

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar

Due to the weather conditions, the Groton Area School District will be closed on Thursday, November 10, 2022.

The Veteran's Day activities scheduled for Friday, November 11, including the Veterans Breakfast and the Veterans Day program will be postponed to Monday, November 14.

A decision about classes for Friday will be made at a later time.

A phone was sent out; however, due to vendor issues, not everyone received a phone call this morning.

Thursday, Nov. 10

Senior Menu: Chicken tetrazzini, mixed vegetables, honey fruit salad, vanilla pudding, whole wheat potatoes.

UMC: Bible Study with Ashley, 6:30 p.m.

Junior High Girls Basketball at Webster, 7th grade at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade.

Friday, Nov. 11 - VETERAN'S DAY

Senior Menu: Goulash, green beans, baked apples, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Eggs and sausage.

School Lunch: Pizza, green beans.

Postponed to Monday: Veteran's Day Program, 2 p.m., GHS Arena

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

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

"The traditions we create will be the memories our children will cherish in the future."

- Author Unknown



Saturday, Nov. 12

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession: 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass: 4:30 p.m.

Combined JH GBB game at Aberdeen Christian, 10 a.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)

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Ice Storm hits area

An ice storm hit the area Wednesday night into Thursday morning. A few tree branches came down and all were full of a glaze of ice. The roads in Groton are good; however, out of town, they are not so good as Groton Area called off school for today.



GROTON'S EVENTS

Nov. 11-13 Front Porch
605 Christmas at the Barn
10am-5pm each day

Nov. 19 American
Legion Post #39 Turkey
Party 6:30pm

Nov. 24 Community
Thanksgiving at the
Community Center
11:30am-1pm

Dec. 3 Holiday Tour of
Homes & Silent Auction
at Olive Grove Golf
Course 4-7pm



Dec. 10 Santa Claus
Day at Professional
Management Services
9am-12pm



Jan. 29, 2023 Groton
Robotics Pancake Feed
at the Community
Center 10am-1pm



Jan. 29, 2023 85th Carnival of
Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce

120 N Main St., Groton, SD 57445

605-397-8422

GrotonChamber.com



Chamber donates to Community Thanksgiving Dinner

The Groton Area Chamber of Commerce decided at its November meeting to donate \$100 to the Groton Community Thanksgiving Dinner fund. Barb and Tom Paepke have been heading up the event for at least 13 years. Pictured are Chamber members and the Paepkes: Douglas Heinrich, April Abeln, Tom and Barb Paepke and Kellie Locke. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State prepares to implement Medicaid expansion next summer, expects 'significant' hiring

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 9, 2022 12:46 PM

A solid majority of South Dakotans voted to expand eligibility for the state's Medicaid programs Tuesday. Constitutional Amendment D passed with 56% of the vote, or 191,781 votes, according to unofficial reporting from the Secretary of State's Office.

"It's long overdue," said Rick Weiland, committee chair and treasurer for Dakotans for Health, which campaigned in favor of the amendment. "Sometimes you have to go directly to the people, and they know what they wanted."

Now, the state government is setting a plan into action to make Medicaid available to 42,500 low-income South Dakotans ages 18 to 64 by July 1, 2023.

Medicaid expansion will cover such adults who earn up to 138% of the federal poverty level, or about \$38,295 for a family of four, said Steve Long, public information officer for the Department of Social Services.

DSS expects around 52,000 newly eligible individuals will enroll, Long said in a written statement, "but those estimates have been exceeded in every other state that has expanded Medicaid."

DSS has formed a leadership team to oversee implementation and its effects on operations. Long expects that a "significant number of additional staff and technology resources" will be needed.

The expansion will have an impact statewide, Weiland said, adding that the cost of uninsured South Dakotans seeking medical care gets passed onto people who have private insurance already through the overall cost of healthcare.

Zach Marcus, campaign manager of South Dakotans Decide Healthcare, said \$328 million in federal taxes will stay in South Dakota because of expanded Medicaid programs, based on calculations from figures released by the Legislative Resource Council.

"That's our money that we paid into taxes and aren't receiving the benefit from," Marcus said. "Those dollars stay here instead of going somewhere else."

The coalition also estimated during its campaign that Medicaid expansion will generate \$3.5 billion in new economic output by 2025, including \$800 million by 2023.

"This huge coalition of organizations that came together to help pass this shows why this is going to be so good for South Dakota," Marcus said. "There are so many groups that see this benefiting them and their organizations, and this will be such a good thing with all these people coming together behind it."

South Dakota was one of 12 holdout states that implemented Medicaid expansion in the 2022 election since it was first effective in 2014.

After Medicaid expansion was discussed during the 2022 State Legislative season and failed, petitioners brought the issue to voters.

"If you know South Dakota well enough, we've had a lot of success when the Legislature fails to step up by going directly to the people," Weiland said.



MAKENZIE HUBER  

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Prosecutors win judgeships in two state court circuits

Incumbent fends off Beadle County challenger in only other contested judicial race

BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 9, 2022 1:54 PM

The longtime Lawrence County State's Attorney will ride out the twilight of his legal career on the bench in South Dakota's Fourth Judicial Circuit.

John H. Fitzgerald, 67, bested four other candidates Tuesday for the single open seat in the circuit – the largest slate of candidates for a single judgeship since the 1972 election.

Near the end of the campaign, the candidate Fitzgerald earned an admonishment for holding two political positions in the county from the South Dakota Special Committee on Judicial Election Campaign Intervention. Judges are required to avoid political activity. Fitzgerald resigned his county GOP posts shortly after that news broke.

Ultimately, it didn't move the needle in a race where Fitzgerald's name was arguably the most recognizable. The Deadwood-based prosecutor, who spent nearly three decades handling criminal cases in Lawrence County after beginning his career as Butte County State's Attorney, led the race with 36 % of the vote. A total of 8,124 cast their ballot for Fitzgerald.

"I look forward to applying my experience, skills and knowledge from being a State's Attorney for the past 40 years to the new position of circuit court judge," Fitzgerald said Wednesday in a written statement.

Behind the victor were private attorney and former Division of Criminal Investigation Director David Natvig in second place, followed by third-highest vote-getter Chad Callahan, a magistrate judge, then by private attorneys Jennifer Tomac and Tina Hogue in fourth and fifth place.

On the opposite end of the state, Assistant Attorney General Doug Barnett sewed up a seat on the Second Judicial Circuit bench, besting Magistrate Judge Eric Johnson 63-37% for the Sioux Falls-based post.

In the Third Circuit, 68-year-old incumbent Robert Spears defeated Beadle County State's Attorney Michael Moore in a much closer race. The Watertown-based judgeship saw Spears come out ahead by less than 1,000 votes to win 51-49%.

Fitzgerald and Spears will both face mandatory retirement at age 70. The governor will choose replacement judges to serve out their terms in the interim period between their retirement and the next judicial election in 2030.



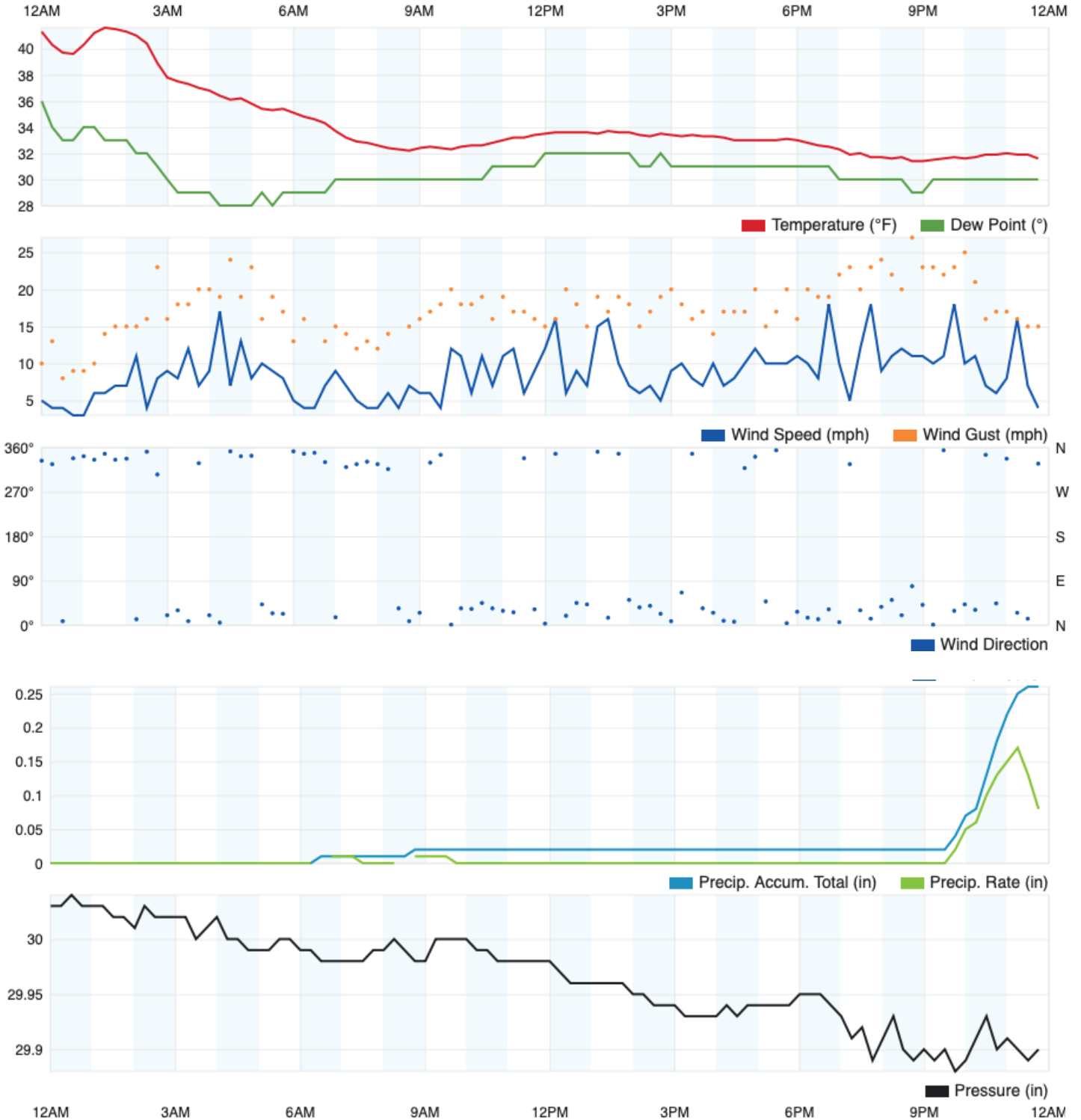
JOHN HULT  

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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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

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Blustery.
Wintry Mix
then Chance
Snow

High: 27 °F ↓



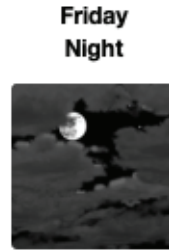
Mostly Cloudy
and Blustery
then Mostly
Cloudy

Low: 11 °F



Partly Sunny

High: 20 °F



Mostly Cloudy

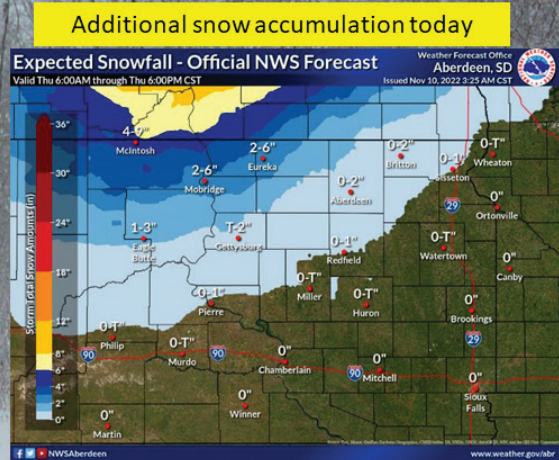
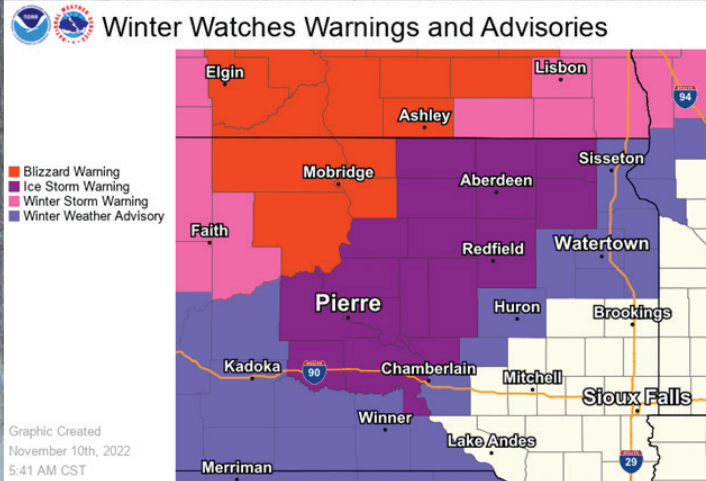
Low: 3 °F



Mostly Sunny

High: 18 °F

Winter Storm Continues Today



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created
11/10/2022 5:43 AM

Periods of freezing rain and snow will continue across the area today. Winds will be out of a north to northwesterly direction, and will generally be in the 20 to 30 mph range, with gusts up to 40 mph possible through the day today. Precipitation will come to an end by this afternoon or early this evening.

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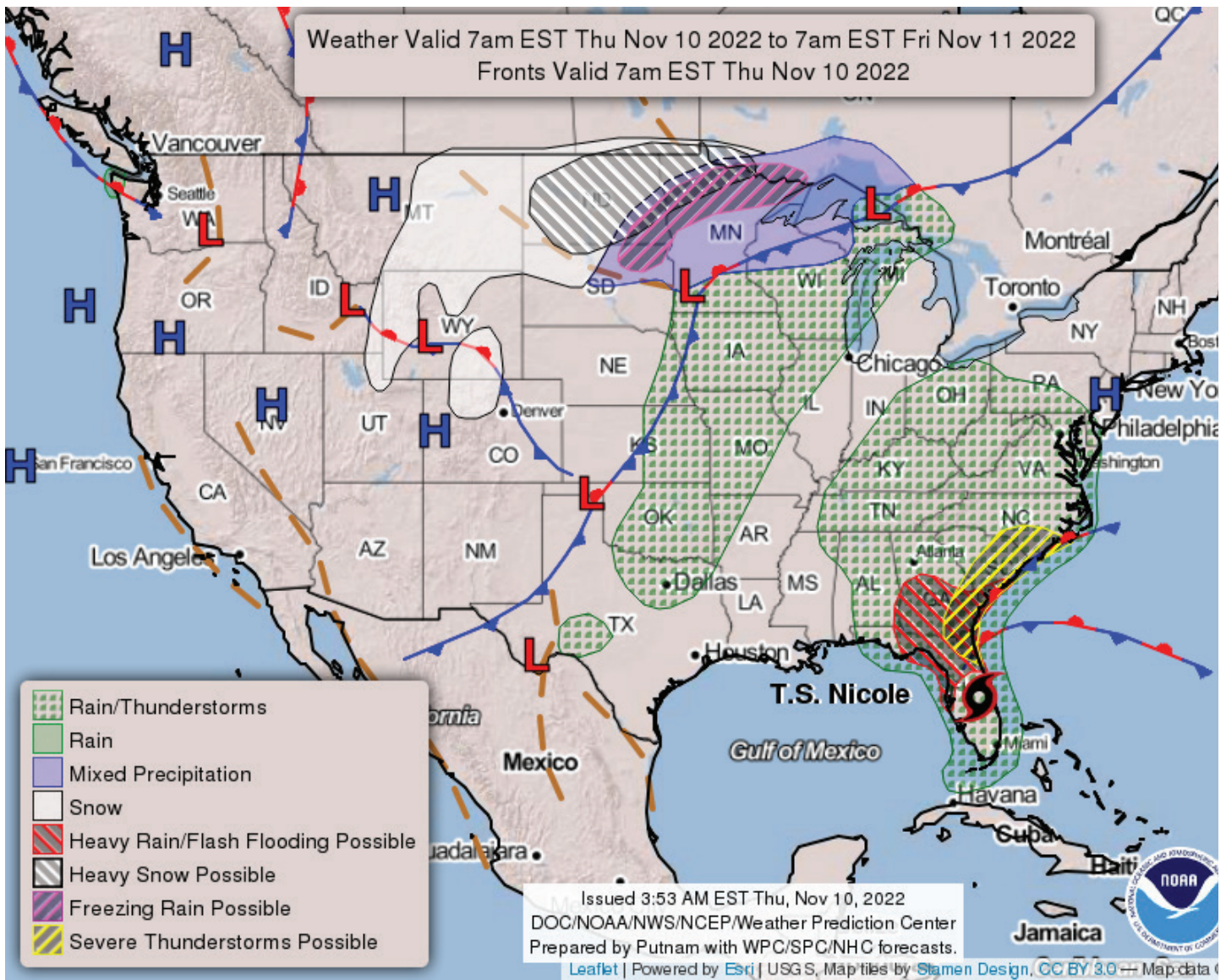
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 41.6 °F at 1:30 AM
Low Temp: 31.4 °F at 9:00 PM
Wind: 27 mph at 8:45 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 46 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 69 in 1954
Record Low: -7 in 1896
Average High: 45°F
Average Low: 22°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.31
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 20.78
Precip Year to Date: 16.50
Sunset Tonight: 5:09:31 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:24:32 AM



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Today in Weather History

November 10th, 1998: Heavy snow fell across central, north-central, and northeast South Dakota from the early morning hours of the 9th into the late afternoon hours of the 10th. Heavy snow also fell across west-central Minnesota from late in the evening on the 9th to the early morning hours of the 10th. Snowfall amounts ranged from 6 to 14 inches. Early in the storm, much of the precipitation fell as rain, freezing rain, and heavy wet snow. During the early morning hours of the 10th, northwest winds increased to 20 to 50 mph and gusted at times to 60 mph. These high winds brought widespread blizzard conditions into the late evening hours of the 10th. On both the 10th and 11th, most area schools were closed, along with many highways, including Highways 12 and 83.

Interstates 29 and 90 were also closed due to slick roads and near-zero visibilities. Hundreds of vehicles were stranded in this storm, with many people needing rescue, and many motorists slid off the streets. There were also numerous accidents, with a few resulting in injuries. Due to the ice buildup from the rain, freezing rain, and wet snow early in the storm, along with the high winds, many tree limbs, some trees, and power lines and poles were brought down, which resulted in multiple power outages across the region. The area most affected by power outages was north of a line from Mobridge to Ipswich, along Highway 212, to the North Dakota border. Some 25 cities were affected by power outages. Hosmer was without power for over 40 hours. At South Shore, a family lost power for 120 hours. A lineman tried to get to the home twice but could not because of the low visibility. A teenager was also lost overnight near South Shore while he was hunting with friends. He was found at 8 am the next morning. In Watertown, two people were injured in an accident. Several of the downed trees across parts of the area blocked traffic for a time. Numerous businesses were closed, and activities were canceled on the 9th and 10th. In Pierre, the strong winds ripped the canopy off the Amoco gas station. The blizzard brought the fifth-lowest barometric pressure on record to Watertown. Some snowfall amounts from this horrible blizzard included; 15.4 inches near Bryant; 12.5 inches in Webster; 12.3 in Pierre; 10.8 in Sisseton; 10.5 inches near Summit; 10.0 inches in Pollock and near Onida; and 9.0 in Blunt and Conde.

1915 - An unusually late season tornado struck the central Kansas town of Great Bend killing eleven persons along its 35 mile track. The tornado destroyed 160 homes in Great Bend killing 11 persons and causing a million dollars damage. Hundreds of dead ducks dropped from the sky northeast of the track's end. (The Weather Channel)

1975 - Another freshwater fury hit the Great Lakes. A large ore carrier on Lake Superior, the Edmund Fitzgerald, sank near Crisp Point with the loss of its crew of 29 men. Eastern Upper Michigan and coastal Lower Michigan were hardest hit by the storm, which produced wind gusts to 71 at Sault Ste Marie MI, and gusts to 78 mph at Grand Rapids MI. Severe land and road erosion occurred along the Lake Michigan shoreline. A popular hit song by Gordon Lightfoot was inspired by the storm. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A cold front brought snow to the Appalachian Region and freezing temperatures to the central U.S. Up to nine inches of snow blanketed Garrett County of extreme western Maryland. Freezing temperatures were reported as far south as El Paso TX and San Angelo TX. Gale force winds lashed the Middle Atlantic Coast and the coast of southern New England. Thunderstorms brought fire quenching rains to Alabama, and produced large hail and damaging winds to eastern North Carolina. Ahead of the cold front, seven cities in Florida and Georgia reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 80s. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Strong winds circulating around a deep low pressure system in southeastern Ontario buffeted the northeastern U.S., with the Lower Great Lakes Region hardest hit. Winds in western New York State gusted to 68 mph at Buffalo, to 69 mph at Niagara Falls, and to 78 mph at Brockport. Four persons were injured at Rome NY when a tree was blown onto their car. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong southwesterly winds prevailed along the eastern slopes of the Rockies in Montana and Wyoming. Winds of 80 to 90 mph prevailed across the northwest chinook zone of Montana, with gusts to 112 mph. Unseasonably warm weather accompanied the high winds. Shortly after midnight the temperature at Kalispell, MT, reached a record 59 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WONDERS AND MIRACLES

Have you ever planted a seed in a jar, placed it in a window where the sun's warmth and light were at work and watched in "wonder" as God brought life to that small "package?" Left in darkness, little, if anything, would have happened. But when the seed was placed in soil, nourished by the sun and the life-giving elements in the soil, its thirst quenched by water, a "miracle" took place. It "did" what God created it to do.

