qarizada's expulsion in September.

While Hungary is notorious for how it treats migrants fleeing wars and poverty, Qarizada's case points to a particularly sinister practice of sending people into a third country they hadn't come from.

Rights activists in the region registered the first such case back in 2017, when a 16-year-old Kurd from

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Iraq was deported into Serbia from Hungary though he had initially entered Hungary from Romania and managed to reach Austria before he was sent back.

More recently, a woman from Cameroon who entered Hungary from Romania was sent to Serbia last December. Another African woman who flew in from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, a year ago also ended up in a field in Serbia.

"This is something that unfortunately has become normal, regular and something which cannot be considered as unusual," Serbian rights lawyer Nikola Kovacevic said.

Qarizada's expulsion illustrates the stark differences in the treatment of people from Ukraine and those from non-European war zones under right-wing Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

Similarly, Croatia — another EU country that has been accused of using violence against migrants — has said Ukrainians can come and stay.

Activists have applauded the shift while also warning of discrimination against refugees and migrants from the Middle East and Africa, who for years have faced perils and pushbacks at the borders of Hungary, Croatia and other European nations.

"For those of us following these issues, it is hard to miss the stark contrast of the last few weeks with Europe's harsh response to people fleeing other wars and crises," said Judith Sunderland of Human Rights Watch. "A staggering number of people from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East die every year attempting to reach Europe."

Zsolt Szekeres from the Hungarian Helsinki Committee noted that "the (Hungarian) government is trying their best to explain now why Ukrainians are good asylum-seekers and others are bad migrants."

With Hungary's April 3 election approaching, government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs dismissed as "fake news" media reports that authorities were discriminating even among the refugees arriving from Ukraine.

Border pushbacks, which are illegal under international law, means that people are sent from one country to another without consideration of their individual circumstances.

When, like Qarizada, they are expelled to a country they hadn't come from, "the severity of the violation is higher," said Kovacevic, the Serbian lawyer.

Qarizada's deportation was even more drastic as he hadn't arrived in Hungary along any illegal migration route. A self-financed student who shared an apartment and had an established life in Budapest, Qarizada sought asylum because the turmoil in Afghanistan meant his family could no longer pay his university fees and therefore he couldn't renew his residence permit.

In rejecting his asylum application, activists say, Hungarian authorities disregarded the fact that Qarizada's homeland of Afghanistan couldn't be considered safe as the Taliban returned to power.

Qarizada told the AP that his family had connections with Afghanistan's pre-Taliban government and were in danger of retribution. "They hardly go outside," he said.

Helsinki Committee lawyers have taken Qarizada's case both to the courts in Hungary and the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that his unlawful expulsion runs against the European Convention of Human Rights, Szekeres said.

A Hungarian court has ruled in favor of Qarizada, but the lawyers are now waging another legal battle to force Hungarian authorities to implement the decision and allow him to come back, he added.

"He applied for asylum, he was staying here, and he was in need of protection, and he was pushed out in a summary manner," Szekeres insisted. "He was never given the possibility or option to explain his situation."

For Qarizada, the days after the expulsion were the worst of his life.

Abandoned in Serbia, he walked for hours, finally reaching a gas station where a woman let him charge his phone and directed him toward the nearest asylum center. The facility was full so he slept outside for four nights.

"I felt very horrible ... because I was a normal student. I was studying, I was going to classes. I had my own friends. I had my own life," he said. "I wasn't doing anything bad."

Karox Pishtewan, the Kurdish minor deported into Serbia in 2017 and who was granted asylum there,

also told the AP that Hungarian police “just opened the gate and told us to go.”

“It was July and everything was green,” he recalled. “I was quite shocked. We hadn’t slept for three days and they just kicked us out there. I had no idea where I was and what was happening.”

Szekeres said the acceptance of refugees from Ukraine shows that solidarity with people in need has remained strong among ordinary Hungarian people despite the government’s years-long anti-immigration agenda.

“There is no difference between Ukrainian parents fleeing with their children and Afghan parents fleeing with their children,” he said. “This is a good reminder for everyone that asylum-seekers, no matter where they come from, need protection.”

## War shakes Europe path to energy independence, climate goals

By FRANK JORDANS, ARITZ PARRA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Before Russia’s war in Ukraine, Europe’s most pressing energy policy goal was reducing carbon emissions that cause climate change.

Now, officials are fixated on rapidly reducing the continent’s reliance on Russian oil and natural gas — and that means friction between security and climate goals, at least in the short term.

To wean itself from Russian energy supplies as quickly as possible, Europe will need to burn more coal and build more pipelines and terminals to import fossil fuels from elsewhere.

This dramatic shift comes amid soaring fuel costs for motorists, homeowners and businesses, and as political leaders reassess the geopolitical risks from being so energy-dependent on Russia.

In 2021, the European Union imported roughly 40% of its gas and 25% of its oil from Russia — an economic relationship that officials had thought would prevent hostilities, but is instead financing them.

While some are calling for an immediate boycott of all Russian oil and gas, the EU plans to reduce Russian gas imports by two-thirds by the end of this year, and to eliminate them altogether before 2030.

This “will not be easy,” said Paolo Gentiloni, the EU’s top economic official. But, he added, “it can be done.”

In the near-term, ending energy ties with Russia puts the focus on securing alternative sources of fossil fuels. But longer term, the geopolitical and price pressures stoked by Russia’s war in Ukraine may actually accelerate Europe’s transition away from oil, gas and coal.

Experts say the war has served as a reminder that renewable energy isn’t just good for the climate, but also for national security. That could help speed up the development of wind and solar power, as well as provide a boost to conservation and energy-efficiency initiatives.

The EU has pledged to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 55% compared with 1990 levels by 2030, and to get to net zero emissions by 2050. Analysts and officials say those goals, enshrined in EU climate legislation, can still be met.

The rapid pursuit of energy independence from Russia will likely require “a slight increase” in carbon emissions, said George Zachmann, an energy expert at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels. But “in the long term, the effect will be that we will see more investment in renewables and energy efficiency in Europe,” Zachmann said.

Plans that wouldn’t have been contemplated just a few months ago are now being actively discussed, such as running coal plants in Germany beyond 2030, which had previously been seen as an end date.

Germany’s vice chancellor and energy minister, Robert Habeck, said there should be “no taboos.”

The Czech government has made the same calculation about extending the life of coal power plants.

“We will need it until we find alternative sources,” Czech energy security commissioner Václav Bartuška, told the news site Seznam Zprávy. “Until that time, even the greenest government will not phase out coal.”

One of Europe’s top priorities is to buy more liquefied natural gas that can come by ship. On Friday, American and European officials announced a plan under which the U.S. and other nations will increase liquefied gas exports to Europe this year, though U.S. officials were unable to say exactly which countries will provide the extra energy this year.

Germany, which lacks import terminals to turn LNG back into gas when it comes off the ship, is pushing

ahead with two multibillion-euro projects on its North Sea coast.

The war also has revived Spain's interest in extending a gas pipeline across the Pyrenees to France. The 450 million-euro (\$500 million) project had been abandoned in 2019 after France showed little interest and a European feasibility study deemed it unprofitable and unnecessary. If built, it would allow gas imported in Spain and Portugal as LNG to reach other parts of Europe.

In Britain, which is no longer part of the EU, Prime Minister Boris Johnson says it's "time to take back control of our energy supplies."

Britain will phase out the small amount of oil it imports from Russia this year. More significantly, Johnson has signaled plans to approve new oil and gas exploration in the North Sea, to the dismay of environmentalists, who say that is incompatible with Britain's climate targets.

Some within the governing Conservative Party and the wider political right want the British government to retreat on its commitment to reach net zero by 2050, a pledge made less than six months ago at a global climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland. Conservative Party co-chairman Oliver Dowden said last week that "British people want to see a bit of conservative pragmatism, not net zero dogma."

Yet the shock waves from the war cut both ways.

Sharply higher gas and electricity prices, and the desire to be less dependent on Russia, are increasing pressure to expand the development of home-grown renewables and to propel conservation.

The International Energy Agency recently released a 10-point plan for Europe to reduce its dependence on Russian gas by a third within a year. Simply lowering building thermostats by an average of one degree Celsius during the home-heating season would save 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas a year, or roughly 6% of what Europe imports from Russia.

At the German rooftop solar panel company Zolar, chief executive Alex Melzer said there has been a surge of inquiries from potential customers since the war began.

"With the Ukraine crisis, we've really seen that people are wondering whether Germany is going to stop buying oil and gas from Russia and what's going to happen to our electricity and energy system," he told The Associated Press.

Melzer said customers are less interested in saving the planet than in saving money, despite the upfront investment of 20,000 euros (\$22,000). But it amounts to the same thing: a reduction in fossil fuel use and thereby emissions.

"Goal achieved, super," he said.

## 'My personal tragedy': Ukrainians brace for attack on Odesa

By YESICA FISCH and CARA ANNA Associated Press

ODESA, Ukraine (AP) — The Black Sea port of Odesa is mining its beaches and rushing to defend its cultural heritage from a feared Mariupol-style fate in the face of growing alarm that the strategic city might be next as Russia attempts to strip Ukraine of its coastline.

The multi-cultural jewel, dear to Ukrainian hearts and even Russian ones, would be a hugely strategic win for Russia. It is the country's largest port, crucial to grain and other exports, and headquarters for the Ukrainian navy.

Bombardment from the sea last weekend further raised worries that the city is in Russia's sights.

Residents say Russian President Vladimir Putin would be insane to take Odesa with the brutal approach that has left other Ukrainian cities in ruins. Once a gilded powerhouse of the Russian empire, Odesa includes one of the finest opera houses in Europe and the famed Potemkin Steps between the city and the sea, featured in Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 silent film masterpiece "Battleship Potemkin."

But after a month of grueling war, people say they can't predict anything anymore.

"The only thing we're really afraid of is that the other side has no principles whatsoever," said Valerii Novak, a local businessman. He never considered himself a Ukrainian patriot, but when Russia invaded, something "just clicked" in him. He has refused to leave Odesa and joined thousands of people in basic training in how to use a gun.

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Now he and other Odesa residents watch Russian warships move closer, in provocation. Western officials call the Russian ships a mix of surface combatants and the kinds used to put naval infantry ashore.

The seizure of Odesa and the strip of land farther west also would allow Moscow to build a land corridor to the separatist Trans-Dniester region of neighboring Moldova that hosts a Russian military base.

A senior U.S. defense official said this past week the U.S. didn't see indications that ships in the Black Sea were firing on Odesa as they had last weekend. He spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive subject.

"It's difficult to know what this indicates," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said of last weekend's bombardment. "Is it the prelude to an assault on Odesa? Is it a diversionary tactic to sort of hold and fix Ukrainian troops in the south so that they can't come to the relief of their comrades in Mariupol or in Kyiv?"

The uncertainty adds to the anxiety in Odesa, where the initial panic has been followed by a wary calm.

Some residents are pitching in to strengthen the city's defenses. On an unmined beach, sea captain Sivak Vitaliy joined others in packing sandbags for barricades.

"We will win," he said, no matter how ghastly Russia's invasion has become in cities like Mariupol or Kharkiv.

Ukrainian authorities assert that Russia appears to lack forces to quickly press an offensive on Odesa as its marine units are busy to the east with the siege of Mariupol, where they have suffered heavy losses.

Closer to Odesa, on the Black Sea coast, the Russian troops have taken Kherson and tried to bypass Mykolaiv, an important port halfway between Odesa and Russia-annexed Crimea, but fierce Ukrainian resistance has thwarted those attempts.

"Is our city the next one or not?" asked Hanna Shelest, an Odesa-based security analyst.

She said Russia needs Odesa to surrender, not to fight, to avoid the "blow to sentiment" that any destruction of the city's cultural heritage would give to nostalgic Russians. Odesa was one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in the Russian empire, with a significant Jewish population as well as Greek, Italian and others drawn by the vibrant port.

Now the city's Italian baroque opera house, rebuilt in the 1880s, is one of the most heavily defended buildings in Ukraine. Major monuments elsewhere in Odesa are covered in sandbags. The contents of the fine arts museum, including Orthodox religious icons, have been moved into underground storage. Checkpoints are heavy throughout the historic city center.

Russian forces' plans to take Odesa have been ruined by the Ukrainian resistance in Mykolaiv, a crucial land supply route, Shelest said. Without holding Mykolaiv, a Russian landing operation in Odesa from the sea would be suicidal.

"If the situation continues like this, there's a chance for a big attack only if Putin becomes completely crazy," she said. "From all considerations, he should not do it."

Nevertheless, Shelest, like other Odesa residents, has gathered her documents in case she has to flee.

The mayor has estimated that 10% of the city's population of about 1 million has gone.

At the central train station, the iconic melody "At the Black Sea" played. The sound of the orchestra summoned up the 1950s Soviet-era as a man placed his hand against the cold window of a moving train in goodbye.

"It has taken a part of my heart from my chest when sending them away," said another resident who gave just her first name, Ludmila. "I don't know how it will be, what it will be."

Russia's invasion has created a wave of pro-Ukraine sentiment in a city whose population has shown significant pro-Russia feelings in the recent past. Shelest and other residents noted a survey published this month in which more than 90% of Odesa residents said they wanted to remain part of Ukraine.

"Nobody wants to be part of Russia anymore," said Natalia Vlasenko, a local tour guide. She called any destruction of Odesa "my personal tragedy" and described a life of walking the streets of her great-grandparents and not wanting to leave.

The city might not be Paris or Rome, she said, but for Ukraine "it's a gem."

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## Trump returns to Georgia confronting test of his grip on GOP

By WILL WEISSERT and JEFF AMY Associated Press

COMMERCE, Ga. (AP) — In Donald Trump's push to fundamentally reshape the Republican Party, few places are a higher priority than Georgia.

The former president has issued highly-coveted endorsements in races ranging from governor to state insurance commissioner. His backing of football legend Herschel Walker essentially cleared a path to the party's nomination for a critical U.S. Senate seat.

Trump has taken a particularly active role in shaping the governor's race, recruiting former Sen. David Perdue to challenge incumbent Brian Kemp as retribution for Kemp not going along with lies about the 2020 election being stolen. And in an effort to clear a path for Perdue, Trump pressed another Republican in the race — Vernon Jones — to run for Congress instead.

Trump returned to Georgia on Saturday night for a rally ahead of the state's May 24 primary to try to boost Perdue in a campaign that is emerging as an early, critical test of whether the former president can live up to his professed role as a kingmaker in the GOP.

