

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar

Tuesday, Nov. 8

Senior Menu: Hearty vegetable beef soup, chicken salad sandwich, mandarin oranges, oatmeal raisin cookie.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Meatballs, mashed potatoes.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 7 p.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

UMC: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

SoDak16 Volleyball at James Valley Christian: Groton Area vs. Miller, 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 9

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, fruited Jell-O, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg Omelets.
School Lunch: Chicken noodle soup.
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.
UMC: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.; UMYF Bible Study, 7 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Youth Meeting, 6 p.m.

SATURDAY CLEANER NEEDED IN FERNEY, SD, 830 am to 130 pm, \$16 an hour. Must be dependable and be willing to work around customers coming into the family owned business. Please call Stephanie at 605-381-1758. (1102.1109)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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

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It's Election Day!

Today is election day! Finally! County workers were at the Groton Community Center on Monday getting things set up for the big day. The polls will be open until 7 p.m.

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Teddy Bear Day Care Too to close

Customers of Teddy Bear Day Care Too were notified that as of December 30, 2022, the facility will be closed.

In a letter that she posted on Facebook, Charity Hinman said the following:

"Anyone who really KNOWS me, knows how much children mean to me. I have devoted most of my life to childcare and wouldn't change that for anything. I have LOVED having a hand in helping raise SO many children in the Groton area, and that BIG chapter of my life will forever hold a very special place in my heart, along with each and every one of those kiddos I have been so lucky to get to help shape... but now it's time to turn the page in my story.

"To say hard would be an understatement. This decision did not come lightly, and will continue to break my heart in the days/weeks to come. I will miss the hugs, the giggles, the sloppy kisses, endless colorings, the never ending dance parties, snuggles, tea parties, and daily adventures. I will miss the parents, who have become friends/family. I will miss my staff who have become best friends and sisters to me. I will miss our Bear family. Teddy Bear is and has been like no other- we ARE a family, and we love SO big in that building. And I will miss the love that building holds so very much!!!

"Inflation is NO JOKE. Staff shortage is NO JOKE. Insurance premiums and workman's comp coverage is NO JOKE. Etc, etc etc.

"The cost to run a small business and stay afloat in these lovely times we're living in is impossible....

"Teddy Bear will be saying goodbye and see you later for good, on December 30th, 2022."

Good Luck Lady Tiger Volleyball Team on Tuesday from these GDILIVE.COM Sponsors!

BAHR SPRAY FOAM

BARY KEITH AT HARR MOTORS

BIERMAN FARM SERVICE

BK CUSTOM T'S & MORE

BLOCKER CONSTRUCTION

DACOTAH BANK

DAN RICHARDT - GROTON FORD

GROTON CHAMBER COMMERCE

GROTON CHIROPRACTIC CLINIC

GROTON LEGION

HEAVY HITTER DETAILING WITH CYRUS DEHOET

HEFTY SEED

JOHN SIEH AGENCY

KARMA SALON

RUTGEAR605

LORI'S PHARMACY

MILBRANDT ENTERPRISES INC

SD ARMY NATIONAL GUARD WITH BRENT WIENK

THUNDER SEED - JOHN WHEETING

WEISMANTEL INSURANCE AGENCY

WATCH THE MATCH ON TUESDAY, 5:30 P.M.,

FOR **FREE** ON GDILIVE.COM.

GOING ON-LINE SHORTLY AT 5 P.M.

GROTON VS. MILLER

SODAK16 AT JAMES VALLEY CHRISTIAN

SODAK16



Listen to the awesome play-by-play commentary with Justin Hanson and Ryan Tracy!



2023 DOG LICENSES due by Dec. 30, 2022

Fines start January 1, 2023

Spayed/Neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog

Proof of rabies shot information is **REQUIRED!!**

Email proof to city.kellie@nvc.net,
fax to (605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that were previously licensed!

Questions call (605) 397-8422



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Homeless task force votes to send recommendations to city leaders in Sioux Falls

Report asks for \$1 million in funding street teams, public education

BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 7, 2022 10:57 PM

The question of responding to homelessness – and the cost of doing so – will soon land in the lap of the Sioux Falls City Council.

The Sioux Falls Homeless Task Force, made up of city and county officials and community representatives in the state's largest city, signed off on its recommendations on Monday night after its seventh and final meeting.

The group wants the city to:

Hire a street team to respond to calls for vagrancy and loitering, at a cost of \$500,000 for two years,

Launch a public education campaign on the causes of realities of homelessness for \$125,000,

Encourage wider participation in the Helpline Network of Care, with \$352,000 in incentives and technology upgrades,

Partner with the county to study a "housing first" approach to homelessness mitigation in line with the county's Safe Home facility, and,

Review and update the existing panhandling ordinance.

The group's final report also suggests devoting resources to the study of shelter and mental health service capacity in Sioux Falls, taking steps to encourage a more simplified, streamlined process for new identification cards to those experiencing homelessness, and a pushing for more affordable housing units.

Long-term cost of proposals questioned

With a price tag of nearly \$1 million for the first two years came questions of long-term funding.

Kadyn Wittman, a task force member who works for the Sioux Falls Family YMCA, called herself a "strong supporter" the public education campaign. The community as a whole struggles to understand the root causes of homelessness and the difficulties faced by families and individuals with nowhere to stay, she said, and a public education campaign could help ease some of the tension between downtown visitors and the homeless population that sometimes mixes with them.

"This is probably the proposal I'm most excited about," Wittman said.

Other task force members chimed in with support for the campaign as a long-term investment. Michelle Erpenbach of Sioux Falls Thrive, a former city council member herself, said she hopes to see city leaders make an ongoing commitment to education

"If this passes this group, I'd encourage that it become a standing item in our city budget," Erpenbach said. "This problem is not going to go away, and people will continue to need to be educated."

But city government tends to move slowly, said City Councilor Curt Soehl. Financing projects year by year can make long-term commitments of any kind a difficult sell. Ongoing funding could force the city to turn to the county or even the state for support.

"The funding might be the hiccup to some of this," Soehl said. "The recommendations here are all great, but we're going to be looking to (some) partners for the funding on this."

'It could help'

A few hours before the task force voted to send its recommendations to the City Council, 56-year-old Richard Reams and 32-year-old Michael Appleby stood smoking cigarettes about a half mile away, in a

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fenced enclosure just north of the Bishop Dudley Hospitality house's front door.

As one of two homeless shelters in Sioux Falls, the Bishop Dudley factored heavily into the task force's work. The Indiana Avenue shelter's capacity and its management of overflow was a major talking point, particularly as the winter months approach.

Appleby and Reams both hope to be long gone from the shelter before the deep freeze sets in.

Reams is a recent parolee who landed at the shelter a few weeks ago after a rough transition from prison to community. He struggled with withdrawal symptoms when he ran out of the two-week supply of mental health medications the prison sent him out with. He eventually secured a prescription from Falls Community Health, but he didn't have the money to rent an apartment or the identification card he'd need to get his name on a lease. Just last week, Reams got his ID. On Friday, he said, once he gets his first paycheck, he plans to move into an apartment.

"When I first came here, I was looking for help, but I helped myself," Richard Reams said. "That's the first lesson I learned."

It wasn't simple, though. Running out of his medication without a clear path to a refill was difficult, he said, as was jumping through the paperwork hoops to document his indigency and secure an ID card without a fee.

If the task force's plans came to be and made it easier for people like him to get back on their feet, Reams said, it could make a difference for the next person in his shoes.

"If they implement it right, it would help," Reams said.

Appleby isn't sure when he'll leave the shelter. He came to Sioux Falls from St. Paul about two weeks ago, meaning to meet and stay with a friend. When he arrived, he said, his friend was gone.

"I came here on a lie," Appleby said.

His backpack, along with his ID, electronics and other personal belongings, was stolen last week while he worked a temp job at a furniture store, he said. Now all he wants "is \$65 for a bus ticket" back to St. Paul.

The Las Vegas native said he preferred St. Paul's approach to homelessness, as well as its easier access to services. If Sioux Falls made it easier to get ID cards, birth certificates or temporary work, Appleby said, the homelessness situation could improve.

"I lived in St. Paul, Minnesota for almost two years and they have so many services. They have so many places you can go to for jobs, birth certificates, the whole nine yards," he said.



JOHN HULT  

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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Climate funding could suffer in the farm bill under GOP control of Congress

BY: ALLISON WINTER - NOVEMBER 7, 2022 9:47 AM

WASHINGTON — Republicans who may be taking control of Congress in this week's midterm elections have not been very specific about many policy goals—but the farm bill is an exception.

Members of the GOP in the U.S. House and Senate are sending strong signals they want to strip climate funding from the massive legislation in 2023 if they take control. That would thwart farmland conservation advocates, who had hoped to make it one of the most significant investments ever made for climate-smart practices on American farmland.

Both House and Senate GOP members of the agriculture panels sent letters to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in late October asking for justification for the administration's recent investment in "climate-smart agriculture," and protesting what they said was a lack of consultation with Congress.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack had announced in September \$2.8 billion for research and pilot projects to support climate-friendly food production. The agency plans to announce a second group of "climate-smart commodities" projects later this year.

Sen. John Boozman of Arkansas, the top-ranking Republican on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, asked Vilsack on Oct. 27 for a report on the department's rationale for its spending.

And a group of House Republicans said Congress should have been consulted before launching the climate program "in this difficult farm economy when so many are struggling with rising input costs, drought, and an ongoing supply chain crisis."

"We are dismayed at the lack of transparency and congressional consultation throughout the development of this process," Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., and Rep. Andy Harris, R-Md., wrote in an Oct. 28 letter along with eight other Republicans from the Congressional Western Caucus, a group of lawmakers that purports to be a "voice for rural America."

Every five years

Lawmakers must rewrite the sweeping farm bill every five years to set both policy and funding levels for farm, food and conservation programs. The next farm bill needs to be authorized by September 2023.

Both agriculture and environmental advocacy groups have geared up for this next farm bill to potentially have a significant section for "climate-smart" farm practices, such as funding for farmers to plant trees and cover crops, use less water or leave soil un-tilled.

If so, it could be the first farm bill in more than 30 years to explicitly address climate change. The Biden administration has come out in support of such practices—notably using a general fund designated for farm support to finance new research on farmland climate mitigation.

Agriculture Committee members tout the bipartisan process they use to write the farm bill, but the question of how much focus to put on climate change is one that clearly already is dividing on party lines.

The Republican Study Committee, whose members make up 80 percent of all Republican members of Congress, proposed drastic cuts for the farm bill in the draft budget it released as a "Blueprint to Save America." It rejects investment in a "radical climate agenda" and outlines a plan to defund farm bill conservation programs that pay farmers to retire environmentally sensitive croplands.

And a major dispute centers around the Inflation Reduction Act that Congress passed in August. It has

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a slate of programs to address climate change, including more than \$20 billion for climate investments on farmland. Congress could fold that into the next farm bill for unprecedented farmland conservation spending.

The Inflation Reduction Act would provide about a 47 percent increase over previous farm bill levels, according to an analysis from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

But the top Republicans on both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees have said they may forego additional investment in climate provisions.

Boozman categorized the funding for agriculture climate programs as “misplaced priorities” and has said it could undermine the farm bill process.

“It unilaterally creates a multi-billion-dollar slush fund for farm bill priorities shared by the president and his allies,” Boozman said in remarks on the Senate floor in August.

“We have a storied history of working together at the Agriculture Committee... unfortunately with this decision the majority has changed that dynamic...they have undermined one of the last successful bipartisan processes remaining in the Senate,” Boozman said.

Similarly, on the House side, Pennsylvania Republican Glenn Thompson, the top Republican on the House Agriculture Committee, said at a hearing last month that the IRA funding “endangered the bipartisan support” for the farm bill conservation title. Thompson could take over as chairman of the House Agriculture Committee if Republicans win a majority in the House.

“I will not sit idly by as we let decades of real bipartisan progress be turned on its head to satisfy people that at their core think agriculture is a blight on the landscape,” Thompson told other members of the committee. “I have been leaning into the climate discussion, but I will not have us suddenly incorporate buzzwords like regenerative agriculture into the Farm Bill or overemphasize climate.”

“I don’t feel bound by the amount of funding or the specific program allocation passed in the partisan IRA bill. I am especially worried about earmarking all the new money just for climate, rather than letting the locally led process work,” Thompson said.

‘Climate-smart’ agriculture

The pushback from Republicans comes as support for “climate-smart” practices has gained unprecedented momentum in the agriculture community.

“There’s a lot of opportunity for making the next farm bill into a climate farm bill. There’s a lot of momentum,” said Anne Schechinger, Midwest director for the Environmental Working Group.

A group of over 150 progressive, agriculture and environmental groups are pushing for the next farm bill to invest in research, technical assistance and financial incentives to help farmers and ranchers reduce emissions. In a letter to President Joe Biden in September they called on the administration to “meet the climate crisis head on” in the next farm bill.

Supporters include state farm cooperatives, community farm groups and environmental groups, including Environmental Working Group.

But it’s not only environmental groups that are pushing for new research and investment in climate-smart practices.

Major farm groups have also come out in support of investment in voluntary climate initiatives for farmers—part of a gradual shift over the years. In previous farm bill or climate debates, some farming and agribusiness groups resisted climate programs for fear it would lead to too many regulations on farmland.

But in the past two years, major farm groups formed a “food and agriculture climate alliance” to make recommendations for climate policy.

It includes the National Farmers Union, American Farm Bureau Federation, Environmental Defense Fund and trade groups representing sugar, cotton, corn and rice growers.

The National Farmers Union included climate change programs in its “days of advocacy” last year, when farmers came to Washington, D.C. to ask lawmakers for support. And the more conservative American Farm Bureau Federation has come full force behind climate-smart solutions for farmers.

Because of this momentum, some experts think the next farm bill will move toward more investment

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in climate programs regardless of the party with the gavel—they just might not do so as explicitly if Republicans take control.

“Who knows what phrase the farm bill might ultimately decide to use, but I think it is inevitable, regardless of who is in charge, that this farm bill will tackle climate change more directly,” said Ferd Hoefner, a Washington, D.C.-based consultant on farm and food policy who has worked on nine previous farm bills.

1990 farm bill

The only farm bill to previously explicitly fund “climate change” was the 1990 farm bill, which had a “Global Climate Change” title drafted in response to the devastating 1988 droughts.

While other farm bills have not mentioned climate change, the conservation title includes billions of dollars for programs that pay farmers to rest sensitive acreage, preserve wildlife habitat or make environmental improvements to working lands.

“We might not necessarily see the word ‘climate’ show up as much in the farm bill if Republicans do take over, but a lot of these conservation programs are really supported by both parties,” said Schechinger.

But Schechinger says USDA needs to do a better job of investing conservation money in practices that are good for the climate. Some programs, like cover crops, have a beneficial effect.

But other practices that the farm bill pays for, like lagoons for animal manure, can actually increase carbon emissions from farms. Nationwide, USDA spent \$174 million on animal waste storage facilities since 2017, as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, according to EWG’s analysis of federal data.

“We are spending millions of dollars on some of these practices that are actually bad for climate change, that actually increase emissions,” said Schechinger.

The group wants the next farm bill to increase cost share and prioritization for climate-smart practices to encourage more farmers to take on practices that reduce emissions.



ALLISON WINTER  

Allison Winter is a Washington D.C. correspondent for States Newsroom, a network of state-based nonprofit news outlets that includes the Alaska Beacon.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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PUC to opponents of an energy storage project: talk to the feds

Gregory County hydropower plans sparked multiple complaints to state agency

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 7, 2022 4:00 PM

A deluge of public comments on a proposed energy storage project along the western bluffs of the Missouri River prompted the state Public Utilities Commission to issue a statement on Monday pointing out that it has no authority over the project.

The project would be located 20 miles northeast of Gregory and is dubbed the Gregory County Pumped Storage Project. The partnership between Missouri River Energy Services and MidAmerican Energy Company would see the construction of a massive reservoir and hydro-plant along Lake Francis Case, as well as transmission infrastructure through Charles Mix County.

Public Utilities Commissioner Kristie Fiegen said the department has been inundated with questions regarding the PUC's authority over the project.

"The PUC does not have jurisdiction on the hydroelectric project because it is on navigable US waters and therefore federal law supersedes state siting law," Fiegen said.

Meaning, the federal government authorizes the project – not the state.

The setup for the controversial project is fairly straightforward. When demand for electricity is low (making electricity cheap), the project would use renewable energy sources like wind and solar to pump water from the river into a 4-square mile, 40-billion-gallon reservoir.

When demand is high, water would flow back down toward the river, where it would run through a new hydro plant, generating up to 2,100 megawatts of electricity – about as much as all the dams in the state.

The system would work like a battery to store excess wind and solar power as water in the upper reservoir and then convert it back into electricity – turning a turbine on the way to the lower reservoir.

Concerns about the project are coming from people like David and Fawn Swift. The couple would lose about 320 acres of land to the proposed reservoir.

On Monday, the day the PUC issued its statement, David Swift said he hopes the state takes steps to protect landowners.

"Although Citizens Against Missouri River Pumped Storage Project acknowledges that the state doesn't have jurisdiction over the project, we still believe the governor and other state officials should be looking out for the interests of the state and standing up for individual landowner rights," David Swift said.

The PUC itself has not taken a stance on the project. PUC Fiegen said that's because the law giving the federal government jurisdiction can change.

"If the federal law is changed and it gives states authority over projects like the Gregory Pumped Storage Project, the SDPUC will become involved," Fiegen said. "Therefore, the PUC has no position on the project."



JOSHUA HAIAR ✉️ 🐦

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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Campaigns make final pitches to South Dakota voters

Trump stumps for Noem, Smith rallies in Sioux Falls; ballot measure backers lean on ads

BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 7, 2022 10:59 PM

Campaigns made their final pitches to voters on Monday ahead of an election that will see South Dakotans decide on a governor and other statewide offices, as well as the legal status of recreational marijuana and the expansion of Medicaid.

Incumbent Republican Gov. Kristi Noem and her opponent, Democrat Jamie Smith, traversed the state over the weekend and capped their tours with dueling rallies on opposite ends of the state.

Trump makes brief appearance for Noem

Noem addressed a large crowd Monday night at the Monument in Rapid City, a venue formerly known as the Rapid City Civic Center. Former President Donald

Trump appeared remotely after speeches from Noem and each Republican candidate for state-level, statewide office. The rally capped a busy week for the Noem, who hosted Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin and former Democratic U.S. Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard last week.

Several of the Monday night speakers predicted a "red wave" of Republican wins in both South Dakota and across the country.

Trump, appearing from his airplane for just over a minute, called Noem a friend who had done "a fantastic job" running South Dakota.

"Kristi Noem is one of the best governors in the country. We have to reelect her by a wide margin," Trump said.

Noem touted her record on gun rights, the COVID pandemic, her signature on a bill banning biological males from competing in women's sports, and the state's economy and a trend of inbound migration.

"South Dakota is proof that Republican values work," Noem said. "All we did in South Dakota is what Republicans say they've always believed in, and it worked."

Handing the reins over to Smith would tank the economy and undo the accomplishments of the past four years, she said.

"We've created opportunity for families, for business, to pursue the dreams they've had for many, many years," Noem said.

Smith camp rallies in Sioux Falls

Smith's rally took place at the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls. The District 15 state senator appeared alongside Brian Bengs, the retired Lt. Colonel and former Northern University professor challenging incumbent Republican Sen. John Thune for a U.S. Senate seat.

The small third floor stage also played host to nearly every Democrat on the ballot for statewide office.

Bengs told the audience that he'd traveled to all 66 counties in South Dakota meeting voters. He's been able to connect with Republicans, he said, by finding common ground on the corrupting influence of political spending and politicians who spend too much time in Washington, D.C.

"I believe that every problem in our country is caused by, or made worse by, the influence of money in politics," Bengs said.

Bengs introduced Smith as "the main event," leading a chant as the gubernatorial hopeful's wife Kjerstin took the stage to introduce her husband. After 27 years together, she said, "I have it on pretty good authority that what you see is what you get with Jamie."

The Democratic challenger said he didn't anticipate a close race with Noem, who outraised and outspent

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him by a wide margin. The most recent poll had Noem 19 points ahead, but an SDSU poll released shortly before that had Smith within a few points.

"I never thought we'd be standing here within the margin of error when we announced in February," Smith said.

He said women's reproductive health, daycare, preschool and health care for the uninsured are on the ballot for South Dakotans, and that his party has the ticket to deliver.

He pointed specifically to Amendment D, which would expand Medicaid eligibility.

"We have thousands of people who need health care, and we can bring it to them tomorrow by expanding Medicaid," he said.

He also backed an initiative for recreational cannabis, something he said "I thought I'd never be campaigning for."

Pro-pot group hopes to overcome odds

Supporters and opponents of those ballot measures have ramped up street team work, as well. Backers of Initiated Measure 27, which would legalize recreational marijuana for adults, say they feel good about their chances, in spite of polls that show their side lagging with likely voters.

Matthew Schweich of South Dakotans for Better Marijuana Laws is confident undecided voters will break for cannabis. He cited the passage of Amendment A in 2020, which legalized both recreational and medicinal marijuana. The Amendment was tossed by the South Dakota Supreme Court after a challenge from two members of the South Dakota law enforcement community. Noem voiced support for the challenge.

"I think the sentiment that the politicians overturned the will of the people will carry us to victory," Schweich said.

Medicinal marijuana passed in a separate initiative in 2020, and dispensaries began to open earlier this year after a rules-making process.

Last week, in the final stretch before the 2022 general election, the pro-recreational pot group organized a press conference with law enforcement backers. That virtual event was a response to an anti-pot gathering with Sioux Falls-area law enforcement and elected officials in late October.

The anti-IM 27 side has continued pushing out its message on the airwaves, said Jim Kinyon of Protecting South Dakota Kids. That messaging has largely taken the form of advertising, upon which the group has spent more than \$300,000 since the primary. The pro-legalization group has spent around \$23,000 on ads since spring and had less than \$1,000 left on hand at the end of October.

Those working to defeat IM 27 are pleased with where they stand, Kinyon said, but they aren't taking a win for granted.

"Resting is not going to be the answer here, because there's an industry that wants to access our kids and communities," he said.

Medicaid expansion advocates make last push

Advocates for the expansion of Medicaid in South Dakota via Constitutional amendment have also been working to get out the vote for their case. The state is one of 12 that hasn't expanded the program since the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010. Passage of Amendment D would make tens of thousands of South Dakotans eligible for Medicaid coverage.

Rick Weiland, co-founder of Dakotans for Health, believes "the tide has turned" on support for Medicaid expansion.

"Anything can happen, but I think the folks who support this feel pretty good about our chances," Weiland said.

Dakotans for Health had about \$77,600 in the bank at the time of the pre-general election campaign filing deadline, as well as the backing of groups like the League of Women Voters, the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and the Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce.

Opponents of Amendment D have far less campaign cash. The group had no cash on hand before the election, according to Republican State Sen. John Wiik, R-Big Stone City, who is among the volunteers who regularly speaks against the ballot question.

"If we pull this off (a defeat for Amendment D), it will be the biggest David vs. Goliath story in the state,"

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Wiik said Monday.

Supporters of expansion have already begun work on a 2024 measure: a Constitutional amendment to codify a right to abortion. Organizer Pam Cole, a former chair of the South Dakota Democratic party, said the group collected more than 150 signatures in support of such an amendment at an event on Saturday, the first day volunteers could legally begin circulating petitions.



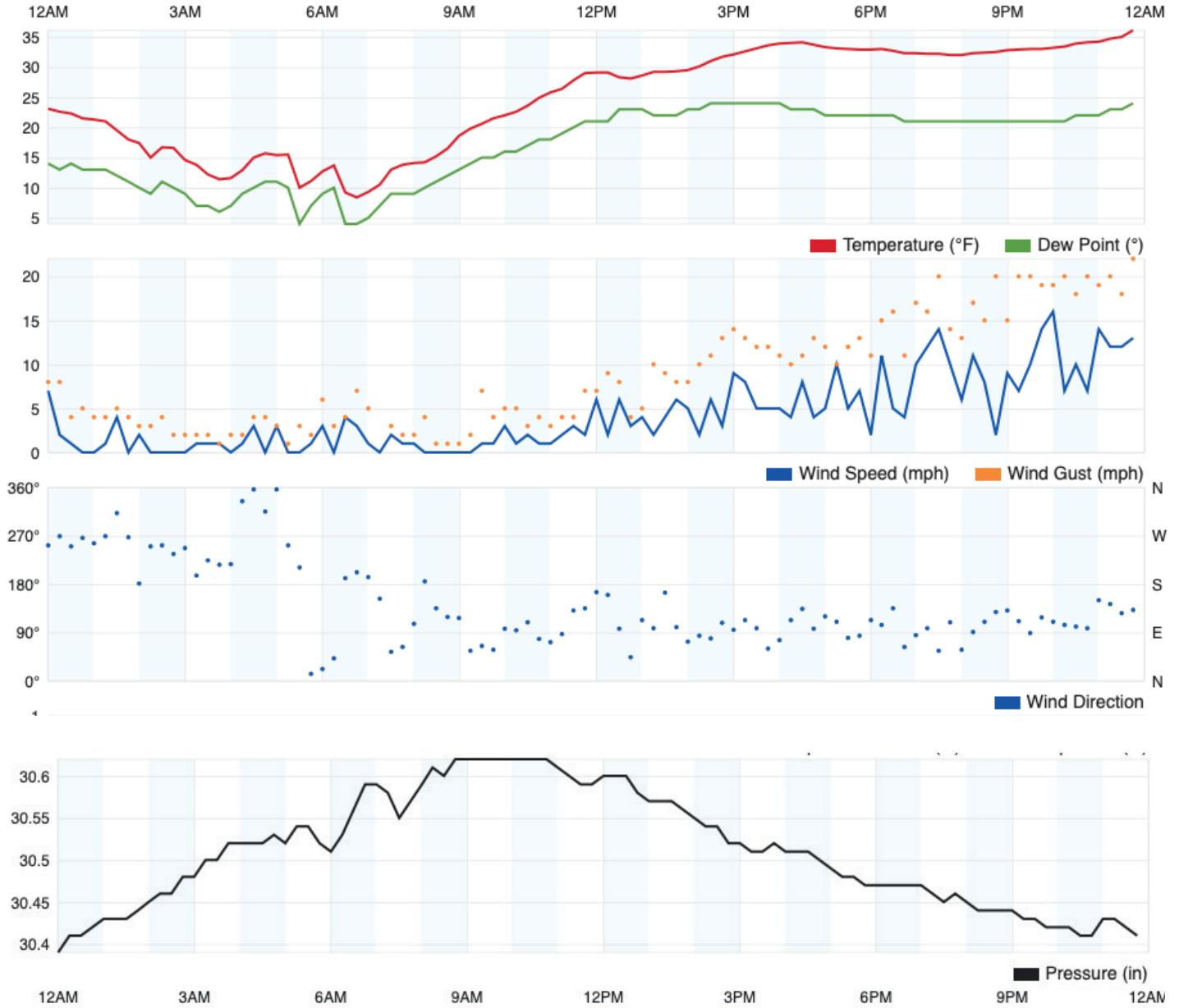
JOHN HULT  

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.