Some might question the difference between the words, "wonder" and "miracle." We often watch in awe when we do not understand what is going on around us. Sometimes things that "amaze" us are easily explained by someone who knows more than we do. Then, when we understand what happened, we may still be filled with wonder, but it is no longer a mystery. It's like God's love for us. We wonder "why" and "how" He loves until we know Jesus.

A miracle, however, is some event or action that cannot be explained. It is an extraordinary event that demonstrates God's power. Without giving us any warning or making any announcement, He "invades what is going on" and unpredictably changes things to let us know "who is in charge!" What has been, no longer is, and what will be cannot be predicted. It was obvious in the journey of the Israelites: God unexpectedly saved and protected them. So, the Psalmist wrote, "Remember His miracles." It was His grace that saved them.

But what about miracles in our lives? "By His grace, we can be saved." Like them, He will save us, too. Now, that's a miracle all can enjoy!

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for Your love, mercy, grace, and salvation. They are so undeserved and yet are such strong evidence of your love. May we never forget these miracles! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced. Psalm 105:5



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
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

08-11-18-27-29

(eight, eleven, eighteen, twenty-seven, twenty-nine)

Estimated jackpot: \$161,000

Lotto America

01-05-07-15-52, Star Ball: 4, ASB: 3

(one, five, seven, fifteen, fifty-two; Star Ball: four; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$30,240,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 189,000,000

Powerball

07-14-24-30-56, Powerball: 7, Power Play: 2

(seven, fourteen, twenty-four, thirty, fifty-six; Powerball: seven; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$47,000,000

Dentlinger's 19 lead South Dakota St. past Boise State 68-66

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Matt Dentlinger scored 19 points as South Dakota State beat Boise State 68-66 Wednesday night.

Dentlinger added four steals for the Jackrabbits (1-1). Zeke Mayo was 4-of-12 shooting (3 for 8 from distance) to add 13 points. Alex Arians shot 2 of 7 from the field and 7 for 9 from the line to finish with 11 points, while adding six rebounds.

The Broncos (0-1) were led in scoring by Max Rice, who finished with 21 points and five steals. Marcus Shaver Jr. added 17 points, six rebounds, five assists and three steals for Boise State. Tyson Degenhart had 12 points and two blocks and Naje Smith also score 12 with five rebounds and two steals.

NEXT UP

South Dakota State takes on Saint Bonaventure on Tuesday, and Boise State squares off against Washington State on Saturday.

Plitzuweit's 33 points help S. Dakota beat Lipscomb 85-77

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — A.J. Plitzuweit's 33 points led South Dakota past Lipscomb 85-77 on Wednesday night.

Plitzuweit added five assists for the Coyotes (1-1). Tasos Kamateros scored 17 points while shooting 7 for 11, including 2 for 3 from beyond the arc, and added eight rebounds. Damani Hayes shot 5 of 8 from the field to finish with 11 points, while adding six rebounds.

The Bisons (0-1) were led by Will Pruitt, who recorded 20 points and three steals. Jacob Ognacevic added 18 points for Lipscomb. Matthew Schner also had 10 points, seven rebounds and two blocks.

NEXT UP

Both teams play on Saturday. South Dakota hosts Dakota State while Lipscomb hosts Campbellsville Harrodsburg.

After big win, Noem looks to cut tax, safeguard abortion ban

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

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SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem took the stage late Tuesday after a hearty reelection win in her deep red state, speaking behind a sign that captured her ambition for staying in the national spotlight: “America’s governor.”

The Republican governor has sprung to national prominence during her first term as the state’s first female governor, and her 27 percentage point victory margin — larger than many expected — seemed to prove the popularity of her hands-off approach to the COVID-19 pandemic and rightward political push. Noem is widely seen as a potential 2024 White House contender, though she told her crowd of supporters who gathered at a Sioux Falls hotel Tuesday she was looking forward to four more years in South Dakota.

Her campaign spokesman, Ian Fury, summed up the victory margin on Twitter with a single word: “Mandate.”

Noem is looking to kick off her second term by enacting a historic tax cut, fend off attempts to soften the state’s abortion ban and address shortages in both child care and affordable housing. But she will be working with a Legislature, that despite being firmly held by Republicans, has sometimes produced significant political headaches for the governor.

Noem’s victory also came alongside heavy Republican wins up and down the South Dakota ballot. U.S. Sen. John Thune outperformed her by gaining 70% of the vote over his Democratic challenger, and other Republicans in statewide races had similar victory margins.

Voters also rejected a ballot measure to legalize recreational marijuana that was opposed by many of the state’s conservative officials. Meanwhile, they approved a constitutional amendment to expand eligibility for Medicaid.

Michael Card, a retired GOP political strategist and political science professor, said that any caveats to Noem’s win should not keep her from seizing the opportunity to press her agenda in the Legislature.

Noem said in her victory speech that she wanted to set an example to the nation of the effectiveness of Republican governors.

“We’re going to remember that the solution to our challenges lies in less government, not more,” she told the crowd. “We’re going to recognize that strong families are the key to strong communities.”

The governor’s top priority will be convincing lawmakers to repeal the state’s tax on groceries. She added, without going into detail, that she was looking to expand paid family leave and create a way for childcare workers to get benefits. Those proposals are key pieces of her goal of supporting families alongside a bid to uphold the state’s abortion ban, which was triggered by the U.S. Supreme Court’s June ruling.

Noem, an ardent abortion opponent, faces a challenge to the ban through a citizen-proposed constitutional amendment that could appear on the 2024 ballot. Abortion rights supporters won in the four states where access was on the ballot Tuesday, including in deep-red Kentucky.

Although Noem has rarely shied away from intra-party fights with state lawmakers, she will also have some key allies when the Legislature convenes in Pierre.

“As we enter next year there’s a lot of momentum, and I’m really looking forward to see our party work together as a team,” said Tony Venhuizen, who previously worked as her chief of staff, after winning a House seat Tuesday.

Republican Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, who has presided over his chamber for the previous two years, in September quickly voiced opposition to the governor’s grocery tax cut proposal, but said in a text message Wednesday that he was now “watching and listening” to the governor. The grocery tax repeal would cost the state about \$100 million, but Noem argued Tuesday that the state could afford it with recent tax revenue projections coming in \$80 million over what was projected.

A group of right-wing lawmakers, who have banded together this year as the Freedom Caucus, has also pushed for the tax cut, though the group’s vice-chair, Rep. Tony Randolph said it was unlikely to support government programs that address paid family leave or benefits for childcare providers.

Meanwhile, Democrats were not able to bring their ranks in the Capitol above a dozen lawmakers and will be without their former House and Senate leaders. However, one newly elected House member, Kameron Nelson, made history in the state as the first openly gay man to win a House seat.

Nelson said he was motivated to run in part because the Legislature perennially advances bills that single

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out transgender youth.

"I'm thrilled to be sitting on the House floor," he said. "They will have to put a face to an entire group of people that they want to condemn."

He added that he was also looking to find common ground with Republicans, especially on issues around education, expanding mental health resources and affordable housing.

"We as South Dakotans want to be able to provide for our families, make a living wage and ensure government is not interfering in our personal lives," Nelson said.

Wednesday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

SDHSAA Playoff=

SoDak 16=

Class AA=

Huron def. Aberdeen Central, 25-22, 26-24, 14-25, 25-17

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

Justices seem to favor most of Native child welfare law

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court appeared likely Wednesday to leave in place most of a federal law that gives preference to Native American families in foster care and adoption proceedings of Native children.

The justices heard more than three hours of arguments in a broad challenge to the Indian Child Welfare Act, enacted in 1978 to address concerns that Native children were being separated from their families and, too frequently, placed in non-Native homes.

It has long been championed by tribal leaders as a means of preserving their families, traditions and cultures. But white families seeking to adopt Native children are among the challengers who say the law is impermissibly based on race, and also prevents states from considering those children's best interests.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh called the case difficult because the court is being called on to draw a line between tribal sovereignty and "the fundamental principle that we don't treat people differently because of race, ethnicity or ancestry."

He was among conservative justices who expressed concern about at least one aspect of the law that gives preference to Native parents, even if they are of a different tribe than the child they are seeking to adopt or foster. Chief Justice John Roberts, Justice Samuel Alito and Justice Amy Coney Barrett also raised questions about whether that provision looked more like a racial classification that the court might frown upon.

"To get to the heart of my concern about this, Congress couldn't give a preference for white families to adopt white children, Black families to adopt Black children, Latino families to adopt Latino children, Asian families to adopt Asian children," Kavanaugh said.

But none of the non-Native families involved in the case has been affected by the preference the conservative justices objected to, Justice Department lawyer Edwin Kneedler told the court.

Even if there is a court majority to strike down that provision, the rest of the law could be kept in place, Ian Gershengorn, a lawyer for the Cherokee Nation, the Navajo Nation and other tribes said.

He urged the court to uphold the law "that has made such a meaningful difference to so many children."

Representing the non-Native families, lawyer Matthew McGill called on the court to strike down the law because it "flouts the promise of equal justice under law."

Justice Neil Gorsuch, a conservative who is a strong supporter of Native Americans' rights, and the court's three liberal justices seemed strongly inclined to uphold the law in its entirety.

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"Congress understood these children's placement decisions as integral to the continued thriving of Indian communities," said liberal Justice Elena Kagan.

Gorsuch said a broad ruling in favor of the challengers also would take "a huge bite out of" other federal programs that benefit Native Americans, including health care.

The law's fate is in the hands of a court that has made race a focus of its current term, in cases involving the redrawing of congressional districts and affirmative action in college admissions. Two members of the court, Roberts and Barrett, also are the parents of adopted children.

The full 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down parts of the law last year, including preferences for placing Native children with Native adoptive families and in Native foster homes. It also said Congress overstepped its authority by imposing its will on state officials in adoption matters.

But the 5th Circuit also ruled that the law generally is based on the political relationship between the tribes and the U.S. government, not race.

The tribes and the Biden administration appealed some parts of the lower court ruling, while the white families and Texas, allied with those families, appealed others.

More than three-quarters of the 574 federally recognized tribes in the country have asked the high court to uphold the law in full, along with tribal organizations. They fear widespread impacts if the court attempts to dismantle the tribes' status as political sovereigns.

Nearly two dozen state attorneys general across the political spectrum filed a brief in support of the law. Some of those states have codified the federal law into their own state laws.

A ruling in favor of the families and Texas could undercut the 1978 law and, the tribes fear, have broader effects on their ability to govern themselves.

When child protection authorities remove Native children from their homes, the law requires states to notify tribes and seek placement with the child's extended family, members of the child's tribe or other Native American families.

All of the children who have been involved in the current case at one point are enrolled or could be enrolled as Navajo, Cherokee, White Earth Band of Ojibwe and Ysleta del Sur Pueblo. Some of the adoptions have been finalized while some are still being challenged.

Before the Indian Child Welfare Act was enacted, between 25% and 35% of Native American children were being taken from their homes and placed with adoptive families, in foster care or in institutions. Most were placed with white families or in boarding schools in attempts to assimilate them.

The International Red River Watershed Board to monitor key nutrients to help reduce the impact of harmful blooms in the Red River basin

OTTAWA, ON and WASHINGTON, Nov. 9, 2022 /PRNewswire/ - To continue improving water quality in the Red River basin, including downstream in Lake Winnipeg, the governments of Canada and the United States approved four additional water quality objectives to be monitored by the International Red River Watershed Board (IRRWB) following a recommendation by the International Joint Commission (IJC). These additional, non-regulatory water quality objectives are for the key nutrients phosphorus and nitrogen.

Excessive nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen increase the frequency and severity of algal blooms, one of the biggest water quality challenges facing the Red River watershed and Lake Winnipeg.

The Red River travels north from its headwaters in Minnesota and South Dakota, across the international boundary and flows downstream into Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba.

Establishing objectives and targets for phosphorus and nitrogen levels and loads in the Red River, along with the other water quality objectives, allows the IRRWB to identify changes in water quality trends over time; essential information to improve water quality and reduce the occurrence of harmful algal blooms in the basin.

Following work by federal, state and provincial agencies, significant collaboration through the IRRWB

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and a number of IJC-funded studies which suggested a significant portion of those nutrients entering Lake Winnipeg come from the Red River, the IJC made (in May 2020) the recommendation to governments that they approve these additional nutrients objectives and targets.

Individuals interested in the IRRWB's work should visit their website for more information: ijc.org/en/rrb

Quotes "I want to thank both governments for approving the IJC-recommended objectives for the Red River basin. The monitoring of phosphorus and nitrogen is key to limiting excess nutrients in the basin."

Pierre Béland, Commissioner and Canadian Chair

"This is excellent news that will enable the International Red River Watershed Board to work with all our partners to improve water quality in the Red River basin. I welcome this decision and thank the Board for their continued commitment to ecosystem health in the basin."

Rob Sisson, Commissioner and Acting United States Chair

Quick Facts The Red River basin occupies substantial portions of North Dakota, northwestern Minnesota, southern Manitoba and a very small portion of northeastern South Dakota. It covers 116,500 square kilometers or 45,000 square miles, excluding the Assiniboine River basin, which joins the Red River at Winnipeg. The concentrations, or specific levels of total phosphorus and nitrogen in the water, would best be limited to 0.15 milligrams per liter (0.15 parts per million) and 1.15 mg/l (1.15 ppm), respectively. The loading targets (i.e. amount of nutrients in the river passing by the international boundary) are 1,400 tons/year for phosphorus and 9,525 tons/year for nitrogen. In addition to monitoring phosphorus and nitrogen levels, five other water quality objectives were previously established for the Red River and are monitored by the IRRWB. They are: Total Dissolved Solids (TDS), Dissolved Oxygen (DO), Chloride (Cl), Sulphate (SO₄), and E. coli. The IRRWB's responsibilities are outlined in the Directive to the International Red River Watershed Board. The IJC is an independent body established by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to help the governments of Canada and the United States prevent and resolve disputes over use of the waters shared by the two countries. It officially designated the IRRWB as an international watershed board in August 2021. Associated Links

Study - Proposed Nutrient Concentration Objectives and Loading Targets for the Red River at the US/Canada Boundary
Comments Sought on Nutrient Targets to Protect Red River, Address Lake Winnipeg Algal Blooms
Red River Story Map - An International Basin: How is Water-Quality Changing?
International Red River Watershed Board: Brochure
Directive to The International Red River Watershed Board
View original content to download multimedia: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-international-red-river-watershed-board-to-monitor-key-nutrients-to-help-reduce-the-impact-of-harmful-blooms-in-the-red-river-basin-301673461.html>

SOURCE International Joint Commission

Drinks at Egypt climate talks now free, jailed activist not

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Drinks are on the house at this year's U.N. climate talks and the price of food will be slashed, Egypt's foreign minister said Thursday following complaints from delegates that they were struggling to get food and water during the event.

But on another issue that threatened to overshadow this year's meeting in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh — the imprisonment of a prominent Egyptian pro-democracy campaigner, Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry indicated no shift in position by the government.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Shoukry took a swipe at media outlets he said "had decided that the issue of climate change is not as important as the issue of the provision of foods and drink for delegates and for participants."

He acknowledged there had been "glitches," blaming them on the large number of participants and traffic delays due to VIP visits during the first days of the meeting.

"We have intervened and today all prices have been slashed by 50%, and water and the soft drinks will be provided for free as a matter of courtesy and at the intervention of the presidency," Shoukry told The AP.

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Asked about the case of Alaa Abdel-Fattah, now in a prison hospital after going on hunger strike over his imprisonment, Shoukry made clear it was not a priority for him as chair of the 27th annual climate talks, known by their acronym COP27.

"I concentrate on highlighting the importance of the COP and trying to the focus attention of the parties and the international community and the civil society on the existential challenge related to climate change," he said. "I think it is beneficial for achieving our objectives that we continue to focus on this issue. This is why we are here."

Numerous foreign leaders including President Emmanuel Macron of France and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz have raised the case with Egypt during their visit this week.

Shoukry suggested such concerns could distract from some countries' failure to live up to their climate commitments.

"Other issues that are not directly pertaining to the climate might detract from the attention and relieve, potentially, and give justification to maybe those who would prefer to concentrate on other issues to avoid having to deal with what they need to do, how they need to implement their obligations and responsibilities."

"It is up to the parties to put the emphasis on the issues that are most important to them," he said.

The Nov. 6-18 talks have moved from high-levels appeals for more climate action, heard from world leaders early in the week, to the nitty-gritty stage of negotiations. Diplomats are trying to forge a broad package of agreements covering issues such as cutting emissions and aid for poor nations that would need to be agreed by consensus at the end.

Nicole weakens to tropical storm over east-central Florida

By FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Shortly after Hurricane Nicole made landfall early Thursday along the east coast of Florida, it was downgraded to a tropical storm but it was still battering a large area of the storm-weary state with strong winds, damaging storm surge and heavy rain.

The rare November hurricane prompted officials to shut down airports and theme parks and order evacuations in areas that included former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago club.

Authorities warned that Nicole's storm surge could further erode many beaches hit by Hurricane Ian in September. The sprawling storm is forecast to head into Georgia and the Carolinas later Thursday and Friday, dumping heavy rain across the region.

Nicole made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane before its maximum sustained winds dropped to 60 mph (100 kph) early Thursday, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center said. The storm was centered about 30 miles (50 kilometers) southeast of Orlando. It was moving west-northwest near 14 mph (22 kph).

Tropical storm force winds extended as far as 450 miles (720 kilometers) from the center in some directions. Nicole was expected to move across central Florida on Thursday morning, possibly emerge over the far northeastern Gulf of Mexico in the afternoon, and then move across the Florida Panhandle and Georgia.

A few tornadoes were possible through early Thursday across east-central to northeast Florida, the forecasters said. Flash and urban flooding will be possible, along with renewed river rises on the St. Johns River, across the Florida Peninsula on Thursday. Heavy rainfall will spread northward across portions of the southeast, eastern Ohio Valley, Mid-Atlantic, and New England through Saturday.

Large swells generated by Nicole will affect the northwestern Bahamas, the east coast of Florida, and much of the southeastern United States coast over the next few days. The storm was expected to weaken into a tropical depression over Georgia on Thursday night or early Friday.

Nicole became a hurricane Wednesday evening as it slammed into Grand Bahama Island, having made landfall just hours earlier on Great Abaco island as a tropical storm. It was the first storm to hit the Bahamas since Hurricane Dorian, a Category 5 storm that devastated the archipelago in 2019.

For storm-weary Floridians, it is only the third November hurricane to hit their shores since recordkeeping began in 1853. The previous ones were the 1935 Yankee Hurricane and Hurricane Kate in 1985.

Mar-a-Lago, Trump's club and home, was in one of the evacuation zones, built about a quarter-mile inland

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from the ocean. The main buildings sit on a small rise that is about 15 feet (4.6 meters) above sea level and the property has survived numerous stronger hurricanes since it was built nearly a century ago. The resort's security office hung up Wednesday when an Associated Press reporter asked whether the club was being evacuated, and there was no sign of evacuation by Wednesday afternoon.

There is no penalty for ignoring an evacuation order, but rescue crews will not respond if it puts their members at risk.

Officials in Daytona Beach Shores deemed unsafe at least a half dozen, multi-story, coastal residential buildings already damaged by Hurricane Ian and now threatened by Nicole. At some locations, authorities went door-to-door telling people to grab their possessions and leave.

Disney World and Universal Orlando Resort announced they likely would not open as scheduled Thursday.

At a news conference Wednesday in Tallahassee, Gov. Ron DeSantis said that winds were the biggest concern and significant power outages could occur, but that 16,000 linemen were on standby to restore power as well as 600 guardsmen and seven search and rescue teams.

"It will affect huge parts of the state of Florida all day," DeSantis said of the storm's expected landing.

Almost two dozen school districts were closing schools for the storm and 15 shelters had opened along Florida's east coast, the governor said.

Forty-five of Florida's 67 counties were under a state of emergency declaration.

Warnings and watches were issued for many parts of Florida, including the southwestern Gulf coastline that was devastated by Hurricane Ian, which struck as a Category 4 storm. The storm destroyed homes and damaged crops, including orange groves, across the state — damage that many are still dealing with. Ian brought storm surge of up to 13 feet (4 meters), causing widespread destruction.

Report: War-triggered gas boom threatens world climate goal

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — The war-inspired natural gas boom is undermining already insufficient efforts to limit future warming to just a few more tenths of a degree, a new report says.

Planning and build-up of liquified and other natural gas — due to an energy crisis triggered by Russian's invasion of Ukraine — would add 2 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (1.9 billion metric tons) a year to the air by 2030, according to a report released Thursday by Climate Action Tracker at international climate talks in Egypt.