"Before we can defeat the Democrat socialists and communists ... we first have to defeat the RINO sell-outs and the losers in the primaries this spring," Trump told the crowd, lacing into Kemp again and again as he accused him of betraying Republican voters with the derisive acronym, "Republican in name only."

"Brian Kemp is a turncoat. He's a coward and he's a complete and total disaster," Trump went on, calling Perdue the only Republican who can defeat Stacey Abrams, a Democrat who is running for governor a second time.

"Governor Kemp is focused on making sure Stacey Abrams is never our governor or the next president," Cody Hall, Kemp's director of communications, said in response.

But there are warning signs for Trump. While Walker is marching to the primary with minimal opposition, other races are more complicated. Jones, for instance, is now competing in a crowded congressional primary in which no one may clear the 50% threshold needed to avoid a runoff.

Perdue, meanwhile, may pose an even higher-profile challenge for the former president. He has struggled to raise money and, in a Fox News poll released this month, trailed Kemp 50% to 39%. If that dynamic holds, Kemp would be within striking distance of winning the primary outright, averting a runoff.

"I think it could be the start of, I don't want to use the word downfall, but it could be the start of his influence waning," said Eric Tanenblatt, former chief of staff to ex-Georgia Republican Gov. Sonny Perdue and a former fundraiser for David Perdue who is backing Kemp in the primary.

In remarks before Trump's arrival at the rally in Commerce in northeast Georgia, Perdue unveiled a series of sharper attacks on Kemp as he parroted Trump's election lies, declaring that "our elections in 2020 were absolutely stolen." He accused Kemp of having "sold out" Georgia voters through a series of actions including refusing to call a special state legislative session before Jan. 6 to investigate or overturn the election.

Kemp was required by state law to certify the results and has repeatedly said any other course would have invited endless litigation. No credible evidence has emerged to support Trump's claims of mass voter fraud. Federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general have said the election was fair, and the former president's allegations were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges Trump appointed.

"By the way, where's Brian Kemp? Where's Brian?" Perdue asked. "He's not here. You know why? Because he kicked sand in the face of the president the last two years and said 'no' every time the president asked for anything."

Perdue promised, if elected, to "make sure that those people responsible for that fraud in 2020 go to jail" as he escalated his rhetoric to mimic Trump's.

Trump has been obsessed with this once Republican stronghold since the aftermath of the 2020 campaign, when he became the first GOP presidential candidate to lose the state in 28 years. It could again be central to his political future if he decides to run for the White House in 2024.

That's why his activity in the state is especially notable as Trump is essentially rallying voters behind

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candidates who could go on to play critical roles in certifying future elections in which he's a participant. He's already shown an extraordinary willingness to press officials to overturn results he doesn't like. During his waning days in office, Trump pressured Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to "find" enough votes to overturn Joe Biden's victory, a conversation that is now the subject of a grand jury probe in Atlanta.

The results in Georgia were certified after a trio of recounts, including one partially done by hand. They all affirmed Biden's victory.

Given the former president's particular focus on Georgia, a stumble here could weaken his efforts elsewhere to champion candidates who have pledged loyalty to his vision of the GOP, which is dominated by election lies and culture clashes over issues related to race and gender. Some of those candidates are already struggling.

Trump rescinded his endorsement of struggling Alabama Republican Senate primary candidate Mo Brooks on Wednesday. He will travel to North Carolina next month to try to boost his pick in North Carolina's contentious Senate primary, Republican U.S. Rep. Ted Budd, who has lagged in polling and fundraising behind former Gov. Pat McCrory. Trump's choice in Pennsylvania's Senate GOP primary dropped out, and Trump has so far not sided with a candidate in key but bruising party Senate primaries in Ohio and Missouri.

Meanwhile, some top national Trump antagonists, including Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming and Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, have not backed away from seeking reelection despite Trump promising for more than a year that he'd make sure they were defeated.

Kemp, who is holding his own Saturday meeting with the Columbia County Republican Party in suburban Augusta, reported having \$12.7 million in his main campaign account as of Jan. 31. That far outpaced Perdue, who had less than \$1 million in cash on hand through January.

The incumbent governor has vowed to provide an initial investment of at least \$4.2 million on TV ads ahead of Georgia's primary. Other Trump detractors are stepping up spending, including GOP 2.0, a super PAC founded by Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan, who isn't seeking reelection but has been staunchly criticized by the former president for his defense of Georgia's 2020 election results.

Duncan, a Republican, said Trump's endorsement isn't the "golden ticket" it once was, and his group is launching its first 30-second television spot timed to coincide with the former president's rally. In it, Duncan decries politicians "who would rather talk about conspiracy theories and past losses, letting liberal extremists take us in the wrong direction."

"You almost feel bad for David Perdue. That (he's) walking off the plank that Donald Trump has put out there for him here in Georgia," Duncan said in an interview. "We're going to see a rally show up that's once again going to confuse Georgians and who knows what Donald Trump's gonna say," Duncan said.

"He's out to settle a score," Duncan added, referring to Trump, "and that's no way to keep conservative leadership in power."

Despite such concerns, Trump isn't backing down. Just this week, he threw his support behind the virtually unknown John Gordon to challenge Attorney General Chris Carr. He's also endorsed Patrick Witt to go up against Insurance Commissioner John King. The Republican incumbents are the statewide officials most closely aligned with Kemp, the leading target of Trump's ire.

## Coach K makes 13th Final Four, Duke beats Arkansas 78-69

By JOSH DUBOW AP Sports Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Mike Krzyzewski slowly climbed up the ladder, bowed to the adoring Duke fans and then pointed to his players to give them the credit before cutting the final string of the net.

Coach K's farewell tour will end at his record-setting 13th Final Four.

The Blue Devils delivered their most complete performance of this NCAA Tournament run to extend the career of their Hall of Fame coach for one more weekend after beating Arkansas 78-69 on Saturday night in the West Region final.

"To see the joy, I can't explain it, because, you know, I'm a grandfather, I've lived through my daughters, I'm living through my grandchildren but now I'm living through these guys," Krzyzewski said on the court

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before cutting down the net. "Holy mackerel!"

A.J. Griffin scored 18 points, West Region MVP Paolo Banchero added 16 and second-seeded Duke (32-6) frustrated fourth-seeded Arkansas (28-9) on the offensive end to get back to the Final Four for the first time since Krzyzewski won his fifth championship in 2015.

Coach K will try to follow the path of the only coach to win more NCAA men's titles as John Wooden won his 10th championship in his final season at UCLA in 1975. Krzyzewski broke the tie he had with Wooden for most Final Four appearances with the commanding win over the Razorbacks.

"It's an honor. Coach Wooden, if he kept coaching, would probably have 24," Krzyzewski said. "But it's a heck of a thing. We've won a lot in the tournament, and we've won a lot of games, but Final Fours are big, obviously, then national championships. That's what you put banners up for."

Duke's upcoming matchup in New Orleans next Saturday will be historic either way — either its first NCAA Tournament meeting with archrival North Carolina or an unfathomable tangle in the national semifinals with 15th-seeded Saint Peter's.

"It's going to be an honor for us to go against whoever is the regional champion of that region," Krzyzewski said. "There's no greater day in college basketball than when those four regional champions, four champions, get in one arena and play. It's the greatest day for college basketball, and we're honored to be a part of it."

The Blue Devils were in control for most of the second half, using an 10-0 run after Arkansas had cut the deficit to five points early in the half to open up a big cushion. The spurt came following a timeout when Krzyzewski once again switched his team to an uncharacteristic zone after having success doing that in the Sweet 16 against Texas Tech.

"I think going zone helped," said defensive anchor Mark Williams, who had 12 points, 12 rebounds and three blocks. "I think it gave them a different look, slowed them up a little bit."

Jaylin Williams ended that run with an emphatic dunk over Banchero for a three-point play but it wasn't nearly enough for the Razorbacks, who didn't cut the deficit into single digits until the final minute of the game.

Williams led Arkansas with 19 points and 10 rebounds and JD Notae had 14 points before fouling out. The Razorbacks shot 41.9% for the game but felt proud after turning their season around following an 0-3 start in the Southeastern Conference.

"We all wanted to get further in this, but the fight this team has showed all year has been incredible," Williams said. "For the way that we started off conference, nobody would have expected us to get this far. So I just think that this team just kept fighting the whole year, the whole year, but, of course, we didn't get where we wanted."

Duke closed the first half on an 8-0 run to take a 45-33 lead at the break with Banchero hitting a 3-pointer to start the spurt. Trevor Keels hit another 3 from long range just before the buzzer.

## BIG PICTURE

Arkansas: For the second straight season, coach Eric Musselman's Razorbacks fell short against a more talented team in the Elite Eight. They lost to eventual champion Baylor last year. Arkansas is still seeking its first Final Four appearance since losing the title game in 1995 to UCLA. The Razorbacks won their only national championship the previous season against Duke.

"Last year we lost to Baylor, and they were national champions," Musselman said. "I'll be shocked if Duke is not national champions in a week or week and a half."

Duke: After losing the regular-season finale to North Carolina in Coach K's final game at Cameron Indoor Stadium and in the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament final to Virginia Tech the following week, the Blue Devils used late rallies to beat Michigan State and Texas Tech the previous two rounds but played a much more complete game against Arkansas. That bodes well for their chances in New Orleans.

"We never doubted as a team, a young team too," Griffin said. "We knew what we were capable of, and we just wanted to show the world."

## LOOSE BALL

A cheerleading team was once again called upon to recover a ball that lodged at the top of the basket

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following a missed shot by the Razorbacks early in the second half. The Arkansas cheer team leaped into action with Kaiden Thraikill boosting Bella Shelley up to knock the ball loose, generating a big roar from the crowd.

UP NEXT

No. 8 seed North Carolina faces tournament darling Saint Peter's on Sunday, with the winner booking a dance in New Orleans with the Blue Devils.

## Colorado wildfire forces evacuation orders for 19,000 people

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Authorities issued an evacuation order for 19,400 people Saturday near a fast-moving Colorado wildfire in rolling hills south of the college town of Boulder, not far from the site of a destructive 2021 blaze that leveled more than 1,000 homes.

The wildfire was fueled by wind earlier in the day and had grown to 122 acres (49 hectares) with no containment, Boulder Fire-Rescue spokesperson Marya Washburn said. The Boulder Office of Emergency Management said an overnight shelter was opened after evacuation orders covered 8,000 homes and 7,000 structures. No structures had been damaged.

Winds and temperatures have died down, Washburn said. Officials expect to be dealing with the fire for several days due to heavy fuels, said Boulder Fire-Rescue Wildland Division Chief Brian Oliver.

The fire is in an area where a blaze destroyed 1,000 homes last year in unincorporated Boulder County and suburban Superior and Louisville. Superior town officials told residents in an email that there were no immediate concerns for the community.

The 2021 blaze burned Alicia Miller's home, where she could see smoke from Saturday's fire rising in the background. She posted a photo on Twitter and referenced climate change, which has made the U.S. West warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more destructive, according to scientists.

Miller said her neighbors helped her escape along with her husband, Craig, their three adult sons and two dogs, Ginger and Chloe. She said the hardest losses from the blaze were things they didn't look at much, like baby shoes, family pictures and letters from her grandmother.

"I feel exhausted by all of this, and I just feel like enough as far as these fires and disasters," she said. She pointed to a recent Texas wildfire that left a deputy dead and homes destroyed. " ... So I'm standing there and it's just kind of a repeat."

Saturday's fire started around 2 p.m. and burned protected wildland near the National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder police said. Authorities have called it the NCAR fire and its cause is not yet known, said Washburn.

## Villanova to 7th Final Four, beats Houston 50-44 in South

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Villanova coach Jay Wright has won national championships with well-balanced and fundamentally sound teams, yet even he knew staying in contention for another title was going to take a rugged and exhaustive effort.

Ugly at times, the final result was beautiful for the Wildcats, who are going to their third Final Four in the past six NCAA Tournaments.

Jermaine Samuels had 16 points and 10 rebounds as Villanova grinded out a 50-44 victory over gritty and athletic Houston team in the South Region final Saturday.

"You just knew watching this team defensively, like you weren't going to come out and just outscore them," Wright said. "We really weren't talking as much at the end about how we were going to score. We were talking about how we were going to stop them."

Caleb Daniels added 14 points for the Wildcats (30-7), and fifth-year senior Collin Gillespie's only made field goal was a clutch shot late, even though Villanova led throughout to clinch the first spot in this year's

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Final Four in New Orleans.

"It was like playing against our own selves. They were just as physical as we were," Daniels said. "It was a literal street fight, every possession trying to get a rebound."

Villanova shot 28.8% from the field (15 of 52). The Cougars were only slightly better at 29.8% (17 of 57), missing their last five shots and 10 of 11 overall after cutting an 11-point second-half deficit to two. They made only one of their 20 attempted 3-pointers in their lowest-scoring NCAA tourney game ever.

"We had it turned, we kept getting stops. We were getting stop, stop stop, we just weren't scoring on the other end," Houston coach Kelvin Sampson said. "I remember telling them in the huddle, I think it was a four-point game there ... and we kept getting stops that somebody's going to make a big shot. But we didn't. Credit Villanova."

The Wildcats, seeing their fourth championship overall, will play either Kansas, the only No. 1 seed remaining, or 10th-seeded Miami in a national semifinal next Saturday. They have won two championships in Wright's 22 seasons, in 2016 and 2018.

"We couldn't get Justin (Moore) or Collin in ball screens. They just took it away. We couldn't get Justin and Collin in post-ups. They took it away. It was hard to even get them backdoor cuts," Wright said. "They took away our two leading scorers, and other guys had to step up."

Taze Moore had 15 points and 10 rebounds for the Cougars (32-6), who were denied making consecutive Final Four appearances for the first time since 1982-84 during the Phil Slama Jama era. The starting five was completely changed from last season, including Moore and two other senior newcomers.

After Villanova missed three shots on the same possession — and was still without any second-chance points in the game — Moore got the long rebound on the break. After initially slowing things down, Moore scored on a drive against Gillespie, getting Houston within 42-40 with 5:25 left.

It was the closest the Cougars had been in the game at AT&T Center, only about 200 miles from their campus, and the crowd was in a frenzy when Wright called timeout. Houston never got a chance to take the lead.