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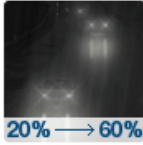



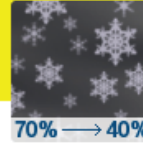

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Winter Storm Watch			
						
Mostly Cloudy and Breezy	20% → 60% Slight Chance Rain then Rain Likely	40% Chance Rain	50% → 90% Chance Wintry Mix then Wintry Mix and Blustery	90% Wintry Mix and Areas Blowing Snow	70% → 40% Snow Likely and Blowing Snow	Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery
High: 51 °F	Low: 34 °F	High: 40 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 30 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 19 °F



1st Major Winter Storm of the Season

November 8, 2022
5:40 AM

Wednesday Night through Early Friday

Key Messages

- 1st major Winter Storm of the season Wednesday night-early Friday. Travel will likely be impacted
- Mainly **Snow** over north central SD
- **Wintry Mix** or **Rain** possible Wednesday night-Thursday. Accumulating freezing rain possible
- Precipitation transitioning to all snow Thursday afternoon-evening from west to east
- Very strong winds to create **blowing snow with significantly reduced visibility** as precipitation changes to snow Thursday afternoon and night

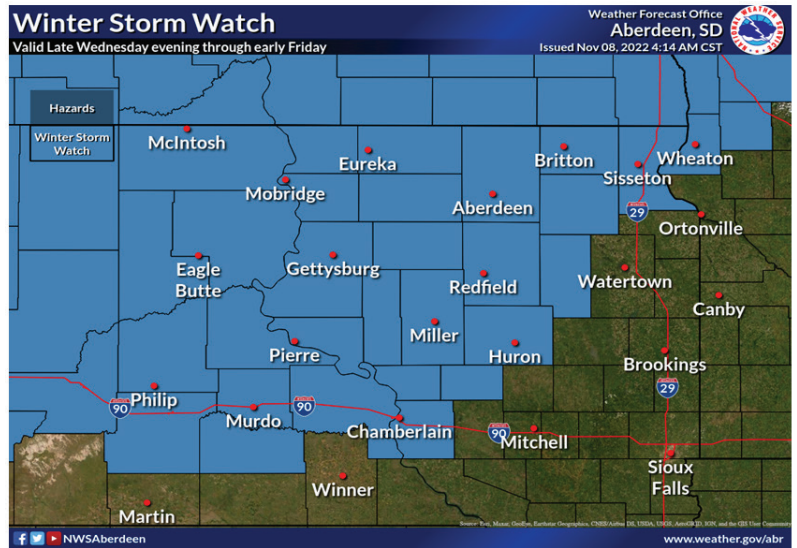
NEW

Important Updates

- Winter Storm Watch issued for portions of the area

Next Scheduled Briefing

- Tuesday afternoon



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The first winter storm of the season is poised to move into the region later this week and deliver the season's first round of accumulating snowfall to parts of the area. This system will bring a wintry mix of snow, rain, and freezing rain starting on Wednesday night and continuing into Friday. The wintry mix will gradually transition to all snow from west to east during the day on Thursday. Strong winds on the back side of the storm will lead to blowing snow with significantly reduced visibility Thursday into Friday.

Groton Daily Independent

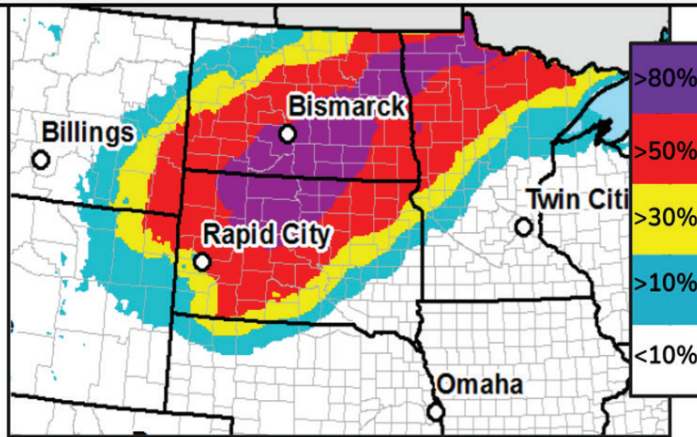
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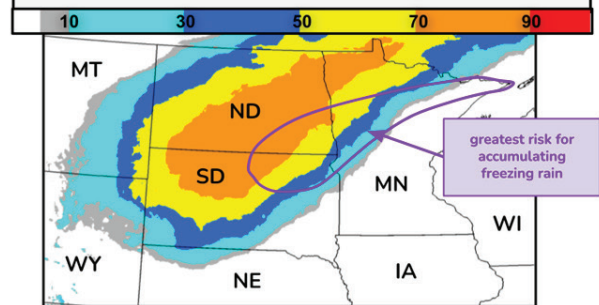
Winter Storm Outlook

November 8, 2022
5:40 AM

Winter Storm Outlook (Through 6am Sat CST)
(Probability of exceeding winter storm warning snowfall)



Probability of 8+'' of snow (6am Wed - 6am Fri CST)



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

These 2 graphics display the probability of exceeding a certain threshold of snowfall. The graphic on the left is the probability of getting at least 6 inches or more and the graphic on the right is the probability of receiving 8 or more inches of snowfall.



Precipitation Type Timing

November 8, 2022
5:40 AM

Wednesday Nov 9th through Friday Nov 11th

	Weather Forecast																
	11/9 Wed			11/10 Thu						11/11 Fri							
	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Britton	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Eagle Butte	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Eureka	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Gettysburg	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Kennebec	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
McIntosh	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Milbank	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Miller	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Mobridge	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Murdo	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Pierre	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Redfield	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Sisseton	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Watertown	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Webster	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔
Wheaton	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔	☔

*Created: 4 am CST Tue 11/8/2022. Shows most impactful weather for the period beginning at the time shown. Weather symbols display where Probability of Precipitation > 0%.

- Rain + - Thunderstorms + - Fz Rain + - Wintry Mix + - Snow +



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 36.1 °F at 11:45 PM

Low Temp: 8.4 °F at 6:45 AM

Wind: 11 mph at 11:45 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 51 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 77 in 1999

Record Low: -3 in 1936

Average High: 46°F

Average Low: 23°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.236

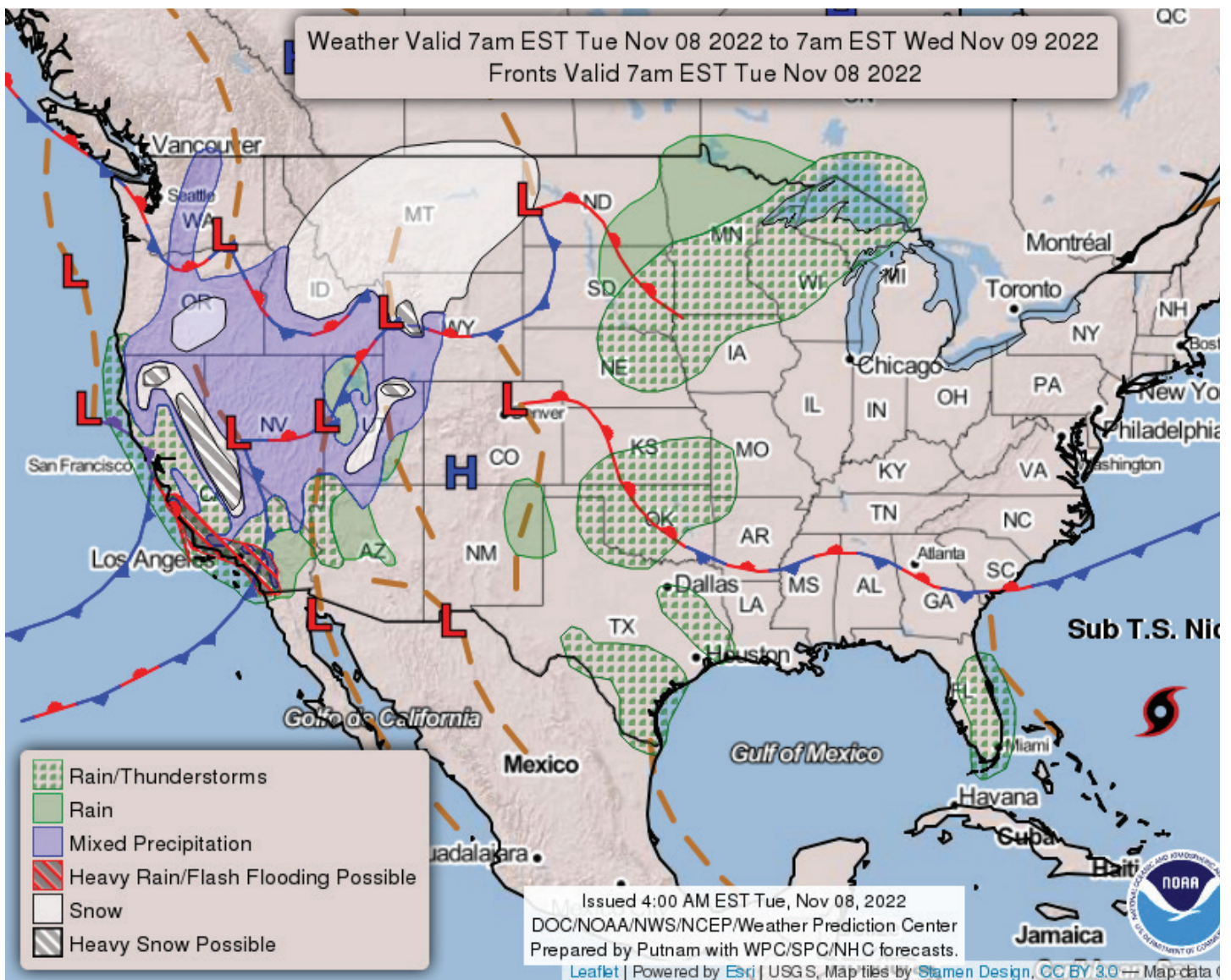
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.73

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 5:11:56 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:21:45 AM



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Today in Weather History

November 8th, 1985: Southern South Dakota saw heavy snow from the morning of the 8th through the evening on the 10th. Snowfall ranged from 5-10 inches over the area, with up to a foot or more in the Black Hills. The most significant amount was 18 inches in the higher elevations of the Black Hills. Winds gusting around 40 mph at times, combined with falling snow, produced near-blizzard conditions during the afternoon of the 9th through the early morning hours on the 10th, in the southwest. Some storm total snowfall amounts include; 16.0 inches near Presho; 11.5 inches in Kennebec; 9.0 inches in Murdo; and 4.0 inches in Timber Lake and near Onida.

1870: The U.S. Signal Corps Weather Service issued the first storm warning on this day. Professor Increase A. Lapham believed that warnings of deadly storms on the Great Lakes could be derived from telegraphed weather observations. As a result, a bill was introduced and signed into law to establish a national telegraphic weather service. The Signal Corps began taking observations of November 1st, 1870. On this date, Lapham would issue the first storm warning, a cautionary forecast for the Great Lakes.

1879: A tornado struck Crawford County, Arkansas, killing several people.

1913: The Great Lakes Storm of November 7-13, 1913, was a blizzard with hurricane-force winds that devastated the Great Lakes Region, sinking as many as 19 ships and stranding 19 others. This storm would be the deadliest and most destructive natural disaster ever to hit the Great Lakes.

1943 - An early season snowstorm raged across eastern South Dakota and Minnesota into northern Wisconsin. The storm produced 22 inches of snow at Fairbault and Marshall MN, 20 inches at Redwood Falls MN, and 10.1 inches at Minneapolis. Drifts fifteen feet high were reported in Cottonwood County MN. The storm produced up to two feet of snow in South Dakota smothering a million Thanksgiving day turkeys. (6th-8th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1953 - Residents of New York City suffered through ten days of smog resulting in 200 deaths. (The Weather Channel)

1966 - The temperature in downtown San Francisco reached a November record of 86 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms over Texas produced locally heavy rains in the Hill Country, with 3.50 inches reported at Lakeway, and 3.72 inches reported at Anderson Mill. Thunderstorms over Louisiana produced hail an inch in diameter at Clay and at Provencial. Blustery northwest winds, ushering cold air into western Kansas and into northwest Texas, gusted to 46 mph at Hill City KS. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Fair weather prevailed across much of the nation for Election Day. Midland TX equalled their record for November with an afternoon high of 89 degrees, and the record high of 87 degrees at Roswell NM was their fifth in eight days. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing along and ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from northern Louisiana into central Georgia. Thunderstorms spawned three tornadoes, and there were sixty-four reports of large hail or damaging winds. A late afternoon thunderstorm in central Georgia spawned a tornado which killed one person and injured eight others at Pineview. Late afternoon thunderstorms in central Mississippi produced baseball size hail around Jackson, and wind gusts to 70 mph Walnut Grove. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1994: The twelfth and final tropical cyclone of the Atlantic hurricane season formed in the southwestern Caribbean. While Hurricane Gordon was only a Category 1, it killed 1,149 individuals, including 1,122 in Haiti.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

GIVING THANKS

Sometimes it seems as though we have more holidays and days to celebrate people and events than there are days on the calendar. But this month contains a national holiday that has special religious significance. This special day has been set aside for us to pause, ponder, praise, pray and give thanks to God for His blessings.

Many families will gather together and share stories of God's love, mercy, grace, and salvation. They will talk of God's peace and presence and tell of His goodness and guidance, hope and healing, power and protection. God's generous blessings will be the most important topic of their discussions. He will be honored!

There will also be families where God will not be respected or mentioned. It is not that there will be an absence of thanks, but God will not be recognized or respected as the giver of all gifts. They will focus on what they have, have accomplished or achieved -believing that they have "done it on my own." They will not recognize His gifts.

Some will resent the day because they feel short-changed or even forgotten by God. They have had trials too tragic to share and losses too great to describe. Their lives seem hopeless with nothing before them but darkness. The consequences of wrong choices have left them scarred for life. However, God still loves them!

But everyone can join the Psalmist and say, "Praise the Lord and give Him thanks!" - Even those who feel hopeless and ungrateful. Why? This verse talks of His mercy which is always available to everyone: the humble, the proud and the resentful.

Prayer: Lord, You have given us so very much. You often give us more than we recognize. Yet, we ask for and need one more thing: A thankful heart! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done. Psalm 105:1



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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2022-23 Community Events

- 07/21/2022: Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/22/2022: Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
07/24/2022: Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
07/27/2022: 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
No Date Set: 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)
09/11/2022: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm
09/11/2022: Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10 a.m.
09/02-04: Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/01/2022: Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/07/2022: Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
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
11/13/2022: Snow Queen Contest
11/19/2022: 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
12/10/2022: Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
07/04/2023 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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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 Monday:
Lotto America
05-13-15-17-20, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 4
(five, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen, twenty; Star Ball: nine; ASB: four)
Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: 154,000,000
Powerball
Estimated jackpot: 1,900,000,000

Thune looks for decisive election win in bid for 4th term

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Republican U.S. Sen. John Thune of South Dakota sought a decisive reelection win Tuesday over his Democratic challenger for a fourth term that could feature a bid to eventually become his party's leader in the Senate.

The 61-year-old Republican held a large fundraising advantage over Democrat Brian Bengs, an Air Force veteran and university professor. Thune is the second-ranking Senate Republican and is seen as a potential pick to succeed Sen. Mitch McConnell once he steps down from leadership.

The most dramatic moment of the campaign for Thune came before it began, when he contemplated retiring rather than running for reelection. He had shown signs of weariness after navigating a Republican Party dominated by former President Donald Trump, who at one point called for a primary challenger to unseat him.

Once he chose to run, Thune easily fended off a pair of primary challengers in June and has ridden out the campaign season in the heavily Republican state by avoiding most engagements with Bengs.

The quiet election year allowed Thune to amass over \$17 million in campaign funds — money that could help line up allies if he moves to become Senate leader.

South Dakota's Johnson heavy favorite for 3rd term in House

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Republican U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson faced an unknown and unfunded Libertarian candidate on Tuesday as he sought a third term in South Dakota's only House seat.

Johnson's path for reelection seemed assured with Democrats not fielding a candidate. Ryan Ryder, a lawyer, withdrew in March after coming under scrutiny for tweets he made from a personal account. The 46-year-old Johnson still faces Libertarian Collin Duprel, who did not report raising or spending any money in the campaign.

Johnson and Duprel met in a single debate in which the incumbent suggested he would vote for a federal bill to restrict abortions. Duprel said that he opposes abortion but believes it should be legal. South Dakota had a trigger law that took effect to ban abortions after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

Duprel, a rancher, also argued he would best represent the state's agricultural interests in Congress. Johnson countered that he has experience in rural development and claimed he has a "proven track record of getting things done."

Johnson has tried to shore up his conservative credentials in heavily Republican South Dakota while saying he's focused on policy over political brawling. During his time in the House, he has worked for bipartisan agreements as part of a group known as the "Problem Solvers Caucus."

The House seat was not always a lock for Johnson. He faced a competitive primary against a right-wing challenger in state lawmaker Taffy Howard that attracted spending from several national political action

committees.

South Dakota's Noem hopes for easy reelection amid '24 buzz

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is hoping for easy reelection over Democratic state Rep. Jamie Smith on Tuesday amid speculation she is aiming to run for president in two years.

The 50-year-old Republican vaulted to national prominence within the GOP during her first term after she derided government mandates aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19 infections. Her reelection campaign has focused on her handling of the state's economy as well as a promise to convince the Legislature to repeal the state's tax on groceries.

Noem has said she plans to stay in the governor's office for a full second term, but she has also used the campaign cycle to develop a nationwide fundraising network and amass over \$15 million — a historic amount of money for a South Dakota gubernatorial candidate.

Campaign season, however, got off to a rocky start for Noem as she came under the scrutiny of a state ethics board. In August, the board found evidence that Noem had interfered with a state agency to aid her daughter's real estate appraisal licensure. The board also asked the state's Division of Criminal Investigation to probe her use of the state's airplane, but the prosecutor overseeing the investigation said last month it found nothing to support a criminal prosecution.

The governor has portrayed the complaints as political retribution from former Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg, who filed them as he faced pressure from Noem to resign over his conduct surrounding a fatal car crash with a pedestrian in 2020.

Meanwhile, Smith also criticized Noem's out-of-state travels as a sign she is more focused on her personal ambition rather than the job at home. He cast himself as a moderate, focused on the state's practical needs and touted a record of bipartisanship as the Democratic leader in the House.

But Smith struggled to raise enough money to compete with Noem.

In ad after ad, the governor labeled Smith an "extreme liberal" in an effort to peel away moderate voters — a group without which Smith couldn't win. Republicans have nearly twice as many registered voters in South Dakota as Democrats, and in some places — including the state's most populated county, Minnehaha — registered Democrats have slipped behind even independents.

Democrats have not won the governor's office since the 1970s.

South Dakota voters to decide on Medicaid expansion

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota voters on Tuesday are weighing whether to expand Medicaid health insurance to tens of thousands of low-income residents through a constitutional amendment.

If Constitutional Amendment D is approved by a majority vote, it would remove South Dakota from a list of 12 states that have not expanded eligibility for the government health insurance program to people earning up to 138% of the federal poverty level — currently about \$18,800 for an individual or \$38,300 for a family of four.

The Republican-controlled Legislature has declined to expand Medicaid eligibility under the 2010 federal Affordable Care Act, and Gov. Kristi Noem has opposed the idea. But proponents for expansion have found success through ballot measures across GOP-dominated states, and a wide coalition of health care groups and organizations backed a well-funded ballot campaign this year in South Dakota.

Once a proposition that was anathema to conservatives, its passage would be a sign of growing acceptance even in a deeply red state.

By amending the state Constitution, voters would also place Medicaid expansion outside the grasp of the Legislature. Roughly 40,000 people would become eligible for Medicaid.

A coalition of health care groups, including the state's largest hospital systems, initiated the ballot campaign. It has also won support from organizations that range across the political spectrum, from the state Chamber of Commerce to the South Dakota Farmers Union, religious organizations and progressive groups.

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Advocates for expansion say that Medicaid access would help low-income people who could be saddled with exorbitant hospital bills, while also allowing the state's citizens to tap into over \$1 billion in federal funds.

They have run ads that feature working-class people like farmers and hairstylists talking about their need for health care coverage.

The campaign has branded the amendment as a financial "deal" for South Dakota. The federal government pays 90% of costs under a 2021 federal COVID-19 relief package, so the state would receive \$1.3 billion in federal funding over five years for expansion. The state's share over that time would be \$166.2 million, but would also result in \$162.5 million in savings, according to the Legislature's research division.

But some Republican lawmakers have argued that the constitutional amendment would create a liability in South Dakota's small state budget.

Groups like American for Prosperity, a free-market lobbying organization, also argue that Medicaid is a wasteful program and discourages people from seeking jobs where they can get private insurance.

In an effort to head off the Medicaid expansion vote, Republican lawmakers had proposed a separate constitutional amendment in this year's primary election that would have required a 60% vote threshold on ballot measures that raise taxes or spend significant government funds. That proposal was overwhelmingly rejected by voters.

Noem, who is likely to win the governor's post again, has said she is not in favor of expanding Medicaid but committed to implementing it if it passes.

Castaneda scores 31, Akron takes down South Dakota St. in OT

AKRON, Ohio (AP) — Xavier Castaneda scored 31 points as Akron beat South Dakota State 81-80 in overtime on Monday night in a season opener.

Enrique Freeman scored 23 points and added 14 rebounds and six assists, and Trendon Hankerson recorded 11 points.

Matt Dentlinger led the Jackrabbits in scoring, finishing with 15 points, six rebounds and three blocks. William Kyle III added 14 points.

NEXT UP

Akron plays Friday against Mississippi State. South Dakota State visits Boise State on Wednesday.

Wahl's double-double leads Wisconsin past South Dakota 85-59

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Tyler Wahl had 19 points and 10 rebounds, four Wisconsin players scored in double figures and the Badgers defeated South Dakota 85-59 in a season opener on Monday night.

Chucky Hepburn had 14 points, Steven Crawl 12 and Max Klesmit 11 for the Badgers.

The Badgers held the Coyotes to two points through the first six minutes and their lead reached 11-2 when Hepburn hit one of his three 3-pointers for the game.

Wisconsin led 38-28 at halftime and 59-39 with about 11 minutes remaining in the second half. The lead peaked at 28 in the final minute.

Wisconsin shot 46% from 3-point distance, making 12 of 26. The Badgers made nine 3-pointers in the first half and led 38-28 at the break.

New Zealander Kruz Perrott-Hunt, South Dakota's leading returning scorer from last season, led the Coyotes with 21 points.

It was Eric Peterson's first game as South Dakota coach.

South Dakota had more turnovers (10) than assists (7).

Wisconsin had 14 assists and 10 turnovers.

Jensen scores 30, No. 21 Creighton women top No. 23 SD State

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Lauren Jensen scored 17 of her 30 points in the fourth quarter and No. 21 Creighton pulled away from No. 23 South Dakota State in the only Top 25 matchup on the opening day

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of the season Monday.

Ellie Colbeck drilled a 3-pointer for the Jackrabbits to tie the game but after a two-minute scoreless drought Emma Ronsieke made a layup for Creighton and Jensen scored the next seven points for a 73-64 lead heading into the final minute.

Creighton, the surprise team of the NCAA Tournament last year when they beat Colorado, No. 8 Iowa and No. 10 Iowa State before losing to top-ranked South Carolina, made 10 of 12 free throws in the fourth quarter.

Morgan Maley added 13 points for the Bluejays, who shot 50% for the game.

Myah Selland scored 22 points to lead South Dakota State, which won the WNIT last season. The Jackrabbits led 25-16 early in the second quarter but then missed their next five shots and never got back to 50% while finishing 5 of 21 from 3-point range.

South Dakota candidates rally base ahead of Election Day

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem planned a Monday reelection rally featuring a video message from former President Donald Trump in a final push to turn out voters in the heavily-Republican western part of the state, while her Democratic challenger, state lawmaker Jamie Smith, focused on the state's largest city in a bid to make the race competitive by winning big in his hometown of Sioux Falls.