That's enough greenhouse gas to "hinder if not catastrophically hinder chances of achieving 1.5 degrees" Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, the international warming-limiting goal, said climate scientist Bill Hare, chief executive officer of Climate Analytics, one of the groups behind Climate Action Tracker, which monitors and analyzes climate promises and action.

The world has already warmed 1.1 to 1.2 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, leaving little room to keep below the 1.5 limit set in Paris in 2015.

The sheer amount of liquified natural gas projects in the pipeline for construction shocked the analysts, Hare said. The report calculates that if everything planned goes through, the build-up would produce five times the amount of gas it is supposed to replace from Russia.

"This reaction to the energy crisis is an over reach that must be scaled back," the report says.

One key way scientists calculate how likely the world is to keep to the 1.5 degree goal is a carbon budget, or how much carbon emissions can still be produced between now and 2050 while staying at or below 1.5 degrees. The tracker report says the LNG planned build-up would eat up about 10% of that 460 billion ton budget on its own. There's about nine years or so left in that carbon budget, Hare said.

About 70% of the planned new gas production facilities are in North America, Hare said. Europe, which needs the gas but doesn't have it, is investing in receiving systems. The tracker report said if everything is built up there will either be too much carbon pollution or stranded energy assets that won't be used.

Natural gas industry leaders say the fuel is the answer to the world's problem, not a problem itself.

"The global conversation has changed. And what has changed about it is the recognized version of how

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essential energy is to not just economic security, but national security," Karen Harbert, chief executive officer of the American Gas Association told The Associated Press. "Natural gas is not only essential for the survival of Ukraine, it can do a lot to address the world's carbon emissions. It can do a lot to bring people out of energy poverty. And here in the United States, we're blessed to have so much natural gas today."

Former Vice President Al Gore, who has been a climate activist for more than 30 years, said decades ago he and others called natural gas a bridge to the future because it was helping wean American and elsewhere off far dirtier coal. But not now.

"Now I believe it's a classic bridge to nowhere," Gore told The Associated Press in a 30-minute interview at the international climate summit in Egypt. He said an especially big problem for natural gas is methane leaking from pipelines, wells and elsewhere.

The climate action tracker report said last year's methane pledge "has not yet lived up to the hype" with big emitters not quite acting yet, just promising.

The tracker says that since last year's climate talks, there has been only a little progress in pledges and action to reduce carbon emissions.

Iran protests rage on streets as officials renew threats

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Protests in Iran raged on streets into Thursday with demonstrators remembering a bloody crackdown in the country's southeast, even as the nation's intelligence minister and army chief renewed threats against local dissent and the broader world.

Meanwhile, a top official in Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard claimed it had "managed to achieve" having so-called hypersonic missiles, without providing any evidence.

The protests in Iran, sparked by the Sept. 16 death of a 22-year-old woman after her detention by the country's morality police, have grown into one of the largest sustained challenges to the nation's theocracy since the chaotic months after its 1979 Islamic Revolution.

At least 328 people have been killed and 14,825 others arrested in the unrest, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that's been monitoring the protests over their 54 days. Iran's government for weeks has remained silent on casualty figures while state media counterfactually claims security forces have killed no one.

As demonstrators now return to the streets to mark 40th-day remembrances for those slain earlier — commemorations common in Iran and the wider Middle East — the protests may turn into cyclical confrontations between an increasingly disillusioned public and security forces that turn to greater violence to suppress them.

Online videos emerging from Iran, despite government efforts to suppress the internet, appeared to show demonstrations in Tehran, the capital, as well as cities elsewhere in the country. Near Isfahan, video showed clouds of tear gas. Shouts of "Death to the Dictator" could be heard — a common chant in the protests targeting Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

It wasn't immediately clear if there were injuries or arrests in this round of protests, though Iran's state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged the demonstrations near Isfahan. They commemorated the Sept. 30 crackdown in Zahedan, a city in Iran's restive Sistan and Baluchestan province, in which activists say security forces killed nearly 100 people in the deadliest violence to strike amid the demonstrations.

Meanwhile Thursday, Guard Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh said in a speech that his forces acquired hypersonic missiles. However, he offered no photograph, video or other evidence to support the claim and the Guard's vast ballistic missile program is not known to have any of the weapons in its arsenal.

Hypersonic weapons, which fly at speeds in excess of Mach 5, or five times the speed of sound, could pose crucial challenges to missile defense systems because of their speed and maneuverability.

China is believed to be pursuing the weapons, as is America. Russia claims to already be fielding the weapons and have said it used them on the battlefield in Ukraine.

"This system is very, very fast, and is capable of maneuvering both inside and beyond the atmosphere,"

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Hajzadeh claimed. "This means the Islamic Republic of Iran's new missile can pass through both terrestrial air defense systems and the super-expensive extraterrestrial systems that could target missiles beyond the earth atmosphere."

Iranian officials have kept up their threats against the demonstrators and the wider world. In an interview with Khamenei's personal website, Iranian Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib renewed threats against Saudi Arabia, a nation along with Britain, Israel and the U.S. that officials have blamed for fomenting unrest that appears focused on local grievances.

Khatib warned that Iran's "strategic patience" could run out.

"Throwing stones at powerful Iran by countries sitting in glass houses has no meaning other than crossing the borders of rationality into the darkness of stupidity," Khatib said. "Undoubtedly, if the will of the Islamic Republic of Iran is given to reciprocate and punish these countries, the glass palaces will collapse and these countries will not see stability."

Iran blames Iran International, a London-based, Farsi-language satellite news channel once majority-owned by a Saudi national, for stirring up protesters. The broadcaster in recent days said the Metropolitan Police warned that two of its British-Iranian journalists faced threats from Iran that "represent an imminent, credible and significant risk to their lives and those of their families."

Last week, U.S. officials said Saudi Arabia shared intelligence with America that suggests Iran could be preparing for an imminent attack on the kingdom. Iran later called the claim "baseless," though the threats from Tehran continue.

The commander of the ground forces of Iran's regular army, Brig. Gen. Kiumars Heydari, separately issued his own threat against the protesters, whom he called "flies."

"If these flies are not dealt with today as the revolutionary society expects, it is the will of the supreme leader of the revolution," he reportedly said. "But the day he issues an order to deal with them, they will definitely have no place in the country."

Climate Migration: Açai growers flee salty Amazon water

By FABIANO MAISONNAVE and ERALDO PERES Associated Press

MACAPA, Brazil (AP) — Where the mother of all rivers meets the Atlantic Ocean in coastal Brazil, it's not a single channel, instead it braids around 230 kilometers (142 miles) of islands including the Bailique Archipelago.

A native of the mouth of the Amazon, Elielson Elinho, 31, knows that the struggle between the majestic river and the ocean shapes life in these islands. So much so that early this year, his family sensed that the sea was winning, and that it was time to leave.

The Amazon River discharges one-fifth of all the world's freshwater that runs off land surface. Despite that force, the seawater pushed back the river that bathes the archipelago for most of the second half of 2021, leaving thousands scrambling for drinking water.

"We had to travel upriver by boat for two hours to fetch sweet water. And sometimes it tasted salty even going that far." Elinho told The Associated Press in his home in Macapa city, where he has lived since August with his wife, Sabrina Fernandes, 25, and their three sons.

The river and the sea push back and forth against each other with different strengths according to the season. During a full moon, the sea invades the river with such strength that, in some places, it turns into a single giant wave of up to 4 meters (13 feet), a phenomenon known as pororoca. The advance of seawater typically occurs in Bailique during the dry season when the Amazon River's flow diminishes.

Last year, the seawater pushed upriver for longer, around five months. The water tasted saltier and for the first time in several decades, it reached the whole archipelago, eight islands, where about 14,000 people live spread across 58 villages.

"I had never seen it like this before. Not even my parents did it," said Elinho, who, living now in Macapa, is away from the islands for the first time in his life.

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Macapa authorities declared a state of emergency in October 2021. But help was scant, Fernandes and other residents say. Her family of four (her third child was born this year) received only 9 liters (2.3 gallons) of mineral water every two months. Even reserving it for drinking, it lasted only a few days.

There is no piped water in the islands. With their drinking water — the river — salty, many Bailique residents had no choice but to use salty water to wash clothes, bathe, cook and brush their teeth, an unpleasant and unhealthy situation.

"We avoided cleaning our faces. The skin gets dry. We used soap, but it makes no foam. When we woke up, our skin was white. For my sons and many other people, it caused itching and they had to use an ointment," Fernandes recalls.

In January, Elinho's family made their first move, to a community farther from the ocean. During the week, he returned to work on his groves of açai palms, the primary income for hundreds of Bailique families. Much of the açai in the U.S. comes from the mouth of the Amazon.

The water quality was better and the children attended a better school, but they continued facing another chronic problem in the region: electric outages — for months at a time.

The power lines that supply Bailique are hung from poles along the river's edge. But erosion of the riverbank has intensified, and many poles have begun to slump into the water.

It takes weeks or even months to restore power. Fernandes and Elinho's family were spending around US \$300 a month on gasoline for the generator. So they made a painful decision to move again. When the family left for Macapa in August, the lights still had not been restored.

Besides electrical lines, sea erosion is also swallowing houses, schools and other facilities. One of the most visible places is in Progresso, the Bailique region's largest village, located close to where the Amazon River touches the Atlantic. On a September morning, the AP team arrived after a 14-hour river trip surrounded by the lush rainforest. The front part of a market had just fallen into the water.

"There was a soccer field here in the front. And after that, there was a hut. And after that was a line of trees," butcher shop owner Reginaldo dos Santos said, pointing to somewhere in the middle of the river.

The sea erosion did not even spare the main school. In February, part of its buildings crumbled.

"First, people came to live here. Now they are leaving," says market owner Manoel Pantoja, 58. After 20 years in Progresso, he plans to move to a community closer to Macapa in December. "The village is approaching its end."

Macapa authorities did not respond to numerous requests for information about Bailique from The Associated Press.

The changes in the region are also an increasing threat to the omnipresent açai palm trees. In many places, sea erosion is taking them. And in areas closer to the sea, the açai berries began to taste different.

"Some açai tastes salty, and berries have a weaker color. It's no longer a deep purple. The canopy is thinner and the bunches are smaller," says Alcindo Farias Júnior, 24, who works as a "peconheiro" or açai picker, a dangerous job that entails climbing high up the slender palm trees.

According to geologist Valdenira dos Santos, who has studied the region for over two decades, several things contribute to the damage, including grazing buffalo, hydropower plants nearby, the natural dynamics of the estuary and on top of that, climate change.

"We are in a coastal system, which is influenced by what happens both at sea and on land. It is a system that changes fast on its own. And now human activities are changing that system," says Santos, a researcher at the Institute for Scientific and Technological Research of Amapa.

Data is limited: There is no monitoring at the mouth of the Amazon River. The closest official monitoring station is in Obidos, about 700 kilometers (430 miles) upstream.

"Brazil does not have the most basic information to face the challenges of climate change in coastal and maritime areas," said Santos. "We need ongoing monitoring to have a steady flow of information to plan mitigation and adaptation."

One of the region's few studies on climate change is led by oceanographer Wilson Cabral, from the Aeronautics Institute of Technology. His team's field research focuses on Marajo. Located south of Bailique, it is the world's largest fluvial island, about the size of Switzerland.

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Based on Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change scenarios, their analysis estimates that at least half the Marajo municipality most exposed to the sea, Soure, should be underwater by the end of this century.

Projected diminished rainfall in the region means lower flow for the rivers that surround the islands and pour their waters into the Marajo Bay, the study said. In addition, sea level rise will likely increase the advance of seawater toward the island's interior. The consequences are more saline soils and freshwater near the coast.

For those leaving Bailique behind, an entirely different life in the city of Macapa, the capital of Amapa state, is the obvious choice, but also a difficult one. One-quarter of its 520,000 inhabitants live in slums. It has the worst sewage system among Brazil's largest cities and is the country's most violent capital.

Living compressed in one-third of the space of their home in Bailique, Elinho, who now works as an electrical technician, says he worries daily about his family's safety. Instead of the Amazon River, open sewage now runs past their porch in a working-class neighborhood.

He hasn't given up on Bailique and plans to use his newfound technical knowledge for a comeback. "In 2025, I will take care of the archipelago's energy and solve the problem for good."

People with disabilities raise voices at climate talks

By DREW COSTLEY and TERESA de MIGUEL Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Last year, climate activists who focus on disability rights scored a major victory at the United Nations climate change conference known as COP. They gained official status as a caucus recognized by the U.N. Secretariat, the conference organizer. They say it was the culmination of years of effort to be officially included in the proceedings. Here's what that means for this week and beyond.

COP27 CONFERENCE

Someone from the caucus will have the chance to address conference attendees at the closing plenary about disability inclusion. People will have an official space to gather. Members of the caucus will also have more access to the conference organizer, making it easier to connect with other attendees including country delegates, negotiators, disability rights organizations, as well as to participate overall in events.

This year there have been two changes to make the venue more accessible to people with disabilities, according to Kera Sherwood-O'Regan, an indigenous and disabled climate activist from New Zealand. People with mobility issues or chronic pain may enter the conference via a separate line, so they don't have to wait as long, and there are more ramps into buildings and onto some of the stages.

Still, there is a lot more the conference organizers can do to ensure that the proceedings are accessible to all, like making sure attendees who use wheelchairs or walkers can move around the venue freely and that sign language interpreters are at all events, said Jason Boberg, a member of the disability caucus and a founder of the disability climate action network SustainedAbility.

The issue of payment for harm caused by climate change, known in the jargon as "loss and damage," is also on the agenda for people with disabilities. Activists want to include disability rights in conference negotiations on this subject.

Boberg has been a key proponent in pushing for inclusion of disabled communities in climate action at the international level.

He said figuring out where loss and damage finance will come from and how to secure some of it for disabled people living in disaster-prone areas is "front of mind" for members of the disability caucus.

NEXT OBJECTIVES

Boberg said one of the next goals will be formal elevation of the new caucus to the level of a "constituency" within COP.

Constituencies are umbrella groups of other organizations such as Indigenous alliances, business and industry coalitions, or farmers and agricultural associations. A disability constituency would have the authority to convene meetings with government officials and suggest speakers and attendees for official COP functions. They would have the right to participate at workshops and events that are otherwise closed.

"We are the most impacted because we're left behind, we're left on the sidelines and our voices need to

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be there," said Dee Woods, the food justice policy coordinator for the U.K.-based agricultural union The Landworkers' Alliance, at a November 2021 event that was held in Glasgow during last year's conference, but was unaffiliated with the U.N.

Boberg said also that it is important for people with disabilities to be included in something called the U.N.'s Action for Climate Empowerment short-term action plan, which will be hashed out in the coming days. This is the U.N.'s framework for getting people, organizations and communities to reduce emissions and prepare for the effects of climate change. Last year, COP delegations adopted a 10-year plan to roll out the Action for Climate Empowerment.

"It's really crucial for disabled people and organizations to be included" in those plans, Boberg said, so they can get more resources from countries for climate action and prepare for climate emergencies. This could mean assurance that relief shelters are accessible. Or it could mean the creation of registries of disabled people, to help governments deliver extra assistance to the right places in the lead up to extreme weather. It also could mean help cleaning up in the aftermath.

Activists are also pushing to ensure disability rights are included in international climate action plans, since there are over 1 billion people in the world living with a disability, according to the World Health Organization.

GETTING THIS FAR

The recognition of the disability caucus by the leadership of the U.N. climate conference last year was a milestone. People have been meeting and organizing on this unofficially at the conference since COP23 in 2017 in Bonn, Germany.

"Back then (we'd meet) in the corridors and cafes and wherever we could get a space," Boberg said.

He was able to give the disability caucus' first-ever address to conference attendees last year. In it, he said world leaders and society at large have considered disabled people as "expected losses" to climate change. He implored world leaders to include human rights and indigenous and disabled people's rights in Article 6 of the Paris climate agreement, which outlines how countries can achieve pledges they've made to reduce emissions and promote sustainable development.

"Until parties recognize disabled leadership on climate and uphold our rights, this COP will be critiqued as an exclusionary event where disabled people are missing," he said in that 2021 statement.

Just days before he spoke, Israel's energy minister Karine Elharrar, a wheelchair user, was prevented from getting into a conference event where she was slated to speak.

Boberg told The Associated Press in an interview days before he departed this year for COP27 that more than once he's seen language that recognizes disability rights appear in draft text of negotiations — for example funding disability rights organizations to do climate action work. But the language was cut from the final agreements at the negotiations.

Sherwood-O'Regan said it's "really disappointing" when that happens.

"You hope for the best, but plan for the worst and I like to keep my expectations not too high," she said. "That sounds really cynical but that makes it a little bit easier to engage in the process."

What's 'Putin's chef' cooking up with talk on US meddling?

By The Associated Press undefined

Yevgeny Prigozhin has had many roles: Convicted felon and hot dog vendor. Owner of a swanky St. Petersburg restaurant and holder of lucrative government catering contracts. Founder of a mercenary military force involved in Russia's various conflicts.

Prigozhin has kept a low profile over the years. But in recent months, the 61-year-old entrepreneur with links to Russian President Vladimir Putin has become more and more public with his activities, especially involving Moscow's 8-month-old war in Ukraine.

This week, he gained new attention by admitting his involvement — previously denied — in the events that drew the scrutiny of U.S. officials: meddling in American elections.

'PUTIN'S CHEF'

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Prigozhin and Putin go way back, with both born in Leningrad, what is now known as St. Petersburg. During the final years of the Soviet Union, Prigozhin served time in prison — 10 years by his own admission — although he did not say what it was for.

Afterward, he owned a hot dog stand and then fancy restaurants that drew interest from Putin. In his first term, the Russian leader took then-French President Jacques Chirac to dine at one of them.

"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 to catering and providing school lunches. In 2010, Putin helped open Prigozhin's factory 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. He also organized catering for Kremlin events for several years — earning him the nickname "Putin's chef" — and has provided catering and utility services to the Russian military.

In 2017, opposition figure and corruption fighter Alexei Navalny accused Prigozhin's companies of breaking antitrust laws by bidding for some \$387 million in Defense Ministry contracts.

MILITARY CONNECTION

For years, media reports and Western officials linked Prigozhin to a Russian private military contractor called the Wagner Group, a mercenary force said to have been involved in conflicts in Libya and Syria, as well as in under-the-radar military operations across at least a half-dozen African countries. The group also has played a prominent role in fighting in Ukraine.

Prigozhin had always denied having anything to do with Wagner. But in September, he acknowledged being the founder of Wagner in a social media statement released by his companies' press service. He said that when fighting broke out in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed separatists and Kyiv's forces in 2014, he was seeking to "put together a group (of fighters) that would go (there) and defend the Russians."

He also admitted that Wagner "defended the Syrian people, other peoples of the Arab countries, disadvantaged Africans and Latin Americans."

Video emerged recently of a man resembling Prigozhin visiting Russian penal colonies to recruit prisoners to fight in Ukraine. Asked about these visits, he didn't directly confirm or deny it, only saying through his press service that he was once incarcerated and thus has been in a number of prisons.

Prigozhin has also spoken about the construction of a "Wagner line" — a system of trenches and anti-tank defenses — in Luhansk, one of four Ukrainian provinces illegally annexed by Moscow in September, and the creation of training centers for defensive militias in Russia's Belgorod and Kursk regions that border Ukraine.

Wagner also opened a business center in St. Petersburg to wide fanfare, and Prigozhin boasted it would become a platform for increasing Russia's "defense capabilities," promising to expand to other locations if successful.

ELECTION MEDDLING

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. Prigozhin was later sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department.

After the indictment, the RIA Novosti news agency quoted him as saying, in a clearly sarcastic remark: "Americans are very impressionable people; they see what they want to see. I treat them with great respect. I'm not at all upset that I'm on this list. If they want to see the devil, let them see him."

The Justice Department in 2020 moved to dismiss charges against two of the firms, Concord Management and Consulting LLC and Concord Catering, saying they had concluded 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 inter-

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ference 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 had denied involvement in any of that — until Monday, the eve of the U.S. midterms. The press service of one of his companies posted on social media his response to a question from a Russian news outlet about allegations of such interference.

"Gentlemen, we have interfered, are interfering and will interfere. Carefully, precisely, surgically and in our own way, as we know how to do," the response read. "During our pinpoint operations, we will be removing both of the kidneys and the liver at once."

Some Russian state-funded media described his remarks as irony.

In response, the White House called him "a known bad actor who has been sanctioned by the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union," and State Department spokesman Ned Price said Prigozhin's "bold confession, if anything, appears to be just a manifestation of the impunity that crooks and cronies enjoy under President Putin and the Kremlin."

Prigozhin reacted to Price's remarks in English, saying, among other things, that the U.S. has been "rudely meddling" with elections around the world for decades.

SARCASM OR BOOSTING HIS PROFILE?

Whether sarcastic or not, the remark gained wide attention in the West. It also fueled long-brewing speculation that he is seeking a bigger role on Russia's political scene.

Prigozhin said through his press service he doesn't plan to "formalize his political status in any way. ... And if I am offered this, I think that I will refuse."

He has joined the strongman leader of the Russian republic of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, in publicly criticizing Moscow's military brass over its conduct of the war.