Gillespie, who played in the championship game for the Wildcats in 2018, was 1-of-6 shooting. But his only field goal came on the possession after the timeout when he waved off Samuels, stepped inside the 3-point line and hit a jumper with 5:02 left.

"It was an in-the-moment decision. They were soft-blitzing me basically the whole game. That time they just happened to switch," Gillespie said. "So I wanted Jermaine to go down into the post. I had a mismatch ... then Jermaine had a guard on him so he could rebound."

There was a nearly two-minute scoring drought before Justin Moore made two free throws — the Wildcats were a perfect 15-of-15 from the line. A foul by J'Wan Roberts bailed them out with the shot clock about to run out. Those were Villanova's first and only second-chance points.

Villanova had scored the first five points of the game, including a 3-pointer by Samuels on the first shot.

Samuels was also on that 2018 title team as a freshman with Gillespie, but the 6-foot-7 forward logged only one minute total while making late-game appearances in those two Final Four games.

As a senior, Samuels goes into the Final Four after being named MVP of the South Region. He is averaging 17.5 points a game in this NCAA tourney — so far.

## INJURY

Justin Moore suffered a lower leg injury in the final minute of the game and was on crutches during the Wildcats' postgame celebration. Moore was dribbling against a defender, and looked like he slipped and fell, then went back down after trying to get up. Initial X-rays showed nothing was broken, but Wright said an MRI was planned and that it didn't look good for Moore.

## BIG PICTURE

Houston: After never trailing in its Sweet 16 win over top-seeded Arizona, Houston never led against 'Nova. ... The Cougars had advanced to the Final Four all previous six times they had played in a regional final: 1967, 1968, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 2021.

Villanova: This is the fourth time in a row that Villanova won when getting to a regional final and ad-

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vanced to the Final Four, following 2009, 2016 and 2018. The Wildcats are 20-3 in NCAA tourney games since 2016. ... They are 9-0 in March, their largest winning streak this season, and have won 14 of 15 overall since the first week of February.

UP NEXT

Villanova will play against the Midwest Region champion in the national semis. Kansas and Miami play Sunday in Chicago.

## Biden lashes at Putin, calls for Western resolve for freedom

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, VANESSA GERA and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — President Joe Biden delivered a forceful and highly personal condemnation of Russia's Vladimir Putin on Saturday, summoning a call for liberal democracy and a durable resolve among Western nations in the face of a brutal autocrat.

As he capped a four-day trip to Europe, a blend of emotive scenes with refugees and standing among other world leaders in grand settings, Biden said of Putin: "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power."

It was a dramatic escalation in rhetoric — Biden had earlier called Putin a "butcher" — that the White House found itself quickly walking back. Before Biden could even board Air Force One to begin the flight back to Washington, aides were clarifying that he wasn't calling for an immediate change in government in Moscow.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov quickly denounced Biden, saying "it's not up to the president of the U.S. and not up to the Americans to decide who will remain in power in Russia."

While Biden's blunt language grabbed headlines, in other pieces of his roughly 30-minute speech before Warsaw's iconic Royal Castle he urged Western allies to brace for what will be a turbulent road ahead in a "new battle for freedom."

He also pointedly warned Putin against invading even "an inch" of territory of a NATO nation.

The address was a heavy bookend to a European visit in which Biden met with NATO and other Western leaders, visited the front lines of the growing refugee crisis and even held a young Ukrainian girl in his arms as he sought to spotlight some of the vast tentacles of the conflict that will likely define his presidency.

"We must remain unified today and tomorrow and the day after, and for the years and decades to come. It will not be easy," Biden said as Russia continued to pound several Ukrainian cities. "There will be costs, but the price we have to pay, because the darkness that drives autocracy is ultimately no match for the flame of liberty that lights the souls of free people everywhere."

Biden also made the case that multilateral institutions like NATO are more important than ever if the West and its allies are going to successfully push back against autocrats like Putin.

During his campaign for president, Biden talked often about the battle for primacy between democracies and autocracies. In those moments, his words seemed like an abstraction. Now, they have an urgent resonance.

Europe finds itself ensconced in a crisis that has virtually all of Europe revisiting defense spending, energy policy and more, and so does the U.S.

Charles Kupchan, who served as senior director for European affairs on the White House National Security Council during the Obama administration, called the invasion a "game-changer" that left Atlantic democracies with "no choice" but to bolster their posture against Russia.

But the path ahead for Biden — and the West — will only grow more complicated, Kupchan said.

"The challenges Biden's presidency faces have just grown in magnitude," said Kupchan, now a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. "He now needs to lead the West's efforts to protect the West from the pressing external threat posed by Russia. And he needs to continue strengthening the West from within by countering the illiberal populism that still poses internal threats to democratic societies on both sides of the Atlantic."

In one of the most poignant moments of his trip, Biden on Saturday bent down and picked up a young girl, a Ukrainian refugee in a pink winter coat, and spoke of how she reminded him of his own granddaughters.

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"I don't speak Ukrainian, but tell her I want to take her home," Biden asked a translator to tell the smiling child.

Hours later, Biden was in front of a crowd of a 1,000 — including recent Ukrainian refugees — at the Royal Castle, a Warsaw landmark that dates back more than 400 years and was badly damaged in World War II. He made clear that the West would need to steel itself for what will be a long and difficult battle.

"We must commit now, to be this fight for the long haul," Biden said.

The Biden administration, which has been selective about putting too great of importance on any single policy speech, sought to elevate what White House officials billed as a major address. Biden spoke with grand palace behind him to an invited audience — one bigger than just about any he's spoken to during his presidency.

He singled out Lech Walesa, the Polish labor leader who led the push for freedom in his country and was eventually elected its president, and connected the moment to the former Soviet Union's history of brutal oppression, including the post-World War II military operations to stamp out pro-democracy movements in Hungary, Poland and what was then Czechoslovakia. And he urged Europe to heed the words of Pope John Paul II, the first pontiff from Poland: "Be not afraid."

Biden's trip has reaffirmed the importance of European alliances, which atrophied under former President Donald Trump. He's worked with his counterparts to marshal an array of punishing sanctions on Russia, and placed the continent on a course that could eliminate its dependence on Russian energy over the next several years.

The collective response to the invasion of Ukraine has little parallel in recent history, which has been more characterized by widening divisions than close coordination. But the Russian invasion of Ukraine has changed that dynamic, with European nations stepping up defense spending and imposing crushing sanctions against Moscow, and some taking initial steps to reorient their energy needs away from Russia.

"I'm confident that Vladimir Putin was counting on dividing NATO," Biden said during a meeting with Polish President Andrzej Duda on Friday. "But he hasn't been able to do it. We've all stayed together."

Maintaining such unity will likely prove difficult as the war grinds on, and the refugee situation could become one source of strain. Much like NATO is committed to the collective defense of each member, Biden said, other nations should share the burden of caring for Ukrainian refugees. To that end, the U.S. administration announced it would admit up to 100,000 Ukrainian refugees into the United States this year.

"It should be all of NATO's responsibility," he told Duda, whose country has accepted roughly 2.2 million of the 3.7 million who have fled Ukraine. It's not clear how many of those displaced Ukrainians who have come through Poland have now moved on to other nations.

There's also no clear path to ending the conflict. Although Russian officials have suggested they will focus their invasion on the Donbas, a region in East Ukraine, Biden wasn't so sure if there was a real shift underway.

Asked on Saturday if the Russians have changed their strategy, he told reporters that "I am not sure they have."

Despite the hazards ahead, Biden insisted there is more reason to be hopeful that the West and Ukraine can eventually succeed.

"A dictator bent on rebuilding an empire will never erase a people's love for liberty," Biden said. "Brutality will never grind down their will to be free. Ukraine will never be a victory for Russia, for free people refuse to live in a world of hopelessness and darkness."

## US Rep. Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska announces resignation

By GRANT SCHULTE Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Republican U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska on Saturday resigned from office after a California jury convicted him of lying to federal authorities about an illegal campaign donation from a foreign national.

In a letter to the House, Fortenberry said he was resigning from Congress, effective March 31.

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"It has been my honor to serve with you in the United States House of Representatives," he said in the letter. "Due to the difficulties of my current circumstances, I can no longer effectively serve."

Fortenberry's resignation letter opened with a poem, "Do It Anyway," that's associated with fellow Catholic Mother Teresa. One line from the poem says: "What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight. Build anyway."

Fortenberry's announcement followed concerted pressure from political leaders in Nebraska and Washington for him to step down. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy on Friday urged Fortenberry to resign.

Nebraska Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts said Fortenberry should "do the right thing for his constituents" and leave the office he has held since 2005.

Fortenberry was indicted in October after authorities said he lied to FBI agents in two separate interviews about his knowledge of an illegal \$30,000 contribution from his campaign from a foreign billionaire. Fortenberry was interviewed at his home in Lincoln, and then again with his lawyers present in Washington, D.C.

At trial, prosecutors presented recorded phone conversations in which Fortenberry was repeatedly warned that the contributions came from Gilbert Chagoury, a Nigerian billionaire of Lebanese descent. The donations were funneled through three strawmen at a 2016 fundraiser in Los Angeles.

Fortenberry's withdrawal from the primary leaves state Sen. Mike Flood as the likely GOP nominee. The former speaker of the Nebraska Legislature, who has won endorsements from Ricketts and former Gov. Dave Heineman, has a strong advantage in the Republican-leaning 1st Congressional District. State Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks, a Democrat from Lincoln, is also running for the seat.

In a statement from his campaign, Flood thanked Fortenberry for "his many years of honorable service" and wished him and his family the best.

"Working together, we will keep this seat in Republican hands," Flood said, promising to "continue the fight for our families, our economy and our conservative values in Congress."

Pansing Brooks said Fortenberry's conviction is a "wake-up call" that the district needs a change.

In a statement Saturday, Pansing Brooks said: "This opens the door for a new approach to serving (the 1st Congressional District). I am ready and able to meet that challenge and lead with integrity."

The timing of Fortenberry's resignation is expected to trigger a special election. Governors aren't able to appoint a person to the seat.

Under Nebraska state law, the governor has to schedule a special election within 90 days once a congressional seat becomes vacant. Each political party gets to pick a nominee who will run to serve the remainder of the congressional member's term.

Flood and Pansing Brooks will both run in the special election to fill the seat and run in November so they can serve the subsequent term.

Nebraska's primary is May 10. Because counties have already mailed ballots to military members serving abroad and other absentee voters, it's too late to remove Fortenberry's name from the primary ballot. Election officials have said there isn't time to schedule a special election to coincide with the primary.

## Shelled city in north Ukraine fears becoming 'next Mariupol'

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Nights are spent huddling underground from Russian strikes pounding their encircled city into rubble. Daylight hours are devoted to hunting down drinkable water and braving the risk of standing in line for the little food available as shells and bombs rain down.

In the second month of Russia's invasion, this is what now passes for life in Chernihiv, a besieged city in northern Ukraine where death is everywhere.

It isn't — yet — quite as synonymous with atrocious human suffering as the pulverized southern city of Mariupol. But similarly blockaded and pounded from afar by Russian troops, Chernihiv's remaining residents are terrified that each blast, bomb and body that lies uncollected on the streets ensnares them in the same macabre trap of unescapable killings and destruction.

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"In basements at night, everyone is talking about one thing: Chernihiv becoming (the) next Mariupol," said 38-year-old resident Ihar Kazmerchak, a linguistics scholar.

He spoke to The Associated Press by cellphone, amid incessant beeps signaling that his battery was dying. The city is without power, running water and heating. At pharmacies, the lists of medicines no longer available grow longer by the day.

Kazmerchak starts his day in long lines for drinking water, rationed to 10 liters (2 1/2 gallons) per person. People come with empty bottles and buckets for filling when water-delivery trucks make their rounds.

"Food is running out, and shelling and bombing doesn't stop," he said.

Nestled between the Desna and Dnieper rivers, Chernihiv straddles one of the main roads that Russian troops invading from Belarus used Feb. 24 for what the Kremlin hoped would be a lightning strike onward to the capital, Kyiv, which is just 147 kilometers (91 miles) away.

The city's peace shattered, more than half of the 280,000 inhabitants fled, according to the mayor, unable to be sure when they'd next see its magnificent gold-domed cathedral and other cultural treasures, or even if they still would be standing whenever they return. The mayor, Vladyslav Atroshenko, estimates Chernihiv's death toll from the war to be in the hundreds.

Russian forces have bombed residential areas from low altitude in "absolutely clear weather" and "are deliberately destroying civilian infrastructure: schools, kindergartens, churches, residential buildings and even the local football stadium," Atroshenko told Ukrainian television.

On Wednesday, Russian bombs destroyed Chernihiv's main bridge over the Desna River on the road leading to Kyiv; on Friday, artillery shells rendered the remaining pedestrian bridge impassable, cutting off the last possible route for people to get out or for food and medical supplies to get in.

Refugees from Chernihiv who fled the encirclement and reached Poland this week spoke of broad and terrible destruction, with bombs flattening at least two schools in the city center and strikes also hitting the stadium, museums and many homes.

They said that with utilities knocked out, people are taking water from the Desna to drink and that strikes are killing people while they wait in line for food. Volodymyr Fedorovych, 77, said he narrowly escaped a bomb that fell on a bread line he had been standing in just moments earlier. He said the blast killed 16 people and injured dozens, blowing off arms and legs.

So intense is the siege that some of those trapped cannot even muster the strength to be afraid anymore, Kazmerchak said.

"Ravaged houses, fires, corpses in the street, huge aircraft bombs that didn't explode in courtyards are not surprising anyone anymore," he said. "People are simply tired of being scared and don't even always go down to the basements."

With the invasion now in its second month, Russian forces have seemingly stalled on many fronts and are even losing previously taken ground to Ukrainian counterattacks, including around Kyiv. The Russians have bombed the capital from the air but not taken or surrounded the city. U.S. and French defense officials say Russian troops appear to have adopted defensive positions outside Kyiv.

With Russia continuing to strike and encircle urban populations, from Chernihiv and Kharkiv in the north to Mariupol in the south, Ukrainian authorities on Saturday dismissed statements from the Russian military suggesting that it planned to concentrate its remaining strength on wresting the entirety of Ukraine's eastern Donbas region from Ukrainian control. The region has been partially controlled by Russia-backed separatists since 2014.

"We cannot believe the statements from Moscow because there's still a lot of untruth and lies from that side," Markian Lubkivskyi, an adviser to the Ukrainian defense minister, told the BBC. "That's why we understand the goal of (Russian President Vladimir) Putin still is the whole of Ukraine."