The dueling campaign rallies on Monday evening centered on the areas where each candidate is expecting to draw large numbers of voters. For Noem, it was in Rapid City, near where she held an Independence Day fireworks celebration in 2020 that featured Trump. For Smith, it was at Sioux Falls' Washington Pavilion, where he once attended high school before the building was converted into an event center.

Republicans have nearly doubled Democrats on voter roles in South Dakota, but Smith said he was hoping to carry Sioux Falls with enough votes to buoy his chances of an upset on Election Day. A Democrat has not won the South Dakota governor's office since the 1970s.

"We're working hard to find those some-time voters to make sure they get out the vote," Smith said, adding that he planned to keep knocking on doors and making phone calls with less than 24 hours to go before polls opened.

Noem has spent a historic amount of money in the race, filling TV airtime with ads that touted her hands-off approach to business closures and mask-wearing mandates during the COVID-19 pandemic. She has outspent Smith nearly 6-to-1.

Running as a moderate, he said he has tried to "stay as positive as we can" amid a slew of campaign ads from Noem that targeted him as an ally to President Joe Biden and called him "extreme."

Smith said his Monday evening rally message would lean on the advice he used to give as a wrestling coach: "You just need to stick with your plan, keep a calm mind, and then work as hard today and tomorrow as we've worked the entire rest of the way. And at the end of the day, we will have the outcome that people choose."

During her term as the state's first female governor, Noem has repeatedly positioned the state — and herself — in the national spotlight. She allied herself closely with Trump, perhaps most visibly by holding a massive fireworks celebration featuring the former president at Mount Rushmore in 2020.

The national attention has fueled speculation that Noem could be angling for a White House bid in 2024, though she has said she plans to serve another four years in the governor's office. She has defended her frequent out-of-state trips to attend conservative events as an effort to attract businesses to the state and bolster its economy. South Dakota, with a population of under 1 million, has also seen an influx of new residents attracted to its low cost of living and conservative politics.

Noem, however, has suggested that she is facing a close race with Smith this year because many of the state's longtime residents are not as appreciative of her political style.

"This race is close because of people that have lived here forever that are taking our freedom for granted," she told the crowd at a rally last week.

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Noem's campaign spokesman, Ian Fury, said that the campaign is trying to remind people to get to the polls.

"As long as Republicans show up and vote for Gov. Noem we'll do great," he said.

Noem spent early Monday attending smaller gatherings in Watertown and Sioux Falls before heading west to Rapid City. Her appearances have drawn full houses to cafes and diners as she has toured the state in recent days.

South Dakota voters were also deciding Tuesday whether to send a pair of incumbents, Sen. John Thune and Rep. Dusty Johnson, back to Washington. They will also vote on legalizing recreational marijuana and expanding Medicaid eligibility through a pair of ballot measures.

Zelenskyy: Talks with Russia possible on Ukraine's terms

By ANDREW MELDRUM and YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's president has hinted at the possibility of peace talks with Russia, a shift from his earlier refusal to negotiate with President Vladimir Putin that came on the eve of crucial elections in the United States.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged the international community late Monday to "force Russia into real peace talks" and listed his usual conditions for dialogue: the return of all of Ukraine's occupied lands, compensation for damage caused by the war and the prosecution of war crimes.

That is a change in rhetoric at least from a man who signed a decree in late September stating "the impossibility of holding talks" with Putin. But since his preconditions appear to be non-starters for Moscow, it's hard to see how that would advance any talks.

Western weapons and aid have been key to Ukraine's ability to fight off Russia's invasion, which some initially expected would more easily roll through the country. But U.S. midterm elections Tuesday will define the amount and the shape of Washington's future political and financial support for Ukraine.

If Republicans win control of Congress, it could become more difficult for President Joe Biden's administration to push forward large packages of military and other aid for Ukraine.

Russia and Ukraine held several rounds of talks in Belarus and Turkey early on in the war, which is now nearing its nine-month mark. The talks stalled after the last meeting of the delegations in Istanbul in March yielded no results.

Zelenskyy said Monday that Kyiv has "repeatedly proposed (talks) and to which we always received crazy Russian responses with new terrorist attacks, shelling or blackmail."

But he has more recently refused to negotiate with Putin — itself a change in tactic after he repeatedly called for a personal meeting with the Russian leader. The Kremlin brushed off any such meeting.

Zelenskyy listed conditions for the dialogue to begin, including the "restoration of (Ukraine's) territorial integrity ... compensation for all war damage, punishment for every war criminal and guarantees that it will not happen again."

Russia, meanwhile, resumed calls for talks after Ukraine's successful counteroffensive in the east and the south of the country began in September, but Ukraine has been rejecting the possibility ever since.

Russia's deputy foreign minister, Andrei Rudenko, stressed on Tuesday that Moscow is not setting any conditions for the resumption of talks with Ukraine and accused Kyiv of lacking "good will."

"This is their choice, we have always declared our readiness for such negotiations," Rudenko said.

Ukraine's presidential advisor Mykhailo Podolyak insisted in a tweet Monday that "Ukraine has never refused to negotiate," but first, Russia needs to withdraw its troops from the country. "Is Putin ready? Obviously not," Podolyak wrote.

In other developments:

— In the eastern Donetsk region, which the Russians are struggling to take full control of, Moscow's shelling killed three civilians and wounded seven others over the past 24 hours, according to Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko.

Kyrylenko said the fatalities occurred in the city of Bakhmut, a key target of Russia's grinding offensive

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in Donetsk, and the town of Krasnohorivka. Ukraine's deputy defense minister last week described the Bakhmut area as "the epicenter" of fighting in eastern Ukraine.

— Elsewhere, two civilians were seriously wounded by unexploded mines in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, where Kyiv's forces retook broad swaths of territory in September, Kharkiv Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

— In the partially occupied Kherson region in the south, where Ukraine's troops are conducting a successful counteroffensive, Russian-installed authorities said they have "completed" measures to evacuate residents ahead of anticipated Ukrainian advances.

The Kremlin-appointed administration had sought to relocate tens of thousands of people in anticipation of a Ukrainian advance deeper into the region. Ukrainian military and civilian officials have previously described the relocation measures as "forced displacement." Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the Kremlin-backed administration, has repeatedly denied that.

Russian-backed officials in Kherson announced that motorized ferries transporting civilians across the Dnieper and deeper into Russian-held territory were no longer running. According to the announcement, made Monday on Telegram, the main remaining relocation route is across the Antonivskiy Bridge over the Dnieper, which has been repeatedly damaged by Ukrainian attacks and is now operated by the Russian military.

Discovery of bronzes rewrites Italy's Etruscan-Roman history

ROME (AP) — Italian authorities on Tuesday announced the extraordinary discovery of more than 2,000-year-old bronze statues in an ancient Tuscan thermal spring and said the find will "rewrite history" about the transition from the Etruscan civilization to the Roman Empire.

The discovery, in the San Casciano dei Bagni archaeological dig near Siena, is one of the most significant ever in the Mediterranean and certainly the most important since the 1972 underwater discovery of the famed Riace bronze warriors, said Massimo Osanna, the Culture Ministry's director of museums.

Thanks to the mud that protected them, the figurines were found in a perfect state of conservation. Alongside the figures were 5,000 coins in gold, silver and bronze, the ministry said.

As evidence of the importance of the find, the ministry announced the construction of a new museum in the area to house the antiquities.

Jacopo Tabolli, who coordinated the dig for the University for Foreigners in Siena, said the discovery was significant because it sheds new light on the end of the Etruscan civilization and the expansion of the Roman Empire between the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.

The period was marked by wars and conflicts across what is today's Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio regions, and yet, the bronze statues show evidence that Etruscan and Roman families prayed together to deities in the sacred sanctuary of the thermal springs. The statues bear both Etruscan and Latin inscriptions.

"While there were social and civil wars being fought outside the sanctuary ... inside the sanctuary the great elite Etruscan and Roman families prayed together in a context of peace surrounded by conflict," Tabolli said. "This possibility to rewrite the relationship and dialectic between the Etruscan and Romans is an exceptional opportunity."

Some of the two dozen bronzes are entire figures of humans or gods, while others are of individual body parts and organs which would have been offered up to the gods for intervention for medical cures via the thermal waters, the ministry said in a statement.

Election 2022: Turbulent campaign season comes to a close

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A tumultuous election season that tugged again at America's searing political divides and raised questions about its commitment to a democratic future comes to a close on Tuesday as voters cast ballots in the first national election of Joe Biden's presidency.

With polls open, Democrats were braced for disappointing results, anxious that their grip on the U.S.

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House may be slipping and that their hold on the U.S. Senate — once seen as more secure — has loosened. The party's incumbent governors in places like Wisconsin, Michigan and Nevada are also staring down serious Republican challengers.

Returning to the White House on Monday night after his final campaign event, Biden said he thought Democrats would keep the Senate but acknowledged "the House is tougher."

The GOP was optimistic about its prospects, betting that messaging focused on the economy, gas prices and crime will resonate with voters at a time of soaring inflation and rising violence. Ultimately, they're confident that outrage stemming from the Supreme Court's decision to eliminate a woman's constitutional right to an abortion has faded and that the midterms have become a more traditional assessment of the president's performance.

"It will be a referendum on the incompetence of this administration," Minnesota Republican Rep. Tom Emmer, who's running the GOP effort to retake the House, said of the election.

The results could have a profound impact on the final two years of Biden's presidency. Republican control of even one chamber of Congress would leave Biden vulnerable to a slew of investigations into his family and administration while defending his policy accomplishments, including a sweeping infrastructure measure along with a major health care and social spending package. An emboldened GOP could also make it harder to raise the debt ceiling and add restrictions to additional support for Ukraine in the war with Russia.

If Republicans have an especially strong election, winning Democratic congressional seats in places like New Hampshire or Washington state, pressure could build for Biden to opt against reelection in 2024. Former President Donald Trump, meanwhile, may try to capitalize on GOP gains by formally launching another bid for the White House during a "very big announcement" in Florida next week.

The midterms arrive at a volatile moment for the U.S., which emerged this year from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic only to confront sharp economic challenges. The Supreme Court stripped away the constitutional right to an abortion, eliminating protections that had been in place for five decades.

And in the first national election since the Jan. 6 insurrection, the nation's democratic future is in question. Some who participated in or were in the vicinity of the deadly attack are poised to win elected office on Tuesday, including House seats. A number of GOP candidates for secretary of state, including those running in Arizona, Nevada and Michigan, have refused to accept the results of the 2020 presidential election. If they win on Tuesday, they would manage future elections in states that are often pivotal in presidential contests.

Democrats acknowledge the headwinds working against them. With only rare exceptions, the president's party loses seats in his first midterm. The dynamic is particularly complicated by Biden's lagging approval, which left many Democrats in competitive races reluctant to appear with him.

Only 43% of U.S. adults said they approved of how Biden is handling his job as president, according to an October poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. In the same poll, just 25% said the country is headed in the right direction.

Still, Biden's allies have expressed hope that voters will reject Republicans who have contributed to an extreme political environment.

"I think what we're seeing now is one party has a moral compass," said Cedric Richmond, who was a senior adviser to Biden in the White House and now works at the Democratic National Committee. "And one party wants a power grab."

That's a message that appeals to Kevin Tolbert, a 49-year-old who works in labor law and lives in Southfield, Michigan. He plans to support Democratic candidates amid worries about the future of democracy.

"It is something that has to be protected and we protect that by voting and being out and supporting our country," Tolbert said. "It's a fragile space that we're in. I think it's really important that we protect it, because we could end up like some of the things we saw in the past — dictators and such. We don't need that."

But in Maryland, where Democrats have one of their best chances to flip a Republican-held governor's seat, Shawn Paulson said there were "too many questions, not enough investigations" into the results of

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the 2020 election.

"It shouldn't be a negative thing or illegal in any way to talk about what you're going to do to improve security," said Paulson, a 45-year-old who chairs the Kent County Republicans Central Committee.

Federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general have said there is no credible evidence the 2020 election was tainted. The former president's allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges Trump appointed.

Thirty-four Senate seats are up for grabs with cliffhangers in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Wisconsin and Arizona possibly deciding which party controls a chamber currently split 50-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris as the tie-breaking vote. Democrats are hoping for upsets in Ohio and North Carolina's Senate contests, while the GOP believes it can oust a Democratic incumbent in Nevada and possibly in New Hampshire.

Thirty-six states are electing governors, with Democrats particularly focused on holding control of Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. All three critical presidential battlegrounds have Republican-controlled legislatures and GOP gubernatorial candidates who have championed Trump's 2020 election lies.

Republican wins in governor's races could see states adopt tighter voting laws and ultimately refuse to block efforts to delegitimize the 2024 presidential election should Trump, or any other Republican candidate, lose it.

Amid predictions of a Republican surge, Democrats are hoping that abortion can energize their base while wooing independents and swing voters angered by the Roe v. Wade ruling's reversal.

"People recognize that this fundamental freedom has been taken away," said Alexis McGill Johnson, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, which teamed up with other Democratic advocacy groups to spend \$150 million to mobilize "infrequent" voters for the midterms.

"They see this is an economic issue, a health care issue, a freedom issue," McGill Johnson added. "And they're enraged."

Still, Biden confronted the possibility of presiding over a divided Washington on Monday. As he returned from an event with Wes Moore, the Democratic candidate for governor in Maryland, Biden was asked what his new reality would be if Congress is controlled by Republicans.

His response: "More difficult."

Dogs gifted by Kim Jong Un at center of South Korean row

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A pair of dogs gifted by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in 2018 are now mired in a South Korean political row, with the country's former president blaming his conservative successor for a lack of financial support as he gave the animals up.

Moon Jae-in, a liberal who left office in May, received the two white "Pungsan" hunting dogs – a breed known to be indigenous to North Korea – from Kim following their peace summit in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang in September 2018.

The dogs are officially considered state property, but Moon took the pair and one of their seven offspring home after he left office. The move was made possible by a change of law in March that allowed presidential gifts to be managed outside of the Presidential Archives if they were animals or plants.

But Moon's office on Monday said he decided he could no longer raise the three dogs because the current government of President Yoon Suk Yeol was refusing to cover the costs for the animals' food and veterinary care. The Ministry of the Interior and Safety said that the dogs were returned to the government on Tuesday and that the parent dogs originally sent from Kim were being examined at a veterinary hospital in the city of Daegu.

In its statement released on Facebook, Moon's office accused Yoon's office of "inexplicably" blocking the ministry's proposal to provide government funds for the animal's care.

The ministry confirmed it had drafted a budget plan to provide a monthly 2.5 million won (\$1,810) in subsidies, including 500,000 won (\$360) for the dogs' food and veterinary care and 2 million (\$1,450) for hiring workers to look after them. But the ministry said the plans were put on hold for months because

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of unspecified "opposing opinions" from within the ministry and the Ministry of Government Legislation. "It seems that the presidential office, unlike the Presidential Archives and the Interior and Safety Ministry, has a negative view about entrusting the care of the Pungsan dogs to former President Moon," Moon's office said.

If that's the case, Yoon's government should be "cool" about ending that entrustment, Moon's office said. "There would be disappointment and regrets as they were companion animals (Moon) grew attached to, but there would be no way to reject the termination of entrustment," it said.

Yoon's office shifted the blame to Moon, saying it never prevented him from keeping the animals and that the discussions about providing financial support were still ongoing.

"It was entirely the decision of former President Moon Jae-in to return the Pungsan dogs to the Presidential Archives" instead of waiting out a legislative amendment to secure the subsidies, Yoon's office said.

Moon and Yoon's spat over the dogs sparked criticism online, with users lamenting that the animals were being treated only as properties.

Staking his single presidential term on inter-Korean rapprochement, Moon met Kim three times in 2018 and lobbied hard to help set up Kim's meetings with former U.S. President Donald Trump. But the diplomacy never recovered from the collapse of the second Kim-Trump meeting in 2019 in Vietnam, where the Americans rejected North Korea's demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for dismantling an aging nuclear facility, which would have amounted to a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

Kim has since vowed to bolster his nuclear deterrent to counter "gangster-like" U.S. pressure and sped up his weapons development despite limited resources and pandemic-related difficulties. The North has fired dozens of missiles this year, using the distraction created by Russia's war on Ukraine to increase arms development and ramp up pressure on the United States and its regional allies.

Powerball announces delay to record-breaking \$1.9B drawing

By SHAMEKA DUDLEY-LOWE and SCOTT McFETRIDGE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The Powerball drawing was delayed Monday and it's likely that the official results won't be known until later Tuesday, the Multi-State Lottery Association said. The record-breaking \$1.9 billion Powerball drawing was delayed because a participating lottery had issues processing sales, officials said.

"Powerball requires all 48 participating lotteries to submit their sales and play data prior to the winning numbers being selected. Once Powerball receives the outstanding submission, the drawing can proceed," the lottery said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Nearly three hours after the scheduled 10:59 p.m. EST drawing, the association told the AP: "It's against our policy to name the lottery that is experiencing the delay."

The winning numbers and recorded video of the drawing will be posted to the Powerball website and YouTube channel. Players should hold onto their tickets, the statement said.

The jackpot is nearly \$400 million larger than the previous record jackpot and will keep growing until someone wins the prize. Only four previous jackpots have topped \$1 billion, but none of those are close to the current prize, which started at \$20 million back on Aug. 6 and over three winless months has grown ever more massive. No one has won the jackpot since Aug. 3.

A winner who chooses an annuity, paid annually over 29 years, would get the estimated \$1.9 billion payout. Nearly all winners instead opt for cash, which for Monday's drawing would be \$929.1 million.

Even as more people attracted by the giant prize drop \$2 on a Powerball ticket, the game's ultra-long odds of 1 in 292.2 million means there still is a good chance that another drawing will pass without anyone winning the grand prize. That would push the jackpot for Wednesday's drawing to more than \$2 billion.

Those who spend \$2 on a Powerball ticket might wonder if something is wrong when 40 drawings pass without a jackpot winner, but this is how the game is designed. It's unlikely anyone will win the prize until a growing jackpot attracts more players. And more ticket sales mean the lottery can raise more money

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for public programs, which is the point of the state lotteries.

Still, it has been an awful long time without a jackpot, and if there isn't a winner some time Tuesday now because of the delay, a record will have been reached: 41 draws without anyone matching all six numbers.

The game is played in 45 states, as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

2022 midterms live updates: Latest election news from AP

By The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Follow along for real-time, on-the-ground updates on the 2022 U.S. midterm elections from The Associated Press. Live updates — all times Eastern — are produced by Ashraf Khalil, Annie Ma, Amer Madhani, Chris Megerian, Mallika Sen and AP journalists around the country.

6:15 a.m.

Polls are beginning to open for in-person voting — by 1 p.m. Eastern, voting locations will be open in all 50 states (Hawaii is five hours behind the East Coast). As fears of harassment of election officials and disruptions at polling places and tallying sites arise, election officials say they are prepared to handle potential issues. Voters should not be deterred, AP's Christina A. Cassidy and Geoff Mulvihill report, and no major problems were reported during the early voting period.

5:15 a.m.

What are Americans voting on? What's at stake? If you need a general primer on the 2022 midterm elections, AP's Mike Catalini has you covered with a basic overview of what's on the ballot, how counting works, how long this thing might take and what the possible outcomes might mean.

12:01 a.m.

Election Day has dawned. With polls set to begin opening in a few hours across the country, you can find a guide of what to expect for each state at our Election Expectations 2022 hub.

It's not a presidential year, but these are high-stakes elections nonetheless. AP's chief political writer, Steve Peoples, highlights six key things to watch today. Among them: Will the expected red wave be a ripple or a tsunami? What effect will the Supreme Court decision striking down Roe v. Wade have? And what will we know before we go to bed tonight?

The answer to that last question is yet unclear. While there are some races the AP can call as soon as polls close, as Mike Catalini explains, other winners might take a lot longer to identify. Christina A. Cassidy takes a look at the factors that can delay results.

World Cup ambassador from Qatar denounces homosexuality

BERLIN (AP) — An ambassador for the World Cup in Qatar has described homosexuality as a "damage in the mind" in an interview with German public broadcaster ZDF only two weeks before the opening of the soccer tournament in the Gulf state, highlighting concerns about the conservative country's treatment of gays and lesbians.

Former Qatari national team player Khalid Salman told a German reporter in an interview that being gay is "haram," or forbidden in Arabic, and that he has a problem with children seeing gay people.

Excerpts of the television interview were shown Monday on the ZDF news program Heute Journal. The full interview, which is part of a documentary, will be shown Tuesday on ZDF.

About 1.2 million international visitors are expected in Qatar for the tournament, which has faced criticism and skepticism ever since the gas-rich emirate was selected as host by FIFA in December 2010. Concerns about LGBTQ tourists attending the World Cup have also been expressed for a long time.

In the interview, Salman also said that homosexuality "is a spiritual harm."

"During the World Cup, many things will come here to the country. Let's talk about gays," Salman said in English, which is simultaneously dubbed into German in the TV segment. "The most important thing is,

everybody will accept that they come here. But they will have to accept our rules.”

The interview was cut short by a media officer of the World Cup organizing committee after Salman expressed his views on homosexuals, ZDF reported.

Leaders push for climate action, fossil tax at UN talks

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — World leaders are making the case for tougher action to tackle global warming Tuesday, as this year’s international climate talks in Egypt heard growing calls for fossil fuel companies to help pay for the damage they have helped cause to the planet.

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres warned Monday that humanity was on “a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator,” urging countries to “cooperate or perish.”

He and leaders such as Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley said it was time to make fossil fuel companies contribute to funds which would provide vulnerable countries with financial aid for the climate-related losses they are suffering.

The idea of a windfall tax on carbon profits has gained traction in recent months amid sky-high earnings for oil and gas majors even as consumers struggle to pay the cost of heating their homes and filling their cars. For the first time, delegates at this year’s U.N. climate conference are to discuss demands by developing nations that the richest, most polluting countries pay compensation for damage wreaked on them by climate change, which in climate negotiations is called “loss and damage.”

The U.S. mid-term elections were hanging over the talks Tuesday, with many environmental campaigners worried that defeat for the Democrats could make it harder for President Joe Biden to pursue his ambitious climate agenda.

Also hanging over the conference was the fate of one of Egypt’s most prominent jailed pro-democracy activists, Alaa Abdel-Fattah, who has been imprisoned for most of the past decade. His family stepped up pleas for world leaders to win his release after he stepped up a longtime hunger strike. Abdel-Fattah stopped even drinking water on Sunday, the first day of the conference, vowing he is willing to die if not released, his family says.

Egypt’s longtime history of suppressing dissent has raised controversy over its hosting of the annual conference, known as COP 27, with many international climate activists complaining that restrictions by the host are quieting civil society.

On Tuesday, more world leaders were to take the stage, including Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif of Pakistan, where summer floods caused at least \$40 billion in damage and displaced millions of people. After the speeches, the conference delegates will delve into negotiations on a range of issues — including for the first time on compensation, known as loss and damage.

Some of the strongest pleas for action came so far from leaders of poor nations that caused little of the pollution but often get a larger share of the weather-related damage.

Nigeria’s Environment Minister Mohammed Abdullahi called for wealthy nations to show “positive and affirmative” commitments to help countries hardest hit by climate change. “Our priority is to be aggressive when it comes to climate funding to mitigate the challenges of loss and damage,” he said.

Leaders of poorer nations, joined by French President Emmanuel Macron, talked about the issue as one of justice and fairness.

“Our part of the world has to choose between life and death,” Tanzania President Samia Suluhu Hassan said.

“Africa should not pay for crimes they have not committed,” Central African Republic President Faustin Archange Touadera said, adding that rich nations were to blame for the climate problem.

“Climate change is directly threatening our people’s lives, health and future,” Kenyan President William K. Ruto said of the African continent, which he said is looking at \$50 billion a year in climate change damage by 2050. Ruto said Kenya is choosing to not use many of its “dirty energy” resources even though it could help the poor nation financially, and has instead opted for cleaner fuels.

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Loss and damage "is our daily experience and the living nightmare of millions of Kenyans and hundreds of millions of Africans," Ruto said.

Seychelles President Wavel John Charles Ramkalawan said, "Like other islands, our contribution in the destruction of the planet is minimal. Yet we suffer the most." He called on wealthier countries to assist in repairing the damage.

Meanwhile, the mother of the Egyptian activist Abdel-Fattah, Laila Soueif, called for world leaders, including British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, to pressure the Egyptian government to free him.

"The Egyptian authorities are your friends and proteges not your adversaries. If Alaa dies you too will have blood on your hands," she said in a video message on Facebook.

Soueif, a university professor, said she waited Monday outside the prison where Abdel-Fattah is held for a letter, but received nothing. She was planning to go to the prison Tuesday, hoping for proof her son is alive.

Abdel-Fattah's youngest sister, Sanaa Seif, is in the resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh to raise the case of her brother and other jailed activists. She is scheduled to speak about Egypt's human rights record in an event along with the Secretary General of Amnesty International Agnes Callamard.

Sunak said he raised Abdel-Fattah's case in his meeting Monday with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi. Sunak said he would continue to "press for progress" in Abdel-Fattah's case, according to Downing Street.

Republicans look to win back power in Congress, stop Biden

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Energized Republicans are eager to claw back power in Congress, working to break the Democrats' one-party hold in Washington and putting the future of President Joe Biden's agenda at stake this Election Day.

With the narrowly held House and an evenly split Senate, Democrats could easily see their fragile grasp on power slip as they face a new generation of Republican candidates. Charismatic outsiders and populists, many newcomers to public office who have become inspired by Donald Trump, promise to end Biden's once lofty ideas and launch investigations and oversight — even, potentially, impeachment of Biden.