Some media reports suggested Prigozhin's influence on Putin is growing and he is after a prominent political post. But analysts warned against overestimating his political significance.

"He's not one of Putin's close figures or a confidant," said Mark Galeotti of University College, London, who specializes in Russian security affairs, speaking on his podcast "In Moscow's Shadows."

"Prigozhin does what the Kremlin wants and does very well for himself in the process. But that's the thing — he is part of the staff rather than part of the family," Galeotti said.

Analysts say Prigozhin's influence has grown but remains rather limited.

Tatyana Stanovaya, founder of the independent R.Politik think tank, in a recent Telegram post called Prigozhin "influential in his own way."

Although Prigozhin denies it, Stanovaya said he meets regularly with Putin, especially recently. She added that he has close ties with certain security agencies and "with some of his functions, he can even claim the role of Putin's private special service," Stanovaya wrote.

She noted, however, that his influence "is indeed greatly exaggerated in the West" and is limited to a "narrow and peculiar" niche.

Russia's Putin won't attend upcoming G-20 summit in Bali

By NINIEK KARMINI Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin will not attend the Group of 20 summit in Indonesia next week, an Indonesian government official said Thursday, avoiding a possible confrontation with the United States and its allies over his war in Ukraine.

Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the chief of support for G-20 events, said Putin's decision not to come was "the best for all of us."

U.S. President Joe Biden, Chinese President Xi Jinping and other world leaders are to attend the two-day summit that starts Nov. 15. The summit would have been the first time Biden and Putin were together at a gathering since Russia invaded Ukraine in February. Indonesian President Joko Widodo is hosting the event on the island of Bali.

"It has been officially informed that Russia's President Vladimir Putin will not attend the G20 summit,

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and will be represented by a high-level official, and this has been discussed by President Joko Widodo and Putin in previous telephone conversations," Pandjaitan said after meeting security officials in Denpasar, the capital of Bali.

"Whatever happens with Russia's decision, it is for our common good and the best for all of us," added Pandjaitan, who is also the coordinating minister of maritime affairs and investment. He said earlier that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will lead the Russian delegation.

Pandjaitan did not know why Putin decided not to come but said "maybe it's because President Putin is busy at home, and we also have to respect that." Pandjaitan confirmed the same reasons may be keeping Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at home as well.

Widodo earlier this year travelled to Kyiv and Moscow in an effort to get the two leaders to sit down in Bali and make peace.

Putin's decision not to attend the G-20 comes as Russia's forces in Ukraine have suffered significant setbacks. Russia's military said it will withdraw from Kherson, which is the only Ukrainian regional capital it captured and a gateway to the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula.

Russia's announced retreat from Kherson along with a potential stalemate in fighting over the winter could provide both countries an opportunity to negotiate peace, Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Wednesday.

He said as many as 40,000 Ukrainian civilians and "well over" 100,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in the war, now in its ninth month. "Same thing probably on the Ukrainian side," Milley added.

The G-20 is the biggest of three summits being held in Southeast Asia this week and next, and it remained unclear if Lavrov will represent Russia at all of them. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit began Thursday in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, followed by the G-20 and then the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Bangkok, Thailand.

Biden will attend ASEAN and the G-20 while Vice President Kamala Harris will travel to APEC. Biden is expected to meet with Xi in Bali.

Biden had ruled out meeting with Putin if he had attended the summit, and said the only conversation he could have possibly had with the Russian leader would be to discuss a deal to free Americans imprisoned in Russia.

Biden administration officials said they had been coordinating with global counterparts to isolate Putin if he had decided to participate either in person or virtually. They have discussed boycotts or other displays of condemnation.

Fed up young climate activists: 'Adults aren't listening'

By SETH BORENSTEIN and SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The climate change generation is saying officials are talking too much, listening too little and acting even less. And they are fed up.

"Instead of talking about how to solve the climate crisis, they negotiate about how to continue polluting," said Mitzy Violeta, a 23-year old indigenous activist from Mexico. "Youth movements are realizing the solution isn't going to be in international gatherings," like the one taking place in Egypt.

"We're upset with the inaction that's being done," said Jasmine Wynn, 18, of the environmental group Treeage.

With decades of warmer and extreme weather ahead of them, young climate activists envision a future that has them frustrated and anxious, according to more than 130 activists questioned by The Associated Press. Most of them said they think their strikes and protests are effective. But lately in high-profile, attention-grabbing actions, a handful of activists have gone beyond skipping school to targeting art work, tires and fossil fuel depots.

Experts and funders expect these in-your-face actions to escalate.

"They will do whatever is non-violently necessary. They're on fire," said Margaret Klein Salamon, a clinical psychologist who runs the Climate Emergency Fund that financially backs some of the in-your-face

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protest events. "They're so passionate. Some of that comes from youth, sure. But it is powered by reality, by having a sort of confrontation with the truth."

At one of the more traditional protests in New York City in September, 14-year-old Truly Hort said she was scared about the future: "I've always had all these dreams, and now I'm like 'God, I can't do that.'"

The trouble, she said, is that leaders talk about what they hope to do, "but it's not a lot of people taking action."

Also mentioning her anxiety at the same protest 16-year-old Lucia Dec-Prat said, "it's one thing to worry about the future and it's another to get out there and do something about it."

But protesting only does so much, Dec-Prat said: "I honestly feel that adults aren't listening."

Governments and international organizations are advancing too slowly to fight climate change, many of those interviewed said about climate conferences. A vast majority of activists asked agreed with Greta Thunberg's characterization of climate negotiations as all talk and no action, or "blah blah blah," as the Swedish activist put it in a speech last year.

"So rather than just making noise to contribute to the blah blah blah, make noise for action. I think that has to be the critical thing," said 25-year-old Jevanic Henry of St. Lucia in the Caribbean. "We are driving action."

"Money doesn't matter because we're not going to have anywhere to live," said Aniva Clarke, a 17-year old activist from Samoa. "And that's probably the biggest issue that a lot of world leaders aren't really focusing on."

While many youth activists don't feel they are being listened to, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres credited the world's youth for spurring negotiators to do more. University of Maryland social scientist Dana Fisher, who studies the environment movement and youth activists, said they've testified before Congress and spoken before the United Nations and at past climate negotiations.

"Young people have gotten a lot more say than they did in any other time during my adult life," Fisher said. "I think a lot of them felt like because they were invited and given these opportunities that that meant everybody's going to snap and change policy."

And she said that's not what happens, which then causes them to get frustrated.

Speaking at a London cultural event, Thunberg said annual climate conferences like the one in Egypt will not bring about meaningful change. "Unless, of course, we use them as an opportunity to mobilize," she said, "and make people realize what a scam this is and realize that these systems are failing us."

One of the most prominent youth climate activists, Vanessa Nakate of Uganda, has been both on the outside as a protestor starting the Rise Up Movement and later inside as a UNICEF ambassador on climate change.

"The question should be like, what should the leaders do? What should governments do? Because this whole time I've done activism, I have realized the youth have done everything," Nakate told The Associated Press.

And there's little doubt about who young activists think needs to foot the bill in the fight against climate change: wealthy, industrialized nations that historically have emitted more greenhouse gases than poorer ones. Rich countries have pledged to pay poor ones to adapt against the hurricanes, droughts and floods made worse by climate change, but so far they've not fulfilled their \$100 billion promise.

While investors on Wall Street continue pouring money into funds that call themselves 'green,' many young climate activists blame free-market capitalism itself for adding heat-trapping gasses to the atmosphere — something that adult analysts and officials often ignore as a factor.

Most of those interviewed called targeting corporations and businesses with more pressure, protests, and shaming — like a recent New York demonstration staged inside financial investment firm BlackRock's headquarters — an effective tactic in fighting climate change.

Minutes before they marched past the famous Wall Street bull statue and near the site of the Occupy Wall Street movement, 17-year-old Oscar Gurbelic squarely blamed the free market system and big business.

"Inherently climate change and capitalism are intertwined," Gurbelic said.

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Many say they're willing to make changes to their own lives to take responsibility for reducing emissions. They fly and drive less, and walk more. A large chunk of activists questioned say they would likely have fewer children because of climate change. Most said they don't take part in certain activities at least once per week because it is wasteful or polluting.

"We no longer want to live in a world in which we only seek to consume and use things and discard them," said Violeta of Mexico.

Similar to other protest movements, there are differences in thought over whether to work inside or outside the system. Some activists that AP spoke with collaborate with governments, international organizations and non-profit groups to raise awareness of climate risks facing their communities. Others strictly work at the grassroots level, fighting the powers that be.

Experts studying youth climate activists say that while the generation they belong to is the most educated in history, many want to pause their educations to focus on climate action. Others, like Jevanic Henry, want to merge their professional lives with climate activism. He's worked for governments and non-profits on climate issues.

"I'm trying to remain optimistic as much as I can," Henry said in an interview, but he said it's tempered by a fear that socioeconomic collapse will come if action is not taken across the board.

But hope only goes so far.

"More and more people are going to be upset and frustrated and willing to take more aggressive action," University of Maryland's Fisher said. "And the problem is that at some point that can become violent."

The newer tactics, such as throwing soup or mashed potatoes on famous art work — which has glass protecting them from damage — is born from that frustration, Climate Emergency Fund's Klein Salamon said.

"We've tried everything. Marches and lobbying, writing letters, making phone calls," Klein Salamon said. "We're just not where we need to be."

Trump urged to delay 2024 launch after GOP's uneven election

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was supposed to be a red wave that former President Donald Trump could triumphantly ride to the Republican nomination as he prepares to launch another White House run.

Instead, Tuesday night's disappointing results for the GOP are raising new questions about Trump's appeal and the future of a party that has fully embraced him, seemingly at its peril, while at the same time giving new momentum to his most potent potential rival.

Indeed, some allies were calling on Trump to delay his planned announcement next week, saying the party's full focus needs to be on Georgia, where Trump-backed football great Herschel Walker's effort to unseat Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock is headed to a runoff that could determine control of the Senate once again.

"I'll be advising him that he move his announcement until after the Georgia runoff," said former Trump adviser Jason Miller, who spent the night with the former president at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida. "Georgia needs to be the focus of every Republican in the country right now," he said.

Trump sought to use the midterms as an opportunity to prove his enduring political influence after losing the White House in 2020. He endorsed more than 330 candidates in races up and down the ballot, often elevating inexperienced and deeply flawed candidates. He reveled in their primary victories. But many of their positions, including echoing Trump's lies about a stolen 2020 election and embracing hardline views on abortion, were out of step with the political mainstream.

Trump did notch some big wins Tuesday, particularly in Ohio, where his pick for the Senate, "Hillbilly Elegy" author JD Vance, sailed to easy victory after Trump's endorsement catapulted him to the front of a crowded primary pack. In North Carolina, Rep. Ted Budd, an early Trump pick, kept an open Senate seat in GOP hands.

But Trump lost some of the night's biggest prizes, particularly in Pennsylvania, where Dr. Mehmet Oz, who only narrowly won his Senate primary with Trump's backing, lost to Democrat John Fetterman. Trump-

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backed candidates also lost governors' races in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Maryland, and a Senate race in New Hampshire, though Trump seemed to celebrate the latter, bashing Republican Dan Bolduc for trying to moderate his stances by backing off his embrace of Trump's election lies.

"Had he stayed strong and true, he would have won, easily," Trump said on his social media network. "Lessons Learned!!!" (Trump also cheered the loss of Colorado Republican Senate hopeful Joe O'Dea, who had said he thought it was time for the party to move on from Trump.)

Other high-stakes races in Arizona and Nevada remained too early to call.

Indeed, the Republicans' biggest victory of the night came in Florida, where Gov. Ron DeSantis cruised to reelection, cementing his status as a rising national Republican star as he eyes his own potential 2024 run.

"I have only begun to fight," he told supporters in his victory speech.

While Republicans still appear well positioned to flip the House, and could ultimately take the Senate, too, those who had believed frustrations with record inflation, combined with President Joe Biden's low approval ratings, would deliver swift and decisive victories were pointing fingers in the former president's direction. The night's message, they argued: The American people want to move on.

"I mean, we had a historic opportunity and Trump's recruitment of unelectable candidates blew it for us," said Scott Reed, a veteran Republican strategist. "Trump's now lost three elections in a row for the Republican Party and it's time to snap out of this foolishness."

Reed argued the party "had everything going for us: money, the issue agenda, Biden being in the tank," but said Trump's efforts to keep himself in the spotlight by teasing a run in the race's final stretch "obviously worked up a lot of independents and Democrats to turn out and vote."

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a longtime Trump friend and adviser-turned-critic, who is considering his own run for president in 2024, said Republicans "have a fundamental decision to make."

"We lost in '18. We lost in '20. We lost in '21 in Georgia. And now in '22 we're going to net lose governorships, we're not going to pick up the number of seats in the House that we thought and we may not win the Senate despite a president who has a 40% job approval," he said. "There's only one person to blame for that and that's Donald Trump."

He blamed Trump for elevating deeply flawed candidates, who won their primaries but struggled in the general election.

"The only animating factor (for him) in determining an endorsement is, 'Do you believe the 2020 election was stolen or don't you?'" Christie said. "It's not, 'Can you raise money?' It's not, 'Do you have an articulatable vision for the future of your state or your district?' It's not evidence of past success in communicating to voters. It is a completely self-centered determination."

Trump, meanwhile, insisted publicly he was happy with the results.

"While in certain ways yesterday's election was somewhat disappointing, from my personal standpoint it was a very big victory - 219 WINS and 16 Losses in the General - Who has ever done better than that?" he wrote on his Truth Social network Wednesday afternoon.

His spokesman Taylor Budowich also touted Trump's endorsement record, and said, "As President Trump looks to the future, he will continue to champion his America First agenda that won overwhelmingly at the ballot box last night."

But Republican strategist David Urban, a former Trump adviser, said the Trump brand is wounded no matter what the former president says.

"Of course, he's going to claim victory, right? The president touts an accomplishment record that includes victories in uncontested races. He can say whatever he wants. But how do people feel in America? I think people feel not great about the Trump brand right now," Urban said. "It's bad."

Some now worry that if Trump goes forward with his planned announcement next week, he could pave the way for a rerun of Republicans' 2021 losses in Georgia by dominating the race.

Former Trump press secretary Kayleigh McEnany, who now works for Fox News, advised on air that Trump should hold off on an announcement until after the Georgia Senate runoff.

"I think he needs to put it on pause," she said. Asked whether Trump should campaign in the state, she said: "I think we've got to make strategic calculations. Gov. DeSantis, I think he should be welcomed to

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the state, given what happened last night. You've got to look at the realities on the ground."

Budowich did not respond to questions about such efforts, but Trump seemed to throw cold water on the advice.

"We had tremendous success," he told Fox News Digital Wednesday. "Why would anything change?"

Trump's setbacks, meanwhile, were giving new hope to the long list of potential rivals who have been quietly waiting in the wings and now face the decision of whether to run, too.

That includes DeSantis, who emerged as the night's obvious winner. "DeFUTURE," The New York Post declared. In addition to his wide margin of victory, DeSantis carried Democratic stronghold Miami-Dade, and did so without Trump's endorsement. (Though Trump did tell reporters he'd voted for the governor days after insulting him as "Ron DeSanctimonious.")

"DeSantis comes out of the election with lot of momentum," said GOP strategist Alex Conant. "Trump has been weak for a long time but it wasn't clear who the alternative was. ... For the first time, Trump really has a formidable rival within the party."

Even some Democrats conceded DeSantis' strength.

Miami-based Democratic strategist Jose Parra said the Trump rival enters the 2024 conversation with "a bunch of wind in his sails" after stronger-than-expected performance across the state — especially in south Florida's Miami-Dade County.

Speaking at the White House on Wednesday, Biden said his "intention" is to run again. But noting the emerging competition between Trump and DeSantis, he said it would be "fun watching them take on each other."

EXPLAINER: Qatar's history, politics ahead of FIFA World Cup

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Qatar will be on the world stage like it has never been before as the small, energy-rich nation hosts the 2022 FIFA World Cup later this month.

The country, on a thumb-shaped peninsula that juts out into the Persian Gulf, has seen its international profile rise as Doha used its massive offshore natural gas fields to make its nation one of the world's richest per-capita.

It has used that money to host the tournament, as well as build out the Arab world's most-recognized satellite news channel, Al Jazeera, construct a major military base that hosts U.S. troops and become a trusted interlocutor for the West — even with the Taliban.

Here's more to know about Qatar ahead of the World Cup.

QATAR'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

Qatar, pronounced like saying the word "cutter" with a soft "r," sits on the Arabian Peninsula and shares a land border with Saudi Arabia. It's also near the island nation of Bahrain, as well as the United Arab Emirates, home to Abu Dhabi and Dubai. It sits across the Persian Gulf from Iran and shares its massive offshore natural gas field with it. Qatar is about twice the size of the U.S. state of Delaware. The majority of its 2.9 million people live around its capital, Doha, on its east coast. Qatar is a primarily flat, desert country, where temperatures in the summer go above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) with high humidity.

GOVERNANCE IN QATAR

Qatar is an autocratic nation overseen by its ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Sheikh Tamim, 42, took power in June 2013 when his father stepped down. The emir wields absolute power in the country, though a 45-seat council does offer advice. As in other Gulf Arab nations, political parties are banned. The right to form unions and strike remains extremely limited. There are no independent human rights organizations operating in the country. Only some 10% of its population are citizens who enjoy vast cradle-to-grave government benefits. Naturalization is rare.

QATAR'S HISTORY

The Al Thani family has ruled Qatar since 1847, though it was first under the Ottoman and then the Brit-

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ish empire. Qatar became an independent nation in 1971 as the British left the region. Oil exports began after World War II, though it would take until 1997 before Qatar began shipping out liquified natural gas to the world. That new money powered Qatar's regional ambitions. It founded the satellite news network Al Jazeera, which brought an Arab perspective to mass media that helped fuel the 2011 Arab Spring protests. It also launched Qatar Airways, a major airline for East-West travel.

QATAR'S INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Qatar follows an ultraconservative form of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism, though unlike neighboring Saudi Arabia, foreigners can drink alcohol. Its faith informs its politics. Qatar backed Islamists in the 2011 Arab Spring, including Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, as well as those who rose up against Syria President Bashar Assad. Al Jazeera became famous for running statements from al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. Qatar has also served as an intermediary for the militant group Hamas, as well as host of the negotiations between the United States and the Taliban that led to America's 2021 withdraw from Afghanistan. Its support of Islamists, in part, led to a yearslong boycott of the country by Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE . That boycott only ended as President Joe Biden prepared to enter the White House.

QATAR'S MILITARY IMPORTANCE

After allowing Western troops to be based in Qatar during the 1991 Gulf War, the country built its massive Al Udeid Air Base for over \$1 billion. American troops began secretly using the base after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan. Use of the base became public knowledge during a Mideast trip by then-Vice President Dick Cheney in March 2002, though sensitivity about the American presence there continued for years. America then moved the forward headquarters of the U.S. military's Central Command to Al Udeid in 2003 and ran air operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, including during the rise of the Islamic State group and the evacuation of Kabul in 2021. It hosts some 8,000 U.S. troops today. Turkey also maintains a military base in Qatar.

Luke Combs tops CMA Awards; Loretta Lynn, Lewis honored

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Luke Combs was crowned entertainer of the year at Wednesday's Country Music Association Awards, the second year in a row that he's taken home the night's top honor.

"I want to thank country music for making my dreams come true," Combs said, dedicating the award to his wife and newborn child. His win came after a performance-packed three hour show that honored country icons and new voices.

"Country is sounding more country than it has in a long time tonight," Combs said. He also won album of the year for "Growin' Up."

The show opened with Carrie Underwood, Miranda Lambert and Reba McEntire playing tribute to the late country queen Loretta Lynn.

The superstar trio performed a medley of Lynn's hits including "You Ain't Woman Enough," "Don't Come Home A-Drinkin'" and "Coal Miner's Daughter" as images of Lynn were projected behind them and audience members sang along.

Rock pioneer Jerry Lee Lewis, who like Lynn died last month, was honored with a fiery tribute by Elle King and the Black Keys.

Alan Jackson accepted the lifetime achievement award, recounting how a movie about Hank Williams inspired him to move to Nashville when he was flat broke. He teared up during his speech, ending it by telling the audience, "I'm still living that honky tonk dream, y'all."

Brothers Osborne won vocal duo of the year and Old Dominion won the trophy for vocal group.

Chris Stapleton won male vocalist of the year, his sixth win in the category. Bryan, Combs, Eric Church and Morgan Wallen were also nominated.

"All the guys in this category deserve this award," Stapleton said.

He dedicated the honor to his 12-year-old daughter, who's birthday was Wednesday.

Emerging country superstar Lainey Wilson was the leading nominee with six nods, taking home trophies

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for new artist and female vocalist.

Jordan Davis' "Buy Dirt" won song of the year. The song featured CMA Awards host Luke Bryan, who Davis called to the stage to hug.

Bryan co-hosted the show at Bridgestone Arena along with NFL great Peyton Manning.

Joining country's biggest stars for the evening were Katy Perry and actors Jessica Chastain and Michael Shannon, who are playing Tammy Wynette and George Jones in an upcoming Showtime limited series and presented Combs the night's top honor.

Perry took the stage and performed "Where We Started" with Thomas Rhett during the show.