That skepticism was underscored hours later when explosions rocked Lviv, a city in western Ukraine about 45 miles (72 kilometers) from the Polish border where an estimated 200,000 displaced Ukrainians have taken refuge.

Among them is Olana Ukrainets, a 34-year-old IT worker from Kharkiv.

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"When I came to Lviv, I was sure that all these alarms wouldn't have any results," Ukrainets told the AP from a bomb shelter after the blasts. "Sometimes when I heard them at night, I just stayed in bed. Today, I changed my mind and I should hide every time. ... None of the Ukrainian cities are safe now."

The strike happened as U.S. President Joe Biden was visiting Poland, which has taken in far more Ukrainian refugees than any other country.

Britain's defense ministry said Saturday that it doesn't expect a reprieve for citizens of Ukraine's bombarded cities anytime soon.

"Russia will continue to use its heavy firepower on urban areas as it looks to limit its own already considerable losses, at the cost of further civilian casualties," the U.K. ministry said.

Previous bombings of hospitals and other nonmilitary sites, including a theater in Mariupol where Ukrainian authorities said a Russian airstrike is believed to have killed 300 people last week, already have given rise to war crimes allegations.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, appearing by video link at Qatar's Doha Forum, on Saturday compared the destruction of Mariupol to the Syrian and Russian destruction wrought on the city of Aleppo.

Later, in a video address, Zelenskyy assailed Russian claims that Ukraine is trying to wipe out the use of the Russian language, saying: "You are doing everything so that our people themselves leave the Russian language, because the Russian language will now be associated only with you, with your explosions and murders, your crimes."

The invasion has driven more than 10 million people from their homes, almost a quarter of Ukraine's population. Of those, more than 3.7 million have fled the country entirely, according to the United Nations. Thousands of civilians are believed to have died.

In Chernihiv, hospitals are no longer operating, and residents cook over open fires in the street because the power is out. The utility workers who stayed behind aren't enough to repair the broken powerlines and restore other essential services, and time has become a blur, the mayor said.

"We live without dates and days of the week," Atroshenko told Ukrainian television.

Ever since a Russian blast hit a Stalin-era movie theater next to his 12-story residential building, Kazmerchak, the linguistics scholar, has been spending his nights in a bomb shelter. A Russian missile also destroyed the hotel not far from his house.

"The walls were shaking so much," he said. "I thought my house would collapse any minute and I would be left under the rubble."

## Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins dead at 50

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Taylor Hawkins, for 25 years the drummer for Foo Fighters and best friend of frontman Dave Grohl, has died during a South American tour with the rock band. He was 50.

There were few immediate details on how Hawkins died, although the band said in a statement Friday that his death was a "tragic and untimely loss."

Colombia's Prosecutor's Office released a statement Saturday saying toxicological tests on urine from Hawkins' body preliminarily found 10 psychoactive substances and medicines, including marijuana, opioids, tricyclic antidepressants and benzodiazepines. It did not provide a cause of death and investigations are continuing.

Foo Fighters had been scheduled to play at a festival in Bogota, Colombia, on Friday night. Hawkins' final concert was Sunday at another festival in San Isidro, Argentina.

"His musical spirit and infectious laughter will live on with all of us forever," said a message on the band's official Twitter account that was also emailed to reporters. "Our hearts go out to his wife, children and family."

The Bogota municipal government issued a statement Saturday that the city's emergency center had received a report of a patient with "chest pain" and sent an ambulance, though a private ambulance had already arrived at the hotel in northern Bogota.

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Health workers tried to revive him, but were unable to do so.

"It was a band I grew up with. This leaves me empty," Juan Sebastian Anchique, 23, told The Associated Press as he mourned Hawkins outside the hotel.

The U.S. Embassy in Bogota also expressed its condolences in a tweet.

After Grohl, Hawkins was the most recognizable member of the group, appearing alongside the lead singer in interviews and playing prominent, usually comic, roles in the band's memorable videos and their recent horror-comedy film, "Studio 666."

Hawkins was Alanis Morissette's touring drummer when he joined Foo Fighters in 1997. He played on the band's biggest albums including "One by One" and "In Your Honor," and on hit singles like "Best of You."

In Grohl's 2021 book "The Storyteller," he called Hawkins his "brother from another mother, my best friend, a man for whom I would take a bullet."

"Upon first meeting, our bond was immediate, and we grew closer with every day, every song, every note that we ever played together," Grohl wrote. "We are absolutely meant to be, and I am grateful that we found each other in this lifetime."

It's the second time Grohl has experienced the death of a close bandmate. Grohl was the drummer for Nirvana when Kurt Cobain died in 1994.

Tributes poured out on social media for Hawkins.

"God bless you Taylor Hawkins," Rage Against The Machine guitarist Tom Morello said on Twitter along with a photo of himself, Hawkins and Jane's Addiction singer Perry Farrell. "I loved your spirit and your unstoppable rock power."

"What an incredible talent, who didn't also need to be so kind and generous and cool but was all those things too anyway," tweeted Finneas, Billie Eilish's brother, co-writer and producer. "The world was so lucky to have his gifts for the time that it did."

At the festival where Foo Fighters had been scheduled to perform, news of the death leaked out slowly, said Diego Báez, a 33-year-old fan.

A concert organizer first announced the performance was cancelled for medical reasons. Minutes later, fans learned from social media of Hawkins' death.

"Some cried. Others were sad, astonished, moved. It was a very powerful moment," Báez said.

A screen projected the words "Taylor Hawkins forever" while the song "My Hero" played.

Born Oliver Taylor Hawkins in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1972, Hawkins was raised in Laguna Beach, California. He played in the small Southern California band Sylvia before landing his first major gig as a drummer for Canadian singer Sass Jordan.

Hawkins told The Associated Press in 2019 that his early drumming influences included Stewart Copeland of The Police, Roger Taylor from Queen, and Phil Collins, who he said was "one of my favorite drummers ever. You know, people forget that he was a great drummer as well as a sweater-wearing nice guy from the '80s, poor fella."

When he spent two years in the mid-1990s drumming for Morissette, he was inspired primarily by the playing of Jane's Addiction's Stephen Perkins.

"My drums were set up like him, the whole thing," Hawkins told the AP. "I was still sort of a copycat at that point. It takes a while and takes a little while to sort of establish your own sort of style. I didn't sound exactly like him, I sound like me, but he was a big, huge influence."

He and Grohl met backstage at a show when Hawkins was still with Morissette. Grohl's band would have an opening soon after when then-drummer William Goldsmith left. Grohl called Hawkins, who was a huge Foo Fighters fan and immediately accepted.

"I am not afraid to say that our chance meeting was a kind of love at first sight, igniting a musical 'twin flame' that still burns to this day," Grohl wrote in his book. "Together, we have become an unstoppable duo, onstage and off, in pursuit of any and all adventure we can find."

Hawkins first appeared with the band in the 1997 video for Foo Fighters' most popular song, "Everlong," although he had yet to join the group when the song was recorded. He would, however, go on to pound

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out epic versions of it hundreds of times as the climax of Foo Fighters' concerts.

In another highlight of the group's live shows, Grohl would get behind the drums and Hawkins would grab the mic to sing a cover of Queen's "Somebody to Love."

"The best part of getting to be the lead singer of the Foo Fighters for just for one song is I really do have the greatest rock 'n' roll drummer on the planet earth," Hawkins said before the song in a March 18 concert in Chile.

Grohl can be heard telling him to shut up.

Hawkins also costarred in Foo Fighters' recently released film, "Studio 666," in which a demonic force in a house where the band is staying seizes Grohl and makes him murderous. Hawkins and the other members of the band are killed off one by one. The premise came out of their work on their 10th studio album at a home in Los Angeles.

He also drummed and sang for the side-project trio Taylor Hawkins and the Coattail Riders. They released an album, "Get the Money," in 2006.

Hawkins is survived by his wife Alison and their three children.

## **Biden budget seeks minimum tax on households worth \$100m**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden intends to propose a minimum tax of 20% on households worth more than \$100 million and cut projected budget deficits by more than \$1 trillion over the next decade, according to a fact sheets released Saturday by the White House budget office.

The introduction of the minimum tax on the wealthiest Americans would represent a significant reorienting of the tax code. It would apply to the top 0.01% of households with half of the expected revenue coming from households worth \$1 billion or more. The minimum tax would effectively prevent the wealthiest sliver of America from paying lower rates than families who think of themselves as middle class, while helping to generate revenues to fuel Biden's domestic ambitions and keep the deficit in check relative to the U.S. economy.

In his proposal expected Monday, the lower deficits also reflect the economy's resurgence as the United States emerges from the pandemic. It's a sign that the government's balance sheet will improve after a historic burst of spending to combat the coronavirus.

The fading of the pandemic and the growth has enabled the deficit to fall from \$3.1 trillion in fiscal 2020 to \$2.8 trillion last year and a projected \$1.4 trillion this year. That deficit spending paid off in the form of the economy expanding at a 5.7% pace last year, the strongest growth since 1984. But inflation at a 40-year high also accompanied those robust gains as high prices have weighed on Biden's popularity.

For the Biden administration, the proposal for the budget year that begins Oct. 1 shows that the burst of spending helped to fuel growth and put government finances in a more stable place for years to come as a result. One White House official, insisting on anonymity because the budget has yet to be released, said the proposal shows that Democrats can deliver on what Republicans have promised before without much success: faster growth and falling deficits.

Yet the Biden budget would pledge to do so through a kind of wealth tax that many Republicans say would hurt the economy by diminishing private investment in companies that create jobs and cause the wealthy to put their fortunes to work abroad.

Republican lawmakers have said that the Biden administration's spending over the past year has led to greater economic pain in the form of higher prices. The inflation that came with reopening the U.S. economy as the closures from the pandemic began to end has been amplified by supply chain issues, low interest rates and, now, disruptions in the oil and natural gas markets because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky pinned the blame solely on Biden's coronavirus relief as well as his push to move away from fossil fuels.

"Washington Democrats' response to these hardships has been as misguided as the war on American energy and runaway spending that helped create them," McConnell said last week. "The Biden administra-

tion seems to be willing to try anything but walking back their own disastrous economic policies.”

Biden inherited from the Trump administration a budget deficit that was equal in size to 14.9% of the entire U.S. economy. But the deficit starting in the upcoming budget year will be below 5% of the economy, putting the country on a more sustainable path, according to people familiar with the budget proposal who insisted on anonymity to discuss forthcoming details.

The lower deficit totals will also be easier to manage even if interest rates rise.

The expected deficit decrease for fiscal 2022 reflects the solid recovery in hiring that occurred in large part because of Biden’s \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package. The added jobs mean additional tax revenue, with the government likely collecting \$300 billion more in revenues compared to fiscal 2021, a 10% increase.

Still, the country will face several uncertainties that could reshape Biden’s proposed budget, which will have figures that don’t include the spending omnibus recently signed into law. Biden and U.S. allies are also providing aid to Ukrainians who are fighting against Russian forces, a war that could possibly reshape spending priorities and the broader economic outlook.

## Shooting at Chicago area shopping mall kills 1, wounds teen

ROSEMONT, Ill. (AP) — A masked gunman opened fire in a suburban Chicago shopping mall, leaving one man dead and wounding at least one other person — a teenage girl who was found in washroom after shoppers ran for cover, police said.

The gunman, in his mid-20s, opened fire just after 7 p.m. Friday near the food court at the Fashion Outlets of Chicago mall in Rosemont, a village just northwest of the city, Rosemont Police Sgt. Joe Balogh told the Chicago Tribune on Saturday. Police did not release a motive for the shooting but said it was a targeted attack.

The gunman then fled in a car with “other unknown subjects, he said.

More than two hours after the shooting, police stopped that vehicle on an expressway in Chicago, Balogh said. The car’s owner was taken into custody and was being questioned as a person of interest, he said. A gun was seized as evidence, but no charges have been announced.

The Cook County medical examiner’s office identified the man who died as Joel Valdes, 20, of Skokie.

A 15-year-old girl who was shot in the right wrist was in stable condition, Balogh said.

Officials said earlier that a third person was shot and ran away, but Balogh said no other victims had been found as of Saturday afternoon.

After the shooting, authorities evacuated and searched the mall.

Luis Elijo said he and his family, including his 5-month-old daughter, were shopping at a store in the mall when a woman opened the store’s doors and screamed, “They’re shooting!” An employee locked the doors and people inside retreated to the back of the store, Elijo said.

“And right after that I heard what sounded like an automatic weapon,” he said while recovering with his family in the lobby of the nearby Crowne Plaza hotel.

## Blinken set to see Israelis, Arabs wary about Iran, Ukraine

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

JERUSALEM (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will try to use his three-nation tour of the Middle East and North Africa to reassure wary Israelis and Arabs that the Biden administration is committed to the region’s security at a time when Washington is confronting multiple foreign policy challenges.

U.S. preoccupation with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and bolstering NATO’s presence in Eastern Europe has fueled concerns that America’s attention may be stretched thin. Indeed, Blinken’s trip was rescheduled several times due to developments in Ukraine, and he arrived late Saturday in Israel from Warsaw after breaking off from President Joe Biden’s Ukraine-dominated visit to Belgium and Poland.

Blinken’s visit also comes as talks over salvaging a landmark nuclear deal with Iran are winding down amid fears in Israel and among Gulf Arab nations that an agreement may not be tough enough to curb

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Tehran's regional aggressiveness.

Israel was strongly opposed to the 2015 agreement between Iran and world powers and welcomed then-President Donald Trump's decision to unilaterally withdraw from the deal. Israel has warned against reviving the agreement and says it will not be bound by any new one.

Underscoring regional anxieties, Israel's government has hastily arranged a meeting of top diplomats from Arab countries that have normalized relations with Israel.

In addition to Blinken and Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, their counterparts from Bahrain, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates will attend.

Those three countries normalized relations with Israel in 2020 in the so-called Abraham Accords brokered by the Trump administration.

Israel's Foreign Ministry announced Saturday that Egypt, the first Arab state to recognize Israel, would also send its foreign minister to the gathering at a kibbutz in the Negev Desert where Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, spent his retirement years. The two-day summit is to begin Sunday, according to the announcement, which gave no details about the agenda.