Tuesday brings the first major national elections since the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol, and emotions are raw. The violent assault on Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband has stunned many, and federal law enforcement is warning of heightened threats nationwide. Biden's party is laboring to hold on by the most tenuous of margins.

All 435 seats in the House and one-third of the Senate are being contested. If Republican newcomers help the party seize control of the House, and possibly the Senate, the outcome will pose new challenges for Congress' ability to govern.

"I do think that this will end up being a period of government that is defined by conflict," said Brendan Buck, a former top aide to the past two Republican speakers of the House.

Divided government has historically offered the possibility of bipartisan deal-making, but the Republican candidates are campaigning instead on a platform to stop Democrats.

Without a unified agenda of their own, the Republicans are running toward crises and confrontations as they promise to cut federal spending, refuse to raise the nation's debt limit and balk at supporting Ukraine in the war with Russia. It all points to potential gridlock ahead.

"They're going to make very clear that there's a new sheriff in town," Buck said.

House GOP leader Kevin McCarthy, who is in line to seize the speaker's gavel from Pelosi next year if Democrats lose power, has recruited the most racially diverse class of House GOP candidates, with more women than ever. But it also has a new cadre of Trump loyalists including election skeptics and deniers, some who were around the Capitol on Jan. 6.

Trump has endorsed nearly 200 House and Senate Republicans for the final ballots, even though they were not always the first choices of McCarthy and Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell as they work

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to bolster their ranks.

In a sign of the nation's toxic political climate, Pelosi canceled most public appearances in the final week of campaigning after an intruder broke into her family's San Francisco home in the middle of the night, demanding "Where is Nancy" and bludgeoning her 82-year-old husband in the head with a hammer. Authorities have said it was an intentional attack.

"People say to me, 'What can I do to make you feel better?'" Pelosi told grassroots activists on a video call. "I say: 'Vote!'"

As polls close Tuesday evening on the East Coast, outcomes in some of the early races for Congress could begin to set the pace.

In the fight for the House, Virginia's marquee race between Democratic Rep. Elaine Luria and Republican challenge Jen Kiggans, both Navy veterans, provides a snapshot. The two-term Democrat Luria, first elected in the 2018 backlash to Trump, rose as part of the committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol riot but is now at risk of defeat.

The Senate battleground is focused on four deeply contested states where razor-thin margins could determine outcomes — in Georgia, Arizona and Nevada, where Democratic incumbents are trying to hold on. In Pennsylvania, the race between Democrat John Fetterman and Republican Mehmet Oz for an open seat is considered key to party control.

One other Senate contest that will be closely watched is in New Hampshire, where Trump-styled Republican Don Bolduc is trying to oust Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan in a race that could signal the former president's viability with voters two years after he left office.

Vote counting could extend beyond Election Day in many states, and Georgia in particular could head to a Dec. 6 runoff if no candidate reaches the majority. Both parties have already filed legal challenges in some cases foreshadowing the court fights that may delay final results.

Republicans need a net gain of five seats in the House to achieve the 218-seat majority and a net gain of one to seize control of the Senate. The 50-50 Senate is now in Democratic hands because Vice President Kamala Harris can cast a tie-breaking vote, in what has been one of the longest stretches of a split Senate in modern times.

Inflation, abortion, crime and the future of democracy have all been at the forefront of campaigns as candidates strive to reach voters.

Democrats gained momentum over the abortion issue after the Supreme Court overturned the Roe v. Wade decision this summer, and they have been warning voters about MAGA conservatives, short for Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan.

But Republicans have focused voter attention on closer-to-home issues — inflation's high prices and crime — as they tap into unease over the country's direction.

Senate Republican leader McConnell openly griped about "candidate quality" potentially costing his party victories, as Trump championed his preferred candidates to create a potentially untested class of newcomers.

House Democrats faced their own recruitment problems, a situation worsened by the slew of Democratic retirements as longtime lawmakers headed for the exits, some giving up their committee gavels rather than accepting a career in the minority party.

In one dramatic example of the difficult political environment for Democrats, the party's House campaign chairman Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney is fighting for political survival against Republican state legislator Mike Lawler in New York's Hudson Valley. He would be the first Democratic campaign chief to suffer defeat in two decades.

Outside groups have poured hundreds of millions of dollars, often to shore up untested candidates, to mixed results.

"I find it almost comical that Republicans and Democrats are talking about what they're going to do in the new Congress," said Rory Cooper, a former House Republican leadership aide. "Neither side is going to get anything done unless Joe Biden has one last bipartisan deal in him."

Power balance in Congress on ballot for Pennsylvania voters

By MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Three races among Pennsylvania's congressional delegation have taken shape as some of the closer contests in the country this year as voters decide whether to shift majority control in the U.S. House from Democrats to Republicans.

Pennsylvania's delegation has been redistricted twice in recent years — first because of a court challenge and again as a result of the 2020 census — and the state has lost one seat in Congress this year because of its anemic population growth.

Democratic U.S. Reps. Matt Cartwright in the Scranton area and Susan Wild in the Lehigh Valley both find themselves in rematches with Republican candidates they narrowly beat two years ago.

A third competitive seat, just north of Pittsburgh, consists largely of the voters who elected Democratic U.S. Rep. Conor Lamb to Congress for the past couple terms. It became vacant for this year's election when Lamb chose not to seek reelection in what was an ultimately failed attempt to get his party's nomination for U.S. Senate.

Pennsylvania polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

As is happening across the country, Pennsylvania's competitive congressional races have Democrats emphasizing support for abortion rights and Republicans reminding voters how inflation and other economic problems are affecting their lives.

In northeastern Pennsylvania, Republicans hope conservative activist and former Trump administration official Jim Bognet will reverse his 3.6 percentage point loss to Cartwright in 2020. A flip of that seat in a region where the GOP has been making gains in recent years would resonate in Washington, given President Joe Biden spent his early childhood in Scranton.

"It's a referendum on Biden," Bognet campaign manager Joe Desilets said. "Especially because Cartwright is so close to him."

Cartwright's campaign director, Kunal Atit, calls Cartwright "the only Democrat who could hold this district," with "cross-party appeal that has been demonstrated time and again through actual election results."

Wild's quest for a third term has her facing off against former Lehigh County Commissioner Lisa Scheller, head of a manufacturing business. Wild, a former Allentown city lawyer, edged Scheller by 3.7 percentage points two years ago. Redistricting added GOP-friendly Carbon County to the map.

Wild's campaign argues Scheller has cut her U.S. workforce and sent jobs overseas, while Scheller blames Wild's support for spending bills under Biden for voters' economic problems.

The third competitive district, in the suburbs north of Pittsburgh and encompassing all of Beaver County, pits election lawyer Chris Deluzio, a Democrat, against Republican businessperson and former Ross Township Commissioner Jeremy Shaffer, a Republican who lost a 2018 state Senate race.

Shaffer said he would position himself in Congress as "a pragmatic, common sense problem solver" and wants term limits and nonpartisan redistricting policies. Deluzio's campaign biography notes his involvement in the effort to establish a faculty union at the University of Pittsburgh last year.

"The union way of life is a huge thing here in western Pennsylvania," Deluzio campaign manager Matt Koos said. "And there's no doubt that the Dobbs decision has put abortion access at the front of voters' minds."

Elsewhere in the state, two Republican incumbents face no opposition this fall: Reps. Guy Reschenthaler south of Pittsburgh and John Joyce in a sprawling district that runs from Gettysburg to Johnstown.

In Pittsburgh, Democrats are concerned about potential voter confusion because the Republican running against Democratic state Rep. Summer Lee is named Mike Doyle, the same name as the city's longtime Democratic congressman, who is retiring at the end of the year.

The version of the state's congressional district map that was drawn after the 2010 census had been particularly friendly to Republicans, producing a durable 13-5 GOP majority until it was thrown out by the state's Democratic-majority Supreme Court in 2018. Since then, the delegation has been evenly split between the two parties.

After the Republican-controlled Legislature and Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf deadlocked on talks to pro-

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duce new districts using 2020 census numbers, the state Supreme Court in a 4-3 vote in February chose a map that had been proposed by a group of Democratic Party-aligned voters who had sued in 2021.

World markets mixed ahead of US elections, inflation data

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian stocks were mixed Tuesday ahead of the U.S. midterm elections, with trading likely to stay bumpy in a week that brings new inflation data and other events that could shake markets.

Germany's DAX added 0.1% to 15,543.08, while the CAC40 in Paris slipped 0.4% to 6,390.14. In London, the FTSE 100 fell 0.4% to 7,274.37.

The future for the S&P 500 lost 0.3% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was 0.2% lower. On Monday, the benchmark S&P 500 rose 1% and the Dow industrials 1.3%. The Nasdaq composite added 0.9%.

The week is full of potentially market-moving events, including U.S. inflation data and the election, which could leave the U.S. government split between Democrats and Republicans.

For Tuesday, at least, "Look for markets to trade political headline spin rather than substance," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

Every seat in the U.S. House of Representatives is up for election this year, along with about a third of the U.S. Senate. On the line is control of both houses of Congress, currently under Democratic leadership.

Voters are also electing governors in most of the states. They'll be in office in 2024 when the next presidential election happens and could affect election laws or vote certifications. Many state legislative and local authorities also are on the ballot.

A divided government would likely bring gridlock rather than big, sweeping policy changes that could upset tax and spending plans. Historically, when a Democratic White House has shared power with a split or Republican Congress, stocks have seen stronger gains than usual.

Analysts say a strong performance by Democrats in the elections could lead to increased spending to help the economy that might fuel inflation and leave the Federal Reserve obliged to continue to hike interest rates to get prices under control.

Higher rates put slow the economy by making it more expensive to buy a house, car or anything else on credit, though they take time to take effect. Rate hikes could bring a recession, and they tend to drag on prices for stocks and other investments.

With economists forecasting recessions for many economies as an inevitable side effect of the effort to quash inflation, sharp cutbacks in spending might hurt, rather than help, some analysts say.

"On the one hand, the prospect of less spending could be viewed as aiding the inflation fight but on the other, the economy could be headed for recession, and inaction in government won't help the situation," Craig Erlam of Oanda said in a report.

It may take a while to get clarity because of the process to count votes that came in through the mail.

In Asia on Tuesday, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 gained 1.3% to 27,872.11 on strong earnings reports. The KOSPI in Seoul advanced 1.2% to 2,399.04 and Australia's S&P/AXS 200 gained 0.4% to 6,958.90.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng sank 0.2% to 16,557.31, while the Shanghai Composite index shed 0.4% to 3,064.49. Thailand's SET gained 0.5%. India's markets were closed for a holiday.

Economists expect a U.S. government report on Thursday to show the consumer price index rose 8% in October from a year earlier, slightly lower than September's 8.2% inflation rate.

A fourth straight month of moderating inflation from June's peak of 9.1% could give the Federal Reserve leeway to loosen up a bit. The Fed has said it may soon dial back its rate hikes to half a percentage point, after it pushed through four straight mega increases of three-quarters of a point.

Earnings reports are also causing share prices to swing.

The reporting season for summertime profits is roughly 85% done, and S&P 500 companies are on track to deliver growth of a little more than 2%. Analysts are forecasting a drop in S&P 500 profits for the final three months of the year, of nearly 1.5%.

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In other trading, U.S. benchmark crude oil lost 94 cents to \$90.85 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 82 cents to \$91.79 per barrel on Monday.

Brent crude, the international pricing standard, gave up 74 cents to \$97.18 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar slipped to 146.39 Japanese yen from 146.63 yen. The euro dropped to 99.89 cents from \$1.0016.

Dems, GOP make urgent final pitches as election season wraps

By WILL WEISSERT and MARC LEVY Associated Press

COATESVILLE, Pa. (AP) — Coast to coast, candidates and big-name backers made final appeals to voters Monday in the last hours of a fraught midterm election season, with Republicans excited about the prospect of winning back Congress and President Joe Biden insisting his party would “surprise the living devil out of a lot of people.”

Democrats contend Republican victories could profoundly and adversely reshape the country, eliminating abortion rights nationwide and unleashing broad threats to the very future of American democracy. Republicans say the public is tired of Biden policies amid high inflation and concerns about crime.

“We know in our bones that our democracy is at risk,” Biden said during an evening rally in Maryland, where Democrats have one of their best opportunities to reclaim a Republican-held governor’s seat. “I want you know, we’ll meet this moment.”

Arriving back at the White House a short time later, Biden was franker, saying: “I think we’ll win the Senate. I think the House is tougher.” Asked what the reality of governing will be like, he responded, “More difficult.”

The Maryland event followed Biden’s late-campaign strategy of sticking largely to his party’s strongholds rather than stumping in more competitive territory, where control of Congress may ultimately be decided. Biden won Maryland with more than 65% of the vote in 2020 and appeared with Wes Moore, the 44-year-old Rhodes Scholar who could become the state’s first Black governor.

The president said at an earlier virtual event, “Imagine what we can do in a second term if we maintain control.”

Most political prognosticators don’t think the Democrats will — and predict that Tuesday’s results will have a major impact on the next two years of Biden’s presidency, shaping policy on everything from government spending to military support for Ukraine.

In the first national election since the violent Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection, the Democrats have tried to focus key races on fundamental questions about the nation’s political values.

The man at the center of most Jan. 6 debate, former President Donald Trump, was in Ohio for his final rally of the 2022 campaign — and already thinking about his own future in 2024. He had teased that he might formally launch a third presidential run at Monday night’s rally with Senate candidate JD Vance — which Trump concluded by promising a “big announcement” next week at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

Trump’s backing of Vance in Ohio this year was crucial in helping the author and venture capitalist — and onetime Trump critic — secure the GOP’s nomination for a Senate seat. He’s now facing Democrat Tim Ryan.

“When I think about tomorrow, it is to ensure the American dream survives into the next generation,” Vance declared to thousands of cheering supporters, some sporting Trump 2024 hats and T-shirts, at Dayton International Airport.

While the GOP likes its chances of flipping the House, control of the Senate could come down to a handful of crucial races. Those include Georgia, Arizona and Pennsylvania, where Democratic Lt. Gov. John Fetterman was locked in a close race against Republican celebrity surgeon Mehmet Oz.

“This is one of the most important races in America,” Fetterman told a crowd of about 100 Monday outside a union hall near a steel plate mill in Coatesville, about 40 miles west of Philadelphia. “Dr. Oz has spent over \$27 million of his own money. But this seat isn’t for sale.”

At a nighttime rally at a suburban Philadelphia estate, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley introduced Oz to a crowd of about 1,500.

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"There's too many extreme positions in Washington, too much out there pulling us away from where the real answers lie," Oz said. "I will bring balance to Washington. But John Fetterman? He'll bring more extreme."

Fetterman's campaign noted that, in the final days, Oz has campaigned with Trump, at a wedding venue that refuses same-sex marriages and at a fitness center whose owner organized buses for Trump's Jan. 6, 2021, rally in Washington.

In Georgia, Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock, who was in a nail-bitter with Republican Herschel Walker, tried to cast himself as pragmatic — capable of succeeding in Washington even if the GOP has more power. Warnock promised Monday to "do whatever I need to do and work with whomever I need to work with in order to get good things done."

Arizona Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly also tried to strike a moderate tone. He praised the state's late Republican senator, John McCain, while noting that he didn't ask Biden to campaign with him but would "welcome the president to come here at any point."

Kelly's Republican rival, Blake Masters, called the senator "just a rubber stamp vote for Joe Biden's failed agenda."

"You look at what Biden and Mark Kelly are doing. It's like, are they that incompetent, or are they trying to destroy the country?" Masters said. "I think it's both."

Elon Musk, whose purchase of Twitter has roiled the social media world, used that platform Monday to endorse the GOP, writing, "I recommend voting for a Republican Congress, given that the Presidency is Democratic."

That came too late for more than 44 million Americans who had already cast early ballots. Biden, meanwhile, wasn't exclusively positive on the final day of campaigning. He's spent weeks warning of extremism and also said Monday, "We're up against some of the darkest forces we've ever seen in our history."

"These MAGA Republicans are a different breed of cat," he said, referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan. Biden also raised concerns about voter intimidation during the midterms, even suggesting that some people were outside voting stations with automatic rifles.

The president was expected to watch Tuesday night's returns from the White House.

Trump has long falsely claimed he lost the 2020 election only because Democrats cheated, and he has begun raising the possibility of election fraud this year. Many Republican candidates across the country continue to adhere to his election denialism, even as federal intelligence agencies are warning of the possibility of political violence from far-right extremists.

Threats could also come from abroad, as they have in past races. Kremlin-connected Russian entrepreneur Yevgeny Prigozhin admitted Monday that he had interfered in U.S. elections and would continue to do so.

"If you want to stop the destruction of our country and save the American dream, then tomorrow you must vote Republican in a giant red wave that we've all been hearing about," Trump said at Monday night's rally in Ohio. He also went after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, saying, "I think she's an animal" mere days after her husband, Paul, was severely beaten by an attacker at the couple's San Francisco home.

First lady Jill Biden appeared with her husband in Maryland but also campaigned earlier Monday for Democratic Rep. Jennifer Wexton in northern Virginia. It could be an early indicator of GOP midterm strength if Wexton's seat flips to her Republican challenger, Hung Cao.

The first lady told about 100 people outside a home in Ashburn, about 30 miles from Washington, that the race could come down to a tiny margin of votes. And she warned that, in Congress, a "Republican majority will attack women's rights and health care."

Italian EV startup takes on US, Chinese rivals with design

By COLLEEN BARRY AP Business Writer

MILAN (AP) — Elon Musk's Tesla paved the way nearly two decades ago. Now, the global transition to fully electric vehicles is littered with startups, inspired by a new era in mobility and drawn by the lower cost of building EVs compared with their fossil-fuel-guzzling forbears.

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Gone are the billion-dollar investments that have made legacy auto-making into such a cash cow. Suppliers offer ready-made generic electric platforms and manufacturers can take on contracts for assembly — approaches that translate into savings on jobs and infrastructure.

What has been missing in the new EV formula, according to a Milan-based startup, AEHRA, is a fresh design concept.

“Electric vehicles are looked at as being boring by the general public,” AEHRA CEO Hazim Nada said. “It is very easy to build an extremely powerful electric vehicle. It is not so easy to build an electric vehicle that has character. And I think that’s one of the elements that Italian-ness has to express.”

Nada has hired a former Lamborghini designer to help infuse his vehicles with Italian emotion and is emphasizing aerodynamics over performance.

But the company wants to enter an increasingly crowded market of EV startups and traditional carmakers that are being pushed to tackle car emissions that contribute to climate change. Some startups have had little success.

AEHRA doesn’t plan to launch its first vehicles — an SUV and a sedan — until mid-2025, with annual production starting at 20,000 to 25,000 vehicles. The ultra-premium cars also plan to come with a price tag to match — \$160,000 to \$180,000.

They are expected to roll out first in the United States and key European markets before expanding to China. That would follow an initial production investment of 700 million euros (dollars).

“We are not spending much,” Nada said. “This is due to the fact that we’re evolving the materials in such a way that the chain of production is very asset-light compared to the existing production ways.”

Nada earned most of the startup money trading crude oil in London and honed his passion for aerodynamics building the world’s largest vertical wind tunnel, AeroGravity, an attraction north of Milan that allows anyone to experience freefalling.

While AEHRA’s cars are for a wealthy demographic as inflation bites the middle class and low-income earners, battery-powered vehicles generally have gained broader consumer acceptance and governments are nudging automakers away from internal combustion engines.

U.S. asset management and research firm Bernstein predicts one-quarter of all cars sold by 2025 will be battery electric or plug-in hybrids, doubling by 2030. It cites ambitious rollout schedules and regulatory support.

The European Union is banning sales of new fossil fuel-burning cars by 2035, giving rise to new players with lower startup costs while potentially penalizing legacy carmakers that have invested billions in hybrids as bridge technologies.

Battery electric vehicles recorded the strongest growth of all fuel types in the third quarter, up 22% to over 259,000 units, according to the European Automotive Manufacturers Association. That accounts for a 12% market share.

The U.S. market share is slimmer, at around 6%, but Bernstein expects that to accelerate significantly with U.S. policies like tighter fuel efficiency standards.

As interest grows, dozens of new startups are entering a crowded market alongside pioneer Tesla and traditional carmakers, some with a century-long track records. The U.S. alone has 417 EV startups, according to research by Bernstein, some of them providing cautionary tales.

California-based Faraday Future has invested billions in an electric car it has yet to build. Others, like Lucid or Rivian, which have gotten into production, have struggled to get components due to global supply chain shortages, said Sam Abuelsamid, principal e-mobility analyst at Guidehouse Insights.

At the same time, Chinese manufacturers are making inroads in Europe, with an eye on the U.S. market. In the Italian luxury market, Ferrari and Lamborghini have announced plans for their own EVs.

“It’s going to be much more difficult now than it was a decade ago for Tesla when they were basically the only brand doing a premium high-performance EV. And now there’s dozens of brands doing this, competing for that same dollar,” Abuelsamid said.

Another risk is service and support, especially when launching across big geographies without built-in sales and service networks, Abuelsamid said.

AEHRA's plans call for mostly online sales and regional service centers, Nada said.

Design is where AEHRA hopes to grab market attention — moving away from the architecture of an internal combustion engine that Nada said has been conditioned by thermal management.

The AEHRA vehicle body is moving away from edges that have defined the muscularity of supercars in recent years and is returning to a gentler line reminiscent of pre-war car design.

This aesthetic shift improves the car's aerodynamics, which will help extend range, according to AEHRA chief design officer Filippo Perini. Reconstructing the classic internal architecture will create more cabin space for passenger comfort, he added.

Nada is convinced that young consumers are not so attached to their previous generations' nameplates and will be willing to buy a car from a new player that offers an emotional change.

"We're not in the market of Ferrari, we're not in the market of Lambo," he said. "Our vehicles are not the same segment of Tesla. We think we can coexist."

Their lagoons languishing, precious Spanish wetlands go dry

By JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

DOÑANA NATIONAL PARK, Spain (AP) — Flamingos, herons and fish once filled a freshwater lagoon in southern Spain. Today, it's a fetid brown splotch. The whisper of wind in the grass is a sad substitute for the cacophony of migratory birds.

Biologist Carmen Díaz steps onto cracked mud. The lagoon in the heart of Spain's Doñana nature reserve is a puddle. The park called "the crown jewel of Spain" may be dying.

Farming and tourism had already drained the aquifer feeding Doñana. Then climate change hit Spain with record-high temperatures and a prolonged drought this year. The disappearance of Doñana's Santa Olalla lagoon's in August makes Díaz, 66, fear that the ecosystem she has studied for four decades may have vanished for good.

"Seeing this last bit of water makes me think that the entire park is dry," Díaz said.

Doñana's Santa Olalla lagoon was the biggest of the handful of lagoons that maintained some water year-round, providing a summer reservoir of aquatic plants and animals.

Sitting on an estuary where the Guadalquivir River meets the Atlantic Ocean, Doñana covers 74,000 hectares (182,000 acres). The reserve was founded in the 1960s with help from environmental group WWF. A UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve, Doñana is a wintering site for a half-million waterfowl and a stopover spot for millions more birds that migrate from Africa to northern Europe. Home to five threatened bird species, including the endangered Spanish imperial eagle, Doñana also hosts a breeding-and-rescue center for the endangered Iberian lynx.

"The solution should have come at least 20 years ago but nothing was done. The environment always loses against the economy," said Díaz, a researcher for the Spanish National Research Council. "Doñana has been the crown jewel of Spain because it is an emblematic park, and we are letting it slip away."

Doñana encompasses two large ecosystems. Besides the wooded dunes, there are marshlands along the Guadalquivir.

Spanish galleons once brought silver back from Spain's American colonies here on their way upstream to Seville. Then, scientists and conservationists came from all over the world. Now Doñana is a case study in how humans destroy natural resources.

Eight mating pairs of imperial eagles have produced only two chicks in 2022, said Carlos Dávila, who works in Doñana for environmental group SEO Birdlife.

"It has been a disastrous year for the imperial eagle," he said.

When Doñana's aquifer fills from rain, lagoons emerge in the swallow depressions between the dunes, creating refuges for turtles, frogs, and aquatic plants. From atop a dune inside the reserve, the 360-degree view of low-lying trees and sand is only broken by a tightly packed mass of buildings seen when one turns to the Atlantic.

They are in Matalascañas, a former fishing village that developed into a beach resort town, complete

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with hotels, swimming pools and a now-defunct golf course. The water for Matalascañas comes from wells that pull from the aquifer. The European Court of Justice cited Matalascañas as making some of Doñana's once-permanent lagoons go dry. Spain's government has approved a plan to reroute water from another area to supply Matalascañas.

"The biggest problem is that this development draws from the aquifer using wells that are very close to the lagoons," Díaz said. "This forms a cone of depression that hurts the closest lagoons, which are the best ones, since they are the biggest."

A two-hour drive south of Seville, one enters Huelva, a rural province including the Doñana reserve. Like other areas near Spain's coast, Huelva has worked hard to become one of Europe's major agricultural areas. Strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries replaced olives, cereals and potatoes in the 1980s. European customers pay far more for the berries, but the crop needs much more water than olives do.

In 2004, authorities divided the farmland into areas eligible for irrigation and those that could only grow crops with rainwater. But with the berry trade booming, some farmers whose lands were left out of irrigation areas drilled wells anyway. WWF says there are between 1,000 and 2,000 illegal wells used to irrigate some 2,000 hectares (4,900 acres) of berries outside the reserve.