Democratic edge shrinks in Arizona Senate, governor races

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Margins between Democrats and Republicans in key Arizona races narrowed considerably Wednesday as election officials chipped away at counting more than half a million mail ballots returned on Election Day and shortly before.

Democrats maintained small but dwindling leads in key races for U.S. Senate, governor and secretary of state, while Republicans were optimistic the late-counted ballots would break heavily in their favor, as they did in 2020.

It could take several days before it's clear who won some of the closer contests.

With Republicans still in the hunt, it remained unclear whether the stronger-than-expected showing for Democrats nationally would extend to Arizona, a longtime Republican stronghold that became a battleground during Donald Trump's presidency.

The GOP nominated a slate of candidates who earned Trump's endorsement after falsely claiming his loss to President Joe Biden was tainted.

Among them former television news anchor Kari Lake was about half a point behind Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs in the race for governor, a contest that centered heavily on Lake's baseless claims of fraud in the 2020 election. The Republican candidate for attorney general also trailed narrowly.

Democrats had more comfortable 5-point margins in the races for U.S. Senate and secretary of state, but with so many ballots outstanding, the races were too early to call.

In the race for attorney general, Republican Abraham Hamadeh took the lead from Democrat Kris Mayes.

Officials in Maricopa County, the state's most populous, said about 17,000 ballots were affected by a printing mishap that prevented vote-counters from reading some ballots, a problem that slowed voting in some locations and infuriated Republicans who were counting on strong Election Day turnout. County officials said all ballots will be counted but gave no timeline for doing so.

The cause of the printing issue remains a mystery. The two top officials on the county board of supervisors, both Republicans, said in a statement Wednesday night that they used the same printers, settings and paper thickness during the August primary and pre-election testing, when there were no widespread issues.

"There is no perfect election. Yesterday was not a perfect election," Bill Gates, chairman of the board of supervisors, told reporters earlier in the day. "We will learn from it and do better."

Lake repeated her pledge to immediately call lawmakers into special session upon being sworn in to make massive changes to Arizona election laws. She wants to significantly reduce early and mail voting, options chosen by at least 8 in 10 Arizona voters, and to count all ballots by hand, which election administrators say would be extremely time consuming.

Ballots can have dozens of races on them. Maricopa County has more than 50 judges on the ballot, on top of state and local races and 10 ballot measures.

"We're going to go back to small precincts where it's easier to detect problems and easier to fix them and it'll be easier to hand count votes as well," Lake told Fox News host Tucker Carlson on Wednesday night. "These are some of the things I'd like to see happen. I'll work with the Legislature."

A political urban-rural divide was evident among Arizona voters.

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Democrats Hobbs and Sen. Mark Kelly each drew support from nearly two-thirds of urban voters, according to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of more than 3,200 voters in Arizona.

Suburban voters split about evenly between the two Democratic candidates and their GOP rivals, Lake and Blake Masters. Small town and rural voters were more likely to favor Lake and Masters.

In the Senate race, suburban men and women were divided in their candidate preferences. Suburban men clearly favored Masters, suburban women Kelly.

In the race for governor, suburban men overwhelmingly backed Lake, while suburban women slightly favored Hobbs.

Meanwhile, Republicans who control the three-member board of supervisors in southeastern Arizona's GOP-heavy Cochise County voted Wednesday to appeal a judge's decision that blocked them from hand-counting all the ballots, which are also being tabulated by machines.

The efforts to hand-count ballots in the county and elsewhere across the nation are driven by unfounded concerns among some Republicans that problems with vote-counting machines or voter fraud led to Trump's 2020 defeat.

A judge said the plan ran afoul of state election law that limits hand-counts to a small sample of ballots, a process meant to confirm the machine count was accurate.

Candidates who backed overturning Trump loss are rebuffed

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

Republicans made a striking decision earlier this year to nominate candidates for top statewide posts in swing states who backed overturning President Donald Trump's loss in 2020. Most of those candidates lost in the midterm election.

Doug Mastriano, who commissioned buses to take Pennsylvanians to the Jan. 6, 2021, protests in Washington failed in his bid to become that state's governor. Kristina Karamo, a community college instructor who spread misinformation about voting on Twitter even on Election Day, was crushed by Michigan's Democratic secretary of state.

Mathew DePerno, an attorney who filed a lawsuit spreading Trump's election lies in Michigan in 2020, lost his bid to be that state's attorney general. Audrey Trujillo, a political novice who cheered Trump's defiance of the vote in 2020, was defeated for New Mexico secretary of state.

Two such races remained too close to call on Wednesday — Arizona and Nevada. And in more conservative states, from Indiana to Kansas, election conspiracy theorists still won key positions.

Many observers argued that the 2022 midterm election has shown that imperiling democracy is not politically successful.

"It turns out that trying to overturn an election is not wildly popular with the American people," said Whit Ayres, a veteran Republican pollster.

That even extends to Arizona, Ayres added, where a prominent former television newscaster-turned-election-conspiracy-theorist, Kari Lake, remains in a tight race for governor against Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, whose campaign has been widely panned.

"The fact that it is close with a very polished, very good Republican candidate and a very weak, very unpolished Democratic candidate tells you how much of a weight election denial is on a Republican candidate," Ayres said.

Lies and conspiracy theories about elections burrowed deeply into the 2022 Republican field, with nearly one-third of the party's 85 candidates for governor, secretary of state and attorney general embracing Trump's efforts to overturn his 2020 loss.

About half of those won — almost all of them incumbents, except for candidates such as Kris Kobach, a member of Trump's 2016 voter fraud commission who won the race for attorney general in Kansas, and Chuck Gray, a Wyoming state representative who ran unopposed for secretary of state in that heavily Republican state.

More significant are the outcomes in the six states that clinched Joe Biden's win in 2020 and where

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Trump and his allies disputed his loss.

In most of those states, as in most of the country, the secretary of state is the top election official while the governor and attorney general often play key roles in voting rules and certifying election results.

In Georgia, Trump unsuccessfully backed a slate of election conspiracy theorists in the GOP primary in May, seeking revenge against incumbent Republicans who rebuffed his requests to overturn his loss.

On Tuesday, Trump lost bids to install supporters in three more of those pivotal states. In Pennsylvania, Mastriano would have had the power to appoint a secretary of state to oversee voting, but he was routed in the governors race by Democratic Attorney General Josh Shapiro. In Wisconsin, Trump's pick for governor, Tim Michels, lost to Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, dooming Republican dreams of disbanding or significantly overhauling the state's bipartisan election commission.

In Michigan, Karamo and DePerno had been key players in spreading misinformation about Trump's loss in 2020. Along with Tudor Dixon, the party's nominee for governor who repeated Trump's election lies, they provided a drag on the GOP ticket that contributed to Democrats capturing full control of the statehouse for the first time in decades.

In two other competitive states — Minnesota and New Mexico — GOP candidates for secretary of state who echoed Trump's election lies lost badly, performing worse than the top of their respective tickets.

"There are more of us pro-democracy Americans who are not Democrats — who look at the Republican Party and say 'That is not for me' — and that was borne out last night," said Jeff Timmers, a former chairman of the Michigan Republican Party.

Nevada and Arizona will continue to test that idea as ballots are tallied in their close races for top state-wide posts.

Nevada is where former state lawmaker Jim Marchant organized a coalition of election conspiracy theorists to run for voting posts nationwide as he himself ran for his state's secretary of state position.

Democracy advocates were optimistic on Wednesday, especially as some Republicans conceded their losses without alleging mass fraud.

"We're seeing a bit of a scramble for the right message" among election deniers online, said Emma Steiner, who monitors disinformation for Common Cause.

She said concessions from candidates including Dixon in Michigan and Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania make "it a little more difficult for election deniers to continue."

But even as advocates celebrated, they kept a wary eye on Arizona and Nevada and acknowledged that Trump has inflicted grave damage on the trust in democracy that helps bind the country together.

"Without a doubt, election denial is alive and well, and this is a continuing threat," said Joanna Lydgate of States United, which has sought to publicize the danger of election conspiracy theorists. But she took solace in Tuesday's results.

"It was a really good night for democracy," Lydgate said.

Hurricane Nicole forms; Florida awaits rare November storm

By FREIDA FRISARO and DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A Florida-bound storm strengthened into Hurricane Nicole on Wednesday evening as it pounded the Bahamas, and U.S. officials ordered evacuations that included former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago club.

It's a rare November hurricane for storm-weary Florida, where only two such hurricanes have made landfall since recordkeeping began in 1853 — the 1935 Yankee Hurricane and Hurricane Kate in 1985.

Nicole was expected to reach Florida late Wednesday or early Thursday with a storm surge that could further erode many beaches hit by Hurricane Ian in September before heading into Georgia and the Carolinas later Thursday and Friday. It was expected to dump heavy rain across the region.

Nicole's center was about 75 miles (125 kilometers) east-northeast of West Palm Beach, Florida, late Wednesday, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center said. It had maximum sustained winds of 75 mph (120 kph) and was moving west-northwest at 13 mph (20 kph).

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The sprawling storm became a hurricane as it slammed into Grand Bahama, having made landfall just hours earlier on Great Abaco island as a tropical storm with maximum sustained winds of 70 mph.

Nicole is the first storm to hit the Bahamas since Hurricane Dorian, a Category 5 storm that devastated the archipelago in 2019.

In the Bahamas, officials said that more than 860 people were in more than two dozen shelters. Extensive flooding, downed trees and power and water outages were reported in the archipelago's northwest region.

Authorities were especially concerned about a large Haitian community in Great Abaco that was destroyed by Dorian and has since grown from 50 acres (20 hectares) to 200 acres (80 hectares).

"Do not put yourselves in harm's way," said Zhivago Dames, assistant commissioner of police information as he urged everyone to stay indoors. "Our first responders are out there. However, they will not put their lives in danger."

In Florida, the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office said in a tweet that storm surge from Tropical Storm Nicole had already breached the sea wall along Indian River Drive, which runs parallel to the Atlantic Ocean. The Martin County Sheriff's office also said seawater had breached part of a road on Hutchinson Island.

Residents in several Florida counties — Flagler, Palm Beach, Martin and Volusia — were ordered to evacuate such barrier islands, low-lying areas and mobile homes. Volusia, home to Daytona Beach, imposed a curfew and warned that intercoastal bridges used by evacuees would close when winds reach 39 mph.

Mar-a-Lago, Trump's club and home, is in one of those evacuation zones, built about a quarter-mile inland from the ocean. The main buildings sit on a small rise that is about 15 feet (4.6 meters) above sea level and the property has survived numerous stronger hurricanes since it was built nearly a century ago. The resort's security office hung up Wednesday when an Associated Press reporter asked whether the club was being evacuated and there was no sign of evacuation by early afternoon.

There is no penalty for ignoring an evacuation order, but rescue crews will not respond if it puts their members at risk.

In Palm Beach County, some 400 people checked into seven evacuation centers including Hidir Dontar, a software engineer carrying a backpack and plastic bag with his belongings. He said he didn't want to stay in his apartment because the landlord wasn't putting shutters over the windows, something that didn't feel safe having lived through "one bad one," 2004's Hurricane Frances.

"I didn't want to be in the middle of the storm, have something go wrong and wonder, 'What do I do now?'" Dontar said.

Meanwhile, officials in Daytona Beach Shores deemed unsafe at least a half dozen, multi-story, coastal residential buildings already damaged by Hurricane Ian and now threatened by Nicole. At some locations, authorities went door-to-door telling people to grab their possessions and leave.

Disney World and Universal Orlando Resort announced they were closing early on Wednesday and likely would not reopen as scheduled on Thursday.

Palm Beach International Airport closed Wednesday morning, and Daytona Beach International Airport said it would cease operations. Orlando International Airport, the seventh busiest in the U.S., also closed. Further south, officials said Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport and Miami International Airport were experiencing some flight delays and cancellations but both planned to remain open.

At a news conference in Tallahassee, Gov. Ron DeSantis said winds were the biggest concern and significant power outages could occur, but that 16,000 linemen were on standby to restore power, as well as 600 guardsmen and seven search and rescue teams.

"It will affect huge parts of the state of Florida all day," DeSantis said of the storm's expected landing.

Almost two dozen school districts were closing schools for the storm and 15 shelters had opened along Florida's east coast, the governor said.

Forty-five of Florida's 67 counties were under a state of emergency declaration.

Florida Division of Emergency Management director Kevin Guthrie said Floridians should expect possible tornadoes, rip currents and flash flooding.

Bahamas Prime Minister Philip Brave Davis, who is at the COP27 U.N. Climate Summit, drew attention to the link between storms and climate change.

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"There have always been storms, but as the planet warms from carbon emissions, storms are growing in intensity and frequency," he said. "For those in Grand Bahama and Abaco, I know it is especially difficult for you to face another storm,"

Tropical storm force winds extended as far as 485 miles (780 kilometers) from the center in some directions.

New warnings and watches were issued for many parts of Florida, including the southwestern Gulf coastline which was devastated by Hurricane Ian, which struck as a Category 4 storm on Sept. 28. The storm destroyed homes and damaged crops, including orange groves, across the state. — damage that many are still dealing with.

In Florida, the "combination of a dangerous storm surge and the tide will cause normally dry areas near the coast to be flooded by rising waters moving inland from the shoreline," the hurricane center said.

Daniel Brown, a senior hurricane specialist at the Miami-based National Hurricane Center, said the storm will affect a large part of the state.

"Because the system is so large, really almost the entire east coast of Florida except the extreme southeastern part and the Keys is going to receive tropical storm force winds," he said.

The storm is then expected to move across central and northern Florida into southern Georgia on Thursday, forecasters said. It was then forecast to move across the Carolinas on Friday.

"We are going to be concerned with rainfall as we get later into the week across portions of the southeastern United States and southern Appalachians, where there could be some flooding, flash flooding with that rainfall," Brown said.

Early Wednesday, President Joe Biden declared an emergency in Florida and ordered federal assistance to supplement state, tribal and local response efforts to the approaching storm. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is still responding to those in need from Hurricane Ian.

At the beach just north of Mar-a-Lago as winds gusts neared 40 mph Wednesday afternoon, numerous people were taking videos of the churning ocean.

Denny DeHaven, who works for a Social Security advocacy group, said he lives inland so he's not too concerned.

"It's only going to be a Category 1 - the thing I mostly worry about is a power outage," he said. "The people I worry about are those who live around here after seeing what happened in Fort Myers." Hurricane Ian brought storm surge of up to 13 feet in late September, causing widespread destruction.

In a video posted on Twitter, Volusia County Sheriff Mike Chitwood said the surge had already arrived and dozens of seaside buildings declared structurally unsafe. A mandatory evacuation was issued for the beach side, and a curfew was scheduled for 7 p.m.

"We're looking for a really rough night here," Chitwood said.

100,000 Russian troops killed or injured in Ukraine, US says

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russia's announced retreat from Kherson, a regional capital in southern Ukraine that it seized early in the war, and a potential stalemate in fighting over the winter could provide both countries an opportunity to negotiate peace, Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Wednesday.

He said as many as 40,000 Ukrainian civilians and "well over" 100,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in the war, now in its ninth month. "Same thing probably on the Ukrainian side," Milley added.

"There has been a tremendous amount of suffering, human suffering," he said at The Economic Club of New York.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday he was open to peace talks with Russia to end the war but only on the condition that Russia return all of Ukraine's occupied lands, provide compensation for war damage and face prosecution for war crimes.

Russia has said it is open to talks, and this week announced it had begun a retreat from Kherson.

Zelenskyy has warned that the Russians are feigning a pullout from Kherson to lure the Ukrainian army

into an entrenched battle in the strategic industrial port city, a gateway to the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula.

Milley, the highest-ranking U.S. military officer, said Russia had amassed 20,000 to 30,000 troops in Kherson and a full retreat could take several weeks.

"The initial indicators are they are in fact doing it. They made the public announcement they're doing it. I believe they're doing it in order to preserve their force to reestablish defensive lines south of the (Dnieper) river, but that remains to be seen" he said.

Milley said it's possible the Russians will use the retreat to reset their troops for a spring offensive, but "there's also an opportunity here, a window of opportunity for negotiation."

But for negotiations to have a chance, both Russia and Ukraine would have to reach a "mutual recognition" that a military victory "is maybe not achievable through military means, and therefore you need to turn to other means," Milley said, citing the end of World War I as an example.

Tight California races may determine US House control

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A string of too-early-to-call California U.S. House races remains in play and might end up determining whether Republicans seize control or Democrats hang on to power.

With millions of votes still uncounted Wednesday across the nation's most populous state, uncertainty remained for about a dozen of the state's 52 House contests. The most competitive of those races were in the Los Angeles region and the Central Valley farm belt.

In Southern California, Democratic Reps. Katie Porter and Mike Levin were locked in close races, despite President Joe Biden's late-hour campaign swing on their behalf. East of Los Angeles, Republican Rep. Ken Calvert was trailing Democrat Will Rollins by 12 points, but less than one-third of the anticipated votes had been tallied.

In the Central Valley, GOP Rep. David Valadao, who voted to impeach then-President Donald Trump, had 54% of the votes counted so far in his race against Democrat Rudy Salas, but most ballots had yet to be tabulated. Four years ago, Valadao lost a reelection bid after seeing a sizable lead on election Day evaporate as late-arriving mail-in ballots were counted. He won back the seat in 2020.

Should Democrats defeat Calvert and prevail in other contests where they were leading or only slightly behind, the year would have echoes of 2018, when the party seized seven Republican-held California seats on the way to retaking the House.

But if Calvert hangs on and Republicans oust Porter and Levin and win an open seat in Central California, the scenario would look similar to 2020, when GOP House candidates flipped four seats in a state where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by nearly 2-to-1.

With votes still being counted in key races "we don't know whether California is a political bellwether or an island," said Thad Kousser, a political science professor at the University of California, San Diego.

If Democrats can hold the Porter and Levin seats and oust Calvert "this red ripple that went across the country becomes a blue counter-ripple," he added.

More broadly, California hewed largely to its liberal leanings on Election Day. Gov. Gavin Newsom and U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla, both Democrats, were easily reelected, voters overwhelmingly endorsed enshrining abortion rights in the state constitution and the Legislature remained firmly in Democratic hands.

Democrats also appeared in position to retain their grip on all statewide offices. A Republican hasn't won one of those races in California since 2006 when Arnold Schwarzenegger was re-elected governor.

The potential for slight shifts mirrored the national political landscape, in which predictions for a Republican "wave" sweeping Congress into solid GOP control failed to materialize. Republicans were closing in on a slim House majority while Senate control will be decided by close races in Arizona, Nevada and Georgia.

A loss by Porter would be stunning, after she spent more than \$24 million to win a third term. She is a star of the party's progressive wing, a prolific fundraiser with a national following and is frequently mentioned as a future U.S. Senate candidate.

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With about half the vote counted, she was virtually tied with Republican Scott Baugh, who had relentlessly criticized her over soaring gas and grocery prices in a closely divided coastal district with a conservative streak. Porter focused strongly on protecting reproductive rights, after the Supreme Court overturned the Roe v. Wade decision.

Calvert — the longest serving Republican in the California congressional delegation — was first elected in 1992.

His support from Trump posed a challenge in a new, reshaped district about equally split between Democrats and Republicans, which included many transplanted Los Angeles residents and liberal Palm Springs, which has a large concentration of LGBTQ voters.

In a district anchored in San Diego County, Levin was in a tight contest with Republican Brian Maryott, who also targeted pocketbook issues that were the top concern for voters nationally. Biden campaigned for him just days before Election Day.

California Republicans believed as many as five House districts in the state could swing their way — enough to very likely give the GOP the House gavel in a midterm-election year when voters typically punish the party that holds the White House. Republican Rep. Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield would be in line to replace Speaker Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco.

Democrats hoped to claw back the four seats they surrendered in 2020 and pad their dominance in the state congressional delegation. Republicans hold only 11 of the state's 53 seats, which drops to 52 seats next year because California's once-soaring population growth has stalled.

One of the closest contests was for an open seat, the Central Valley's 13th District, which has a prominent Democratic tilt and a large Latino population. But the most likely voters tend to be white, older, more affluent homeowners, while working-class voters, including many Latinos, are less consistent getting to the polls. Republican John Duarte and Democrat Adam Gray were nearly tied.

In a Democratic-leaning district north of Los Angeles, Republican Rep. Mike Garcia was holding a 15-point edge over Democrat Christy Smith in their third consecutive race. Garcia won the previous two.

GOP nudges closer to House win; Senate could hinge on runoff

By SARA BURNETT, JILL COLVIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans inched closer to a narrow House majority Wednesday, while control of the Senate hinged on a few tight races in a midterm election that defied expectations of sweeping conservative victories driven by frustration over inflation and President Joe Biden's leadership.

Either party could secure a Senate majority with wins in both Nevada and Arizona — where the races were too early to call. But there was a strong possibility that, for the second time in two years, the Senate majority could come down to a runoff in Georgia next month, with Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock and Herschel Walker failing to earn enough votes to win outright.

In the House, Republicans on Wednesday night were within a dozen seats of the 218 needed to take control, while Democrats kept seats in districts from Virginia to Pennsylvania to Kansas and many West Coast contests were still too early to call. In a particularly symbolic victory for the GOP, Sean Patrick Maloney of New York, the House Democratic campaign chief, lost his bid for a sixth term.