An official involved in the planning said the gathering was the first of its kind in terms of the large number of Arab partners to be hosted by Israel. He said shared concerns about Iran and the nuclear deal were sure to be part of the discussions with the Americans. The goal was to bring together moderate Arab partners to discuss a vision for "how the region moves forward" together with the United States, said the official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the meeting because the agenda was not finalized and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Biden administration has welcomed the Abraham Accords, one of the few Trump foreign policy initiatives it has praised, and expressed interest in negotiating additional ones despite frosty reaction from the Palestinians. They have watched unhappily as Arab nations recognize Israel while their own conflict with Israel remains unresolved.

The U.S. has repeatedly said it supports a two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, after seeing Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in Jerusalem, Blinken will meet Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah, on the West Bank, to reaffirm that position.

While Iran and the uncertain status of the nuclear negotiations in Vienna may be the issue of most immediate concern to Israel and its neighbors, the war in Ukraine and efforts to persuade Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the invasion loom large.

That conflict has roiled world energy markets, leading the U.S. and Europe to appeal to Arab and other major oil suppliers to step up production. The war may also soon result in major food security challenges, particularly across the Middle East, which imports vast quantities of grain from Ukraine.

Bennett has presented himself as a mediator between Putin, Ukraine and the West but his discussions with the Russian leader have yet to bear fruit. U.S. officials say Blinken plans to discuss possible roles that Israel, which has concerns about the Russian presence in its northern neighbor Syria, could play.

Israel has walked a fine line between Russia and Ukraine since hostilities began last month. Bennett has expressed support for the Ukrainian people but stopped short of condemning Russia's invasion. Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid has been much more outspoken in his criticism of Russia, giving Bennett some space to continue his mediation efforts.

Israel regularly conducts airstrikes on what it says are hostile Iranian military targets in Syria. Such strikes must be coordinated with Russia, which intervened in Syria's civil war in 2015 on the side of President Bashar Assad. Russia is also a party to the Iran talks.

After Israel, Biden will travel on to Morocco and Algeria. Apart from seeing senior Moroccan officials in Rabat, Blinken will also meet there with Abu Dhabi's powerful crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the de facto leader of the United Arab Emirates.

He is a key player in the region and met with Bennett and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi in Egypt this past week, and with el-Sissi, Jordan's King Abdullah II and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi in Jordan.

But he angered the United States by hosting Assad recently, drawing a firm rebuke from Washington.

The U.S. said the meeting was inappropriate while Syria's civil war continues and that there should be no business as usual with Damascus.

The visit was Assad's first to an Arab country since the Syrian uprising began in 2011. The UAE, a U.S. ally and the driving force behind the Abraham Accords, has also tried to avoid angering Russia.

## Black women feel sting of 'traumatizing' Jackson hearings

By AARON MORRISON and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — "Senator," she said, letting out an audible sigh.

In that singular moment, Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson spoke for countless Black women who have had to gather all the patience, strength and grace within to answer insinuating questions about their credentials, qualifications and character.

It was Day One of questioning at the Senate Judiciary Committee as the Harvard-educated Jackson, the first Black woman to be nominated for the nation's highest court, was making history.

The federal judge had to endure hours of public scrutiny from skeptics, namely the Republican senators who are erecting a wall of opposition to her landmark nomination, the first in the court's 233-year history, and may vote en bloc against her confirmation.

"It was really traumatizing to watch," said Melanie L. Campbell, president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation and convener of the Black Women's Roundtable.

From questioning of Jackson's view of books on critical race theory that drew her exasperated sigh — "They don't come up in my work as a judge," she said — to the loaded suggestion that the sentences she imposed on child pornography defendants were too lenient, the questions from the Republicans tapped into long-standing American grievances over race, class and public safety.

The insinuations that Jackson, a distinguished jurist and mother of two, is a secret radical liberal or poses a danger to the safety of children felt to some supporters as yet another example of highly qualified Black women having to endure indignities and distortions of their credentials, even as they shatter racial barriers in American society.

Campbell told The Associated Press that "the othering of her, in a sense, like she's against our children," seemed like a tired political tactic.

"My spirit feels it was to bring this Black woman down because she's about to break the glass ceiling that, once broken, opens the door to more."

Democrats praise President Joe Biden's choice of Jackson as long overdue, a chance to start making the court more reflective of the diverse nation it serves. But they have been slow to bolster the judge's nomination against the unrelenting attacks and instead allowed them to linger.

Over and over during her hearings, Republican Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Josh Hawley of Missouri hammered Jackson on a handful of the many cases she handled as a judge, asking if she regretted having a record that, in their view, is soft on child pornography defendants.

No matter how many times Jackson asserted, for example, that the child pornography cases were some of "the most difficult" of her career or tried to explain the particulars of the law, the GOP senators talked over her, past her and pushed onward in their attempt to portray the nominee as they wished.

"I can only wonder what's your hidden agenda," asked Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., pointing to one of the judge's earlier writings. "Is it to let violent criminals, cop killers and child predators back to the streets? ... Is it your personal hidden agenda to incorporate critical race theory into our legal system?"

These senators insisted their questions were not about race. In fact, Graham opened with a warning that the questioners would be framed as racist. "We're all racists if we ask hard questions. It's not going to fly with us."

Yet Republicans ignored analysis that shows Jackson's sentencing record on such cases is on track with other judges appointed by both Democrats and Republican presidents, and that in some cases she went beyond recommendations to come down harder on defendants.

"What I regret," Jackson told the senators, "is that in the hearing about my qualifications to be a justice on the Supreme Court, we've spent a lot of time focusing on this small subset of my sentences."

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For many supporters of Jackson, the Republicans' cherry-picking of her record tarnished a momentous occasion.

Nina Turner, a former Ohio state senator who was a prominent surrogate for Sen. Bernie Sanders' 2020 Democratic presidential campaign, criticized Democratic members on the committee for not defending Jackson more vigorously.

"She should not have had to endure what she endured," Turner told the AP. "The Democratic senators should have used their authority and positioning to show the requisite outrage necessary for that moment."

Overall, during her time on the district court bench, Jackson presided over 14 total cases of child sexual abuse, interstate travel for child sexual abuse and child pornography.

The American Bar Association's standing committee on the federal judiciary said in its survey of some 250 judges, attorneys and academics that words such as "brilliant," "beyond reproach," "fair" were used to describe Jackson, who earned the panel's highest rating.

"They uniformly rejected any accusations of bias," said Jean Veta of the ABA committee.

In a letter to the Senate committee, Fred Bowman, a University of Missouri law professor and former federal prosecutor, spoke of his dismay at the thought Jackson was somehow "soft" on these crimes. His letter was signed by other experts in the field.

White House deputy press secretary Andrew Bates blasted the Republican line of questioning as an "embarrassing conspiracy theory" that "has been conclusively debunked by fact check after fact check."

But alone before the panel, Jackson had difficulty convincing the Republican senators as she worked to explain the rules judges adhere to and the nuances of the wrenching cases they face. The GOP senators rarely accepted the judge's answers and interjected or just ignored her explanations altogether.

At one point, Jackson simply stopped answering: "Senator," she said to Cruz, "I've said what I'm going to say about these cases. No one case can stand in for a judge's entire record."

By Thursday, as the hearings concluded, Republican leaders in the Senate were using the issue — and her refusal to repeat earlier answers — as justification for opposing her confirmation.

Throughout the four days of testimony, Black women filled many of the seats in the committee room. Those women included some of the leading civil rights figures and members of the Congressional Black Caucus, which ran its own "war room" to back up Jackson's nomination.

LaTosha Brown, cofounder of the group Black Voters Matter, said she had received numerous text messages from Black women who were both outraged by Jackson's treatment from senators and heartened by her clear determination to endure the process.

"I just got texts that said, 'Persevere.'"

It was a reference to Jackson's own words of advice delivered at the hearing to young people who may have watched what the nominee endured and felt discouraged.

"Black people in America," Brown said, "if we don't know anything else, we know what that word means."

## Bodies of Marines killed in NATO exercise returned to US

DOVER, Del. (AP) — The bodies of four Marines who died in a military aircraft crash during a NATO exercise were transferred back to the U.S. Friday.

The U.S. Marine Corps said an Osprey aircraft crashed on March 18 in a Norwegian town in the Arctic Circle, killing the four Marines. Officials with the Marines said Saturday that hundreds of U.S. Marines, sailors, service members and civilians rendered final salutes to the fallen Marines in Bodø, Norway, early Friday.

The bodies of the Marines were then placed on board an Air National Guard military transport aircraft and flown to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, Marine Corps officials said. The remains of the Marines will ultimately be moved to their final resting places according to their families' wishes, officials said in a statement.

The crash killed Capt. Ross A. Reynolds, 27, of Leominster, Massachusetts; Capt. Matthew J. Tomkiewicz, 27, of Fort Wayne, Indiana; Gunnery Sgt. James W. Speedy, 30, of Cambridge, Ohio; and Cpl. Jacob M. Moore, 24, of Catlettsburg, Kentucky.

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The men were all assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 261, Marine Aircraft Group 26, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing stationed at Marine Corps Air Station New River, North Carolina. They were taking part in a long-planned NATO exercise called Cold Response, which authorities said was unrelated to Russia's war in Ukraine.

## **EXPLAINER: Why the 14th Amendment has surfaced in midterms**

By GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — An 1868 amendment to the U.S. Constitution best known for protecting the due process rights of previously enslaved Americans has resurfaced in certain congressional races this year.

Some attorneys and voters believe a rarely cited section of the 14th Amendment dealing with insurrection can disqualify a handful of U.S. House members from seeking reelection for events surrounding the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol.

First-term Republican firebrands Madison Cawthorn of North Carolina and Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia are among those targeted. Both are strong supporters of former President Donald Trump who have pushed his unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election.

It's a largely untested argument working its way through election agencies in at least three states, with little success so far. But court cases and appeals could address the extent to which state officials can scrutinize the minimum qualifications for candidates for federal office.

### WHAT DOES THE 14TH AMENDMENT SAY?

There are five sections to the amendment. The best-known declares that no state can "deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

Section 3 of the amendment also declares that no one can serve in Congress "who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress ... to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same." This section was designed to keep representatives who had fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War from returning to Congress. The amendment, however, allows Congress to pass laws that can remove such restrictions.

### HOW COULD IT APPLY TO LAWMAKERS TODAY?

Voters from congressional districts where Cawthorn and Greene are seeking reelection this fall allege in legal filings that evidence shows they helped facilitate the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection that attempted to thwart the certification of President Joe Biden's Electoral College victory. The voters want state officials to investigate Greene and Cawthorn and disqualify them from appearing on ballots this year, based on the amendment's language.

Greene, according to a challenge filed Thursday with Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, either helped plan the riot or helped plan the demonstration held beforehand, knowing that it was "substantially likely to lead to the attack, and otherwise voluntarily aided the insurrection."

In a video posted on social media, Greene said: "You can't allow it to just transfer power 'peacefully' like Joe Biden wants and allow him to become our president because he did not win this election."

Somewhat similar allegations have been lodged with the North Carolina Board of Elections by voters challenging Cawthorn. Cawthorn spoke at the "Save America Rally" before the riot, days after he was sworn in to office, saying the "crowd has some fight in it."

A longshot Democrat candidate seeking to unseat Indiana Republican Rep. Jim Banks filed similar allegations against Banks with the state elections commission.

### HOW HAVE THE REPRESENTATIVES RESPONDED?

Greene and Cawthorn have said they did nothing unlawful such as encouraging political violence or participating in an insurrection.

Cawthorn, who was the first representative subjected to the challenge in January, said activists are going after "America First patriots" who backed Trump. Greene said she was targeted because she is "effective and will not bow to the DC machine."

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Cawthorn proceeded to sue the State Board of Elections in federal court, saying that North Carolina's candidate challenge process violated his constitutional rights and should be overturned. His lawyers also said Section 3 didn't apply to Cawthorn because of congressional action in 1872.

Free Speech for People, a national election and campaign finance reform group, is helping represent the voters in both challenges. The group has said more challenges could be filed against other members of Congress who are seeking reelection.

## WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE CHALLENGES?

Indiana's state elections commission voted unanimously last month to reject the challenge against Banks. The commission's chairman, a Republican, called the Capitol riot a "regrettable mark in history" but said there was no evidence that Banks was guilty of taking part in an insurrection.

As for Cawthorn, U.S. District Judge Richard Myers ruled earlier this month that the State Board of Elections could not hear the voters' challenges on Section 3 claims.

Myers wrote that the 1872 law that removed office-holding disqualifications "from all persons whomsoever" — save for those who served in two specific legislative sessions among others — "demonstrates that the disability set forth in Section 3 can apply to no current member of Congress."

The North Carolina Board of Elections hasn't appealed so far. Myers previously rebuffed efforts by voters who filed challenges to participate in the litigation, but the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals told him last week to reconsider their entry. Myers' ruling could come as soon as next week.

## COULD VOTERS ULTIMATELY HAVE THEIR SAY?

Free Speech for People argues that the 1872 law applied only to former members of the Confederacy: "The right of voters to bring this challenge to Cawthorn's eligibility must be preserved," group legal director Ron Fein said this month.

Michael Gerhardt, a constitutional expert at the University of North Carolina law school, said he believes the 1872 law could be construed more broadly than how Myers ruled. But he also said the chances that candidate challenges will go forward under insurrection claims are "probably not good."

"It's really a novel theory and there's no consensus on what the actual procedure should be, and that does pose a problem," Gerhardt said.

He said it's unclear, for example, whether a declaration that someone participated in an insurrection should come from a judge hearing evidence, state officials or Congress.

If the challenges are unsuccessful or delayed, voters still will get to decide whether the subjects of the challenges should return to Congress. Greene and Cawthorn have GOP primaries in May.

Cawthorn may have the more difficult road, with seven GOP opponents. He also has taken criticism for a video in which he called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy a "thug" even as his country resists a Russian invasion.

## Did teen's big size factor in Florida amusement ride death?

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — A rising middle school football player in Missouri, only 14 but already 6 feet, 5 inches tall and well over 300 pounds, Tyre Sampson fell to his death from a towering Florida amusement ride. Lawyers for his family want to know if negligence about his size, or other factors, played a role.

"This young man, he was athletic and he was big. He had no way of knowing," said Bob Hilliard, a Texas attorney who represents Tyre's mother, Nekia Dodd, in an interview Saturday. "This is going to be an issue of a lack of supervision and lack of training. A straight-up negligence case."