Outside the reserve's limits, roadside signs warn drivers to be on the lookout for lynx. Greenhouses hold mostly berries.

"Perhaps 50% of (damage done to the park) is due to drought and lack of rain, but the other 50% of the blame goes to the lack of governance in the area, the cutting off of tributaries, and illegal wells," WWF's Felipe Fuentelsaz told the AP.

Authorities have managed to close over 400 wells and purchased some farmland to remove crops, but far from being discouraged, many farmers are pushing authorities to reclassify their terrain as irrigable.

One group represents 1,500 farmers who feel that they were unfairly left out of the 2004 irrigation plans. Spokesman Julio Díaz said many families have the right to water and should be able to use it.

"What we are going to do is ensure that these farmers recover their historic rights, which they used to have," Díaz said. "Nothing will be increased, but we must recover what they once had."

Spain's central government is concerned that expanding water use could earn a hefty fine from the European Union.

The government plans to reroute water from rivers that lie further west toward Doñana to relieve pressure on the aquifer. The group represented by Julio Díaz wants that water to come to them. But other farmers who have been using legal wells on lands declared irrigable say not so fast.

Manuel Delgado, spokesman for 300 farmers in the town of Almonte, said that his group believes that any new water should go to those farmers who already have water rights, so they can close their legal wells and protect the aquifer.

"If there is new terrain declared eligible for irrigation, we won't be able to replace the legal wells with the surface water," he said. "There won't be water for everyone."

Residents clash with Chinese authorities over COVID rules

BEIJING (AP) — Police in northeastern China said that seven people have been arrested following a clash between residents and authorities enforcing COVID-19 quarantine restrictions.

The violence comes as China reports new cases nationwide, with 2,230 cases reported Tuesday in the southern manufacturing and technology hub of Guangzhou.

While the numbers remain relatively low, China has relentlessly pursued its strict "zero-COVID" policy of quarantines, lockdowns and daily or near-daily compulsory testing.

A news release from the police department in the Shandong city of Linyi said public security would take strong measures against those who "illegally violated the legal rights of personal protection of citizens."

Anti-pandemic measures have prompted backlashes across the country, forming a rarely seen challenge to Communist Party authority. It wasn't immediately clear who was arrested after the clash. News of the arrests appeared on social media Tuesday morning, but were erased by the country's censors before noon.

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Chinese leader Xi Jinping has made “zero-COVID” a hallmark of his administration, which gained a boost last month after he was granted a third five-year term in power and promoted loyalists to top positions.

Those include the former party leader of Shanghai, where a draconian lockdown over the summer led to food shortages, confrontations with authorities and severe disruptions to global supply chains that have grown dependent on Chinese manufacturing and shipping.

While the rest of the world has mostly opened up, China has taken only highly cautious minor steps, with its borders still largely closed and officials under heavy pressure to enforce restrictions.

China reported its trade shrank in October as global demand weakened and anti-virus controls weighed on domestic consumer spending. Exports declined 0.3% from a year earlier, down from September’s 5.7% growth, the customs agency reported Monday. Imports fell 0.7%, compared with the previous month’s 0.3% expansion.

Speculation about a possible relaxation of “zero-COVID” roiled markets, but the government has kept its plans, including the possibility of importing foreign vaccines, a closely held secret.

Last week, access to the industrial zone where a factory that manufactures Apple iPhones is located was suspended for one week following a surge in infections in Zhengzhou and the departure of workers from the factory. Many climbed fences and walked along highways to avoid being placed in quarantine centers where food, sanitation and privacy standards have been heavily criticized.

Apple announced Sunday that customers will have to wait longer to get its latest iPhone models, saying the Foxconn factory in the central Chinese city Zhengzhou is “operating at significantly reduced capacity.”

Drake, Houston lead Ravens past Saints for 3rd straight win

By BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens didn’t need their full complement of key contributors to stifle the Saints and silence the Superdome.

Kenyan Drake rushed for 93 yards and two touchdowns, Justin Houston had an interception to go with his third straight multiple-sack game, and the Ravens beat New Orleans 27-13 on Monday night.

Jackson passed for a touchdown and frustrated New Orleans (3-6) with his mobility, rushing for 82 yards and exhibiting an array of jump cuts and spin moves while helping Baltimore (6-3) win its third straight and remain atop the AFC North, one game ahead of Cincinnati.

“The human will can only take so much. It was just pounding down in and down out,” Drake said. “That’s just what this team is all about — just continuing to wear teams down and grind them out with four quarters of football.

“If you can stand up to that, more power to you, but more times than not we’re going to win that battle,” Drake said.

The Saints entered the game with a chance to pull into a three-way tie atop the anemic NFC South with Atlanta and Tampa Bay. Instead, they were outclassed by a Baltimore team missing several offensive starters, including tight end Mark Andrews and running back Gus Edwards.

The Ravens converted nine of 15 third downs and had 319 total yards. The Saints were 3 of 11 on third down and finished with a season lows of 243 yards and 13 first downs. Baltimore possessed the ball for 37:47.

“They beat us in a lot of different areas,” Saints coach Dennis Allen said. “Time of possession is a factor of all phases of the game. And so we did not do a good job on third down in either aspect, offensively or defensively.”

Andy Dalton passed for 210 yards and New Orleans’ lone touchdown to tight end Juwan Johnson, which came in when the game was virtually out of reach in the fourth quarter. Alvin Kamara was limited to 62 yards from scrimmage, his lowest output in five games.

“We got just got beat,” Dalton said, adding that Baltimore “deserved to win this one. They got after us.”

Dalton was sacked four times and his interception came on a pass tipped by Brent Urban. The play set up Drake’s second TD.

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Baltimore's defense was stifling on New Orleans' first four possessions, limiting the Saints to 13 combined plays.

Consequently, the stamina of New Orleans' defense was tested as the unit contended with the elusive Jackson for 19:31 of the first half. Baltimore's star QB didn't let that time go to waste.

"Traditionally you cover for 3 to 4 seconds and the play is over," Saints safety Tyrann Matheiu said. "But a guy like that is a 7-, 8-, 9-second cover."

While rolling right, Jackson found tight end Isaiah Likely running a flag pattern for a 24-yard score to make it 7-0 in the first quarter.

In the second quarter, Jackson orchestrated a 12-play, 81-yard drive during which he ran for gains of 7, 16 and 12 yards. Drake capped it off by running into the end zone virtually untouched from a yard out for a 14-0 lead.

Ravens coach John Harbaugh recalled shaking his head on the sideline in awe of Jackson's displays of explosiveness and agility.

"I do not take it for granted," Harbaugh said. "I think I said, 'Wow,' a couple of times. Lamar plays on a different level. You can't just look at the passing stats."

The Saints did not get on the board until Wil Lutz's field goal as time expired in the half — a couple plays after Dalton overthrew open receiver Marquez Callaway in the end zone.

REMEMBERING MILLS

The Saints held a halftime ceremony to honor the late linebacker Sam Mills, who was inducted posthumously into the Pro Football Hall of Fame this past summer.

Appearing on the field in gold jackets were Saints Hall of Famers Rickey Jackson, Willie Roaf and Morten Andersen, along with linebacker Pat Swilling, who was part of the famed "Dome Patrol" linebacker corps that also included Jackson, Mills, and Vaughan Johnson.

Their coach, Jim Mora, also appeared while a video montage of Mills' Saints highlights were played on the Superdome video boards.

INJURIES

Ravens: Right tackle Morgan Moses received attention on the field during the third quarter. ... Veteran receiver DeSean Jackson injured a hamstring in his first game with Baltimore. He caught one pass for 16 yards.

Saints: Center Erik McCoy had to be helped off the field with a calf injury late in the second quarter. Pete Werner was carted to the locker room in the third quarter with an ankle injury. Defensive end Marcus Davenport left in the second half with a calf injury.

UP NEXT

Ravens: After a bye, host Carolina on Nov. 20.

Saints: Visit Pittsburgh on Sunday.

Chris Evans named Sexiest Man Alive by People magazine

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Chris Evans may have put down Captain America's shield but he's got a new badge of honor: he's been named People magazine's Sexiest Man Alive.

People's selection was announced Monday night on Stephen Colbert's late night show and on the magazine's website. Evans, who for nearly a decade played Captain America in Marvel's sprawling superhero films, takes the baton from another Avenger, Paul Rudd.

"My mom will be so happy," he told the magazine for its cover story, which hits newsstands on Friday. "She's proud of everything I do but this is something she can really brag about."

He also knows that he's likely to be teased by close friends. "Really this will just be a point of bullying," he joked in an interview. "It's ripe for harassment."

Among those likely to heckle him are co-stars and previous Sexiest Man Alive winners like Rudd, Ryan Reynolds and Chris Hemsworth. (Hemsworth, who plays Thor in the Marvel films, was the first Avenger to win People's annual honor, which was first handed out to Mel Gibson in 1985.)

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Other past honorees include John Legend, Dwayne Johnson, Idris Elba, Adam Levine, Richard Gere, Channing Tatum and David Beckham.

People interviewed Evans, 41, at a Georgia farmhouse, where the actor talked about finding a better work-life balance. "The most enjoyable aspect of my career right now is feeling secure enough to take my foot off the gas," he said.

Evans' first film role came in 2000's "The New Comers" and he played superhero Johnny Storm in two "Fantastic Four" films released in 2005 and 2007. But he gained widespread fame in 2011 with the release of "Captain America: The First Avenger."

Since then, he's played the wholesome superhero in 10 Marvel films, laying down his shield after saving the universe in "Avengers: Endgame" in 2019.

Evans has become a highly bankable star, voicing the Buzz Lightyear character in Pixar's "Lightyear" film and playing a sadistic assassin trying to kill Reynolds in Netflix's "The Gray Man" — both released this year.

The actor told People he's thinking about marriage and having a family, saying, "That's absolutely something I want."

He said he didn't expect to talk publicly much about his private life though. "Some things you want just for you, or just for my family and my friends."

The Boston native also continues his involvement with the civic engagement site A Starting Point, which he co-founded in 2020.

As Evans charts the next part of his life and career, he fully expects People's honor will be a milestone. "It's something that as I become old and saggy I can look back on and say 'I remember then...'" Evans said. "I'm lucky to be in the discussion in any capacity."

N. Korea denies US claims it sent artillery shells to Russia

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea has denied American claims that it's shipping artillery shells and ammunition to Russia for use in its war against Ukraine, and on Tuesday accused the United States of lying.

The denial follows dozens of weapons tests by North Korea, including short-range missiles that are likely nuclear-capable and an intercontinental ballistic missile that could target the U.S. mainland. Pyongyang said it was testing the missiles and artillery so it could "mercilessly" strike key South Korean and U.S. targets if it chose to.

North Korea has been cozying up to traditional ally Russia in recent years and even hinted at sending workers to help rebuild Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine. The United States has accused North Korea, one of the most weaponized countries in the world, of supplying Soviet-era ammunition such as artillery shells, to replenish Russian stockpiles that have been depleted in the Ukraine.

Last week, Russia sent North Korean leader Kim Jong Un a trainload of 30 thoroughbred horses, opening the border with its neighbor for the first time in 2 1/2 years. Kim is an avid horseman and state media have often pictured him galloping on snowy mountain trails astride a white charger. The horses, Orlov trotters, are prized in Russia.

Spokespeople of Russia's Far Eastern Railway told the state-run news agency Nov. 2 that the first train headed to North Korea with the 30 horses and said the next train was to carry medicine.

Experts say North Korea may be seeking Russian fuel and also technology transfers and supplies needed to advance its military capabilities as it pursues more sophisticated weapons systems.

In September, North Korea restarted its freight train service with China, its biggest trading partner, ending a five-month hiatus.

Last week, U.S. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby accused North Korea of covertly supplying a "significant number" of ammunition shipments to Russia. He said the United States believes North Korea was trying to obscure the transfer route by making it appear the weapons were being sent to countries in the Middle East or North Africa.

"We regard such moves of the U.S. as part of its hostile attempt to tarnish the image of (North Korea) in

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the international arena," an unidentified vice director at the North Korean ministry's military foreign affairs office said in a statement carried by state media.

"We once again make clear that we have never had 'arms dealings' with Russia and that we have no plan to do so in the future," the vice director said.

In September, U.S. officials confirmed a newly declassified U.S. intelligence finding that Russia was in the process of purchasing millions of rockets and artillery shells from North Korea. North Korea later dismissed that report, calling on Washington to stop making "reckless remarks" and to "keep its mouth shut."

On Nov. 2, Kirby said the U.S. has "an idea" of which country or countries the North may funnel the weapons through but wouldn't specify. He said the North Korean shipments are "not going to change the course of the war," citing Western efforts to resupply the Ukrainian military.

Slapped by international sanctions and export controls, Russia in August bought Iranian-made drones that U.S. officials said had technical problems. For Russia, experts say North Korea is likely another good option for its ammunitions supply, because the North keeps a significant stockpile of shells, many of them copies of Soviet-era ones.

Even as most of Europe and the West has pulled away, North Korea has pushed to boost relations with Russia, blaming the U.S. for the crisis and decrying the West's "hegemonic policy" as justifying military action by Russia in Ukraine to protect itself. In July, North Korea became the only nation aside from Russia and Syria to recognize the Donetsk and Luhansk territories as independent.

North Korea's possible arms supply to Russia would be a violation of U.N. resolutions that ban the North from trading weapons with other countries. But it's unlikely for North Korea to receive fresh sanctions for that because of a division at the U.N. Security Council over America's confrontations with Russia regarding its war in Ukraine and its separate strategic competitions with China.

Earlier this year, Russia and China already vetoed a U.S.-led attempt to toughen sanctions on North Korea over its series of ballistic missile tests that are banned by multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Some observers say North Korea has also been using the Russian aggression in Ukraine as a window to ramp up weapons testing activity and dial up pressure on the United States and South Korea. Last week, the North test-fired dozens of missiles in response to large-scale U.S.-South Korea aerial drills that Pyongyang views as a rehearsal for a potential invasion.

In a separate statement published Tuesday by state media, a senior North Korean diplomat criticized U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' recent condemnation of North Korea's missile launch barrage, calling him a "mouthpiece" of the U.S. government.

"The U.N. secretary general is echoing what the White House and the State Department say as if he were their mouthpiece, which is deplorable," said Kim Son Gyong, vice minister for international organizations at the North Korean Foreign Ministry.

Kim said that Guterres' "unfair and prejudiced behavior" has contributed to the worsening tensions in the region.

Pelosi says attack on husband weighs on her future plans

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Monday the brutal attack on her husband will impact her decision on whether to remain in Congress after the midterm election, as she called on Republicans to stop the misinformation that is fueling political violence and urged Americans to "vote to defend our democracy."

In a wide-ranging CNN interview, the Democratic leader did not disclose her future plans if the party loses the House majority, as many believe Pelosi and others will step down. Known for her stiff resolve, Pelosi's voice cracked with emotion and she acknowledged she was "close to tears" as she described the trauma of the attack on her 82-year-old husband and the sadness she felt for the country.

"I'm sad because of my husband, but I'm also sad for our country," Pelosi said.

"I just want people to vote and we will respect the outcome of the election, and I would hope that the other side would do that as well," she said.

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Pelosi was speaking for the first time publicly on the eve of elections as the Democrats are struggling against a surge of Republican enthusiasm to keep control of Congress at a time of rising threats of violence against lawmakers and concerns over the U.S. election.

Asked whether she had made a decision on whether or not to remain in Congress, Pelosi who rarely publicly discussed her future would only disclose that the attack on her husband had impacted her thinking.

"I have to say my decision will be affected about what happened in the last week or two," Pelosi said on CNN.

Top Republican leaders including allies of Donald Trump and even new Twitter-owner Elon Musk have mocked and downplayed the attack, despite the gravity of the assault on her husband.

"There has to be some message to the Republicans to stop to stop the disinformation," she said. "We want the country to heal."

Pelosi's husband, Paul, was bludgeoned 11 days before the election by an intruder authorities said broke into the family's San Francisco and was looking for the speaker before striking him in the head with a hammer at least once. The intruder told police he wanted to talk to Speaker Pelosi and would "break her kneecaps" as a lesson to other Democrats. Paul Pelosi suffered a fractured skull and other injuries in what authorities said was an intentional political attack.

"For me this is the hard part because Paul was not the target, and he's the one paying the price," Pelosi said.

Pelosi said the hammer hit her husband in two places, but did not pierce his brain. Pelosi said his recovery was "on a good path" but she acknowledged "it's a long haul."

Long a target of Republican attacks, Pelosi said the assault on her husband of nearly 60 years, with its echoes of the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capitol, was fueled by misinformation "that has no place in our democracy."

Pelosi said she was sleeping at her apartment in Washington, having just returned from San Francisco, when there was a "bang, bang, bang, bang, bang," on her door. It was about 5 a.m. on the morning of Oct. 28.

"I was very scared," Pelosi told CNN in an interview. "I'm thinking my children, my grandchildren. I never thought it would be Paul."

"We didn't even know where he was or what his condition was," Pelosi said, in excerpts of the interview. "We just knew there was an assault on him in our home."

David DePape, 42, is being held without bail in San Francisco after entering a not guilty plea to attempted murder and other charges in San Francisco. He also faces federal charges of attempted kidnapping of an elected official.

The fringe activist who followed conspiracy theories broke into the Pelosi home, woke up Paul Pelosi and demanded to talk to "Nancy," authorities said. When Paul Pelosi told the intruder his wife was out of town, DePape said he would wait. After Paul Pelosi called 911, officers arrived to see the two men struggling over a hammer before DePape struck Paul Pelosi at least once in the head with the hammer.

DePape later told police he wanted to kidnap the speaker and threatened to injure her "to show other members of Congress there were consequences to actions."

The authorities' stark narrative laid out in court filings in the case comes in contrast to the jokes and innuendo that conservatives and some Republican officials have spread about the Pelosis in the aftermath of the attack.

Pelosi has said little since the attack on her husband, cutting short her campaign appearances but spoke in a virtual call to grassroots activists late last week after Paul Pelosi was released from the hospital.

"People say to me, 'What can I do to make you feel better?' I say: 'Vote!'" Pelosi told those on the call. Her voice cracked at times as she said of her husband's recovery, "It's going to be a long haul."

Sandinistas complete their political domination of Nicaragua

By GABRIELA SELSER Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The Sandinista National Liberation Front completed its political domination of

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Nicaragua on Monday as electoral officials said it had won control of all the country's 153 municipalities in elections that critics called unfair.

Coming into Sunday's elections, the party of President Daniel Ortega already controlled 141 of Nicaragua's municipalities. But having outlawed the country's main opposition parties and jailed dozens of opposition figures, the field was clear for the Sandinistas' sweep.

They appeared to achieve de facto single-party status, wresting control of the last 12 municipalities that had been in the hands of other parties, though those groups were considered collaborationist by much of the exiled opposition.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights expressed concern Friday that "the minimum conditions necessary" to hold free and fair elections do not exist in Nicaragua. It called on the government to reestablish democratic guarantees and stop the repression.

The government has shuttered some 2,000 nongovernmental groups and more than 50 media outlets as it cracked down on voices of dissent. Some 100 civil society organizations were closed Friday, the government announced.

First lady and Vice President Rosario Murillo told government media that the elections confirmed "the unity around peace and the good, as the only path" for the country. "We had an exemplary, marvelous, formidable day in which we confirm our calling for peace."

Nicaragua has been in political and social upheaval since big street protests that broke out in April 2018 became a referendum on Ortega's rule. More than 200,000 Nicaraguans have fled the country since, most to neighboring Costa Rica.

Ahead of national elections last November when Ortega was elected to a fourth consecutive term, authorities locked up leading opposition figures, including six likely challengers. Since his re-election, Ortega has further cracked down on dissent, going so far as to jail an outspoken Roman Catholic bishop and other clergy.

Arizona county's plan to hand-count ballots blocked by judge

By BOB CHRISTIE Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A judge on Monday blocked a rural Arizona county's plan to conduct a full hand-count of ballots from the current election — a measure requested by Republican officials who expressed unfounded concerns that vote-counting machines are untrustworthy.

The ruling from Pima County Superior Court Judge Casey F. McGinley came after a full-day hearing on Friday during which opponents presented their case and called witnesses. An appeal of the judge's decision is likely. Election Day is Tuesday.

McGinley said the county board of supervisors overstepped its legal authority by ordering the county recorder to count all the ballots cast in the election that concludes on Tuesday rather than the small sample required by state law.

The opponents who sued to stop the proposed hand-count — a group called the Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans — argued that state law only allows a small hand-count of early ballots to ensure the counting machines are accurate. Group members argued that a last-minute change would create chaos and potentially delay certification of the election results. Cochise County Elections Director Lisa Marra also opposed the plan for the expanded count and testified about how it could delay results and imperil ballot security.

The lawsuit only challenged a full hand-count of an estimated 30,000 early ballots, but the ruling went further by blocking hand-counts of both the early ballots and those cast on Election Day.

McGinley wrote that state election laws lay out a detailed procedure for randomly choosing which Election Day ballots are chosen for the standard hand-count.

"This entire process would be rendered superfluous if the court were to construe (that section) to initially select 100% of the precinct ballots as its starting point," the judge wrote. "Because the statute does not permit elections officials to begin the precinct hand-count by counting all ballots cast, the Board's require-

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ment that elections officials do so here is unlawful.”

The process for early ballots has different rules, but specifically says it must stop once that small sample matches the machine count. That tally starts with 2% of the precincts or 5,000 ballots, whichever is less.

“Because the Board’s directive would require the initial audit of approximately 30,000 early ballots, it is not permitted by the plain language of (the law),” McGinley said.

The president of the retiree group, Sandra Cole, called the ruling a big win for the county’s voters, especially retirees who often vote early.

“All voters have the right to cast a ballot that will be counted — in the most accurate way possible,” Cole said in a statement “Elected officials must follow the law and this ruling affirms the rule of law.

The push for hand-counts follows a barrage of attacks on ballot counting machines by former President Donald Trump and his allies following the 2020 election, who embraced various conspiracy theories. Election experts say machines are faster and more accurate than hand-counting votes. They are extensively tested and exhaustive reviews have found no issues with them.

Peggy Judd, one of the two Republicans on the three-member Cochise County board of supervisors who voted to hand-count all the ballots, said she did so because many of her constituents believed it was important.

“And I could have said that there’s no evidence, but they said ‘Can’t we just do this? We want to volunteer, we want to do this,’” Judd said. “What would it have hurt?”

She said she does not know if an appeal will happen, but if it does she does not want the taxpayers to cover her share.

“I am delighted to have a ruling to have something to go with,” Judd said. “I still am 100% positive that what were doing was OK and the right thing to do.

The board voted to go ahead despite opposition from the county’s elected Republican attorney and the election director for Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs. Both said a full hand-count of early ballots is illegal under state election law. Hobbs is running for governor.

Attorney General Mark Brnovich, a Republican, issued an informal opinion on Oct. 28 siding with the board.

Republican Cochise County Recorder David Stevens, who has been charged by the county board of supervisors with conducting the count, has never overseen a hand-count; that’s Marra’s role. She testified on Friday that she plans to conduct the normal post-election hand-count. She also criticized the method Stevens chose to use, saying it was error-prone.

The county and its attorneys relied on a section in the state Election Procedures Manual written by the secretary of state’s office that allows counties to choose a larger number of early ballots for the hand-count audit, saying it gave them authority to do a 100% hand-count. McGinley said because that sentence wasn’t in the actual election law it “runs afoul of (the statute) and its requirement that the initial hand-count audit not exceed a review of 5,000 ballots.”

Stevens said he was surprised by that part of the ruling.

“The procedures manual was developed and written with the help of the recorders and election directors, approved by the secretary of secretary of state, approved by the governor and attorney general and now that line is illegal?” Stevens asked. “The court’s ruled — what am I to do? I just find it odd that they can pick one line and say ‘that’s illegal.’”

Stevens, who along with the board was named as a defendant, said a decision on an appeal had not yet been made.

The two Republican Cochise County supervisors who voted in favor of the 100% hand-count rather than the small sample that is counted in every other election were pushed to do so by people who believe former President Donald Trump’s unfounded claims that fraud or problems with vote-counting machines led to his loss in 2020. The lone Democrat on the board opposed the hand-count.

A Nevada county is also pushing a full hand-count to mollify Trump supporters but is battling with the secretary of state over rules for the count, while leaders of another GOP-led Arizona county rejected a similar effort last week.

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The hand-count would have covered four races chosen by lot: one statewide elected official, one federal race, one from the state legislature and a statewide ballot measure.

Marra testified that holding a full hand-count would imperil the county's certification of the election, which is set to happen by Nov. 22. That could delay the statewide certification, which is expected to trigger recounts because the threshold for mandatory recounts was greatly increased by the Legislature earlier this year. In a worst-case scenario, she said, that could lead to delays in seating newly elected officials in January.

Hurricane watch: Subtropical storm eyes Florida, Bahamas

By FRIEDA FRISARO and JULIE WALKER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Subtropical Storm Nicole is now expected to become a hurricane over the Bahamas before hitting Florida's east coast on Wednesday, just well enough after polls close to avoid disrupting voting on Election Day, forecasters said.

"We won't really start to see any significant impacts from Nicole until really Tuesday night to Wednesday, so really it shouldn't have a huge impact on voting operations tomorrow," hurricane specialist Phillippe Papin told The Associated Press.

"Unfortunately this is going to be a very large storm, with a very large wind field on the north side. This is going to cause quite substantial surf, potentially dangerous storm surge somewhere along the Florida east coast, and heavy rainfall and probably significant winds over a large area," Papin added.