Control of Congress will decide how the next two years of Biden's term play out, and whether he is able to achieve more of his agenda or will see it blocked by a new GOP majority. Republicans are likely to launch a spate of investigations into Biden, his family and his administration if they take power, while a GOP takeover of the Senate would hobble the president's ability to appoint judges.

"Regardless of what the final tally of these elections show, and there's still some counting going on, I'm prepared to work with my Republican colleagues," Biden said Wednesday in his first public remarks since the polls closed. "The American people have made clear, I think, that they expect Republicans to be prepared to work with me as well."

Democrats did better than history suggested they would. The party in power almost always suffers losses in the president's first midterm elections, though even if the GOP ultimately wins the House, it

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won't be by a margin as large as during other midterm cycles. Democrats gained a net of 41 House seats under then-President Donald Trump in 2018, President Barack Obama saw the GOP gain 63 in 2010 and Republicans gained 54 seats during President Bill Clinton's first midterm.

A small majority in the House would pose a great challenge for the GOP and especially California Rep. Kevin McCarthy, who is in line to be House speaker and would have little room for error in navigating a chamber of members eager to leverage their votes to advance their own agenda.

In the fight for Senate control, Pennsylvania was a bright spot for Democrats. Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, who suffered a stroke five months ago, flipped a Republican-controlled Senate seat, topping Trump-endorsed Republican Dr. Mehmet Oz.

Georgia, meanwhile, was set for yet another runoff on Dec. 6. In 2021, Warnock used a runoff to win his seat, as did Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff — which gave Democrats control of the Senate. Both Warnock and Walker were already fundraising off the race stretching into a second round.

Both Republican and Democratic incumbents maintained key Senate seats. In Wisconsin, Republican Sen. Ron Johnson prevailed over Democratic Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, while in New Hampshire, Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan beat Don Bolduc, a retired Army general who had initially promoted Trump's lies about the 2020 election but tried to shift away those views closer to Election Day.

AP VoteCast, a broad survey of the national electorate, showed that high inflation and concerns about the fragility of democracy were heavily influencing voters. Half of voters said inflation factored significantly, with groceries, gasoline, housing and other costs that have shot up in the past year. Slightly fewer — 44% — said the future of democracy was their primary consideration.

Biden didn't entirely shoulder the blame for inflation, with close to half of voters saying the higher-than-usual prices were more because of factors outside of his control. And despite the president bearing criticism from a pessimistic electorate, some of those voters backed Democratic candidates.

Democrats counted on a midterm boost from the Supreme Court's decision to gut abortion rights, which they thought might energize their voters, and the bet paid off. In four states where the issue was on the ballot, voters backed abortion rights. VoteCast showed that 7 in 10 national voters said overturning the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision was an important factor in their midterm decisions. It also showed the reversal was broadly unpopular. And roughly 6 in 10 said they favor a law guaranteeing access to legal abortion nationwide.

In the first national election since the Jan. 6 insurrection, some who participated in or were in the vicinity of the attack on the U.S. Capitol were poised to win elected office. One of those Republican candidates, Derrick Van Orden in Wisconsin — who was outside the Capitol during the deadly riot — won a House seat. Another, J.R. Majewski, lost to Ohio Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur.

Republicans had sought to make inroads in liberal New England but were shut out of House contests, with one Maine race still set to be determined by ranked choice voting.

Governors' races took on outsized significance this year, particularly in battleground states that could help decide the results of the 2024 presidential election. Democrats held on to governors' mansions in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, defeating Republicans who promoted Trump's lies about a stolen 2020 election. Republicans held on to governors' mansions in Florida, Texas and Georgia, another battleground state Biden narrowly won two years ago.

Trump found some success as well. He lifted Republican Senate candidates to victory in Ohio and North Carolina. JD Vance, the bestselling author of "Hillbilly Elegy," defeated 10-term congressman Tim Ryan, while Rep. Ted Budd beat Cheri Beasley, the former chief justice of the state Supreme Court.

Trump had endorsed more than 300 candidates across the country, hoping the night would end in a red wave he could ride to the 2024 Republican presidential nomination. After summoning reporters and his most loyal supporters to a watch party at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida on Tuesday, he ended the night without a triumphant speech.

Still, the former president insisted on social media that he'd had "A GREAT EVENING." Hours later, Palm Beach County issued an evacuation order for an area that included Trump's club with Hurricane Nicole

approaching.

Facebook parent Meta cuts 11,000 jobs, 13% of workforce

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Facebook parent Meta is laying off 11,000 people, about 13% of its workforce, as it contends with faltering revenue and broader tech industry woes, CEO Mark Zuckerberg said in a letter to employees Wednesday.

The job cuts come just a week after widespread layoffs at Twitter under its new owner, billionaire Elon Musk. There have been numerous job cuts at other tech companies that hired rapidly during the pandemic.

Zuckerberg said that he had made the decision to hire aggressively, anticipating rapid growth even after the pandemic lockdowns ended.

"Unfortunately, this did not play out the way I expected," Zuckerberg said in a statement. "Not only has online commerce returned to prior trends, but the macroeconomic downturn, increased competition, and ads signal loss have caused our revenue to be much lower than I'd expected. I got this wrong, and I take responsibility for that."

Meta, like other social media companies, enjoyed a financial boost during the pandemic lockdown era because more people stayed home and scrolled on their phones and computers. But as the lockdowns ended and people started going outside again, revenue growth began to falter.

Of particular concern to investors, Meta poured over \$10 billion a year into the "metaverse" as it shifts its focus away from social media. Zuckerberg predicts the metaverse, an immersive digital universe, will eventually replace smartphones as the primary way people use technology.

Spooked investors have sent company shares tumbling more than 71% since the beginning of the year and the stock now trades at levels last seen in 2015.

An economic slowdown and a grim outlook for online advertising — by far Meta's biggest revenue source — have contributed to Meta's woes as well. This summer, the company posted its first quarterly revenue decline in history, followed by another, bigger decline in the fall.

Some of the pain is company-specific, while some is tied to broader economic and technological forces.

Last week, Twitter laid off about half of its 7,500 employees, part of a chaotic overhaul as Musk took the helm. He tweeted that there was no choice but to cut the jobs "when the company is losing over \$4M/day," though did not provide details about the losses. Snap, the owner of Snapchat, also recently laid off 1,000 workers and online real estate broker Redfin said Wednesday it is cutting 862 employees.

Meta and its advertisers are bracing for a potential recession. There's also the challenge of Apple's privacy tools, which make it more difficult for social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Snap to track people without their consent and target ads to them.

Although Meta has been hurt by broader economic trends that have curtailed spending on digital ads, the company's challenges have been compounded by the rise of TikTok at the same time Zuckerberg is pouring billions into a metaverse that so far seems like a distant mirage, said Forrester Research analyst J.P. Gownder.

"They are making a big bet on something that may not happen for another five to 10 years," Gownder said. "What they need to be doing is trying to solve some of their fundamental business problems. This (mass layoff) is only a stopgap."

Zuckerberg said Meta is cutting costs across its business, but he added that this alone won't big costs in line with its revenue growth.

In addition to the layoffs, a hiring freeze at the company will be extended through the first quarter of 2023, Zuckerberg said. The company has also slashed its real estate footprint and he said that with so many employees working outside of the office, the company will transition to desk sharing for those that remain.

More cost cuts at Meta will be rolled out in coming months, Zuckerberg said.

Zuckerberg told employees Wednesday that they will receive an email letting them know if they are

among those being let go. Access to most company systems will be cut off for people losing their jobs, he said, due to the sensitive nature of that information.

"We're keeping email addresses active throughout the day so everyone can say farewell," Zuckerberg said.

Former employees will receive 16 weeks of base pay, plus two additional weeks for every year with the company, Zuckerberg said. Health insurance for those employees and their families will continue for six months.

Even with Wednesday's reductions, Meta still has more than 75,000 workers around the globe. In fact, the company had 71,970 workers at the end of 2021, and less than 59,000 at the end of 2020.

Brad Gerstner, the CEO of Meta shareholder Altimeter Capital, wrote an open letter to Zuckerberg last month urging him to tighten Meta's belt.

"Meta has drifted into the land of excess — too many people, too many ideas, too little urgency," Gerstner wrote. "This lack of focus and fitness is obscured when growth is easy but deadly when growth slows and technology changes."

Gerstner urged Zuckerberg to streamline costs and focus the company in an open letter posted on Medium. His suggestions include cutting 20% of the company's workforce — which still would only set Meta back to 2021 levels of staffing, backing Gerstner's point that the company has become bigger than it needs to be.

Meta's Wednesday layoffs, while historic for the company, breaks no tech industry records. Hewlett Packard let go about 2/3 of its workforce between 2010 and 2021, going from 324,600 employees to 111,000 as of Oct. 31, 2021 for HP Inc. and HP Enterprises, which had been one company back in 2010.

And its peak in 1986, IBM had about 400,000 employees worldwide. At the end of last year, IBM had about 282,000 full-time workers.

It's not yet clear if Meta — and the social media economy — is on a similar trajectory. A decade ago, Facebook successfully pivoted its business from running a website on desktop computers to an app — then multiple apps — on smartphones. While it is possible that it will be able to make the switch again to a new communications platform in the metaverse, the world — and the company — have changed tremendously.

"Meta has three huge problems to overcome: It is no longer an innovative groundbreaker; its grip on market domination is dwindling; and the promise of the metaverse, the centerpiece of Zuckerberg's vision for the future of his company, has been diminished by a combination of consumer apathy, business skepticism, and the realities of a sinking worldwide economy," Gerstner wrote.

Shares of Meta Platforms Inc. added \$5, or 5.2% to close at \$101.47 on Wednesday.

Biden hails Democrats' 'strong night,' acknowledges concerns

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, ZEKE MILLER and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden claimed vindication the day after the midterm elections, saying Democrats had "a strong night" and he planned to change nothing about his approach despite facing the likelihood of divided government in the nation's capital.

"I'm prepared to work with my Republican colleagues," Biden said during a post-election news conference Wednesday. "The American people have made clear they expect Republicans to work with me as well.

He brushed off concerns that Republicans, who are on track to take control of the House, will investigate his administration and family in what could swiftly become a bruising stretch of his presidency.

"I think the American people will look at all that for what it is, almost comedy," he said.

The White House said later Wednesday that Biden had spoken by phone with Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., who is in line to become House speaker if Republicans win the majority.

In his first public comments since voting ended, Biden was celebratory and defiant as Democrats denied Republicans the sweeping victory they expected. His party still has a potential path to hold control of the Senate, which would preserve his ability to nominate federal judges and administration officials.

"While the press and the pundits were predicting a giant red wave, it didn't happen," Biden said.

The election results were a remarkable display of resiliency in the face of both history and gloomy polls

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that suggested voters were fed up with inflation and crime and looking to punish the party in power. Biden acknowledged that many Americans remain discouraged by the country's direction.

"The voters were also clear that they're still frustrated," he said. "I get it."

Even so, Biden expressed little interest in changing course on his agenda, saying: "I'm not going to change anything in any fundamental way."

The benefit of his policies, such as funding for infrastructure projects and limits on prescription drug costs, "takes time to be recognized," he said.

Biden said he planned to call Republican congressional leaders, and he opened the door to seeking compromise with them — without shifting on his top priorities. He also questioned whether Americans want the major changes some Republicans are seeking, such as revisiting Social Security or Medicare benefits.

Biden was joined by first lady Jill Biden at his press conference, and he said it's "ultimately a family decision" about whether to run for a second term.

His team has been making preparations for another campaign, and Biden said "my intention is that I run again." He said he doesn't "feel any hurry one way or another" about making an announcement, which could come early next year.

It's unclear if the midterm results will be enough to enable Biden to move ahead strongly toward a second term. An expansive survey by AP VoteCast revealed deep worries about his performance and ability to continue serving.

With Biden approaching his 80th birthday, 58% of voters said he does not have the mental capability to serve effectively as president. Only 44% described him as honest, and just 34% said he's a "strong leader."

There were other warning signs for his political standing as well.

When Biden was elected two years ago, 54% of voters described him as someone who "cares about people like you." Among this year's midterm voters, that slipped to 46%.

Overall, 57% of voters said they had an unfavorable view of Biden. His approval ratings on the economy, energy policy and border security were underwater. Even his handling of Russia, widely seen as a success for Biden as he maintains an international coalition to oppose the invasion of Ukraine, is viewed negatively.

His lukewarm ratings were driven by overwhelmingly negative attitudes among Republicans, but even Democratic voters were not resounding in their support.

About 2 in 10 voters for Democrats said they disapprove of Biden's job performance overall, a noticeable softness in today's hyper-partisan political environment.

The survey of more than 94,000 voters nationwide was conducted for nine days, concluding as polls closed, for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago.

A clear advantage for Biden, who campaigned for office on simply being better than the alternative, is the disdain that his supporters have for his predecessor.

While 50% of voters for Democratic candidates said their votes were meant to show support for the president, an even greater percentage — 65% — said they voted to express opposition to Donald Trump.

"Democrats were arguing from the beginning that they needed to make this election a choice rather than a referendum," said Amy Walter, an analyst who leads the Cook Political Report. "And essentially, they did."

Walter said Democrats were able to maintain support in the midterms even from voters who believe that "Biden is not living up to their expectations, or they are feeling disappointed of his stewardship."

The outcome takes the heat off the White House, at least for now.

"The pressure goes from 'How is Biden going to explain himself post election?' to 'How is Trump going to explain himself?'" she said. "The more intriguing conversations are happening on the Republican side."

Some members of Biden's team began circulating a clip of his meeting with the New York Times editorial board during the Democratic primary. Asked about whether his lead in the polls was fleeting, Biden dismissed the question by saying pundits were always too quick to "declare me dead."

"And guess what?" he said. "I ain't dead. And I'm not going to die."

For a White House that has felt besieged by second guessing, it was a moment of satisfaction.

"Never underestimate how much Team Biden is underestimated," tweeted Ron Klain, the White House

chief of staff.

Musk seeks to reassure advertisers on Twitter after chaos

By MATT O'BRIEN, MAE ANDERSON and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

Elon Musk sought to reassure big companies that advertise on Twitter on Wednesday that his chaotic takeover of the social media platform won't harm their brands, acknowledging that some "dumb things" might happen on his way to creating what he says will be a better, safer user experience.

The latest erratic move on the minds of major advertisers — that the company depends on for revenue — was Musk's decision to abolish a new "official" label on high-profile Twitter accounts just hours after introducing it.

Twitter began adding gray labels to prominent accounts Wednesday, including brands like Coca-Cola, Nike and Apple, to indicate that they are authentic. A few hours later, the labels started disappearing.

"Apart from being an aesthetic nightmare when looking at the Twitter feed, it was simply another way of creating a two-class system," the billionaire Tesla CEO told advertisers in an hour-long conversation broadcast live on Twitter. "It wasn't addressing the core problem."

Musk's comments were his most expansive about Twitter's future since he closed a \$44 billion deal to buy the company late last month, dismissed its top executives almost immediately and, on Friday, fired roughly half of its workforce. Major brands including General Motors, United Airlines, General Mills and others have temporarily halted buying ads on the platform as they watch whether Musk's plans to loosen its guardrails against hate speech will lead to a rise in online toxicity.

Scores of companies big and small made their presence known among the more than 100,000 Twitter Space listeners by signing in with their brand Twitter accounts. The brand accounts for companies including banks Deutsche Bank, TD Ameritrade, gas company Chevron, automaker Nissan, airline Air Canada and many others appeared. Car brand Audi, which has paused Twitter ads, was there, as was retailer R.E.I., which said after the call its ads were still paused.

Musk said he's still planning a "content moderation council" representing diverse viewpoints that will tackle inappropriate content and reassure advertisers, but it would take "a few months" to put together. He said it will be advisory and "not a command council."

Lou Paskalis, longtime marketing and media executive and former Bank of America head of global media, said the briefing raised questions that will likely leave Fortune 500 advertisers uneasy.

The biggest concern for big advertisers is brand safety and risk avoidance, he said. And Musk seems uninterested in reining in his Twitter persona that can be divisive — such as his tweet ahead of the election advising Americans to vote Republican.

"To come out like Elon did ... and say 'vote Republican since there's a Democrat in the White House' — I don't know what marketer wants to go near that," he said.

One solution could be to hire a CEO to run the company and create stability while Musk continues to be his "Chief Twit" persona, Paskalis said.

Musk had earlier threatened by tweet a "thermonuclear name & shame" on advertisers that quit Twitter. But he took a more measured approach Wednesday, asking them to "give it a minute and kind of see how things are evolving."

"The best way to understand what's going on with Twitter is use Twitter," he told the group, which was represented mostly by the head of the Interactive Advertising Bureau, a trade association.

However, the confusion on Twitter continued Wednesday. The rollout hours earlier of the "official" labels appeared arbitrary, with some politicians, news outlets and well-known personalities getting the label and others not. In some cases, whether users could see an account's "official" label appeared to depend on what country they were in.

Then the labels started disappearing.

YouTube personality and author John Green got the label but his younger brother and "vlogging" partner Hank Green didn't make the cut. Then John Green's label was gone. Another popular YouTuber, Marques

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Brownlee, who posts videos on technology, tweeted he got the label, then tweeted again that it disappeared. "I just killed it," Musk responded, though at first it wasn't clear if he was referring specifically to Brownlee's label or the entire project.

The site's current system of using "blue checks" to confirm an account's authenticity will soon go away for those who don't pay a monthly fee. The checkmarks will be available for anyone willing to pay a \$7.99-a-month subscription, which will also include some bonus features, such as fewer ads and the ability to have tweets given greater visibility than those coming from non-subscribers.

The platform's current verification system has been in place since 2009 and was created to ensure high-profile and public-facing accounts are who they say they are.

Experts have expressed concern that making the checkmark available to anyone for a fee could lead to impersonations and the spreading of misinformation and scams.

The gray label — a color that tends to blend into the background whether you use light or dark mode to scroll Twitter — was an apparent compromise.

Esther Crawford, a Twitter employee who has been working on the verification overhaul, had said Tuesday on Twitter that the "official" label would be added to "select accounts" when the new system launches.

"Not all previously verified accounts will get the 'Official' label and the label is not available for purchase," said Crawford.

But after the labels started disappearing Wednesday, she again took to Twitter to say "there are no sacred cows in product at Twitter anymore."

"Elon is willing to try lots of things — many will fail, some will succeed," she said.

There are about 423,000 verified accounts under the outgoing system. Many of those belong to celebrities, businesses and politicians.

But a large chunk of verified accounts belong to individual journalists, some with tiny followings at local newspapers and news sites around the world. The idea was to verify reporters so their identities couldn't be used to push false information on Twitter.

Musk, who often bristles at critical news coverage, pushed back against that use of the tool Wednesday, saying he wanted to elevate "citizen journalism" and the "voice of the people" over publications he suggested had too much influence in defining the "Western narrative." Journalism professionals generally consider Musk's concept of elevating "citizen journalists" dangerous because it ignores the need for standards, including fact-checking, that responsible news organizations enforce.

Russia claims pullout from occupied city; Ukraine skeptical

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia's military said Wednesday it will withdraw from the only Ukrainian regional capital it captured, but Kyiv was skeptical and an analyst warned this could be a ruse to lure the country's forces into a deadly trap. A forced pullout from the city of Kherson would mark one of Russia's worst setbacks in the 8-month-old war.

Ukrainian authorities cautioned against considering the announced plan to retreat from Kherson, a gateway to the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula, and nearby areas as a done deal. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has warned that the Russians were feigning a pullout from Kherson to lure the Ukrainian army into an entrenched battle in the strategic industrial port city.

If confirmed, the withdrawal from Kherson — in a region of the same name that Moscow illegally annexed in September — would pile on another setback to Russia's early failed attempt to capture the capital, Kyiv, and the chaotic and hasty retreat from the administrative region around Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, which itself never fell to the Russians. Russian forces captured Kherson early in the invasion, which began Feb. 24.

Kyiv's forces have zeroed in on the city, whose prewar population was 280,000, and cut off supply lines in recent weeks as part of a larger counteroffensive in eastern and southern Ukraine that has pushed Russian troops out of wide swaths of territory.

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Recapturing Kherson could allow Ukraine to win back lost territory in the Zaporizhzhia region and other southern areas, including Crimea, which Russia illegally seized in 2014. A Russian retreat is almost certain to raise domestic pressure on the Kremlin to escalate the conflict.

Speaking in a stern tone and with a steely face on Russian TV, Moscow's top military commander in Ukraine pointed to a blurred map as he reported to Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu on Wednesday that it was impossible to supply the city of Kherson and that its defense would be "futile."

Gen. Sergei Surovikin said that 115,000 people had been relocated because their "lives are constantly in danger" and proposed a military retreat "in the near future" to the opposite bank of the Dnieper River from where Kherson lies.

Shoigu agreed with Surovikin's assessment and ordered him to "start with the withdrawal of troops and take all measures to ensure the safe transfer of personnel, weapons and equipment across the Dnieper River."

But Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak told The Associated Press: "So far, we do not see any signs that Russia is completely leaving the city, which means that these statements may be disinformation."