Investigators on Saturday continued to examine what happened Thursday night when Sampson dropped out of his seat from a 430-foot, free-fall amusement park ride that is taller than the Statue of Liberty along a busy street in the heart of Orlando's tourist district not far from Disney World.

The ride takes patrons up to that height, tilts so they face the ground for a moment or two, and then plummets toward the ground at speeds of 75 mph (about 121 kph) or more.

The well-known civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who is working with Hilliard and represents Tyre's father,

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Yarnell Sampson, said the family is "shocked and heartbroken at the loss of their son."

"This young man was the kind of son everyone hopes for — an honor roll student, an aspiring athlete, and a kind-hearted person who cared about others," Crump said in a statement Saturday.

The Orange County Sheriff's Office and the state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which regulates amusement rides in Florida at all but the major theme parks, declined comment Saturday other than to say the investigation is ongoing.

The Icon Park attraction said in a statement it is fully cooperating with investigators and that the Orlando FreeFall ride will be closed indefinitely. It opened late last year on International Drive, a major tourist mecca.

"We are heartbroken with the incident that took the life of one of our guests. We extend our condolences and deepest sympathy to his family and friends," said a statement from the SlingShot Group, which operates the ride.

Tyre was a giant for his age, already the size of an NFL offensive lineman. His family says he aspired to play pro football, like many kids with athletic ability who see a way to buy their mother a house and lift everyone in the family to a new level.

"That was his dream, and he was on his way," Wendy Wooten, his stepmother, told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. "He had so many scouts looking at him. He was going to be a great football player."

Tyre was part of a group called the St. Louis Bad Boyz football club who were in Orlando for a weeklong training camp, the Post-Dispatch reported. The group had chaperones and, by all accounts, were doing what millions do every year during spring break in Orlando: enjoying the theme parks and rides.

He was a student at the City Garden Montessori School in St. Louis. The school sent a letter to parents Friday saying counseling would be available for students on Monday.

"Tyre has been a City Garden student for many years," the school said in a statement from its principal and CEO. "We will miss him tremendously and our hearts go out to his family and friends during this extremely difficult time."

No criminal charges have been filed but a negligence or wrongful death lawsuit, or both, seem likely. Crump said boy's parents "intend to get answers for Tyre's grieving family."

"A fun theme park visit with his football team should not have ended in tragedy," Crump said.

## Missouri station offering Russian state radio to listeners

By MARGARET STAFFORD Associated Press

LIBERTY, Mo. (AP) — A man who runs a little-known, low-budget radio station in suburban Kansas City says he is standing up for free speech and alternative viewpoints when he airs Russian state-sponsored programming in the midst of the Ukrainian war.

Radio Sputnik, funded by the Russian government, pays broadcast companies in the U.S. to air its programs. Only two do so: One is Peter Schartel's company in Liberty, Missouri, and one is in Washington, D.C.

Schartel started airing the Russian programming in January 2020, but criticism intensified after Russia invaded Ukraine in February. Schartel said people accuse him and his wife of being traitors to the U.S. and occasionally issue threats. Some critics say he is promoting propaganda and misinformation, but Schartel maintains most people who call to complain haven't listened to the program.

"Some will talk to me, but others will still call me a piece of whatever," he said. "What I am thankful for is we are still living in a country where they can call me up. Even if they aren't thinking about free speech they're exercising that right."

Radio Sputnik is produced by the U.S.-based branch of Rossiya Segodnya, a media group operated by the Russian government.

Its content prompted the National Association of Broadcasters to issue an unusual statement on March 1 calling on broadcasters to stop carrying state-sponsored programming with ties to Russia or its agents.

The statement from NAB President and CEO Curtis LeGeyt said the organization is a "fierce defender" of free speech but that given Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine, "we believe that our nation must stand fully united against misinformation and for freedom and democracy across the globe."

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During one recent broadcast of "The Critical Hour" that aired on Schartel's KCXL, the hosts and their guests echoed false and unsupported claims about Ukraine's government. They repeated Russian state media lies about the Russian military's attacks on civilian targets and its destruction of entire neighborhoods, as well as Russian President Vladimir Putin's baseless claim that his enemies in Ukraine are Nazis.

The Kansas City Star said in an editorial that Schartel is putting his financial needs above ethics by spreading Russian propaganda.

"Much like the National Association of Broadcasters, we advise KCXL to drop all programming that paints Putin in a positive light. The Russian president is no victim; he is for sure no war hero," The Star wrote.

Schartel acknowledged that he initially accepted the Radio Sputnik contract because he was struggling to keep KCXL afloat. The station operates out of a dilapidated, cluttered building. He said he stopped taking a salary months ago, though he does nearly all the work.

Schartel's Alpine Broadcasting Corp. is paid \$5,000 a month to air Radio Sputnik in two three-hour blocks each day, according to a U.S. Justice Department Foreign Agent Registration Act filing in December 2021.

KCXL's other programming includes shows that are heavily religious, offer opinions across the political spectrum and promote conspiracy theories. One program, TruNews, has been criticized by the Anti-Defamation League for spreading antisemitic, Islamophobic and anti-LGBTQ messages.

Schartel said he airs programs that are not commercially viable and don't depend on advertising, which he contends influences news reporting. He said he is promoting free speech by providing a platform for people who otherwise aren't heard.

Roy Gutterman, director of the Tully Center for Free Speech at Syracuse University, said all radio station owners in the U.S. have a right to air whatever content they want.

"It this station thinks it's going to make a mark in Missouri by playing Radio Sputnik, they have the right to do so," Gutterman said.

The Federal Communications Commission, which regulates licensing of radio and television broadcasts, does not censor content unless it intentionally endangers public safety or is found to be obscene, indecent or profane.

Radio Sputnik listeners hear discussions not only about Russia but also current issues in the U.S. and other countries. The theme throughout the broadcast is that U.S. policies intentionally damage the U.S. and other countries while benefiting other corrupt governments, the rich and big business.

The deal that brought Radio Sputnik to the small Missouri station was brokered by RM Broadcasting, based in Florida, which is run by Anthony Ferolito. He signed a similar deal in 2017 with Way Broadcasting, which agreed to lease WZHF-AM's airtime in Washington, D.C., to RM Broadcasting.

Because of his contracts with Rossiya Segodnya, the Justice Department required Ferolito to register as a foreign government agent in 2018, citing a 1938 law for people lobbying for or acting on behalf of a foreign government. Ferolito lost a lawsuit over the registration.

Ferolito did not return messages from The Associated Press, but RM Broadcasting said in a statement that the company stands with Ukraine and all victims of oppression and aggression. It said RM Broadcasting is dedicated to freedom of speech.

"The public is explicitly notified throughout the broadcast day of the source of the material, so that people can make an informed decision on whether to listen or turn the dial — and that freedom of choice is the ultimate underpinning of our republic," the statement said.

Gutterman, of Syracuse University, noted that state-produced content from countries not friendly with the U.S., including Russia and China, is already available on some cable stations and online, although some providers have dropped Russian content since the war began.

"Modern media has changed the radio landscape we grew up with," he said. "Even if stations drop it, people can find this content."

For his part, Schartel doesn't think the uproar over the Radio Sputnik broadcasts will last.

Russian state-controlled RT America, the television counterpart to Radio Sputnik, closed its U.S. branch this month and laid off most of its staff. Schartel said that likely means his contract won't be renewed when it ends in December.

## Saudi airstrikes hit Yemen's Houthis after Jiddah attack

By AHMED AL-HAJ and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — A Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen unleashed a barrage of airstrikes on the capital and a strategic Red Sea city, officials said Saturday. At least eight people were killed.

The overnight airstrikes on Sanaa and Hodeida — both held by the Houthis — came a day after the rebels attacked an oil depot in the Saudi city of Jiddah, their highest-profile assault yet on the kingdom.

Brig. Gen. Turki al-Malki, a spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, said the strikes targeted “sources of threat” to Saudi Arabia, according to the state-run Saudi Press Agency or SPA.

He said the coalition intercepted and destroyed two explosives-laden drones early Saturday. He said the drones were launched from Houthi-held civilian oil facilities in Hodeida, urging civilians to stay away from oil facilities in the city.

Footage circulated online showed flames and plumes of smoke over Sanaa and Hodeida. Associated Press journalists in the Yemeni capital heard loud explosions that rattled residential buildings there.

The Houthis said the coalition airstrikes hit a power plant, a fuel supply station and the state-run social insurance office in the capital.

A Houthi media office claimed an airstrike hit houses for guards of the social insurance office in Sanaa's Haddah neighborhood, killing at least eight people and wounding four others, including women and children.

The office shared images it said for the aftermath of the airstrike. It showed wreckage in the courtyard of a social insurance office with the shattered windows of a nearby multiple-story building.

Hamoud Abbad, a local official with the Houthis in Sanaa, said the facility is located close to a building used by the U.N. agencies in the capital. He claimed that U.N. vehicles were seen leaving the area prior to the airstrikes.

In Hodeida, the Houthi media office said the coalition hit oil facilities in violation of a 2018 cease-fire deal that ended months of fighting in Hodeida, which handles about 70% of Yemen's commercial and humanitarian imports. The strikes also hit the nearby Port Salif, also on the Red Sea.

Al-Malki, the coalition spokesperson, said it targeted drones being prepared in Hodeida to be launched on the Kingdom. He accused the Houthis of using civilian infrastructure, such as Hodeida's ports and the Sanaa airport, to launch attacks on Saudi oil facilities, according to SPA.

Late Wednesday, coalition airstrikes rained on Houthi-held areas in Hodeida, al-Malki announced. No immediate casualties were reported.

A U.N. mission overseeing the Hodeida deal voiced concern about the airstrikes and urged warring sides to “maintain the civilian nature of the ports and avoid damage to civilian infrastructure.”

“Once again we are seeing civilians bearing the brunt of this conflict which is just getting worse every year,” said Erin Hutchinson, Yemen director at the Norwegian Refugee Council, a charity working in Yemen. “This escalation is going to do nothing to elevate the hardships that millions are going through.”

The escalation, which comes on the seventh anniversary of the Saudi-led coalition's intervention in Yemen's war, is likely to complicate efforts by the U.N. special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, to reach a humanitarian truce during the holy month of Ramadan in early April.

It comes as the Gulf Cooperation Council plans to host the warring sides for talks late this month. The Houthis however have rejected Riyadh — the Saudi capital where the GCC is headquartered — as a venue for talks, which are expected to include an array of Yemeni factions.

The Houthis also announced Saturday a unilateral initiative that included a three-day suspension of cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia, as well as fighting inside Yemen. They demanded an end to the coalition air and sea blockade on their territories before engaging in negotiations.

Peter Salisbury, Yemen expert at the International Crisis Group, doubted that ongoing efforts will succeed in bringing a peaceful settlement to the grinding war in the near future, given that international attention is now focusing on other crises including the war in Ukraine.

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"I really wouldn't buy into any optimism we'll see diplomatic progress in 2022," he said. "It's pretty clear that all parties are still looking for ways to either win outright or cause significant damage to their rivals."

Yemen's brutal war erupted in 2014 after the Houthis seized Sanaa. The Saudi-led coalition entered the war months later to try restore the internationally recognized government. The conflict has in recent years become a regional proxy war that has killed more than 150,000 people, including over 14,500 civilians. It also created one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

The Houthis' Friday attack came ahead of a Formula One race in the kingdom on Sunday, raising concerns about Saudi Arabia's ability to defend itself against the Iranian-backed rebels. The Houthis targeted the same fuel depot that they had attacked in recent days — the North Jiddah Bulk Plant that sits just southeast of the city's international airport and is a crucial hub for Muslim pilgrims heading to Mecca.

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed by The Associated Press showed one of the two tanks damaged in the Houthi attack on Jiddah still burning late Saturday morning. Bright red flames leapt up from the tank, with thick black smoke rising from the fire.

The attack appeared to target new tanks, as a tank twice struck by the Houthis just two rows north appeared untouched in the new attack. A tank alongside the burning one appeared to have white wrap and fire-suppressing foam around it.

In Egypt, hundreds of passengers were stranded at Cairo International Airport after their Jiddah-bound flights were canceled because of the Houthi attack, according to airport officials.

The kingdom's flagship carrier Saudia announced the cancellation of two flights on its website. The two had 456 passengers booked. A third canceled flight with 146 passengers was operated by the low-cost Saudi airline Flynas.

Some passengers found seats on other Saudi Arabia-bound flights and others were booked into hotels close to the Cairo airport, according to Egyptian officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because there were not authorized to brief media.

## Officials: Taliban blocked unaccompanied women from flights

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Afghanistan's Taliban rulers refused to allow dozens of women to board several flights, including some overseas, because they were traveling without a male guardian, two Afghan airline officials said Saturday.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions from the Taliban, said dozens of women who arrived at Kabul's international airport Friday to board domestic and international flights were told they couldn't do so without a male guardian.

Some of the women were dual nationals returning to their homes overseas, including some from Canada, according to one of the officials. Women were denied boarding on flights to Islamabad, Dubai and Turkey on Kam Air and the state-owned Ariana Airline, said the officials.

The order came from the Taliban leadership, said one official.

By Saturday, some women traveling alone were given permission to board an Ariana Airlines flight to western Herat province, the official said. However, by the time the permission was granted they had missed their flight, he said.

The airport's president and police chief, both from the Taliban movement and both Islamic clerics, were meeting Saturday with airline officials.

"They are trying to solve it," the official said.

It was still unclear whether the Taliban would exempt air travel from an order issued months ago requiring women traveling more than 45 miles (72 kilometers) to be accompanied by a male relative.

Taliban officials contacted by The Associated Press did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Since taking power last August, the Taliban leadership have been squabbling among themselves as they struggle to transition from war to governing. It has pit hard-liners — like acting Prime Minister Mullah Hasan Akhund, who is deeply rooted in the old guard — against the more pragmatic among them, like Sirajuddin

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Haqqani. He took over leadership of the powerful Haqqani network from his father Jalaluddin Haqqani. The elder Haqqani, who died several years ago, is from Akhund's generation, who ruled Afghanistan under the strict and unchallenged leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar.

Infuriating many Afghans is the knowledge that many of the Taliban of the younger generation, like Sirajuddin Haqqani, are educating their girls in Pakistan, while in Afghanistan women and girls have been targeted by their repressive edicts since taking power.

This latest assault on women's rights in Taliban-run Afghanistan denying women air travel, comes just days after the all-male religiously driven government broke its promise to allow girls to return to school after the sixth grade.