A hurricane warning is in effect for northwestern Bahamas, including the Abacos, Berry Islands, Bimini and Grand Bahama Island, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center said in its latest advisory. A tropical storm warning is in effect for Andros Island, New Providence and Eleuthera. A hurricane watch is in effect for the Atlantic coast of Florida from Brevard County to Broward County, as well as the Lake Okeechobee area. A storm surge watch has been issued from Broward County to halfway up Georgia's coast.

The hurricane center predicted a particularly wobbly forward movement for Nicole as it approaches Florida before crossing into the northwest Gulf of Mexico. At 7 p.m. Monday, it had top winds of 45 mph (75 kph) and was centered about 425 miles (685 kilometers) east-northeast of the northwestern Bahamas, the advisory said. The storm was moving to the northwest at 8 mph (13 kph).

"Do not focus on the exact track of Nicole since it is expected to be a large storm with hazards extending well to the north of the center, and outside of the cone, and affect much of the Florida peninsula and portions of the southeast U.S.," the advisory said.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency for 34 counties in the potential path of the storm, out of an abundance of caution.

"While this storm does not, at this time, appear that it will become much stronger, I urge all Floridians to be prepared and to listen to announcements from local emergency management officials," DeSantis said in a statement.

"While this storm does not, at this time, appear that it will become much stronger, I urge all Floridians to be prepared and to listen to announcements from local emergency management officials,"

Large parts of the state have yet to recover from destructive Hurricane Ian, which slammed into southwestern Florida on Sept. 28 as a strong Category 4 hurricane and dumped massive amounts of rain, causing flooding across central Florida.

Along Florida's central Atlantic coast, nervous county managers warned residents that the tropical storm could bring more flooding and beach erosion only weeks after Ian inundated the region with unprecedented levels of water.

In Volusia County, home to Daytona Beach, county officials advised coastal residents to consider moving to a safer location as soon as possible.

Volusia County Emergency Director Jim Judge said the area could get 4 inches to 8 inches (10.2 cm to 20.3 cm) of rain and winds strong enough to cause flooding and widespread power outages, along with more permanent damage.

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"We need to take this storm very seriously because it could cause more coastal erosion, which could be devastating to our beachfront properties impacted by Hurricane Ian," Judge said in a statement.

Volusia County is one of the few Florida counties where driving is permitted on beaches. Vehicles were being prohibited on the sand starting Tuesday until the storm passes. County officials said repairs to sea walls damaged by Ian would no longer be able to be made after Monday because the tides will be too high. Building inspectors also were keeping their eyes on the structural integrity of about two dozen oceanfront homes already damaged by Ian and threatened by the new storm.

"The potential for impacts is very significant in terms of erosion," said Jessica Fentress, coastal division director for Volusia County. "They are calling for a swell event, on top of high tide on top of a wind situation."

In Seminole County, northeast of Orlando, officials opened sandbag distribution locations on Monday. Just as waters had receded from hundreds of residents' homes, Seminole County faced the prospect of getting 7 inches (17.8 cm) of rain in some areas from Danielle, said Alan Harris, Seminole County's emergency manager.

Officials also worried about the dangers from winds blowing large piles of debris still on the roads and in yards left over from Ian.

"No one wants to hear that but that is what it looks like as of today," Harris said at a news conference Monday. "We are trying to prepare our community for the worst and hoping for the best."

A subtropical storm is a non-frontal low-pressure system that has characteristics of both tropical and extratropical cyclones. They tend to have a larger wind field, extending much farther from their centers. Forecasters said the storm could possibly transition into a tropical system as it continues to develop.

The Atlantic hurricane season began on June 1 and ends on Nov. 30.

Musk's partisan tweets call Twitter neutrality into question

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Elon Musk used his Twitter megaphone to appeal to "independent-minded voters" on Monday, urging them to vote Republican in Tuesday's U.S. midterm elections and stepping into the country's political debate that tech company executives have largely tried to stay out of — so their platforms wouldn't be seen as favoring one side over the other.

Musk, who bought Twitter for \$44 billion, has expressed political views in the past, on and off the platform. But a direct endorsement of one party over another now that he owns it raises questions about Twitter's ability to remain neutral under the rule of the world's richest man.

"Shared power curbs the worst excesses of both parties, therefore I recommend voting for a Republican Congress, given that the Presidency is Democratic," Musk tweeted.

It's one thing for the CEO of Wendy's or Chick-fil-A to endorse a political party, said Jennifer Stromer-Galley, a professor at Syracuse University who studies social media and politics. It's a whole other thing, though, for the owner of one of the world's most high-profile information ecosystems to do so.

"These social media platforms are not just companies. It's not just a business. It is also our digital public sphere. It's our town square," Stromer-Galley said. "And it feels like the public sphere is increasingly privatized and owned by these companies — and when the heads of these companies put their finger on the scale — it feels like it's potentially skewing our democracy in harmful ways."

Musk's comments come as he seeks to remake the company and amid widespread concern that recent mass layoffs at the social media platform could leave the company unable to deal with hate speech, misinformation that could impact voter safety and security and actors who seek to cast doubt on the legitimate winners of elections. Though Musk has vowed not to let Twitter become a "free-for-all hellscape," advertisers have left the platform and Musk himself has amplified misinformation.

It's not a secret that when it comes to tech workers and executives, the political mix tends to favor the left, with a good amount of Silicon Valley libertarianism thrown in. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, for instance has donated to candidates on both sides of the political spectrum, but in recent years he's veered more toward Democrats. Publicly he's stayed away from pledging allegiance to either party.

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But in their platform policies and content moderation, tech companies such as Facebook (now Meta), Google and even Twitter have taken great pains to appear politically neutral, even as they are routinely criticized — largely by conservatives but also by liberals — for favoring one side over the other.

“Now, you might say, look, Rupert Murdoch owns Fox News and that’s his voice amplified,” said Charles Anthony Smith, a professor of political science and law at The University of California at Irvine. “But the difference is that gets filtered through a variety of different script writers and on-air personalities and all this other sort of stuff. So it’s not really Rupert Murdoch. It may be people that agree with him on things, but it’s filtered through other voices. This is an unadulterated direct contact. So it’s an amplification that is unrivaled.”

Musk’s tweets could also stir up trouble in global politics outside of the U.S. elections. On Sunday, the billionaire signaled willingness to explore reversing decisions blocking some accounts of Brazilian right-wing lawmakers. The nation’s electoral court last week ordered their suspension; all are supporters of Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro, who on Oct. 30 lost his reelection bid by a narrow margin, and most had aired claims of election fraud.

Paulo Figueiredo Filho, a political analyst who often defends Bolsonaro on social media and is also the grandson of the military dictatorship’s final president, tweeted that Twitter has become a strict and spontaneous censor.

“Your moderators are currently being more dictatorial than our own courts!” Figueiredo wrote.

Musk responded: “I will look into this.”

The suspended accounts include that of Nikolas Ferreira, who garnered more votes in the October race than any other candidate for a seat in the Lower House. According to orders issued by the electoral authority, Ferreira’s account and most others were blocked for sharing a live video from an Argentinian digital influencer questioning the reliability of Brazil’s electronic voting system. The video was largely shared by allies of Bolsonaro, who himself has often claimed the system is susceptible to fraud, without presenting any evidence.

Twitter’s policies, as of Monday, prohibit “manipulating or interfering in elections or other civic processes.”

In a tweet just two days after he agreed to buy Twitter in April, Musk said that for “Twitter to deserve public trust, it must be politically neutral, which effectively means upsetting the far right and the far left equally.”

And to attract the largest possible number of advertisers and users, Big Tech has tried to go this route, with varying degrees of success. For years, it managed to succeed. But the 2016 U.S. presidential elections changed online discourse, fueling the country’s increased political polarization.

In early 2016, a tech blog quoted an anonymous former Facebook contractor who said the site downplayed news that conservatives are interested in and artificially boosted liberal issues such as the “BlackLivesMatter” hashtag. The blog did not name the person, and no evidence was provided for their claim.

But in the explosive political climate that preceded the election of former President Donald Trump, the claim quickly took a life of its own. There was plenty of media coverage, as well as inquiries from GOP lawmakers, then, later, congressional hearings on the matter. In the years since, as social media companies began to crack down on far-right accounts and conspiracy theories such as QAnon, some conservatives have come to see it as evidence of the platforms’ bias.

Musk himself is at least listening to such claims, and he’s repeatedly engaged with figures on the right and far-right who would like to see a loosening of Twitter’s misinformation and hate speech policies.

Evidence suggests those voices are already being heard. In an October study, for instance, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found that “Twitter gives greater visibility to politically conservative news than it does content with a liberal bent.”

Musk’s tweet garnered hundreds of thousands of likes and many retweets Monday on the day before the final votes are cast in thousands of races around the country. But in replies and retweets, many prominent (and not so prominent) Twitter personalities expressed criticism for the Tesla CEO — often poking fun at him. For Smith, that’s a sign Musk may not quite be a billionaire political kingmaker that some of his peers,

like venture capitalist Peter Thiel, are aspiring to be.

"I wonder if we're having the emergence of a new type of billionaire, the ones who want to decide what happens and get credit for deciding what happens," Smith said. "So this more like an oligarchy approach than the old school billionaires who would drop lots of money but then they didn't want anybody to know their names."

'Black Panther' cast pushes Wakanda forward after Boseman

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Letitia Wright hit the Marvel Cinematic Universe scene as King T'Challa's joyfully witty younger sister in 2018's blockbuster "Black Panther." But in the new sequel, the actor's usual easy-going character delivers a more serious tone while dealing with grief.

Wright's character takes center stage as Shuri who ventures into womanhood after the death of T'Challa. She'll be looked upon to take the iconic Black Panther mantle in "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," which releases in theaters Friday. Chadwick Boseman, who played T'Challa died in August 2020.

In between "Panther" films, Wright took on a few movie projects that exercised her dramatic acting chops. "I always try to do things that are outside the box and what people wouldn't expect," said Wright, who starred in dramas "The Silent Twins" and "Aisha." She also stars in "Surrounded," which releases next year. The actor said each of those projects challenged her enough to "stretch me as an artist."

"That naturally helped me grow a lot more," said the actor, whose Shuri character also appeared in "Avengers: Infinity War" and "Avengers: Endgame" as Wakanda's princess and chief scientist. "We know Shuri as the fun, vibrant sister of the first film. ... But in the film, we really followed that journey of womanhood for her."

Wright credits director Ryan Coogler for ushering Shuri's maturation along in his rewritten script following Boseman's unexpected death from colon cancer. The director carried an even heavier burden to deliver a strong script — especially after "Black Panther" broke box office records, earned \$700 million domestically during its theatrical run and became the first superhero film nominated for best picture at the Academy Awards.

For the "Black Panther" follow, Coogler had developed a screenplay centered around T'Challa grieving lost time following Thanos' snap in "Avengers: Infinity War," which caused a five-year "blip." But after Boseman's death, Coogler and filmmaker Joe Robert Cole went back to the drawing board. They worked up a script that delved more into the concept of Wakanda's grief in the wake of T'Challa's death.

Coogler said Boseman's family signed off on his character's "respectful" death in "Wakanda Forever." In the new film, the Wakandans are put in a peculiar spot to protect their nation without T'Challa against a new nemesis, Namor, a sub-marine Talocan leader who has extraordinary mutant-like abilities and can fly with the aid of tiny wings on his ankles. Namor is played by Tenoch Huerta.

"This script was born of the truth in our lives that we had lost Chadwick Boseman," said Lupita Nyong'o, who plays Nakia, a war spy and T'Challa's lover. She said the characters dealt with T'Challa's loss differently in the film.

"For me personally, I was relieved that we got to speak our truth," Nyong'o said. "We got to express the grief that we were feeling and put it to good use."

Wright and Nyong'o said they used their grief over Boseman to fuel their performances, while Coogler said his mournful remembrance of the late actor helped motivate him through his writing and directing process. The director said several photos of Boseman were posted on set, and a prop master put inside Coogler's trailer a shield and spear that T'Challa held during a duel with Michael B. Jordan's Killmonger at Warrior Falls in "Black Panther."

Before filming the project, the entire cast — including the newcomers — visited Boseman's burial site. It turned into a bonding moment.

"We tried to make a movie to honor the legacy of Chadwick," Huerta said. "The movie is about grieving. It was happening at the same time as reality. They were able to integrate what was happening in real

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life into fiction. Art is kind of therapy. It helped us deal with the reality and things we can't understand."

The cast leaned on each other during the filming process, which had several setbacks and obstacles. Production took longer than expected after Wright was injured while filming a stunt, and several cast and crew members tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Wright was attacked for sharing an anti-vaccination video, and Coogler was briefly handcuffed by Atlanta police after being mistaken for a bank robber earlier this year.

"We certainly had bumps in the road, but people pulled together," said Nate Moore, the vice president of production and development at Marvel Studios. He was a producer on the "Captain America: The Winter Soldier," "Eternals" and executive producer on "Black Panther."

Moore said the filming experience of "Wakanda Forever" was the toughest, but he said the whole cast and crew showed resilience through adversity.

"They didn't pull apart," Moore said. "If it were a different filmmaker, who didn't have such great relationships with everybody, we would've seen a lot more partition from the crew, which we didn't really. The cast could've gotten frustrated with the stopping and starting that we were forced to do, but they didn't. They believe in what this movie was about and Ryan's vision. As hard as it was, we had each other."

Nyong'o said cast members comforted each other in grieving Boseman while attempting to keep the kingdom of Wakanda moving forward.

"It was joyful and sometimes it was hard," she said. "But there was a lot of levity as well, because we had so many powerful, joyful memories of Chadwick to share with one another."

Twitter's pared-down staff struggles with misinformation

By MATT O'BRIEN and DAVID KLEPPER AP Technology Writer

Twitter is struggling to respond to political misinformation and other harmful posts on the social media platform after Elon Musk fired roughly half of its workforce just days before the U.S. midterm elections, according to employees who survived the cuts and an outside voting rights group.

The recent mass layoffs spared many of the people whose job it is to keep hate and misinformation off the social-media platform. Musk cut just 15% of those frontline content-moderation workers, compared to roughly 50% job cuts companywide, an executive said last week.

But in preparation for the layoffs, employees said the company also sharply reduced how many employees can look into a specific account's digital history and behavior — a practice necessary to investigate if it's been used maliciously and take action to suspend it. The company said it froze access to those tools to reduce "insider risk" at a time of transition.

The developments are causing concern as the U.S. midterm elections culminate on Tuesday. Though millions of Americans have already cast early and absentee ballots, millions more are expected to go to the polls to cast in-person votes. Election watchers fear the platform may not be equipped to handle hate speech, misinformation that could impact voter safety and security, and actors seeking to cast doubt on the legitimate winners of elections around the country.

Researchers tracking misinformation ahead of the midterms notified Twitter on Friday about three posts from well-known far-right figures that advanced debunked claims about election fraud. The posts remain up three days later. When Common Cause asked Twitter for an update on Monday, the platform said the posts were "under review."

Before Musk took over, Twitter responded much more quickly, said Jesse Littlewood, vice president for campaigns at Common Cause. The group said they had been in regular contact with Twitter staff before Musk took over. Now, they are getting a response from a generic email address.

"We had been getting much faster decisions from them, sometimes within hours," said Littlewood. Now, he said, "It's like pushing the button for the walk sign at the stop light, and nothing is happening."

Musk gutted teams working on marketing, communications and editorial curation of what people see on Twitter. But his decision to retain most of Twitter's content moderation team came as a welcome surprise to some inside and outside the company. Musk, after all, promised to let free speech flourish by loosening

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Twitter's content restrictions and restoring accounts banned for violating those rules. He has also pledged to end the current user verification system in favor of a \$7.99 subscription fee.

But the fact that the content moderation team survived could mean that critical misinformation functions such as blocking incitements of political violence will continue, and some of the worst-case scenarios around election misinformation won't be realized. Some of Musk's own tweets have been annotated with fact-checked context in recent days.

Two employees who survived the job cuts credit a previously little-known executive Yoel Roth, Twitter's global head of safety and integrity, for leveraging his team's importance to Musk's goals for Twitter while avoiding moves that might anger the mercurial Tesla CEO.

"Yoel Roth singlehandedly saved the company," said a Twitter employee who spoke on condition of anonymity because of concerns about job security. "On the public side, he appropriately and thoughtfully engaged with Elon Musk in a way that was not subservient, but deferring, because Elon is the king."

Roth has become the public face of Twitter's content moderation since Musk took over and has regularly defended Twitter's ongoing efforts to fight harmful misinformation. Musk, a prolific tweeter with more than 110 million followers, has frequently pointed to Roth's Twitter feed as the most reliable account of the company's adherence to integrity standards. And the billionaire, who embraces the idea that Twitter's past leadership suppressed right-wing views, defended Roth when ardent Musk supporters demanded his firing over past comments they thought showed Roth's liberal bias.

Roth, who once worked at an Apple store fixing Mac computers, joined Twitter in 2015 after spending a year studying online hate speech at Harvard University's Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society, according to his LinkedIn profile. In May, he took on a senior role "responsible for all user, content, and security policies, comprising more than 120 policymakers, threat investigators, data analysts, and operations specialists."

Roth didn't respond to requests for comment.

A legal scholar who sits on Twitter's Trust and Safety Council, an advisory board set up in 2016, said she has long been impressed with Roth's candor about the challenges of content moderation and the nuances of free speech — such as the importance of curbing abusive content to enable the free speech of women and others more likely to be harassed online.

"If Musk had been able to cut everybody in content moderation and just replace it with his 'yes' men, he probably would have," said Mary Anne Franks, a law professor at the University of Miami and president of the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative. "The only reason why he hasn't is because he maybe recognizes that would make Twitter unworkable."

One Twitter employee said Monday that layoff survivors were actively looking for new jobs in part because of Musk's lack of commitment to keeping the platform free of hate speech and misinformation. Speaking anonymously because of concerns about job security, the employee said the job cuts would make Twitter's staff less effective in following up and acting on complaints about election-related disinformation, because they included people leading civic integrity teams.

Franks said there's always been a tension within Twitter and other social media companies between making money and protecting democracy and freedom of expression. She said that's only getting harder under Musk, who has shown Twitter can act quickly in banning a comedian who made fun of him by impersonating his account, but who has otherwise expressed hostility towards Twitter's anti-abuse standards.

"I would imagine that someone in a position like Roth's at Twitter would have to play a pretty delicate game trying not to trip any of the wires, not to trigger a backlash from Musk because he's incredibly thin-skinned," Franks said.

AP sources: Justice Dept. watchdog probing Mass. US attorney

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department's inspector general has opened an investigation of the top federal prosecutor in Massachusetts, prompted by U.S. Attorney Rachel Rollins' appearance at a political

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fundraiser featuring first lady Jill Biden, The Associated Press has learned.

An investigation by the department's internal watchdog targeting one of the nation's 93 U.S. attorneys — political appointees who are some of the highest-ranking federal law enforcement officials — is highly unusual. The ethics concerns surrounding Rollins threaten to undermine Attorney General Merrick Garland's efforts to restore the Justice Department's reputation for political independence after tumultuous years under Republican President Donald Trump.

The inspector general's office is focusing on Rollins' attendance at the Democratic National Committee event in July as well as her use of her personal cellphone to conduct official business, according to two people briefed on the investigation, which has been underway for weeks.

Also being examined is a trip that Rollins took to California that was paid for by an outside group, they said. They were not authorized to publicly discuss the ongoing investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Anthony Coley, the department's chief spokesman, declined to comment and referred all questions to the inspector general's office. A spokeswoman for the inspector general, Michael Horowitz, said it is the office's "general practice not to confirm or deny the existence of any ongoing investigation."

A spokesperson for Rollins, Christina DiIorio-Sterling, said Rollins is "fully cooperating with the OIG investigation." Rollins declined to answer specific questions from the AP.

It's the second known federal investigation into Rollins less than a year into her tenure.

The inspector general's office generally investigates allegations of fraud, abuse or violation of other Justice Department policies. Any decision about the fate of a U.S. attorney — a Senate-confirmed post — would fall to President Joe Biden.

News outlets reported in August that the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, another federal watchdog agency, was examining whether Rollins' attendance at the fundraiser violated the Hatch Act, a law that limits political activity by government workers. The investigation is in the early stages.

Rollins was a controversial pick to be Massachusetts' top federal law enforcer and she faced stiffed opposition from congressional Republicans for her progressive approach to crime. As district attorney for Suffolk County, which includes Boston, Rollins pushed ambitious criminal justice changes, most notably a policy not to prosecute certain low-level crimes such as shoplifting.

The Senate Judiciary Committee deadlocked on her nomination last year before she was confirmed by a 51-50 party-line vote, with Vice President Kamala Harris breaking the tie.

Rollins came under scrutiny after she was photographed in July arriving at a home in Andover, Massachusetts, where the DNC fundraiser with Jill Biden was held.

Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., said her appearance was a "blatant violation" of the Hatch Act by someone who is supposed to "act as a nonpartisan law enforcement official rather than as a partisan politician." He asked Horowitz to investigate.

Rollins said in a July tweet that she "had approval" to meet the first lady and left the event early to speak at two community events.

According one person familiar with discussions before that event, Rollins was given limited permission to meet Jill Biden outside the home. The person was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Moving beyond that matter, investigators have copied the phone contents of some employees in Rollins' office as part of their look into Rollins' use of her personal device for Justice Department business, according to one of the people briefed on the investigation.

The use of a personal device — rather than a government-issued phone — by someone in Rollins' position raises possible security and public records retention concerns.

Investigators also have asked about Rollins' trip to California in June to speak at CAA Amplify, the annual gathering of entertainment, business and political figures run by one of Hollywood's leading talent agencies, the Creative Artists Agency. The group paid for Rollins' trip, even though Justice Department employees are not supposed to accept payments for travel. The department later instructed Rollins to pay back the group, the people familiar with the investigation said.

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Rollins' appearance at the DNC fundraiser may have contributed to new political restrictions for Justice Department appointees.

Garland told department employees in August that political appointees would no longer be allowed to go to fundraisers and other campaign events. Such appointees, who are hired under presidential administrations rather than making long careers at the Justice Department, had been allowed to attend political events passively on their personal time with prior approval. The new policy bans attendance altogether.

"It is critical that we hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards to avoid even the appearance of political influence as we carry out the department's mission," Garland said in a memo to employees.

Fans celebrate Houston Astros' World Series win with parade

HOUSTON (AP) — An estimated crowd of more than 1 million fans celebrated the Houston Astros' World Series win with a downtown parade Monday.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner had encouraged fans coming to the victory parade to "arrive early, wear Astros' colors, be loud and celebrate safely." The parade, which started at noon and lasted for a couple of hours, packed sidewalks with people as Astros players riding floats and buses waved at cheering fans.

The parade took place without any serious incidents, except for the arrest of a 33-year-old man who was accused by Houston police of throwing a beer can at U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, who was riding in the back of a truck that was part of the parade. Police said the beer can hit the Republican senator from Texas in the chest and neck area but he did not require any medical attention. The man was arrested by police but his name was not immediately released. He is expected to face assault charges, police said.

Video from the parade showed people along the route booing Cruz as he went by, including just before he was hit by the beer can.

Although a final tally of the number of people at the parade was not immediately available, it was expected to surpass the 1 million individuals who attended the parade held after the Astros won their first World Series in 2017, said Mary Benton, a spokeswoman for Turner.

The Astros clinched their second World Series title in six seasons Saturday. Yordan Alvarez hit a towering three-run homer, helping the Astros beat the Philadelphia Phillies 4-1 in Game 6.

Saturday's win gave the Astros' 73-year-old manager Dusty Baker his first title in 25 seasons as a manager, the last three in Houston.

Q&A: A look at \$1.9B Powerball jackpot, how it grew so large

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Millions of lottery players around the country will try their luck again Monday night as they vie for an estimated \$1.9 billion Powerball jackpot that dwarfs all previous prizes by hundreds of millions of dollars.

The jackpot is nearly \$400 million larger than the previous record jackpot and will keep growing until someone wins the prize. Only four previous jackpots have topped \$1 billion, but none of those are close to the current prize, which started at \$20 million back on Aug. 6 and over three winless months has grown ever more massive.

A winner who opts for a lump sum payment would get an estimated \$929.1 million, with the \$1.9 billion for a winner who chose an annuity, paid annually over 29 years.

Even as more people attracted by the giant prize drop \$2 on a Powerball ticket, the game's ultra-long odds of 1 in 292.2 million means there still is a good chance that another drawing will pass without anyone winning the grand prize. That would push the jackpot for Wednesday's drawing to more than \$2 billion.

WHY SO LONG WITHOUT A WINNER?

Those who spend \$2 on a Powerball ticket might wonder if something is wrong when 40 drawings pass without a jackpot winner, but this is how the game is designed. With odds of 1 in 292 million, that means it's unlikely anyone will win the prize until a growing jackpot attracts more players. And more ticket sales mean the lottery can raise more money for public programs, which is the point of the state lotteries. Still,

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it has been an awful long time without a jackpot, and if there isn't a winner Monday night, a new record will have been reached: 41 draws without anyone matching all six numbers.

PLENTY OF PEOPLE MUST BE PLAYING NOW, RIGHT?

Yes and no. Many, many more people are buying tickets now that the jackpot has reached nearly \$2 billion. That's clear from the fact that when the jackpot started at \$20 million in the summer, players bought only enough tickets to cover less than 10% of the 292.2 million possible number combinations. For Saturday night's drawing, that had climbed to 62%, so millions and millions of people are playing. But that percentage is still less than the 88.6% coverage reached for the previous record jackpot in 2016. And if 38% of the possible number combinations aren't covered, there is a good chance there won't be a winner.