Yaroslav Yanushevych, Kherson's Ukrainian-appointed governor, called on residents "not to give in to euphoria" just yet. Another Ukrainian-appointed Kherson regional official, Serhii Khlan, told reporters that Russian forces had blown up five bridges to slow Kyiv's forces.

Military analyst Oleg Zhdanov told the AP Russia's announced retreat "could very well be an ambush and a Russian trap to force the Ukrainians to go on the offensive, force them to penetrate the Russian defenses, and in response to strike with a powerful blow from the flanks."

After a day of his aides' observations about the announced retreat and a meeting he held with his senior military staff in Kyiv, Zelenskyy didn't directly comment, saying in his nightly video address, "Our emotions must be restrained — always during war. I will definitely not feed the enemy all the details of our operations. ... When we have our result, everyone will see it."

In addition to the largely successful counteroffensive, Ukrainian resistance fighters behind the front line have worked inside Kherson, with sabotage and assassinations of Moscow-appointed officials.

With no indication of foul play but against that backdrop, reports surfaced Wednesday that the No. 2 official of the Moscow-installed Kherson regional government was killed in a car crash. The death of Kirill Stremousov — a prominent regional official who posted public updates about the war almost daily — was confirmed by his boss, Vladimir Saldo.

The Russian Defense Ministry said months ago that Saldo himself had been poisoned and hospitalized.

Speaking at a White House news conference, U.S. President Joe Biden said American officials had been expecting the Russian announcement. "It's evidence of the fact that they have some real problems — the Russian military," he said.

Asked if a pullout might signal to Kyiv that it now had leverage to begin peace talks with Moscow, Biden said it would "at a minimum lead to time for everyone to recalibrate their positions over the winter period."

The Russian military appeared to have been preparing for an orderly pullout from Kherson — or an ambush — for months, contrasting with the haphazard retreat from the Kharkiv region when the invading force left behind a large amount of weapons and ammunition.

In October, Surovikin appeared to set the stage for a withdrawal from Kherson, acknowledging the situation was "quite difficult." Evacuations of civilians followed, as did symbolic moves, such as relocation of the remains of Grigory Potemkin, the Russian general who founded Kherson in the 18th century.

In recent months, Ukraine used U.S.-supplied HIMARS rocket launchers to hit a key bridge on the Dnieper in Kherson and a large dam upstream that is also used as a crossing point. The strikes forced Russia to rely on pontoons and ferries that Ukraine also targeted.

The attacks disrupted supply links to Kherson and made Russian forces on the Dnieper's west bank vulnerable to encirclement. The shortages were exacerbated after an Oct. 8 truck bomb blew up part of the strategic Kerch Bridge linking Russia's mainland to Crimea, which has served as a major supply hub for Russian forces.

Russia wanted to hold onto Kherson and other positions west of the Dnieper so it could press an offen-

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sive to other areas and sever Ukraine's access to the Black Sea. That would damage Ukraine's economy and enable Moscow to build a land corridor to the separatist Transnistria region of Moldova, home to a major Russian military base.

The loss of Kherson could have painful consequences for Russian President Vladimir Putin: more criticism of Russia's military command from hawks, a decline in troop morale, and stronger opposition to his troop mobilization. Abroad, China and India could see the loss as a sign of the Kremlin's weakness just when it needs their support to soften the blow of crippling Western sanctions.

Other Kremlin setbacks have included a chaotic and mistake-ridden troop mobilization, poor training and a shortage of weapons, clothing and other supplies for troops, increase in international sanctions, and intensified Western advanced weapons supplies to Kyiv.

Fresh signs of Ukraine's advance toward Kherson emerged Wednesday. Zhdanov, the analyst, said Ukrainians captured the city of Snihurivka, 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of Kherson, opening a direct road to a Dnieper River crossing and Kherson's suburbs. The Ukrainian Pravda news outlet cited Ukrainian armed forces intelligence as claiming that two other settlements in the Kherson region, Pravdyne and Kalynivske, had been captured,

None of the reports could be independently confirmed.

Nationwide, at least nine civilians were killed and 24 wounded in 24 hours, the Ukrainian president's office said. It accused Russia of using explosive drones, rockets, heavy artillery and aircraft to attack eight regions in the southeast.

The president's office said widespread Russian strikes on Ukraine's energy system continued. Two cities not far from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant — Europe's largest — were shelled overnight.

Biden hopes Putin will negotiate WNBA star Griner's release

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden said Wednesday that he hopes Russian President Vladimir Putin will be more willing to negotiate the release of WNBA star Brittney Griner now that the U.S. midterm elections are over.

"My hope is that now that the election is over, that Mr. Putin will be able to discuss with us and be willing to talk more seriously about a prisoner exchange," Biden told reporters at a news conference.

He spoke hours after Griner's lawyers revealed that she had been sent to a penal colony to serve her sentence for drug possession.

U.S. officials have for months tried to negotiate the release of Griner and another American jailed in Russia, Paul Whelan. But there have been no overt signs of progress.

A diplomatic resolution has taken on new urgency after a Russian court rejected an appeal of her nine-year sentence last month. The eight-time all-star center with the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury and two-time Olympic gold medalist was convicted Aug. 4 after police said they found vape canisters containing cannabis oil in her luggage at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport.

Her arrest came at a time of heightened tensions between Moscow and Washington, just days before Russia sent troops into Ukraine, and the politically charged case could lead to a high-stakes prisoner exchange between Washington and Moscow.

"Every minute that Brittney Griner must endure wrongful detention in Russia is a minute too long," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. "As we have said before, the U.S. Government made a significant offer to the Russians to resolve the current unacceptable and wrongful detentions of American citizens."

Griner's legal team said she left a detention center outside Moscow on Nov. 4 for a penal colony — as prisons in Russia are commonly known. The move was expected since she lost her appeal.

Such transfers can take days or even weeks, during which time lawyers and loved ones usually don't have contact with the prisoner. Even after she arrives, access to Griner may be difficult since many penal colonies are in remote parts of Russia.

Her lawyers said Wednesday that they did not know exactly where she was or where she would end

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up — but that they expected to be notified when she reached her final destination.

In a statement stressing the work being done to secure Griner's release, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken insisted that Russian authorities give the embassy regular access to Griner, as they are required to do. Officials at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow visited Griner last week.

A senior State Department official, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the case, said the Russians had not notified American diplomats of Griner's transfer ahead of time and had not yet responded to queries from the American embassy about either her current whereabouts or ultimate destination.

In many penal colonies, prisoners work for minimal pay, and dissidents and other countries have denounced the conditions of those held. Imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny went on a hunger strike to protest his treatment, including officials' refusal to give him the right medicines and to allow his doctor to visit him behind bars.

He also protested the hourly checks a guard makes on him at night, saying they amount to sleep deprivation torture.

Griner, 32, who was detained while returning to play for a Russian team during the WNBA's offseason, has admitted that she had the canisters in her luggage. But she testified that she had inadvertently packed them in haste and that she had no criminal intent. Her defense team presented written statements that she had been prescribed cannabis to treat pain.

The Associated Press and other news organizations have reported that Washington has offered to exchange Griner and Whelan — an American serving a 16-year sentence in Russia for espionage — for Viktor Bout. Bout is a Russian arms dealer who is serving a 25-year sentence in the U.S. and once earned the nickname the "merchant of death."

CDC to conduct health study at polluted former Army base

By MARTHA MENDOZA, JULIET LINDERMAN and JASON DEAREN Associated Press

Federal health officials are conducting a new study to determine whether veterans once stationed at a now-shuttered California military base were exposed to dangerously high levels of cancer-causing toxins.

The decision by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention comes nine months after an Associated Press investigation found that drinking water at Fort Ord contained toxic chemicals and that hundreds of veterans who lived at the central California coast base in the 1980s and 1990s later developed rare and terminal blood cancers.

In a letter last Friday to Rep. Katie Porter, D-Calif., the director of the CDC's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Patrick Breyse, wrote that "there are sufficient data and scientific reasons for ATSDR to re-evaluate health risks related to historical drinking water exposures at Fort Ord." Porter had asked for a new study in February, two days after the AP published its story.

The agency did not immediately respond to a request seeking further details about the new study.

Army veteran Julie Akey, who lived at Fort Ord and was diagnosed in 2016 at the age of 46 with multiple myeloma, a rare blood cancer, said she is "confident that science will prove our high rate of cancers and illnesses are not a coincidence."

Akey started a Facebook group for Fort Ord veterans with cancer. The number has grown to nearly 1,000.

In 1990, four years before it began the process of closing as an active military base, Fort Ord was added to the Environmental Protection Agency's list of the most polluted places in the nation. Included in that pollution were dozens of chemicals, some now known to cause cancer, that were found in the base's drinking water and soil.

The AP's review of public documents showed the Army knew that chemicals had been improperly dumped at Fort Ord for decades. Even after the contamination was documented, the Army played down the risks.

One of those chemicals was trichloroethylene, or TCE, which was known as a miracle degreaser and was widely used at Fort Ord. The Army found TCE in Fort Ord's wells 43 separate times from 1985 to 1994, and 18 of those tests showed TCE exceeded legal safety limits.

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The new health study will update one conducted more than 25 years ago. The previous ATSDR public health study, published in 1996, found that toxins in the soil and in the aquifers below Fort Ord were not likely to pose a past, present or future threat to those living there.

But that conclusion was based on limited data supplied by the military and before medical science understood the relationship between some of the chemical exposures and cancer, particularly TCE. Four years after the ATSDR's assessment, in 2000, the Department of Health and Human Services added TCE to its roster of chemicals known to cause cancer.

It's unclear how long and at what concentrations TCE may have been in the water before 1985, when hundreds of thousands of people lived on the base. And TCE wasn't the only problem. The EPA identified more than 40 "chemicals of concern" in soil and groundwater.

The Department of Veterans Affairs told the AP earlier this year that the contamination was "within the allowable safe range" in areas that provided drinking water.

Veterans who lived at Fort Ord and have since tried to get medical care or disability benefits through the VA based on their cancers have repeatedly been denied. Akey and others hope the new study will find a link between their cancers and their time at Fort Ord, allowing them to get care and benefits.

Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta grew up next to Fort Ord, went through basic training on the base and now runs a nonprofit institute there. He said a new health study is an important next step for veterans.

"They were willing to serve their country and put their lives on the line, and as a result of their willingness to serve, I think we really owe it to them," he said.

'Great danger': Couple sentenced in submarine secrets case

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Citing the "great danger" that a Navy engineer and his wife posed to U.S. security, a federal judge gave both of them lengthy prison terms Wednesday for a plot to sell secrets about nuclear submarines to what they thought was a representative of a foreign government.

U.S. District Judge Gina Groh, who in August rejected earlier plea agreements that had called for reduced sentencing guidelines, sentenced Jonathan Toebbe to more than 19 years and his wife, Diana Toebbe, to nearly 22 years. The sentences were handed down on Jonathan Toebbe's 44th birthday.

The Annapolis, Maryland, couple and their attorneys described the defendants' struggles with mental health issues and alcohol and said they were anxious about the nation's political climate when they sold secrets in exchange for \$100,000 in cryptocurrency.

Groh said their tale "reads like a crime novel or a movie script" and that Jonathan Toebbe's "actions and greedy self-serving intentions placed military service members at sea and every citizen of this country in a vulnerable position and at risk of harm from adversaries."

Diana Toebbe, who admitted acting as a lookout for her husband, received an enhanced sentence after the judge disclosed during the couple's combined five-hour sentencing hearing that Diana Toebbe tried to send her husband two letters from jail.

The letters, which were read in court, were intercepted before they could be delivered. In one of them, Diana Toebbe told her husband to flush the letter down a toilet after reading it. She encouraged him to lie about her involvement in the scheme and say she "didn't know anything about any of this."

The judge said she lacked genuine remorse and didn't take responsibility for her actions.

"This is an exceptional story, right out of the movies," Groh said.

Prior to sentencing, Jonathan Toebbe described his battles with stress in taking on additional duties and his own battle with alcohol. He said he experienced warning signs of a nervous breakdown over 18 months that he failed to recognize.

"I believed that my family was in dire threat, that democracy itself was under collapse," he said. That belief overwhelmed him, he said, and led him to believe he had to take "precipitous action to try to save them from grave harm."

Prosecutors said Toebbe abused his access to top-secret government information and repeatedly sold

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details about the design and performance of Virginia-class submarines to someone he believed was a representative of a foreign government but who was actually an undercover FBI agent.

Diana Toebbe, 46, who was teaching at a private school in Maryland at the time of the couple's arrest last October, admitted she acted as a lookout at several prearranged "dead-drop" locations where memory cards containing the secret information were left behind.

The memory cards were devices concealed in objects such as a chewing gum wrapper and a peanut butter sandwich. The couple was arrested in October 2021 after Jonathan Toebbe placed a card in Jefferson County, West Virginia.

None of the information was classified as top secret or secret, falling into a third category considered confidential, according to previous testimony.

The couple was sentenced for their guilty pleas in September in federal court in Martinsburg, West Virginia, to one felony count each of conspiracy to communicate restricted data.

In August, Groh rejected their initial guilty pleas to the same charges, saying the sentencing options were "strikingly deficient" considering the seriousness of the case. The previous sentencing range agreed to by lawyers for Jonathan Toebbe had called for a potential punishment of up to 17 years in prison. Prosecutors had sought three years for Diana Toebbe.

During a hearing last December, Diana Toebbe's attorney, Barry Beck, asserted that the couple was looking to flee the United States due to their contempt for then-President Donald Trump.

During a search of the couple's home, FBI agents found a trash bag of shredded documents, thousands of dollars in cash, valid children's passports and a "go-bag" containing a USB flash drive and latex gloves, according to previous testimony.

She said her decision to participate in the scheme was "catastrophic," as she is the mother of children ages 12 and 16, and that she should have tried to talk her husband out of it.

"I didn't think of my children, who have suffered the most," she said. "Their lives will forever be marked by the decision that I made."

Groh said that choice was "deliberate and calculated." She admonished Beck, who had labeled his client as merely an accomplice in seeking a lesser sentence.

"Your client put this country in great danger," Groh told Beck. "No matter what you call it, the harm to this nation was great."

The FBI has said the scheme began in April 2020, when Jonathan Toebbe sent a package of Navy documents to a foreign government and expressed interest in selling operations manuals, performance reports and other sensitive information. That package was obtained by the FBI in December 2020 through its legal attaché office in an unspecified foreign country, setting off a months-long undercover operation.

An FBI agent posing as a foreign government's representative made contact with Toebbe, ultimately paying in cryptocurrency for the information Toebbe was offering.

Groh said about \$54,000 of the cryptocurrency has been recovered. She imposed fines of around \$50,000 to each defendant.

Slavery, involuntary servitude rejected by 4 states' voters

By AARON MORRISON AP National Writer

Voters in four states have approved ballot measures that will change their state constitutions to prohibit slavery and involuntary servitude as punishment for crime, while those in a fifth state rejected a flawed version of the question.

The measures approved Tuesday could curtail the use of prison labor in Alabama, Oregon, Tennessee and Vermont.

In Louisiana, a former slave-holding state and one of a handful that sentences convicted felons to hard labor, lawmakers trying to get rid of forced prisoner labor ended up torpedoing their own measure. They told voters to reject it because the ballot measure included ambiguous language that did not prohibit involuntary servitude in the criminal justice system.

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Despite the setback in Louisiana, Max Parthas, campaigns coordinator for the Abolish Slavery National Network, called Tuesday's vote on anti-slavery measures historic.

"I believed that the people would choose freedom over slavery, if we gave them the opportunity, by taking the slavery question away from the legislators and putting it into the hands of the people. And they proved us right," he said.

The four approved initiatives won't force immediate changes in the states' prisons, but they may invite legal challenges over the practice of coercing prisoners to work under threat of sanctions or loss of privileges if they refuse the work.

Vermont's constitutional amendment removes what supporters say is ambiguous language and makes clear that slavery and indentured servitude are prohibited in the state.

While Vermont's legislature was the first state to abolish adult slavery in 1777, its constitution stated that no person 21 or older should serve as a slave unless bound by their own consent or "by law for the payment of debts, damages, fines, costs, or the like." The amendment removes that language and adds that slavery and indentured servitude in any form are banned.

"We think it shows how forward thinking and good-natured Vermonters are and we're looking forward to using it as a springboard to do a lot of work on dismantling systemic racism going forward," said Debbie Ingram, executive director of Vermont Interfaith Action and a former state senator who sponsored the proposal.

The results were celebrated widely among anti-slavery advocates, including those pushing to further amend the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits enslavement and involuntary servitude except as a form of criminal punishment. More than 150 years after enslaved Africans and their descendants were released from bondage through ratification of the 13th Amendment, the slavery exception continues to permit the exploitation of labor by incarcerated individuals.

"Voters in Oregon and other states have come together across party lines to say that this stain must be removed from state constitutions," Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley, a Democrat, told The Associated Press.

"Now, it is time for all Americans to come together and say that it must be struck from the U.S. Constitution. There should be no exceptions to a ban on slavery," he said.

Coinciding with the creation of the Juneteenth federal holiday last year, Merkley and Rep. Nikema Williams, D-Georgia, reintroduced legislation to revise the 13th Amendment to end the slavery exception. If it wins approval in Congress, the constitutional amendment must be ratified by three-fourths of U.S. states.

After Tuesday's vote, more than a dozen states still have constitutions that include language permitting slavery and involuntary servitude for prisoners. Several other states have no constitutional language for or against the use of forced prison labor.

Voters in Colorado became the first to approve removal of slavery exception language from the state constitution in 2018, followed by Nebraska and Utah two years later.

Parthas said he and other advocates in his network worked with 15 states on anti-slavery legislation in 2022, although only five made it to the ballot. In 2023, the network plans to work with two dozen states.

"We'll keep doing it as many times as necessary," until the U.S. reaches the threshold of 38 states needed to revise the 13th Amendment, Parthas said.

"Even our ancestors were unable to get this far," he said.

The movement to end or regulate the use of prison labor has existed for decades, since the time when former Confederate states sought ways to maintain the use of chattel slavery after the Civil War. Southern states used racist laws, referred to as "Black codes," to criminalize, imprison and re-enslave Black Americans over benign behavior.

Today, prison labor is a multibillion-dollar practice. By comparison, workers can make pennies on the dollar. And prisoners who refuse to work can be denied privileges such as phone calls and visits with family, as well as face solitary confinement, all punishments that are eerily similar to those used during antebellum slavery.

"The 13th Amendment didn't actually abolish slavery — what it did was make it invisible," Bianca Tylek,

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an anti-slavery advocate and the executive director of the criminal justice advocacy group Worth Rises, told the AP in an interview ahead of Election Day.

She said passage of the ballot initiatives, especially in red states like Alabama, "is a great signal for what's possible at the federal level."

"There is a big opportunity here, in this moment," Tylek said.

Abortion supporters win in conservative, liberal states

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Abortion rights supporters won in the four states where access was on the ballot Tuesday, as voters enshrined it into the state constitution in battleground Michigan as well as blue California and Vermont and dealt a defeat to an anti-abortion measure in deep-red Kentucky.

In all, it was a dramatic illustration of how the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in June to eliminate the nationwide right to abortion has galvanized voters who support women's right to choose. The court's June decision has led to near-total bans in a dozen Republican-governed states and animated races around the country up and down the ballot.

The Kentucky result spurned the state's Republican-led Legislature, which has imposed a near-total ban on abortion and put the proposed state constitutional amendment on the ballot. The outcome echoed what happened in another red state, Kansas, where voters in August rejected changing that state's constitution to let lawmakers tighten restrictions or ban abortions.

"As we saw in Kansas earlier this year, and in many other states last night, this is not a partisan issue," said Nancy Northup, president the Center for Reproductive Rights, in a statement. "People are energized and they do not want politicians controlling their bodies and futures."

Nationally, about two-thirds of voters say abortion should be legal in most or all cases, according to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of over 90,000 voters across the country. Only about 1 in 10 say abortion should be illegal in all cases.

About 6 in 10 also say the Supreme Court's abortion decision made them dissatisfied or angry, compared with fewer who say they were happy or satisfied.

Still, the nationwide election results Tuesday reflected how voters' views on abortion rights can play out in complicated ways. By narrow margins, Wisconsin voters re-elected their pro-choice Democratic governor and an anti-abortion GOP senator. Kansas re-elected a Democratic governor who supports abortion rights. Meanwhile, staunchly anti-abortion GOP governors in Georgia, Florida and Texas easily won their contests.

Stephen Billy of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America rejected any suggestion that the overall midterm outcome reflected a surge of support for abortion rights. He acknowledged that abortion opponents were outspent in the key ballot-measure campaigns and needed to review their strategies.

The Kentucky ballot measure was originally considered a conservative vote driver. But after the Roe decision, abortion-rights supporters raised nearly \$1.5 million to fight it.

Thousands of voters who cast their ballots for Republican Sen. Rand Paul split with the party on the abortion ballot measure, returns showed.

At a elementary school in Simpsonville, a small town outside of Louisville, 71-year-old Republican voter Jim Stewart said he voted for Paul, but chose no on the amendment, even though he's opposed to abortion.

"You got to have a little choice there," he said.