The move enraged the international community, which has been reluctant to recognize the Taliban-run government since the Taliban swept into power last August, fearing they would revert to their harsh rule of the 1990s. The Taliban's refusal to open up education to all Afghan children also infuriated large swaths of the Afghan population. On Saturday, dozens of girls demonstrated in the Afghan capital demanding the right to go to school.

After the Taliban's ban on girls education beyond the sixth grade, women's rights activist Mahboub Seraj went on Afghanistan's TOLO TV to ask: "How do we as a nation trust you with your words anymore? What should we do to please you? Should we all die?"

An Afghan charity called PenPath, which runs dozens of "secret" schools with thousands of volunteers, is planning to stage countrywide protests to demand the Taliban reverse its order, said Matiullah Wesa, PenPath founder.

On Saturday at the Doha Forum 2022 in Qatar, Roya Mahboob, an Afghan businesswoman who founded an all-girl robotics team in Afghanistan, was given the Forum Award for her work and commitment to girls education.

U.S. special representative for Afghanistan Tom West canceled meetings with the Taliban at the Doha Forum after classes for older girls were halted.

Deputy U.S. State Department spokesperson Jalina Porter said in a statement that "We have canceled some of our engagements, including planned meetings in Doha and around the Doha Forum, and have made clear that we see this decision as a potential turning point in our engagement.

"The decision by the Taliban, if it is not swiftly reversed, will profoundly harm the Afghan people, the country's prospects for economic growth, and the Taliban's ambition to improve their relations with the international community," she said.

West acknowledged that the Taliban had made promises since their takeover to allow girls and women to go to school. He said that both the U.S. and the international community received "the necessary assurances" that was going to happen.

"I was surprised at the turnaround this past Wednesday and I think you've seen the world react in condemning this move," West said. "It is a breach, first and foremost, of the Afghan people's trust because they made the commitment."

He added: "I believe hope is not lost. I've talked to a lot of Afghans here who also believe that. I'm hopeful that we will see a reversal of this decision in the coming days."

In an interview after receiving the Doha Forum award, Mahboob called on the many global leaders and policy makers attending the forum to press the Taliban to open schools for all Afghan children.

The robotics team fled Afghanistan when the Taliban returned to power but Mahboob said she still hoped a science and technology center she had hoped to build in Afghanistan for girls could still be constructed.

"I hope that the international community, the Muslim communities (have not) forgotten about Afghanistan and (will) not abandon us," she said. "Afghanistan is a poor country. It doesn't have enough resources. And if you take (away) our knowledge, I don't know what's going to happen."

## Hungary's Orban criticized for 'neutrality' in Ukraine war

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Widely seen as Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest ally in the Eu-

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European Union, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has sought to assert Hungary's neutrality in the war in Ukraine, even as his allies in the EU and NATO assist the embattled country and punish Russia for launching the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II.

Orban, who faces a difficult election on April 3, has refused to supply Ukraine with military aid — alone among Ukraine's EU neighbors — and has not allowed lethal weapons to be shipped to Ukraine across Hungary's borders.

Arguing that providing such assistance to Ukraine would draw Hungary into the war, Orban — while avoiding ever mentioning Putin by name — has portrayed himself as the defender of his country's peace and security while insisting that EU sanctions against Russia not be extended to its energy sector, of which Hungary is a major beneficiary.

"The answer to the question of which side Hungary is on is that Hungary is on Hungary's side," Orban wrote Saturday on social media.

While his approach has gained traction among many of his supporters, Orban's reluctance to act unambiguously in support of Ukraine and his insistence on maintaining his Russian economic interests has led to frustration and outrage among other European leaders — not least the Ukrainian president himself.

In a video address Friday to a summit of EU leaders, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a frank, direct appeal to Orban to take a clearer stance on Russia's war on Ukraine and support his besieged country.

"I want to stop here and be honest, once and for all. You have to decide for yourself who you are with," Zelenskyy said.

Zelenskyy recalled that Hungary's capital of Budapest had experienced the horrors of war in the 20th century, and referred to a memorial of bronze shoes on the Danube river that pays tribute to the Hungarian Jews executed by German and Hungarian fascists in World War II.

"Listen, Viktor, do you know what's going on in Mariupol?" Zelenskyy said, referring to the Ukrainian city on the Sea of Azov that has undergone devastating Russian bombardment. "Please, if you can, go to your waterfront. Look at those shoes. And you will see how mass killings can happen again in today's world. That's what Russia is doing today."

While Orban has voted in favor of most EU sanctions against Russia, Zelenskyy slammed him for opposing sanctions on Russian energy imports — considered one of the EU's most effective potential means for putting pressure on the Kremlin — and for being Ukraine's only EU neighbor to refuse to supply it with military aid.

"You hesitate whether to impose sanctions or not? You hesitate whether to let weapons through or not? And you hesitate whether to trade with Russia or not? It's time to decide already. We believe in you, we need your support," the Ukrainian leader said.

Yet Orban rejected Zelenskyy's emotional appeal, saying Friday in a video posted to social media that the Ukrainian president's requests were "against Hungary's interests." He claimed that sanctions on Russian energy "would mean that the Hungarian economy would slow down and then stop within moments."

Blocking Russian energy exports would force Hungarians to "pay the price of the war," Orban said, noting that 85% of Hungary's gas and more than 60% of its oil comes from Russia.

As the Hungarian election approaches and Orban seeks to protect his country's long-term gas and nuclear contracts with Russia, his posture has threatened his relationships with his closest regional allies in the Visegrad Four alliance of central European countries — Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

Poland, like Hungary, has long been the target of EU efforts to crack down on democratic backsliding and rule of law violations, and is a steadfast ally in Orban's efforts to reduce the power of EU institutions over member states.

Yet centuries of domination by Russia has given Poles a deep distrust of Moscow. The Polish government in Warsaw has been outspoken in condemning Putin and supporting Ukraine.

Orban's refusal to act in kind has created fault lines in the two countries' relationship.

Speaking to Polish public radio on Friday, Poland's ruling party leader and Orban ally Jaroslaw Kaczynski said he was displeased with Orban's stance on Russia.

"If you asked me if I was happy, I would say no," Kaczynski said. "We will see what will happen after the elections and then this assessment can be finally formulated. But we are not happy."

Also Friday, Czech Defense Minister Jana Cernochova said she would not attend a meeting of Visegrad Four defense ministers in Hungary next week. In a tweet, Cernochova said she did not want to get involved in Hungary's election campaign but criticized Hungary's attitude to the war in Ukraine.

"I'm really sorry that cheap Russian oil is more important for Hungarian politicians than Ukrainian blood," she wrote.

## Canadian Indigenous leaders to meet pope over school abuse

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — When an Assembly of First Nations delegation traveled to the Vatican in 2009 to meet with then-Pope Benedict XVI, the pontiff told them in a private meeting of his "personal anguish" over abuse suffered by Indigenous children in church-run boarding schools they were forced to attend in Canada.

What at the time was called an expression of deep, heartfelt regret is no longer seen as sufficient after last year's discovery in British Columbia of about 200 unmarked and previously undocumented graves of children at what was Canada's largest Indigenous residential school — one of numerous, similar grim sites across the country.

Now Indigenous leaders are expecting nothing less than a public apology from Pope Francis, with government officials up to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau lending support to their cause. Set to meet with First Nations, Métis and Inuit survivors at the Vatican next week ahead of a visit to Canada that could come later this year, the pontiff appears likely to offer just such an apology for the church's role in boarding school abuses.

"We're trying to give a voice to the voiceless by going there," said Gary Gagnon, who will represent the Métis people of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry in the delegation. Originally scheduled for last December, the visit was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than 150,000 native children were forced to attend state-funded Christian schools from the 19th century until the 1970s in an effort to isolate them from the influence of their homes and culture, Christianize and assimilate them into mainstream society, which previous governments considered superior.

The government has admitted that physical and sexual abuse was rampant, with students beaten for speaking their native languages. That legacy of abuse and isolation has been cited by Indigenous leaders as a root cause of epidemic rates of alcohol and drug addiction on reservations.

Nearly three-quarters of the 130 residential schools were run by Catholic missionary congregations.

Last May the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Nation announced the discovery of the gravesites near Kamloops, British Columbia, found using ground-penetrating radar. The sites have not yet been excavated, but they renewed a national reckoning as Indigenous groups across the country search for graves at other residential schools.

"What really spurred things forward was Kamloops," said Phil Fontaine, who was national chief of the Assembly of First Nations in 2009 and led the delegation that met with Benedict. "It grabbed the attention of so many people."

Fontaine, 77, said he and his classmates suffered physical and sexual abuse when he was a boy at the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School in Manitoba, where he was forbidden from seeing family except for two hours on Sundays even though they lived nearby.

"Finally Canadians are saying, 'Oh, so it's true. This is what happened at residential schools,'" he added. "And I think it put a lot of pressure on the Catholic Church and the Vatican. Keep in mind the prime minister himself asked Francis to apologize."

Fontaine is calling for the pope's Canada visit, which the Vatican has announced but as yet has no set date, to happen on Indigenous lands.

A National Truth and Reconciliation Commission has records of at least 51 children dying at the Kamloops school between 1915 and 1963.

Nationwide, the commission identified about 3,200 confirmed deaths at residential schools amid poor

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conditions, some from tuberculosis, but noted that the cause of death was not recorded for almost half of them. Standard practice was not to send the bodies of the students who died back to their communities; the commission said the government wanted to keep costs down.

Calgary Bishop William McGrattan, vice president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, said the church hopes next week's Vatican encounter will be a historic moment for all Canadians, but "most especially our First Nation and our Métis."

"They will be bringing their own stories and the stories of their communities," McGrattan said. "Pope Francis and the bishops will listen and respond to make sure we are committed to this path of reconciliation."

Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology over the residential schools in Parliament in 2008, calling them a sad chapter in Canadian history and saying the policy of forced assimilation caused great harm.

As part of a settlement of a lawsuit involving the government, churches and the approximately 90,000 surviving students, Canada paid reparations that amounted to billions of dollars being transferred to Indigenous communities.

The Catholic Church, for its part, has paid over \$50 million and now intends to add \$30 million more over the next five years.

The United, Presbyterian and Anglican churches already have apologized for their roles.

Canada's residential schools were based on similar facilities in the United States, where Catholic and Protestant denominations operated more than 150 boarding schools between the 19th and 20th centuries, according to researchers, that also were home to rampant abuse.

While the issue has drawn comparatively little attention in the U.S., Fontaine believes a day of reckoning is coming for Canada's neighbor to the south.

The aim of the residential school systems, he argued, was no less than cultural genocide.

"They decided that the best way to do that is to herd children into residential schools, forbid them to speak Indigenous language, forget about their culture," Fontaine said. "In fact, embrace everything that was not them in terms of culture and tradition, in keeping with federal government policy."

## Amazon tries to stave off union drive on two fronts

By HALELUYA HADERO, ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and JAY REEVES Associated Press

Amazon is gearing up for its toughest labor fight yet, with two separate union elections coming to a head as soon as next week that could provide further momentum to the recent wave of organizing efforts across the country.

Warehouse workers in Staten Island, New York, and Bessemer, Alabama, will determine whether or not they want to form a union. If a majority votes yes at either location, it would mark the first successful U.S. organizing effort in Amazon history. Rejection would notch another victory for the country's second-largest employer in keeping unions at bay.

Here's what the elections will look like in Bessemer and Staten Island:

### THE VOTING

Last April, workers in Bessemer overwhelmingly voted against a union bid, providing a bitter defeat for a labor movement that had already been declining in influence but making some gains during the pandemic. Federal labor officials later scrapped the results and ordered a re-do, ruling Amazon tainted the election process.

Ballots for the second election were mailed to 6,100 employees in early February. The counting process is expected to start on Monday and could last for several days.

Meanwhile, Amazon workers in the Staten Island warehouse began in-person voting Friday in their first union election. The facility is one of Amazon's largest in New York City with more than 8,300 employees. Voting will wrap up Wednesday, with the counting expected to begin shortly thereafter.

### UNION SUPPORT

The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union is once again spearheading the drive at the Alabama

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facility. More than 150 organizers from the union, as well as from roughly 20 other labor groups were on the ground since last summer — a bigger push than in the first election — to galvanize support. Vaccines made it easier during the ongoing pandemic to knock on workers' doors and also visit barbershops, stores and other places to distribute flyers and chat with residents.

Pulling off a win could still be tough. There's high turnover at the facility, making it difficult to build momentum. At the same time, organizers estimate about half of current workers were eligible to vote in the last election, offering the RWDSU a chance to tap new workers who may be more amenable to a union.

In Staten Island, Amazon workers are currently organizing under the independent Amazon Labor Union led by Chris Smalls, a former employee who says he was fired after leading a protest over the warehouse's working conditions in the early days of the pandemic. (Amazon said he violated COVID-19 safety protocols.)

The nascent union seeks to negotiate higher wages, more paid time off and other benefits for workers, 100 of which sit on its worker committee. Some of them have been wearing shirts and masks with the group's logo during work shifts. Others have been handing out pro-union fliers after work and encouraging their co-workers to unionize.

## NEW YORK VS. ALABAMA

The union landscape in Alabama is starkly different from New York.

Last year, union members accounted for 22.2% of wage and salary workers in New York, ranked only behind Hawaii, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's more than double the national average of 10.3%. In Alabama, it's 5.9%.

Alabama is also a right-to-work state, which prohibit a company and a union from signing a contract that requires workers to pay dues to the union that represents them. Pro-labor experts say many may feel intimidated by companies that could undermine the unionized shop.

New York is not a right-to-work state, and Amazon is attempting to use that to its advantage. The company is telling workers it could fire them should they unionize but fail to pay union dues. But that requirement is not an across-the board mandate for non-right-to-work states and is something that is negotiated during union contracts, said Jennifer Sherer, senior state policy coordinator at the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute.

## THE WORKERS

The mostly Black workforce at the Alabama facility, which opened in 2020, mirrors the Bessemer population of more than 70% Black residents, according to the latest U.S. Census data. There's little public transportation, so many of the Amazon workers drive to the facility from as far away as metro Montgomery, nearly 100 miles to the south.

Pro-union workers say they want better working conditions, longer breaks and higher wages. Regular full-time employees at the Bessemer facility earn at least \$15.80 an hour, higher than the estimated \$14.55 per hour on average in the city. That figure is based on an analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's annual median household income for Bessemer of \$30,284, which could include more than one worker.