Players can choose numbers themselves but the overwhelming majority let a machine randomly pick the numbers.

That's not the case for George Pagen, of Brooklyn, New York, who always selects his numbers.

"I cannot let the machine pick for me," he said. "I have numbers in my mind and I'm going to win it. I'm going to win it and share it with all my friends and family and everybody."

WILL THE EVENTUAL WINNER REALLY GET \$1.9 BILLION?

Pity the poor Powerball winner, as the lucky ticketholder will see nothing close to \$1.9 billion. It's only a question of how much less.

First, that \$1.9 billion prize is for winners who choose payment through an annuity, which sends out a check annually for 29 years, with a 5% increase each year. But almost no winners take the annuity, instead opting for cash. For Monday night's drawing, the cash prize would be \$929.1 million, or less than half the annuity prize.

Given the difference between the two prize options, Daniel Law of Brooklyn, New York, said he would consult a tax attorney if he won.

"We'd figure out which one is a better deal," Law said as he bought tickets at a liquor store. "The annuity might be good because it would stop us from spending, but it's pretty hard to spend \$2 billion all at once."

Larry Evans, who was buying Powerball tickets in Chicago, agreed that he'd need to hire a "team of people" to handle his finances. He noted that it might be expensive, "but it doesn't make any difference because I could afford to pay the team."

However winners are paid, federal taxes would take an additional bite, lessening the payout by more than one-third, and many states tax lottery winnings, so that would eat into the prize as well.

The difference between the annuity and cash prizes has grown larger recently because inflation has resulted in higher interest rates, which means money invested in the annuity can grow.

DO I HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF WINNING IF I BUY MORE TICKETS?

Yes, but your odds of winning aren't significantly improved. Think of it this way: If you buy one ticket, you have a 1 in 292.2 million chance of winning the jackpot. If you spend \$10 for five number combinations, your chances are better, but at 5 in 292.2 million you still almost undoubtedly are not going to hit the jackpot. The same is true if you spend \$100. Lottery officials say the average player buys two or three tickets, meaning they're putting money down on a dream with very little chance it will pay off in a rich reality.

WHERE IS POWERBALL PLAYED?

Powerball is played in 45 states, as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Jackson, in dissent, issues first Supreme Court opinion

By MARK SHERMAN and JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — New Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson issued her first Supreme Court opinion Monday, a short dissent in support of a death row inmate from Ohio.

Jackson wrote that she would have thrown out lower court rulings in the case of Ohio inmate Davel Chinn, whose lawyers argued that the state suppressed evidence that might have altered the outcome of his trial.

The two-page opinion came on the same day the high court was hearing cases that are part of a wider

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dispute over the power of the federal government.

In her dissent, Jackson wrote that she would have ordered a new look at Chinn's case "because his life is on the line and given the substantial likelihood that the suppressed records would have changed the outcome at trial." The evidence at issue indicated that a key witness against Chinn has an intellectual disability that might have affected his memory and ability to testify accurately, she wrote.

Prosecutors are required to turn over potentially exculpatory evidence to the defense. In this case, lower courts determined that the outcome would not have been affected if the witness' records had been provided to Chinn's lawyers.

Chinn's lawyers said in a statement after his case was rejected that: "Ohio must not exacerbate the mistakes of the past by pursuing Mr. Chinn's execution."

The only other member of the court to join Jackson's opinion was fellow liberal Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

Jackson joined the high court on June 30, following the retirement of Justice Stephen Breyer.

The court has yet to decide any of the cases argued in October or the first few days of this month. Jackson almost certainly will be writing a majority opinion in one of those cases. Every justice typically writes at least one opinion each time the court sits for a two-week session of hearing arguments.

Also on Monday:

— The court heard arguments in two cases, involving the Federal Trade Commission and the Securities and Exchange Commission, that are part of a sustained attack by business and conservative interests on what they say is government overreach. The two cases before the court have to do with whether challengers can quickly get into federal court or must endure a sometimes yearslong agency process first.

In both cases it seemed that the court dominated 6-3 by conservatives would opt for the shorter route, with Justice Samuel Alito at one point questioning a lawyer for the government on his argument for the more lengthy process: "Isn't it in your interest to get this decided?"

Fellow conservative Chief Justice John Roberts, meanwhile, noted the string of Supreme Court decisions against the government in recent years saying: "Doesn't that underscore the need for ... a direct proceeding to raise the constitutional claim rather than waiting however many years before the agency?"

— The justices declined to hear a case out of Arizona in which a man, Ramin Khorrami, challenged his conviction by an eight-member jury. Two conservative justices said the court should have heard Khorrami's case. Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote that the high court should have done so and overturned a 1970 Supreme Court precedent in which the justices said a 12-member jury is not required. Gorsuch wrote that six states allow smaller jury panels, a practice he said is "difficult to reconcile" with the Constitution. Justice Brett Kavanaugh agreed the court should have heard the case. Khorrami was convicted after demanding money from a woman he had an affair with, threatening to reveal the affair to her husband if she didn't comply.

— The justices also declined to hear the case of a Louisiana man who was convicted of sex trafficking and argued there was serious prosecutorial misconduct in his case. Jackson and Sotomayor were also allies in dissent on that case.

UN chief, Gore, others give heated warnings in climate talks

By SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — With the world on "a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator," the United Nations chief on Monday told dozens of leaders to "cooperate or perish," singling out the two biggest polluting countries, China and the United States.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres wasn't alone in preaching with tones of fire and brimstone to try to shake up the world's sense of urgency at this year's annual U.N. climate conference.

"Choose life over death," former U.S. Vice President Al Gore urged. "It is not time for moral cowardice."

Some of the strongest pleas for action came from leaders of poor nations that caused little of the pollution but often get a larger share of the weather-related damage. Several called on developed nations for reparations, which in climate negotiations is called "loss and damage."

"Africa should not pay for crimes they have not committed," Central African Republic President Faustin Archange Touadera said, adding that rich nations were to blame for the climate problem.

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"Climate change is directly threatening our people's lives, health and future," Kenyan President William K. Ruto said of the African continent, which he said is looking at \$50 billion a year in climate change damage by 2050. Ruto said Kenya is choosing to not use many of its "dirty energy" resources even though it could help the poor nation financially, and has instead opted for cleaner fuels.

Loss and damage "is our daily experience and the living nightmare of millions of Kenyans and hundreds of millions of Africans," Ruto said.

Seychelles President Wavel John Charles Ramkalawan said, "Like other islands, our contribution in the destruction of the planet is minimal. Yet we suffer the most." He called on wealthier countries to assist in repairing the damage.

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley called for a massive overhaul of international development loans and a 10% tax on fossil fuel companies, which she said made "\$200 billion in profits in the last three months."

"I don't need to repeat the horror and the devastation wrecked upon this Earth over the course of the last 12 months since we met in Glasgow," Mottley said. "Whether the apocalyptic floods in Pakistan or the heat waves from Europe to China or indeed in the last few days in my own region, the devastation caused in Belize by Tropical Storm Lisa or the torrential floods a few days ago in St. Lucia."

Ahead of this year's conference, known as COP27, leaders and experts have been ringing alarm bells that time is running out to avert catastrophic rises in temperature. But the warnings may not have the impact of past meetings because of multiple other challenges pulling leaders' attention — from midterm elections in the U.S. to the Russia-Ukraine war.

"In the fight for life on Earth, no one is a bystander," said Jordan's King Abdullah. "Every contribution counts. COP27 has brought us together to link forces and stand our ground. We are at the beginning of a long, challenging and urgent transformation."

More than 100 world leaders will speak over the next days at the gathering in Egypt, most from developing countries demanding greater accountability from the richest, most polluting nations. Much of their focus will be on telling their stories of devastation by climate disasters, including a speech Tuesday by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif of Pakistan, where summer floods caused at least \$40 billion in damage and displaced millions of people.

"Climate change will never stop without our intervention," the summit's host, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, said.

El-Sissi, who also called for an end to the Russia-Ukraine war, was gentle compared to a fiery U.N. chief Guterres, who said the world "is on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator."

He called for a new pact between rich and poor countries to make deeper cuts in emissions with financial help and phasing out coal by rich nations by 2030 and elsewhere by 2040. He called on the United States and China — the two biggest economies — to work together on climate, something they used to do until the last few years.

"Humanity has a choice: cooperate or perish," Guterres said. "It is either a Climate Solidarity Pact — or a Collective Suicide Pact."

But bad timing and world events hang over the gathering.

Most of the leaders are meeting Monday and Tuesday, just as the United States has a potentially policy-shifting midterm election. Then the leaders of the world's 20 wealthiest nations will have their powerful-only club confab in Bali in Indonesia days later.

Leaders of China and India — both among the biggest emitters — appear to be skipping the climate talks, although underlings are here negotiating. U.S. President Joe Biden is coming days later than most other leaders on his way to Bali.

"There are big climate summits and little climate summits and this was never expected to be a big one," said Climate Advisers CEO Nigel Purvis, a former U.S. negotiator.

United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was initially going to skip the negotiations, but public pressure and predecessor Boris Johnson's plans to come changed his mind. King Charles III, a longtime environment advocate, won't attend because of his new role. And Russia's leader Vladimir Putin, whose invasion

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of Ukraine created energy chaos that reverberates in the world of climate negotiations, won't be here.

Many European leaders who spoke Monday singled out Russia as the cause of the current energy and food crises, saying the war in Ukraine showed shifting to renewable energy was a matter of national security.

"We always want more" leaders, United Nations climate chief Simon Stiell told a Sunday news conference. "But I believe there is sufficient (leadership) right now for us to have a very productive outcome."

In addition to the leaders' speeches, the negotiations include "innovative" roundtable discussions that "we are confident, will generate some very powerful insights," Stiell said.

Still, "the historical polluters who caused climate change are not showing up," said Mohammed Adow of Power Shift Africa. "Africa is the least responsible, the most vulnerable to the issue of climate change and it is a continent that is stepping up and providing leadership."

"The South is actually stepping up," Adow told The Associated Press. "The North that historically caused the problem is failing."

For the first time, developing nations succeeded in getting onto the summit agenda the issue of "loss and damage" — demands that emitting countries pay for damage caused by climate-induced disasters.

Nigeria's Environment Minister Mohammed Abdullahi called for wealthy nations to show "positive and affirmative" commitments to help countries hardest hit by climate change. "Our priority is to be aggressive when it comes to climate funding to mitigate the challenges of loss and damage," he said.

Leaders of poorer nations, joined by French President Emmanuel Macron, talked about the issue as one of justice and fairness.

"Our part of the world has to choose between life and death," Tanzania President Samia Suluhu Hassan said.

Putin-linked businessman admits to US election meddling

By The Associated Press undefined

Kremlin-connected entrepreneur Yevgeny Prigozhin admitted Monday that he had interfered in U.S. elections and would continue to do so — confirming for the first time the accusations that he has rejected for years.

"Gentlemen, we have interfered, are interfering and will interfere. Carefully, precisely, surgically and in our own way, as we know how to do," Prigozhin boasted in remarks posted on social media.

The statement, from the press service of his catering company that earned him the nickname "Putin's chef," came on the eve of the U.S. midterm elections.

It was the second major admission in recent months by the 61-year-old businessman, who has ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Prigozhin has previously sought to keep his activities under the radar and now appears increasingly interested in gaining political clout — although his goal in doing so was not immediately clear.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Monday that Prigozhin's comments "do not tell us anything new or surprising."

"It's well known and well documented in the public domain that entities associated with Yevgeny Prigozhin have sought to influence elections around the world, including the United States. The U.S. has worked to expose and counter Russia's malign influence efforts as we discover them," she said, noting that Yevgeny has been sanctioned by the United States, the U.K. and the European Union.

"Part of Russia's efforts includes promoting narratives aimed at undermining democracy and sowing division and discord. It's not surprising that Russia would be highlighting their attempted efforts and fabricating a story about their successes on the eve of an election," she added.

In September, Prigozhin also publicly stated that he was behind the Wagner Group mercenary force — something he also had previously denied — and talked openly about its involvement in Russia's 8-month-old war in Ukraine. The military contractor also has sent its forces to places like Syria and sub-Saharan Africa.

Video also has emerged recently of a man resembling Prigozhin visiting Russian penal colonies to recruit prisoners to fight in Ukraine.

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In 2018, Prigozhin and a dozen other Russian nationals and three Russian companies were charged in the U.S. with operating a covert social media campaign aimed at fomenting discord and dividing American public opinion ahead of the 2016 presidential election won by Republican Donald Trump. They were indicted as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian election interference.

The Justice Department in 2020 moved to dismiss charges against two of the indicted firms, Concord Management and Consulting LLC and Concord Catering, saying they had concluded that a trial against a corporate defendant with no presence in the U.S. and no prospect of meaningful punishment even if convicted would likely expose sensitive law enforcement tools and techniques.

In July, the State Department offered a reward of up to \$10 million for information about Russian interference in U.S. elections, including on Prigozhin and the Internet Research Agency, the troll farm in St. Petersburg that his companies were accused of funding. Prigozhin also has been sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department for election interference.

Until now, Prigozhin had denied Russian involvement in election interference.

Russian media, prisoner's rights groups and relatives of prisoners this year reported an extensive effort by Wagner — and sometimes Prigozhin personally — to recruit convicts to fight in Ukraine. Prigozhin hasn't directly confirmed it, but said in one statement that "either (the Wagner private military company) and convicts, or your children" will be fighting on the front lines.

Last week, Wagner opened a business center in St. Petersburg, which Prigozhin has described as a platform for "increasing the defense capabilities" of Russia.

On Sunday, he also announced through Concord the creation of training centers for militias in Russia's Belgorod and Kursk regions that border Ukraine.

"A local resident, like no one else, knows his territories, is able to fight against sabotage and reconnaissance groups and take the first blow if necessary," he said.

A one-time hot dog stand owner, Prigozhin opened a swanky restaurant in St. Petersburg that drew interest from Putin. During his first term in office, Putin took then-French President Jacques Chirac to dine at one of Prigozhin's restaurants.

"Vladimir Putin saw how I built a business out of a kiosk, he saw that I don't mind serving to the esteemed guests because they were my guests," Prigozhin recalled in an interview published in 2011.

His businesses expanded significantly. In 2010, Putin attended the opening of Prigozhin's factory making school lunches that was built on generous loans by a state bank. In Moscow alone, his company Concord won millions of dollars in contracts to provide meals at public schools. Prigozhin has also organized catering for Kremlin events for several years and has provided catering and utility services to the Russian military.

When fighting broke out in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed separatists and Kyiv's forces in 2014, Prigozhin said through his spokespeople that he was seeking to "put together a group (of fighters) that would go (there) and defend the Russians."

Russian laws prohibit the operation of private military contractors, but state media in recent months have openly reported on Wagner's involvement in Ukraine.

Takeaways: Calls for reparations, emissions cuts at COP27

By PETER PRENGAMAN undefined

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — The first full day of the year's most important summit on climate change, known as COP27, got underway on Monday with urgent calls by leaders to slash greenhouse gas emissions as the planet warms and severe weather events become more frequent and destructive.

Scores of presidents, along with thousands of diplomats, climate negotiators, business leaders, activists and journalists descended on the Red Sea resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh to take part in discussions and negotiations slated to go through Nov. 18.

"Climate change will never stop without our intervention," said Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, opening the day's session. "Our time here is limited and we must use every second that we have."

Former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore, one of the first leaders to raise the alarm about climate change,

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framed the question of whether to decarbonize as a "life over death" choice by leaders.

Nigeria's Environment Minister Mohammed Abdullahi, along with many others, argued that the action needed to go beyond just cutting emissions in the future. Rich nations, most responsible for climate change, must help poor nations hit hard by impacts of climate change.

"The blame game should stop," he said, adding that the country would be "aggressive" during negotiations about financing and reparations for vulnerable countries.

Here is a look some of the largest storylines on the first day of COP27:

LOSS AND DAMAGE

In the world of climate negotiations, loss and damage refers to reparations. That would be rich nations, the most responsible for the emissions that have led to climate change, making reparations to developing countries that are often most impacted.

While the idea has long been around, traditionally it's been more on the fringes of climate discussions than in the forefront. On Monday, it dominated many of the talks.

For the first time, developing nations got on to the summit agenda the issue of loss and damage, and numerous leaders brought it up and urged action. The setting of this year's summit, Egypt, a developing nation in Africa, seemed to give the initiative a symbolic push.

"The damage is obvious," Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo told The Associated Press. "Those who are responsible should be very, very much aware of the need to compensate others."

PROGRESS AMID DISTRACTIONS

Throughout the speeches, leaders urged their counterparts and negotiators not to get distracted amid so many things competing for attention. There are the U.S. Midterm elections on Tuesday. Now in its eighth month, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has pushed some countries to speed up plans to transition to green energies while others have come under criticism for turning back to dirty fuels like coal to make up the energy shortfall. And COP27 will still be happening when leaders of the world's richest nations meet in Bali in Indonesia for the G20 summit next week.

"Today's urgent crises cannot be an excuse for backsliding or greenwashing," said Antonio Guterres, the U.N. secretary general.

On the sidelines, there was also talk about who wasn't attending the summit, and what that might say about their commitments.

Leaders of two of the biggest emitting countries, China and India, thus far appear to be skipping the talks, though they are sending underlings to negotiations. The leader of the historically top polluting country, U.S. President Joe Biden, is coming days later than most of the other presidents and prime ministers on his way to Bali.

EGYPTIAN ACTIVIST STRIKE

To coincide with the summit start, jailed opposition activist Alaa Abdel-Fattah escalated a hunger strike, refusing also water, according to his family. On Monday, Agnes Callamard, secretary general of Amnesty International, warned that failure by the Egyptian government to release him would lead to his death.

Abdel-Fattah, 40, has spent most of the past decade behind bars. For many Egyptians, his detention is a symbol of the country's return to autocratic rule. For more than six months, Abdel-Fattah has been on a partial hunger strike, consuming only 100 calories a day.

Hoping to push the issue, Abdel-Fattah's younger sister, Sanaa Seif, came to Sharm el-Sheikh early Monday. She arrived on a flight from London through the Turkish city of Istanbul.

"I'm here to do my best to try and shed light on my brother's case and to save him," Seif said upon arrival.

Since 2013, el-Sissi has overseen a massive crackdown, jailing thousands of Islamists, but also secular activists involved in the country's 2011 uprising. Many other activists, journalists and academics have fled the country.

SAUDI ARABIA INITIATIVE

As expected, Saudi Arabia had a large presence, both inside the COP27 venues and outside.

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On the sidelines of an event, on Monday Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pledged \$2.5 billion to fund regional efforts to combat climate change.

The crown prince said the money would support initial projects and the budget for the Middle East Green Initiative, which Saudi Arabia launched a year ago. Saudi Arabia had a large pavilion outside the venue dedicated to its green initiatives.

Salman also said the kingdom's Public Investment Fund would target net zero carbon emissions by 2050, through a circular carbon economy approach.

Many climate change activists say the strategy and investments are simply a way for Saudi Arabia, one of the world's largest oil producers, to continue with business as usual. They say the circular carbon strategy focuses on unreliable carbon capture and storage technologies rather than phasing out fossil fuels.

AP Top 25 Reality Check: ND is back; Who else can return?

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

No. 20 Notre Dame is back in The Associated Press college football poll after struggling early this season.

Meanwhile, Oklahoma State and Wake Forest became the latest teams from the preseason AP Top 25 to slide out as eight ranked teams lost this past weekend.

Heading into the stretch of the season, there are 14 teams that started the season ranked and are now unranked. If that number holds it would match the record for turnover from start to finish in the AP Top 25 presented by Regions Bank.

The preseason No. 5 Fighting Irish were near the top of the list of the season's most disappointing teams after losses to Marshall and Stanford. Now after handing Clemson its first loss, Notre Dame has a chance to make a strong closing statement.

Who else among the preseason ranked to unranked has a path back? Certainly not preseason No. 6 Texas A&M (3-6) or preseason No. 16 Miami (4-5). Scratch preseason No. 15 Michigan State (4-5) off the list, too.

At 5-4, a four-game winning streak (including a bowl game) to end the season could get preseason No. 9 Oklahoma, preseason No. 17 Pittsburgh, preseason No. 18 Arkansas and preseason No. 19 Wisconsin back in the final Top 25.

The window has probably closed for preseason No. 24 Houston (5-4) and preseason No. 25 BYU (5-5).

Keep an eye on preseason No. 10 Baylor (6-3). The defending Big 12 champions still have a chance to get back to the conference title game. Same goes from preseason No. 23 Cincinnati in the American Athletic Conference.

Tricky schedules down the stretch face preseason No. 20 Kentucky (6-3) and preseason No. 22 Wake Forest (6-3). Preseason No. 12 Oklahoma State (6-3) needs to get healthy.

Teams change throughout a season, which is why Reality Check supports second chances. and encourages voters to keep those teams that fall out of the rankings on the radar.

No. 1 Georgia (9-0)

Next: at Mississippi State, Saturday.

Reality check: With a disruptive performance against Tennessee, DT Jalen Carter showed the country why he will be one of the first players picked in the next NFL draft.

Ranking: Do you have to ask?

No. 2 Ohio State (9-0)

Next: vs. Indiana, Saturday.

Reality check: Getting QB C.J. Stroud a little more involved in the running game might be the boost the Buckeyes need on the ground. He ran for 79 yards at Northwestern.

Ranking: This is fine.

No. 3 Michigan (9-0)

Next: vs. Nebraska, Saturday.

Reality check: Only two Big Ten teams (Iowa and Rutgers) have fewer passes that have gained at least 10 yards than the Wolverines' 69. They're limited on the outside.

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Ranking: Just right.

No. 4 TCU (9-0)

Next: at No. 18 Texas, Saturday.

Reality check: Horned Frogs overcame another second-half deficit and faced another team that lost its starting quarterback to an in-game injury. They're good, but there is a loss — or two — coming.

Ranking: Little high.

No. 5 Tennessee (8-1)

Next: vs. Missouri, Saturday.

Reality check: The heavy lifting is done. The Vols have a chance to cruise home in potential playoff position against Missouri, South Carolina and Vanderbilt.

Ranking: Little low.

No. 6 Oregon (8-1)

Next: vs. No. 24 Washington, Saturday

Reality check: The Ducks' stretch run will prove their worth: Washington, No. 13 Utah, Oregon State and likely either No. 8 USC or No. 9 UCLA in the Pac-12 title game.

Ranking: Just right.

No. 7 LSU (7-2)

Next: at Arkansas, Saturday.

Reality check: The development of QB Jaylen Daniels has been remarkable.

Ranking: Tigers are seventh in the SEC in offense (6.10 yards per play) and 10th in defense (5.52), but a plus-4 turnover margin and the ability to do different things well week-to-week has them with a chance to win the conference.

No. 8 Southern California (8-1)

Next: vs. Colorado, Saturday.

Reality check: Trojans are down to 108th nationally in yards per play allowed. If QB Caleb Williams can win a Pac-12 championship, give him the Heisman.

Ranking: Too high.

No. 9 UCLA (8-1)

Next: vs. Arizona, Saturday.

Reality check: Bruins ran for 392 yards without star RB Zach Charbonnet against Arizona State. Nobody better than coach Chip Kelly at scheming up the running game.

Ranking: Little high.

No. 10 Alabama (7-2)

Next: at No. 11 Mississippi, Saturday.

Reality check: The inability of a high-level wide receiver to emerge from a room full of blue-chip recruits is the most confusing part of the Tide's struggles.

Ranking: Little low. Remember, two losses on the road on the last play of the game.

No. 11 Mississippi (8-1)

Next: vs. No. 10 Alabama, Saturday.

Reality check: Welcome to Lane Kiffin watch season as the open Auburn job will crank up the speculation about the Ole Miss coach's future.

Ranking: Too high.

No. 12 Clemson (8-1)

Next: vs. Louisville, Saturday.

Reality check: You could see trouble on the horizon for Clemson throughout its 8-0 start, but, boy, did it come crashing down against Notre Dame. Most troublesome: The Tigers' touted D-line getting mauled.

Ranking: This OK.

No. 13 Utah (7-2)

Next: vs. Stanford, Saturday.

Reality check: Utes have not gotten the star season expected out of RB Tavion Thomas, but still rank

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fourth in the Pac-12 in rushing at 4.96 yards per carry thanks to mobile QB Cam Rising and deep tailback room.

Ranking: Just right.

No. 14 Penn State (8-1)

Next: vs. Maryland, Saturday.

Reality check: RB Nick Singleton hits more home runs, but fellow freshman Kaytron Allen is the Nittany Lions' best all-around back. Allen makes a lot of great 5-yard runs.

Ranking: Too low.

No. 15 North Carolina (8-1)

Next: at Wake Forest, Saturday.

Reality check: This week in Drake Maye being awesome: The second-year quarterback casually puts up 293 yards passing, 74 rushing and three total touchdowns.

Ranking: Little high.

No. 16 Tulane (8-1)

Next: vs. No. 22 UCF, Saturday.

Reality check: Green Wave defense is a master class in bend don't break. Tulane ranks last in the American in tackles for loss, first in fewest explosive plays allowed.

Ranking: Too high.

No. 17 North Carolina State (7-2)

Next: vs. Boston College, Saturday.

Reality check: You might be able to pass against the Wolfpack's defense in a game. You might be able to run against it in a game. But the key is, they will rarely let you do both.

Ranking: Just right.

No. 18 Texas (6-3)

Next: vs. No. 4 TCU, Saturday.

Reality check: In six of their seven games against Power Five teams, the Longhorns have been outscored in the second half.

Ranking: Too high.

No. 19 Liberty (8-1)

Next: at Connecticut, Saturday.