At Amazon's Staten Island facility, which opened in 2018, workers earn a minimum hourly wage just over \$18, much lower than the estimated \$41 per hour average for the borough, according to a similar U.S. Census Bureau analysis of Staten Island's \$85,381 median household income.

Workers from across the New York metro area trek long distances to get to the company's warehouse, many times alternating between the subway, a ferry and 40-minute long public bus rides.

The ALU said it doesn't have a demographic breakdown of the warehouse workers in Staten Island and Amazon declined to provide the information to The Associated Press, citing the union vote. But internal records leaked to The New York Times from 2019 showed more than 60% of the hourly associates at the facility were Black or Latino, while most of managers were white or Asian.

## AMAZON'S STRATEGY

Amazon sees unions as a threat to its business model built on speedy deliveries to customers.

"As a company, we don't think unions are the best answer for our employees," an Amazon spokesperson said in a emailed statement. "Our focus remains on working directly with our team to continue making Amazon a great place to work."

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The online retail giant continues to hammer the message that it offers benefits such as health care, 401(k) plans and a prepaid college tuition program to help grow workers' careers. It launched a website for workers at both warehouses that casts doubt on the benefit of unions and has been blasting out mailings, text messages, emails and flyers.

It has also relied on consultants and managers to hold mandatory staff meetings to talk about why unions are a bad idea. Such meetings stopped in Bessemer, right before the ballots were sent on Feb. 4, in accordance with labor regulations. But it could continue in Staten Island until 24 hours before the in-person vote was scheduled to begin on Friday.

A company spokesperson said the meetings give employees the opportunity to ask questions and learn what a union "could mean for them and their day-to-day life working at Amazon."

In Bessemer, Amazon has made some changes to but still kept a controversial U.S. Postal Service mailbox that was key in the NLRB's decision to invalidate last year's vote. In February, police arrested Smalls after Amazon officials said he was trespassing while delivering food to workers in Staten Island. Two other current pro-union employees were arrested with him for obstructing governmental administration charges.

## **GOP push for state election reviews mixed, but sows distrust**

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The push by Republicans to conduct partisan ballot reviews similar to the one that unfolded last year in Arizona has spread beyond the battleground states where former President Donald Trump disputed his loss, an effort that has had mixed legislative success but has sown doubts about whether future elections can be trusted.

While most of the bills are unlikely to become law, the debates and public hearings in GOP-controlled state legislative chambers have added fuel to the false claims that widespread fraud cost Trump reelection in 2020.

"They're really tearing down democracy, and they don't think they are," said Scott McDonell, the election clerk in Dane County, Wisconsin, home to the state capital.

The proposals come after flawed Republican-ordered reviews in Arizona and Wisconsin where GOP lawmakers gave the job of examining the previous election to partisan actors.

In Arizona, the contract went to a Florida-based firm with no previous experience in election audits but with a CEO who had expressed support for conspiracy theories surrounding the 2020 presidential results. In Wisconsin, the Republican leader of the state Assembly appointed a retired state Supreme Court justice who declared the election stolen even before he began his review.

Similar efforts are being pursued by Republicans in the presidential battleground states of Michigan and Pennsylvania, also won by Biden.

More than a dozen bills have been introduced this year in seven other states proposing similar reviews of elections and election results, including in states Trump won such as Florida, Missouri and Tennessee, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, which tracks such efforts. That comes after legislation was introduced in eight states last year to review the 2020 results and 12 states considered bills to perform new review processes for future elections.

"It's really not clear to me that there's any realistic, legitimate audit that can be done that will satisfy some of the folks who are calling for this," said Wisconsin state Rep. Mark Spreitzer, a Democrat and member of the Assembly's elections committee. "If I thought there was some additional check we could do that would give voters more confidence, we'd do it."

Forty-four states already conduct some type of postelection audit or take other steps — outlined in state law or through administrative procedures — to verify the accuracy of vote tallies, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. The six states with no such requirements are Alabama, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, New Hampshire and South Dakota.

Those states likely have some kind of canvassing process where election officials certify the results, but there is no check on the voting equipment itself, said Jennifer Morrell, a former elections clerk in Colorado

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and Utah who now advises state and local election officials.

Bills calling for partisan election reviews have found little success, which is due partly to Republican lawmakers who have criticized the 2020 conspiracy theories and defended their state's elections.

In South Dakota, the Republican-controlled House last month passed a measure to require in-depth reviews of ballots and voting equipment in close presidential elections. Several House Republicans had attended a conference held by MyPillow chief executive Mike Lindell in Sioux Falls last year during which he attempted to prove that voting equipment had been hacked, and the lawmakers echoed those claims during debate.

The bill was later rejected by Republicans in the state Senate who pointed out that it was prompted by baseless claims that the 2020 presidential election was subject to widespread fraud. Trump won the state by a wide margin.

"Uncertainty comes because we have these extremists across America who with the social media can get a forum, and they are raising questions only for the purpose of creating uncertainty about our elections," said Republican state Sen. Lee Schoenbeck. "Regular, normal people don't have those fears at all. They trust those little old ladies that you see when you go to vote here for the first time."

In Virginia, Democrats who control the state Senate defeated a Republican measure that would have required "forensic audits" of an election if certain elected officials or elections officials requested one, or if a group of residents petitioned for one. It also would have initiated a review of the 2020 general election in Virginia.

The bill was sponsored by Republican Sen. Amanda Chase, a prominent promoter of conspiracy theories about the 2020 presidential election who attended the rally in Washington, D.C., that preceded the Capitol insurrection. Chase said during a contentious committee hearing that she filed the measure after hearing concerns from constituents who tried to vote and were told a ballot had already been cast in their name.

Members of the public were given an opportunity to weigh in, and several speakers in favor of the bill attacked the committee's Democrats.

"I consider it treason to not support this bill," one woman said. Another warned the committee that there would be "eternal consequences" for "your souls" if they didn't "legislate fairly."

Democratic Sen. Adam Ebbin, the committee chairman, said he was offended by the statements.

"We're doing our jobs and we're trying to assess each bill fairly," he said. Ebbin also told the Republican sponsor of the bill that "when public officials sow distrust in elections" it furthers unfounded concerns about widespread problems.

The measure was defeated on a party-line vote, with every Republican on the committee voting in support of it.

In Arizona, Republicans behind that state's flawed election review introduced a bill to require an exhaustive review following every election. The measure hit a snag earlier this month when two Republicans voted against it. That left it short of majority support, though it could be revived in the coming months.

In Pennsylvania, where Senate Republicans are mounting a partisan investigation into the 2020 election lost by Trump, Republicans have pressed legislation to expand the state's postelection reviews. One bill was vetoed last summer by Gov. Tom Wolf, a Democrat, while others are pending in the Republican-controlled Legislature.

While some states are pushing to enact Arizona-style reviews, others are moving in the other direction.

In Maine, a pending Democratic bill would instill safeguards to protect ballots and voting machines from tampering while also keeping ballots out of the hands of partisans. A similar bill is making its way through Colorado's Democratic-controlled Legislature.

Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, a Democrat, said the bill there was "a safeguard against election subversion and will help prevent problems other states like Arizona have had where the integrity of ballots and equipment has been compromised."

Colorado's Democratic Secretary of State Jena Griswold issued a rule last summer banning Arizona-style "sham" third-party reviews. The secretary of state's office after each election conducts its own risk-limiting

audit, a rigorous type of audit that relies on statistical methods to validate the results.

While there have been steps to improve official, postelection audits, that work has largely gone unnoticed, said Gowri Ramachandran, senior counsel in the Brennan Center's democracy program.

"Unfortunately, it's been kind of drowned out by some of this negative legislation," she said.

## **NATO deputy: Putin can't win his 'unprovoked, illogical' war**

By STEPHEN McGRATH Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — NATO Deputy-General Secretary Mircea Geoana says that Russian President Vladimir Putin's month-old "barbaric war" against Ukraine is a war he cannot win.

In an interview with The Associated Press, the former Romanian foreign minister and ambassador to the United States added that NATO would be "forced to take appropriate measures" in the event of a chemical or nuclear attack, which follows a string of ominous comments from Moscow officials who refuse to rule out their use. He declined to say what those measures would be.

"NATO is a defensive alliance, but also it's a nuclear alliance," he said. "If they will be using chemical weapons or other kinds of higher-end systems against Ukraine, this will be changing fundamentally the nature of the war that Mr. Putin has waged against Ukraine."

"I can guarantee that NATO is ready to respond proportionately," he added.

Geoana said Russia's attack on a theater in the besieged port city of Mariupol, which Ukrainian authorities said Friday killed about 300 civilians, is "another proof that Putin's war is a war that is unprovoked, illogical, and also barbarian."

"We hope that Mr. Putin will not go even further down the road of war crimes, and even more devastation against a sovereign nation," he said.

But the brutal war that Russia has waged since Feb. 24, is having the opposite effect to what Putin hoped for, the NATO official said, and has only united the West and worked to bolster the 30-nation defensive alliance.

At a NATO summit on Thursday, alliance leaders agreed to launch four new Eastern Flank battlegroups — which usually number around 1,000-1,500 troops — to Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.

"These groups are already constituting themselves," Geoana, a former foreign minister in his native Romania, said. "I can anticipate that this will be a matter of a few months before we see these battlegroups up and running and fully functional."

If the "very poorly planned and executed" military campaign continues to drag on for Putin's forces, who many observers say are floundering on the battlefield, Geoana believes that it could raise the stakes for miscalculations by the Russian leader.

"We see that for the time being, the Russian military planning is trying to reassess the situation — to try to compensate for the massive losses in people and material that they suffered in the first month of the war."

Geoana said the combination of harsh economic and individual sanctions on Russia and big losses militarily may eventually make Putin rethink his offensive on Ukraine.

"Mr. Putin probably believed his own post-imperial fantasies, thinking that Ukrainians will welcome them with open arms," he said. "In fact, they got very fierce resistance. We are convinced that today, even with reinforcements that are still coming into Ukraine, Russia does not possess the forces and the capacity to occupy the whole of Ukraine."

By Geoana's estimation, the Putin regime's most significant mistake was underestimating "the bravery of the Ukrainian army" and the "unity of the political West."

"We are supporting Ukraine in many many ways, in defense terms, in financial terms, in humanitarian terms," he said. "When the time will come, and that time will come, we'll also help Ukraine reconstruct, rebuild their nation because they earned our admiration — they deserve our support."

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## Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Sunday, March 27, the 86th day of 2022. There are 279 days left in the year.

On March 27, 1977, in aviation's worst disaster, 583 people were killed when a KLM Boeing 747, attempting to take off in heavy fog, crashed into a Pan Am 747 on an airport runway on the Canary Island of Tenerife (ten-uh-REEF').

In 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon sighted present-day Florida.

In 1625, Charles I acceded to the English throne upon the death of James I.

In 1794, Congress approved "An Act to provide a Naval Armament" of six armed ships.

In 1912, first lady Helen Herron Taft and the wife of Japan's ambassador to the United States, Viscountess Chinda, planted the first two of 3,000 cherry trees given to the U.S. as a gift by the mayor of Tokyo.

In 1945, during World War II, General Dwight D. Eisenhower told reporters in Paris that German defenses on the Western Front had been broken.

In 1964, Alaska was hit by a magnitude 9.2 earthquake (the strongest on record in North America) and tsunamis that together claimed about 130 lives.

In 1968, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin (gah-GAH'-rihn), the first man to orbit the Earth in 1961, died when his MiG-15 jet crashed during a routine training flight near Moscow; he was 34.

In 1973, "The Godfather" won the Academy Award for best picture of 1972, but its star, Marlon Brando, refused to accept his Oscar for best actor. Liza Minnelli won best actress for "Cabaret."

In 1975, construction began on the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which was completed two years later.

In 1980, 123 workers died when a North Sea floating oil field platform, the Alexander Kielland, capsized during a storm.

In 2019, Facebook said it was extending its ban on hate speech to prohibit the promotion and support of white nationalism and white separatism.

In 2020, the House approved a \$2.2 trillion coronavirus rescue package; it was immediately signed by President Donald Trump. The Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, a civil rights leader who helped the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, died at 98.

Ten years ago: A JetBlue Airways captain ran through the cabin of a New York-to-Las Vegas flight yelling about religion and terrorists before he was tackled and restrained by passengers. (Clayton Osborn was charged with interference with a flight crew; he was found not guilty by reason of insanity.) Award-winning poet Adrienne Rich, 82, died in Santa Cruz, California. Art critic Hilton Kramer, 84, died in Harpswell, Maine.

Five years ago: U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions warned so-called "sanctuary cities" they could lose federal money for refusing to cooperate with immigration authorities; city leaders vowed to intensify their fight against the promised crackdown despite the financial risks. NFL owners meeting in Phoenix approved the Oakland Raiders' move to Las Vegas 31-1; Miami was the lone dissenter.

One year ago: On the deadliest day yet in a crackdown on protests against the February coup in Myanmar, local media said security forces killed at least 114 people, including several children under 16; a U.N. human rights expert accused the junta of committing "mass murder." A nine-story apartment building in Cairo, Egypt, collapsed, leaving at least 25 people dead.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Julian Glover is 87. Actor Jerry Lacy is 86. Hall of Fame racer Cale Yarborough is 83. Actor-director Austin Pendleton is 82. Actor Michael York is 80. Rock musician Tony Banks (Genesis) is 72. Rock musician Andrew Farriss (INXS) is 63. Jazz musician Dave Koz (kahz) is 59. Movie director Quentin Tarantino is 59. Rock musician Derrick McKenzie (Jamiroquai) is 58. Rock musician Johnny April (Staind) is 57. Actor Talisa Soto is 55. Actor Ben Koldyke is 54. Actor Pauley Perrette is 53. Singer Mariah Carey is 52. Rock musician Brendan Hill (Blues Traveler) is 52. Actor Elizabeth Mitchell is 52. Actor Nathan Fillion is 51. Hip-hop singer Fergie is 47. Jazz musician Tia Fuller is 46. Actor Emily Ann Lloyd is 38. MLB catcher Buster Posey is 35. Actor Brenda Song is 34. Pop singer-songwriter Kimbra is 32. Actor Taylor Atelian is 27. Actor/R&B singer Halle Bailey is 22. Classical crossover singer Amira Willighagen (TV: "Holland's Got Talent") is 18.