Reality check: Hugh Freeze's teams get a lot for offense, but it's the defense propelling the Flames. They are 21st in the country in yards per play allowed 1t 4.95.

Ranking: Little high.

No. 20 Notre Dame (6-3)

Next: vs. Navy in Baltimore, Saturday

Reality check: The way this season has gone for the Irish, they will follow up beating Clemson with losing to the Midshipmen (3-6).

Ranking: Touch high.

No. 21 Illinois (7-2)

Next: vs. Purdue, Saturday.

Reality check: Illini opened the door a crack for the rest of the Big Ten West by slipping up against Michigan State in a game they outgained the Spartans by 141 yards.

Ranking: Too low.

No. 22 UCF (7-2)

Next: at No. 16 Tulane, Saturday.

Reality check: How good are the Knights chances to play in the AAC title game if they beat Tulane? They'd be alone in first with Navy and South Florida left to play.

Ranking: Too low.

No. 23 Kansas State (6-3)

Next: at Baylor, Saturday.

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Reality check: Wildcats still have Big 12 title hopes, because the Big 12 is kind of nuts.

Ranking: Just right.

No. 24 Washington (7-2)

Next: at No. 6 Oregon, Saturday.

Reality check: Huskies fans have to hope trio of dynamic third-year receivers — Rome Odunze, Jalen McMillan and Ja'Lynn Polk — return to Seattle next season.

Ranking: Touch high.

No. 25 Florida State (6-3)

Next: at Syracuse, Saturday.

Reality check: Seminoles are better than their record, with a top 20 offense (7.01 yards per play, ninth in FBS) and defense (4.73, 11th).

Ranking: Too low.

Kyiv region still struggles 6 months after Russian retreat

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

MOSCHUN, Ukraine (AP) — Standing amid the wreckage of his home, Vadym Zherdetsky shows photos on his phone of how it once looked: handsome rooms, a hand-carved wooden bed and a chest of drawers he intended to leave to his grandchildren.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February, two missiles struck the house in the tiny village of Moschun on the outskirts of Kyiv, the capital, ripping off the roof and nearly killing four family members. The town was recaptured from Russian forces in April, but Zherdetsky's house, like many others in the Kyiv region, remains in ruins.

"Everything changed. Our lives changed," the 51-year-old said, wiping away tears. "Thank God it was only property, and we are alive and healthy. ... I don't know where our kids and grandkids will live. I don't know anything."

More than six months after Russian forces retreated from the towns around Kyiv, residents of those communities are still struggling to rebuild their lives. An estimated 1 million people — half the number who fled the region — have returned, according to local authorities. But many no longer have jobs, cannot afford to fix their houses and say they need more assistance.

Nearly \$350 billion is needed for reconstruction across the war-ravaged country, and that amount is expected to grow, according to a report in September by Ukraine's government, the European Commission and the World Bank.

Burdened with the fighting and frequent Russian attacks on the country's power system, the Ukrainian government is straining to carry out the most urgent repairs to civilian residences. This month it plans to send 1,000 crews to do as much work as possible before winter, including fixing 117 high-rise buildings in the Kyiv region, the area's military administration said.

People submit photos of their destroyed homes to a government app to receive compensation. However, large-scale reconstruction — such as the \$300,000 that Zherdetsky estimates is needed to repair his house — has yet to begin.

Moschun, with a population of about 1,000, was hit hard at the start of the war. Approximately 37 people were killed and 160 homes destroyed, residents say. The town was occupied by Russian troops for nearly six weeks.

Walking through the debris, Zherdetsky nostalgically points to the carefully constructed archways he designed to allow two of his grandchildren to ride through on their scooters at the same time.

He and his wife have moved to a cramped space above a convenience store they own on the edge of town. He's now earning about 10 times less than he did before Russia's invasion, because prices have spiked and people don't have money to spend. The drop in income has prevented him from buying building materials and warm clothes ahead of winter, he said.

Reconstruction is challenging, especially since 60% of the country's budget is allocated for the war, Oleksiy Kuleba, head of the Kyiv region military administration, told The Associated Press.

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"The Kyiv region is bombarded with missiles and drones ... We understand that everything is not happening as quickly as we would like, but 28,000 objects were damaged in the region. We will rebuild them all," said Kuleba, who said housing is a priority.

Moscow is targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure to drive the nation into the cold of the impending winter. Since early October, it has destroyed approximately 40% of the country's energy system, forcing Ukraine to impose rolling blackouts while racing to stabilize the grid.

The strikes drew a warning from the mayor of Kyiv, who said that residents should be prepared for the worst this winter, including the threat of having no electricity, water or heat.

Worried that the energy system will not hold, the government is urging Ukrainians who fled the country not to return until after winter, said Iryna Vereshchuk, the minister for the reintegration of the Russian-occupied territories.

Analysts warn that displaced people should be cautious about going back to areas around Kyiv that have been regained by Ukraine because some are not yet fully secure, especially with Russia's military buildup in neighboring Belarus, which poses a risk of a renewed invasion from the north.

In the quest for assistance, Ukraine "still struggles to mobilize donors for rapid rebuilding and necessary security measures," said Orysia Lutsevych, head of the Ukraine forum at Chatham House, a London-based think tank.

Some aid groups are trying to help those who have returned. The International Committee of the Red Cross gave two generators to help Moschun cope with power cuts, as well as insulation to help prepare buildings for the fast-approaching cold, said Achille Despres, committee spokesman in Ukraine. In July, other organizations provided some 60 prefabricated houses for those without shelter.

Yet Moschun locals worry that even with heaters, those temporary houses won't be warm enough come winter. Many say they feel abandoned.

"It's like a dead city," said Nataliya Perekhrestenko, the deputy administrator of Moschun. "We feel like no one cares about us."

US voters fret about democracy, polarization before election

By GARY FIELDS, GILLIAN FLACCUS and MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

American voters are fractured politically and culturally ahead of Election Day, and they are anxious about where their country is heading — on inflation, abortion, immigration, crime, and much more.

They also sense something more fundamental at stake at a time of rising mistrust of institutions and each other: the future of democracy.

Some Americans remain hopeful, but a fretful outlook emerges from interviews with more than two dozen Democratic, Republican and unaffiliated voters before Tuesday's midterm elections — the first since followers of former President Donald Trump tried to halt the certification of President Joe Biden's 2020 victory.

These midterm elections are also the first since the Supreme Court took away a woman's constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy, leaving the matter to states.

"This election is hugely consequential," said Edward Foley, a professor at Ohio State University who directs its election-law program. "It's a question of where our democracy is and how we are doing with our collective self-governance."

Midterms are always important because a switch in control of the House or Senate can stunt the plans of a sitting president. Control of Congress could also affect various investigations into Trump, including his role in the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection.

Dozens of statewide candidates have said the 2020 election was stolen; some running for positions that validate elections have refused to say if they will certify the 2024 results. And there are already more than 100 legal challenges against this year's election.

The United States has stood at the precipice before. Not long after Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860, 11 states withdrew from the nation and the Civil War began.

Ultimately, Foley said, the election turns on a question: "Can we actually build the system and produce

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accurate, honest outcomes, and will enough people believe them?"

Here is a sampling of what voters had to say about democracy and other issues:

COLLEGE STUDENT 'MOTIVATED TO CHANGE THINGS'

Brian Montes' Mexican-born parents told him that America is "a shining city on a hill" and urged him to take his responsibility as a U.S. citizen seriously.

Montes, 21, is majoring in political science at Portland State University, and will vote this election for the second time in his life.

Montes was appalled to see election deniers attempt to overturn President Biden's victory. For him, democracy is on the ballot this November.

"Protecting our democracy truly is ... paramount. We can't really fix climate change, we can't, you know, help the health care system, we can't bring relief to students across this country until we have faith in our democracy," he said.

Montes, who is gay, also worries that political beliefs are now such a part of personal identity that it's almost impossible to separate politics from hate.

In the past, someone on the other side of an issue simply had "a different perspective as to why or how we can better our country," he said. "Now it's whether or not somebody believes you have a right to be here, whether or not somebody believes you have a right to exist. And that is deeply personal."

But as the first person in his family to vote, Montes is also optimistic in the long-term.

"Our generation is uniquely motivated to change things, to change the systems of now — because the systems of today are the biggest reason we find ourselves in this position," he said.

— By AP Writer Gillian Flaccus

ELECTION IS ABOUT 'ECONOMY, FIRST AND FOREMOST'

Tony Bergida, a 27-year-old father from the Kansas City, Kansas suburb of Olathe, said pocketbook issues carry more weight for him in this election than abortion, transgender rights or the validity of the 2020 presidential election.

Bergida, the chair of the Kansas Young Republicans, cast his ballot in advance and picked Republican Amanda Adkins over the incumbent, Democratic Rep. Sharice Davids.

Democratic ads have focused on abortion protections but the election is "really going to be the economy, first and foremost," said Bergida, who said his grocery bill has soared over the past two years.

"The cost of living has got to be on everyone's minds right now."

Bergida is also opposed to transgender athletes participating in girls' sports, an issue that's at play in the Kansas gubernatorial race.

Republicans seeking to keep Democratic incumbent Laura Kelly from a second term have attacked Kelly for vetoing two proposals to ban transgender athletes from girls' and women's school and college sports.

"It's not fair, and it's not safe for that to happen," said Bergida, the father of a 2-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son and a former quarterback at Grinnell College in Iowa.

"I played sports and know what a locker room is like. Um, yeah, I've got a big problem with that."

— By AP Writer Heather Hollingsworth

WORRIED ABOUT SOCIAL SECURITY, WEALTH DISPARITY

Cynthia Jones was severely injured at work more than a decade ago and has relied on Social Security disability benefits to help pay bills and hold on to the ranch-style house left by her father.

The Atlanta native sees a country split between haves and have nots. She doesn't have health insurance that could pay for back surgery, but noted that members of Congress get access to health care and a pension. She worries that if Republicans take over Congress they will cut Social Security. (Republican Sen. Rick Scott of Florida has proposed a plan that would require Congress to adequately fund Social Security and Medicare or consider phasing them out.)

"If you're poor, you don't matter," said the 64-year-old Democratic voter, who is pursuing a master's

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degree to be a mental health counselor.

She was also motivated to vote this year by the false claim by Trump and other Republicans that the last presidential election was stolen. She views that lie as an attack on Black and other marginalized voters who cast ballots in large numbers in 2020.

"I feel like they're trying to put us back on the plantation," she said of the Republican Party.

That feeling is particularly hard for her. Her parents faced discrimination and financial hardship but were also able to save money and buy their own homes. She doesn't want the country to backtrack on that progress.

"I don't want to be not counted," she said. "I don't want to be seen as a third-class citizen. I don't want anybody to feel that way."

— By AP Writer Sudhin Thanawala

PUSHING FOR LATINO TURNOUT, GOOD GOVERNANCE

Ron Flores is a Republican retiree in his 70s who lives in a surf-friendly California beach community not far from the mostly Latino city of Santa Ana, where he lived as a child.

The son of a Mexican immigrant, Flores said he always had an interest in history and politics but didn't act on it until more recently and last year formed the group "BASTA!," which is aimed at encouraging Latinos to vote and promoting mostly — but not solely — politically conservative candidates.

"Are you honest? Are you going to do what we want you to do?" he asked. "I support good governance candidates and sometimes it's on the left, but most of the time, it's on my right."

In California, there are measures on the ballot right now about online gambling and abortion. But Flores said there are bigger issues, like how much it costs to fill his car with gas and the rising price of nearly everything.

"That impacts me, number one," said Flores, who said he raised six children and worked in product design and consulting.

For Congress, Flores said he's fed up with progressives' views on social issues so he's voting for a Republican. But he isn't thrilled about his choice.

"I'm going to go for the best of the worst," he said, pinching his nose.

— By AP Writer Amy Taxin

AFTER TRAGEDY, COMBATTING CRIME IS TOP OF MIND

Mary Elledge, 80, raised four children with her high school sweetheart in suburbs of Portland, Oregon. In 1986, her life was upended when her only son, Rob, was brutally murdered in their home.

The registered Democrat has been laser-focused since then on the rights of murder victims and their loved ones.

Now, as homicides spike in Portland, Elledge is choosing the independent candidate in Oregon's gubernatorial election. She feels Democrats have strayed too far to the left on public safety and it bothers her deeply.

"It isn't safe to let your children outside without being able to know exactly where they are," said Elledge, who has grandchildren and great-grandchildren. "What kind of a world are we bringing these children into?"

"I believe that being soft on crime is what's caused a lot of this," she said. "Anyone who wants to defund the police, I wouldn't vote for them if they talk like that."

Other than public safety, Elledge more neatly toes the Democratic Party line.

She believes in a woman's right to an abortion and she's "appalled" by former President Donald Trump. Elledge, who has family members who are Trump supporters, said she struggled after her son's murder to avoid descending into hatred and now sees a lesson in her own story for today's polarized times.

"You have to agree not to agree," Elledge said. "I think in all of this, we have to be careful that we don't become angry with everything."

— By AP Writer Gillian Flaccus

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TRANSGENDER DRAG PERFORMER FOCUSED ON 'RIGHT TO EXIST'

It took Emma Scott Lavin most of her life to realize who she was, and she's no longer willing to hide. Lavin, a 49-year-old transgender drag performer, waded into a crowd of protesters last month outside a Drag Queen Storytime in Eugene, Oregon.

She failed in her bid to engage with protesters and the incident increased her alarm as the far-right rallies around anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and advances legislative proposals in some states that would ban transgender girls and women from playing on female sports teams, from using female locker rooms or from accessing medical care for their transition.

"My right to exist is the biggest political issue for me right now," said Lavin, a Democrat. "It's on the ballot."

"There may be a lot of people who see this and say, 'This person, this person is everything that's wrong with America right now,'" she said, gesturing to her red lipstick, red-and-black dress, stiletto red suede boots and wig.

"But my response to that is, 'If you already know who and what I am or you think you know, then how can you possibly learn anything from me? ... If you believe that your religion tells you that you know everything and you know what other people are, then your religion is preventing you from learning and growing as a person.'"

Lavin believes that America's political system can't survive because there is no longer any middle ground.

"It's winner take all," she said. "There are people in the LGBT community who probably have a more Republican-leaning sense of how the economy could work, but they can't vote Republican because it's a question of their own existence."

— By AP Writer Gillian Flaccus

OPTIMIST IS AGAINST 'DEHUMANIZING THE OTHER SIDE'

The country's deep political divisions leave Mark Riegel, a draftsman from Boyertown, Pennsylvania, feeling disappointed.

But the 38-year-old registered Republican considers himself an optimist and believes Americans can rebuild a greater sense of shared purpose.

The key, he says, is to interact more intentionally with others who are different, even as politicians fan polarization.

"We have to realize that the other side is not the enemy," said Riegel. "We seem to be, like, becoming like children, infantilizing the other side, or dehumanizing the other side, or kind of saying that they're evil. Certainly, they're not evil. We just don't agree with them."

As Election Day approached, Riegel said he was leaning toward Democrats on the Pennsylvania ballot.

He doesn't believe GOP Senate candidate Dr. Mehmet Oz really cares about his adopted state of Pennsylvania, and he described GOP gubernatorial candidate Doug Mastriano as "pro-life to the extreme," too far right for his tastes.

Disavowing a politician because of their policy stance is OK. But when it comes to neighbors, a different approach is required.

"You can just go up and talk to people, face to face, shake their hand," he said. "Do you care whether or not your cashier at Giant is a Democrat or Republican?"

— By AP Writer Michael Rubinkam

SOCIAL WORKER LAMENTS 'JUST TWO PARTIES'

Abi Suddarth has always opposed abortion. When she got pregnant in college, she knew she would keep the baby.

That decision dramatically altered her life, but the social worker from Kansas City, Kansas, said that watching her son, now 7, grow up to be "as beautiful as he is, and smart, is the best thing I could have done."

Opposition to abortion is one of the key values that drive her political views; support for creating a more inclusive society is another.

A naturalized citizen, Suddarth was born in Mexico and is outraged by Trump's comments about immi-

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grants. She believes he and his Republican supporters have stoked political divisions in the U.S.

"When you become a president, you're not for one color skin," she said, tearing up as she described how some of her social work clients complain about her accent. "You are governing everybody. Even the ones who did not vote for you, you still have a responsibility to them because they are still paying taxes."

Suddarth – an unaffiliated voter -- hasn't decided yet how she will vote in a congressional race that pits Republican Amanda Adkins against the Democratic incumbent, Sharice Davids.

Suddarth often feels divided like this, she said.

"We need more than just two parties," she said. "There is some elections (where) ... you are like, 'OK, so I have to make a choice and I have to vote. So which one is going to harm me the least?'" she added.

"Because it's not even who is going to benefit me anymore."

— By AP Writer Heather Hollingsworth

CONCERNED ABOUT FREE SPEECH, FAIR ELECTIONS

Jennifer Quade believes it is possible that "shenanigans" during the 2020 election helped President Biden defeat Trump, and she resents being labeled an "election denier" just for saying so.

"When you have a free society where people are free to have an exchange of ideas, that is a free society, that is a Republic, that is what our country is supposed to be," said Quade, a 52-year-old Republican voter in Queen Anne's County, Maryland.

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

To Quade, a former nurse who now works in sales, it feels like big tech and media companies are working to silence, or at least marginalize, conservative voices.

Her idea for restoring everybody's faith in America's elections is to require a Republican and Democrat at every polling station "so they balance each other out."

Aside from election integrity, Quade said some of the issues that matter most to her are reducing illegal immigration and the illegal drug trade.

The country, she said is "being destroyed from within."

— By AP Writer Gary Fields

RETIRED ENGINEER CONTRASTS U.S. AND CHINA

As a naturalized U.S. citizen, Jerry Cheng doesn't mind the rough-and-tumble of American politics. The retired mechanical engineer cherishes his ability to participate in democracy — and especially his freedom to criticize politicians.

Those are things Cheng didn't have in China, where he was born and spent most of his life before settling in Philadelphia for good three years ago.

"Because of the whole one-party dictatorship in China, one-party rule, you have nothing, you have no right to say 'no.' Always 'yes, yes, yes,'" said Cheng, 66. "Here .. you have more choice."

Cheng, a registered Democrat, acknowledged that deep political divisions are roiling his adopted country. But he said that is "part of the cost of democracy."

"To criticize the government is necessary. Because the government always has the privileges," he said.

Cheng doesn't just talk about democracy, he lives it. He became involved in Asian American civic engagement for the first time this election. He educates people — many of them older and native Chinese speakers — about voting, how government works, and issues impacting the community.

"Nothing's perfect, including the American system," he said. "But compared to one-party dictatorship, it's much better. At least it gives people some chance to do business, to campaign for a political position."

Jimmy Kimmel to host Oscars again: 'Great honor or a trap'

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

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Jimmy Kimmel is ready to host the Oscars again, completing a trilogy that started with him presiding over the chaotic "envelope-gate" ceremony.

The late-night talk show host will preside over the ceremony in March, the show's producers said Monday. "We're super thrilled to have Jimmy score his hat trick on this global stage," executive producers and showrunners Glenn Weiss and Ricky Kirshner said in a joint statement. "We know he will be funny and ready for anything!"

Kimmel has hosted the show twice before, in 2017, when he managed the chaotic final moments in which the wrong best picture winner was called, and then the next year, which came just months into the #MeToo reckoning.

"Being invited to host the Oscars for a third time is either a great honor or a trap," Kimmel said. "Either way, I am grateful to the academy for asking me so quickly after everyone good said no."

After the 90th Oscars in 2018, which Kimmel hosted to generally positive reviews, the Academy Awards went without a host until the 94th ceremony earlier this year when Regina Hall, Amy Schumer and Wanda Sykes shared the stage.

"Jimmy is the perfect host to help us recognize the incredible artists and films of our 95th Oscars," added academy CEO Bill Kramer and academy President Janet Yang. "His love of movies, live TV expertise, and ability to connect with our global audiences will create an unforgettable experience for our millions of viewers worldwide."

Molly McNearney, who is the co-head writer and executive producer of "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" and is married to Kimmel, will also serve as an executive producer on the Oscars broadcast. Ratings have been a bit of a rollercoaster for the esteemed Hollywood awards show. The 94th Oscars was an improvement with 15.36 million viewers, but that was also in comparison to the previous year's record low, which befell many COVID-modified awards shows. As always ratings will be paramount for broadcaster ABC.

"Having Jimmy Kimmel return to host the Oscars is a dream come true. As we see every night on his own show, Jimmy can handle anything with both heart and humor, and we know that he will deliver the laughs and celebratory moments that define the Oscars," said Craig Erwich, president of ABC Entertainment, Hulu & Disney Branded Television Streaming Originals. "We love being the home of Hollywood's biggest night and can't wait to toast the success of this year's cinema and storytelling."

This next event is a landmark anniversary year for the show, and the first to follow The Slap, in which Will Smith struck presenter Chris Rock on stage. Smith, who went on to win best actor that night, was banned from the Oscars for 10 years as a result. The organization's leadership has said that they'd like to move on from the slap and focus on a ceremony that celebrates cinema.

The 95th Oscars will be held on Sunday, March 12 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles and will be broadcast live on ABC in more than 200 territories worldwide.

Today in History: November 8, Hitler's "Beer-Hall Putsch"

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 8, the 312th day of 2022. There are 53 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 8, 1923, Adolf Hitler launched his first attempt at seizing power in Germany with a failed coup in Munich that came to be known as the "Beer-Hall Putsch."

On this date:

In 1793, the Louvre began admitting the public, even though the French museum had been officially open since August.

In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln won reelection as he defeated Democratic challenger George B. McClellan.

In 1889, Montana became the 41st state.

In 1935, the movies "Mutiny on the Bounty," starring Clark Gable and Charles Laughton, and "A Night at

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the Opera," starring the Marx Brothers, premiered in New York.

In 1942, Operation Torch, resulting in an Allied victory, began during World War II as U.S. and British forces landed in French North Africa.

In 1950, during the Korean War, the first jet-plane battle took place as U.S. Air Force Lt. Russell J. Brown shot down a North Korean MiG-15.

In 1966, Republican Ronald Reagan was elected governor of California, defeating Democratic incumbent Pat Brown.

In 1974, a federal judge in Cleveland dismissed charges against eight Ohio National Guardsmen accused of violating the civil rights of students who were killed or wounded in the 1970 Kent State shootings.

In 2000, a statewide recount began in Florida, which emerged as critical in deciding the winner of the 2000 presidential election. Earlier that day, Vice President Al Gore had telephoned Texas Gov. George W. Bush to concede, but called back about an hour later to retract his concession.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 1441, aimed at forcing Saddam Hussein to disarm or face "serious consequences." President George W. Bush said the new resolution presented the Iraqi regime "with a final test."

In 2011, an asteroid as big as an aircraft carrier zipped by Earth in the closest encounter by such a massive space rock in more than three decades.

In 2016, Republican Donald Trump was elected America's 45th president, defeating Democrat Hillary Clinton in an astonishing victory for a celebrity businessman and political novice. Republicans kept their majorities in the Senate and House.

Ten years ago: Jared Lee Loughner was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the January 2011 shootings in Tucson, Arizona, that killed six people and wounded 13 others, including Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. Longtime baseball executive and Hall of Famer Lee MacPhail, 95, died in Delray Beach, Florida.

Five years ago: In a speech to South Korean lawmakers in Seoul, President Donald Trump warned North Korea, "Do not underestimate us." Director Ridley Scott decided to cut Kevin Spacey out of the already-completed movie "All the Money in the World" because of the sexual misconduct allegations against Spacey and reshoot his many scenes using Christopher Plummer, just six weeks ahead of the film's release date. Garth Brooks continued his winning streak as entertainer of the year at the Country Music Association Awards.

One year ago: A U.S. House committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection issued subpoenas to six more associates of former President Donald Trump who were involved in his efforts to overturn his defeat in the 2020 election. The U.S. fully reopened to many vaccinated international travelers, allowing families and friends to reunite for the first time since the coronavirus emerged. A new mandate in the city of Los Angeles required people visiting shopping malls, theaters, gyms or nail salons to verify they were vaccinated against COVID-19. President Joe Biden welcomed the NBA champion Milwaukee Bucks to the White House; the Bucks were the first NBA champions to visit the White House in nearly five years.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Alain Delon is 87. Singer-actor Bonnie Bramlett is 78. Singer Bonnie Raitt is 73. TV personality Mary Hart is 72. Former Playboy Enterprises chairman and chief executive Christie Hefner is 70. Actor Alfre Woodard is 70. Singer-songwriter Rickie Lee Jones is 68. Nobel Prize-winning author Kazuo Ishiguro is 68. Rock musician Pearl Thompson (The Cure) is 65. Singer-actor Leif Garrett is 61. Chef and TV personality Gordon Ramsay is 56. Actor Courtney Thorne-Smith is 55. Actor Parker Posey is 54. Actor Roxana Zal is 53. Singer Diana King is 52. Actor Gonzalo Menendez is 51. Rock musician Scott Devendorf (The National) is 50. Actor Gretchen Mol is 50. ABC News anchor David Muir is 49. Actor Matthew Rhys is 48. Actor Tara Reid is 47. Country singer Bucky Covington is 45. Actor Dania Ramirez is 43. Actor Azura Skye is 41. Actor Chris Rankin is 39. TV personality Jack Osbourne is 37. Actor Jessica Lowndes is 34. R&B singer SZA is 33. New York Yankees outfielder and designated hitter Giancarlo Stanton is 33. Singer-actor Riker Lynch is 31. Country singer Lauren Alaina is 28. Actor Van Crosby (TV: "Splitting Up Together") is 20.