In Michigan, supporters of the push to protect abortion rights collected more signatures than any other ballot initiative in state history to get it before the voters. It puts a definitive end to a 1931 ban on abortion that had been blocked in court but could have been revived.

On Michigan State University's campus, junior Devin Roberts said students seemed "fired up" and that he had seen lines of voters spilling out of the school's polling places throughout the day. The ballot measure was one of the main drivers of the high turnout, he said.

"I think students want to have the same rights that their parents had when they were younger," Roberts said.

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Democrats also won full control of the Michigan state government for the first time in 40 years. Democratic state Sen. Jeremy Moss said the outcome showed abortion's resonance for voters, even in a year where issues like inflation and public safety loomed large. "I think that Republicans really discounted that ... abortion is an economic agenda, a freedom agenda, and people really showed out to support choice," he said.

Christen Pollo, spokeswoman for Citizens Supporting MI Women & Children, blamed the Michigan measure's success on out-of-state donors and predicted an "inevitable flood of litigation" over issues of parental consent.

Kentucky's election outcome doesn't lift its ban, which does not include exceptions for rape and incest, but it means a legal battle over the law will keep playing out. The ban faces a legal challenge presently before the state Supreme Court, and the amendment's rejection leaves open the possibility that the court could declare abortion a state right.

Anti-abortion groups in Kentucky said they were disappointed in the results but the executive director of the Family Foundation pointed out that abortion bans remain in place and voters again backed "pro-life legislative majorities" in state government.

The reproductive-rights question in Vermont came after Legislature passed a law in 2019 guaranteeing reproductive rights, including becoming pregnant and having access to birth control. Supporters with the Reproductive Liberty Ballot Committee said the overturning of Roe meant "state-level protections are vital to safeguarding access to reproductive health care."

California already had passed several measures aimed at easing access to abortion and set aside millions of taxpayer dollars to help pay for some out-of-state abortion travel. On Tuesday, voters approved language that would explicitly guarantee access to abortion and contraception in the state constitution.

In Montana, meanwhile, it was too early to determine the result of a ballot measure to create criminal penalties for health care providers unless they do everything "medically appropriate and reasonable" to save the life of a baby after birth, including the rare possibility of birth after an attempted abortion.

Democrats buck midterm history to win control of 4 states

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Bucking historic midterm election trends, Democrats wrested control of state legislative chambers away from Republicans in Michigan and Minnesota while also gaining full control of state capitols in Maryland and Massachusetts.

The Democrats' gains in Tuesday's elections gave them power to set the agenda on topics ranging from state taxes and spending to contentious social issues in four states that previously had politically divided governments.

Democrats also gained legislative seats in Pennsylvania, another important presidential swing state where Republican lawmakers have held majorities against a Democratic governor.

Future control of several legislatures — including Republican-led Arizona's and Democratic-led Nevada's — remained unclear Wednesday as votes were still being counted. The New Hampshire House clerk said results show an almost even partisan divide in the 400-member chamber. That could set the stage for either unprecedented bipartisanship or major gridlock.

Democrats were thrilled with the results so far, especially since the president's party almost always suffers legislative losses during midterm elections.

"By all accounts, this election should have been a landslide for Republicans. Instead, their so-called red wave is looking more like a puddle," said Jessica Post, president of the national Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee.

Republicans entered the election with full control of both legislative chambers and the governor's office in 23 states, compared to 14 for Democrats, with the rest divided.

Democrats already controlled both legislative chambers in Maryland and Massachusetts but picked up their governorships by capturing seats being vacated by Republicans.

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Even with Democratic gains, Republicans still will control more states and more total legislative seats. Only twice since 1900 had the president's party posted a net increase in state legislative seats during a midterm election — in 1934 during the Great Depression and in 2002, a year after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

This year, "it's becoming apparent that if either side gains seats, it's going to be a narrow margin relative to history," said Ben Williams, the NCSL's principal for elections and redistricting.

Republicans said going into the election that they would be happy to keep what they held, though they had targeted several states for potential gains.

Despite some losses, Republicans withstood bigger Democratic spending in some states and "an incredibly challenging political environment" to maintain a majority of state legislatures, said Andrew Romeo, communications director for the Republican State Leadership Committee.

A summertime U.S. Supreme Court's decision ending a half-century of national abortion rights — and returning the issue to states — gave Democrats a new campaign theme to counter Republican ads blaming Democrats for rising inflation and economic concerns.

In Michigan, voters passed a state constitutional amendment guaranteeing abortion rights while narrowly electing Democratic legislative majorities. Lawmakers were running for the first time in new districts drawn by an independent citizens committee that gave Democrats a better chance than the previous districts draw by the GOP-led Legislature.

When newly elected lawmakers take office along with Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, it will mark the first time in 40 years that Democrats wield full control of Michigan government.

State Sen. Jeremy Moss, campaign co-chair for Michigan's Senate Democrats, said voters would see a different policy focus.

"We really have to restore the dignity of Michigan's middle and working class," Moss said. "That includes uplifting labor rights. That includes reversing this tax shift that Republicans placed upon them. That includes pushing forward on equal protection under the law."

Though the economy was the top issue for Michigan voters, a majority also said the abortion ballot initiative was very important and that their views aligned most closely with the idea that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, according to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of more than 3,200 of the state's voters.

Republican House Speaker Jason Wentworth attributed the loss to redistricting and "special interests from all over the country" that aided Democrats. He predicted that Republicans would regain the chamber in two years.

In Minnesota, Democrats won control of the state Senate from Republicans while also defending their House majority against a Republican takeover attempt. Democratic Gov. Tim Walz also won reelection.

Democratic lawmakers said Wednesday that their agenda could include codifying abortion rights, legalizing recreational marijuana and increasing education funding, among other things.

Amy Koch, a former Republican Minnesota Senate majority leader turned political strategist, said the GOP should have won Tuesday. But she said Republicans failed to appeal to women who opposed the Supreme Court's abortion ruling and "were just upset with the GOP brand."

"If Republicans don't address that, we are never going to win statewide," Koch said.

Republicans controlled both of Pennsylvania's legislative chambers heading into the election. But Democrats made significant gains in the House, with some Democrats even predicting the chamber could flip their way by the time all the votes are counted.

The political shift was aided by more favorable districts drawn by four top lawmakers and a tie-breaking outsider, a slew of Republican retirements and victories by Democrats in high-profile races for governor and U.S. Senate.

By contrast, Ohio Republicans expanded their legislative majority while running under new districts drawn by a Republican-controlled redistricting commission. The maps remained in place for this election even though the state Supreme Court said they are unconstitutional and must be redrawn in the future.

Republicans won 26 of the 33 Ohio Senate seats — the largest supermajority since 1951, according to

Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman.

Republicans also made gains in South Carolina, winning more than two-thirds of the House seats for the first time since at least Reconstruction.

But Republicans were short in their quest for veto-proof majorities in both legislative chambers in North Carolina and Wisconsin — two states with Democratic governors.

Alaska was among the states where legislative control might not be determined for a while.

Under the state's new ranked choice voting system, if no one wins more than 50% of first-choice votes in a race, the next-choice votes for eliminated candidates will be tabulated in a process that's expected to occur Nov. 23. But even that might not determine legislative control, because Alaska lawmakers don't always organize along party lines. After the last two general elections, it took weeks into the next legislative session before the House formed a leadership coalition.

In a first, doctors treat fatal genetic disease before birth

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

A toddler is thriving after doctors in the U.S. and Canada used a novel technique to treat her before she was born for a rare genetic disease that caused the deaths of two of her sisters.

Ayla Bashir, a 16-month-old from Ottawa, Ontario, is the first child treated as fetus for Pompe disease, an inherited and often fatal disorder in which the body fails to make some or all of a crucial protein.

Today, she's an active, happy girl who has met her developmental milestones, according to her father, Zahid Bashir and mother, Sobia Qureshi.

"She's just a regular little 1½-year-old who keeps us on our toes," Bashir said. The couple previously lost two daughters, Zara, 2½, and Sara, 8 months, to the disease. A third pregnancy was terminated because of the disorder.

In a case study published Wednesday in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, doctors describe an international collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic that led to the treatment that may have saved Ayla's life — and expanded the field of potential fetal therapies. The outlook for Ayla is promising but uncertain.

"It holds a glimmer of hope for being able to treat them in utero instead of waiting until damage is already well-established," said Dr. Karen Fung-Kee-Fung, a maternal-fetal medicine specialist at The Ottawa Hospital who gave the treatment and delivered Ayla.

Fung-Kee-Fung was following a new treatment plan developed by Dr. Tippi MacKenzie, a pediatric surgeon and co-director of the Center for Maternal-Fetal Precision Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, who shared her research after the pandemic prevented Ayla's mother from traveling for care.

"We were all motivated to make this happen for this family," MacKenzie said.

Doctors have treated fetuses before birth for three decades, often with surgeries to repair birth defects such as spina bifida. And they've given blood transfusions to fetuses through the umbilical cord, but not medicines. In this case, the crucial enzymes were delivered through a needle inserted through the mother's abdomen and guided into a vein in the umbilical cord. Ayla received six biweekly infusions that started at about 24 weeks of gestation.

"The innovation here wasn't the drug and it wasn't accessing the fetal circulation," said Dr. Pranesh Chakraborty, a metabolic geneticist at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, who has cared for Ayla's family for years. "The innovation was treating earlier and treating while still in utero."

The unusual partnership also involved experts at Duke University in Durham, N.C., which has led research on Pompe disease, and University of Washington in Seattle.

Babies with Pompe disease are often treated soon after birth with replacement enzymes to slow devastating effects of the condition, which affects fewer than 1 in 100,000 newborns. It is caused by mutations in a gene that makes an enzyme that breaks down glycogen, or stored sugar, in cells. When that enzyme is reduced or eliminated, glycogen builds up dangerously throughout the body.

In addition, the most severely affected babies, including Ayla, have an immune condition in which their bodies block the infused enzymes, eventually stopping the therapy from working. The hope is that Ayla's

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early treatment will reduce the severity of that immune response.

Babies with Pompe disease have trouble feeding, muscle weakness, floppiness and, often, grossly enlarged hearts. Untreated, most die from heart or breathing problems in the first year of life.

In late 2020, Bashir and Qureshi had learned they were expecting Ayla and that prenatal tests showed she, too, had Pompe disease.

"It was very, very scary," recalled Qureshi. In addition to the girls who died, the couple have a son, Hamza, 13, and a daughter, Maha, 5, who are not affected.

Both parents carry a recessive gene for Pompe disease, which means there's a 1 in 4 chance that a baby will inherit the condition. Bashir said their decision to proceed with additional pregnancies was guided by their Muslim faith.

"We believe that what will come our way is part of what's meant or destined for us," he said. They have no plans for more children, they said.

Chakraborty had learned of MacKenzie's early stage trial to test the enzyme therapy and thought early treatment might be a solution for the family.

The treatment could be "potentially very significant," said Dr. Brendan Lanpher, a medical geneticist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., who was not involved in the research.

"This is a progressive disease that builds up over time, so every day a fetus or baby has it, they're accumulating more of the material that affects muscle cells."

Still, it's too early to know whether the protocol will become accepted treatment, said Dr. Christina Lam, interim medical director of biochemical genetics at the University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital in Seattle.

"It's going to take some time to really be able to establish the evidence to definitively show that the outcomes are better," she said.

Ayla receives drugs to suppress her immune system and weekly enzyme infusions that take five to six hours — a growing challenge for a wiggly toddler, her mother said. Unless a new treatment emerges, Ayla can expect to continue the infusions for life. She is developing normally — for now. Her parents say every milestone, such as when she started to crawl, is especially precious.

"It's surreal. It amazes us every time," Qureshi said. "We're so blessed. We've been very, very blessed."

US vote counting unaffected by cyberattacks, officials say

By NOMAAN MERCHANT and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — No instances of digital interference are known to have affected the counting of the midterm vote after a tense Election Day in which officials were closely monitoring domestic and foreign threats.

A few state and local governments appeared to be hit by a relatively rudimentary form of cyberattack that periodically made public websites unreachable. But U.S. and local officials said Wednesday that none breached vote-counting infrastructure.

"We have seen no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes, or was any way compromised in any race in the country," Jen Easterly, director of the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, said in a statement.

CISA and other federal agencies had warned that safeguarding U.S. elections has become more complex than ever, with the most serious threats from domestic sources. Foreign adversaries such as Russia, China, and Iran have tried to meddle in individual campaigns and amplify false or misleading narratives on social media.

Many members of an increasingly fractious American public have latched onto unproven conspiracies about voter fraud. And there are constant fears that state-sponsored intruders or criminals might try to interfere with voter rolls or steal data for ransom. Also of concern are increasing physical and online threats to election workers.

Votes are still being counted throughout the country and winners have not been projected in some key

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rices that will decide control of the House and Senate.

"It's important to remember that this thorough and deliberative process can take days or weeks, depending on state laws; these rigorous procedures are why the American people can have confidence in the security and integrity of the election," Easterly said in a statement.

The website of Mississippi's secretary of state was down for part of Tuesday and there were other reports of sites becoming unreachable throughout the country, including in Champaign County, Illinois, and parts of Arkansas.

Mississippi was apparently hit with a "distributed denial of service," in which a website is made unreachable by a flood of inauthentic traffic. Federal and state officials said they could not say who was responsible for the Mississippi attack or other denial of service incidents, though a pro-Russia group had called on the social media platform Telegram for its followers to target the site.

"While attribution is inherently difficult, we've not seen any evidence to suggest that these are part of a widespread coordinated campaign," said one official at CISA, the cybersecurity arm of Department of Homeland Security, in a briefing Tuesday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity under rules set by the agency.

Matt Dietrich, spokesman for the Illinois State Board of Elections, said state officials had reached out to Champaign County after seeing the county clerk claim in a tweet that their website had been "under attack" for a month.

The state board requested information about the issue but the data provided was insufficient to establish that there had been an attack, Dietrich said.

Analyst Alexander Leslie of the cybersecurity firm Recorded Future called any attacks "negligible, a minor nuisance at most."

The pro-Russia group that claimed responsibility for degrading Mississippi's site also tried to organize an attack against democrats.org, run by the Democratic National Committee. There is no evidence the DNC's site was affected, Leslie said.

Killnet, a far larger pro-Russia hacktivist group with 100,000 online followers that knocked down some state government and airport websites in October, did not organize any online attempts to attack U.S. election infrastructure.

That may be because such digital systems "are tough targets to hit. CISA has pretty high cybersecurity standards," Leslie said. "If they claim a bunch of attacks that do absolutely nothing, it doesn't look good for Killnet."

States have also toughened their defenses. Illinois has established eight "cyber navigators" each with responsibility for a number of counties in the state. Clerks are encouraged to report problems to the navigators so they can quickly involve experts.

Republican state Sen. Scott DeLano of Mississippi is a legislative adviser for the state Department of Information Technology Services. He told The Associated Press on Wednesday that Mississippi government websites typically face "hundreds, if not thousands" of attempted intrusions daily — nothing unusual in today's online world.

The site's inaccessibility meant, for example, that residents could not use the site's information about the location of voting precincts. DeLano said the secretary of state keeps a separate database for statewide voter registration information and that was not affected by the attack. Same-day election results are not posted on the Mississippi secretary of state's site, so those also were not affected.

In a statement, Secretary of State Michael Watson, a Republican, credited technology staff who "worked diligently to ensure that Mississippi's election was secure, and through their hard work, we can confidently say our election system was not compromised."

"We will continue to work ... to ensure, as cyber attacks strengthen in frequency and intellect, we are prepared and have the necessary resources to combat any and all attacks," Watson said.

Review: Ferrell, Reynolds get 'Spirited' in holiday musical

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

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The devil works in public relations in "Spirited," a new spin on "A Christmas Carol" starring Will Ferrell and Ryan Reynolds. With songs by "The Greatest Showman" duo Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, big ensemble dance numbers choreographed by Chloe Arnold and special effects galore, "Spirited" it is a maximalist affair that spares no expense in its heart-on-sleeve efforts to entertain. The sincerity isn't necessarily a bad thing: If you're going to make a holiday-themed musical on Apple's dime, you might as well go all out, right?

You'd also think that if you're going to make a big movie musical, a genre that it seems every top filmmaker dreams of getting a chance to do, that you wouldn't feel the need to have someone make a joke about it every time another character is about to burst into song. But that is the paradox of "Spirited," which wants to be everything to everyone. The most egregious sin, though, is the fact that no one seems entirely sure of how to shoot a big, choreographed dance number effectively. At times, it feels like you're watching a live show that wasn't rehearsed with camera movements and cuts beforehand, doing a disservice to the songs, the dancers and sets.

And yet, though "Spirited" comes up short as a musical, it is still pretty enjoyable. Perhaps that's because it is just so stuffed with everything else: If one part doesn't totally work, there's plenty else in the four-quadrant buffet to sample. In addition to the committed leads, there are comedy gems from Christmas Past (Sunita Mani), Christmas Yet-to-Come (Loren Woods with Tracy Morgan's voice), Pasek and Paul's easily digestible pop ballads and Octavia Spencer's lovely singing voice.

Ferrell has already written his Christmas movie legacy with "Elf," which is somehow turning 20 next year. Others might have cashed in after a holiday home run like that, but Ferrell seems to have exercised some discernment before jumping into another seasonal romp. Then Sean Anders, who directed him in "Daddy's Home" and its sequel, came to him with this idea to re-imagine "A Christmas Carol" from the ghosts' point of view. He would be the Ghost of Christmas Present, who is one part of a big operation that every year finds Scrooge-y humans to change with their hauntings. "Present" as he's called, is long due for a retirement which the company's HR department tries to remind him. (It's just used for a joke, but it is also a crushingly depressing idea that this heavenly operation for good has HR at all).

But Present still doesn't feel like his work is done and he sets his sights on Reynolds' Clint Briggs, a media consultant who has made a fortune peddling hate, controversy, misinformation and outrage for his clients, who range from pop stars and presidents to the National Association of Christmas Tree Growers. We meet him presenting to this latter group in a song-and-dance about bringing back Christmas that's part Professor Harold Hill singing "Ya Got Trouble," part Chicago's Billy Flynn talking about how they both reached for the gun. Reynolds does a good job, too, though he is more of the Rex Harrison "talk on key" school than a classical Broadway guy like his friendly foe Hugh Jackman.

Clint is going to be a tough case for Present, though, as an "unredeemable." Because this movie is constantly apologizing for itself, Broadway veteran Patrick Page, as Jacob Marley, while explaining to Clint what's about to happen says that, yes, it's "Like the Dickens book, the Bill Murray movie and every other adaptation no one asked for." But they try anyway with Ferrell playing the wide-eyed innocent to Reynolds' smarmy schemer — a comedic combo that may be familiar but is also still funny and the two stars seem game for anything.

After a brief theatrical run, "Spirited" will live on Apple TV+ starting on Nov. 18, which is a good thing for families looking for some fun holiday viewing options. Parents will get to sample the PG-13 movie before deciding on who gets to watch and everyone can take a popcorn break over the 2-hour runtime, which even that you'll forgive because, it's the holidays and Will Ferrell and Ryan Reynolds literally singing and dancing for you.

"Spirited," an Apple TV+ release in theaters Friday and streaming Nov. 18, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for language, some suggestive material and thematic elements. Running time: 127 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

GOP rides Latino support in Florida as Miami-Dade turns red

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

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MIAMI (AP) — For some Democrats, losing South Florida's Miami-Dade County was unthinkable. The state's largest county in population and a Democratic stronghold, home to 1.5 million Latinos of voting age, has been a staging ground for virtually every successful statewide Democratic campaign for the last two decades.

But in Tuesday's midterm elections, the GOP shattered the Democrats' Miami-Dade firewall, raising questions about their ability to compete in future statewide elections — including the 2024 presidential race — as Republicans expand their coalition in a way that could echo beyond Florida.

With the final votes still being counted, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Sen. Marco Rubio defeated their Democratic opponents by close to 20 points. In Miami-Dade specifically, their wins could ultimately touch double digits.

DeSantis even won among college-educated and suburban voters, cutting into what was a core Democratic strength elsewhere.

"Our party, especially here in Florida, needs to take a step back to make sure this never happens again," said Rep.-elect Maxwell Alejandro Frost, a 25-year-old Democrat who is Black with Latino heritage. He won his central Florida congressional race on Tuesday but lamented GOP gains elsewhere across the state.

Florida Republicans, meanwhile, were ecstatic.

"The Florida Democratic Party has completely collapsed," said Giancarlo Sopo, a Republican strategist. "This wasn't just a wave or a tsunami. It was a red asteroid that hit them in Florida."

The GOP's success in Florida stands in stark contrast with seeming disappointments for Republicans elsewhere on Tuesday. While votes were still being counted in several key races, the red wave that Republican leaders predicted did not materialize in most of the country. Some of former President Donald Trump's hand-picked candidates did especially poorly.

Trump did not endorse DeSantis, whom Trump sees as a potential rival in the 2024 presidential contest. Days before the election, Trump mocked DeSantis as "Ron DeSanctimonious" and excluded him from a Florida rally.

But for this week, at least, DeSantis had a decided edge in the rivalry.

The New York Post, Trump's favorite hometown newspaper, put DeSantis on Wednesday's front page with the headline, "DeFUTURE."

"I think people feel not great about the Trump brand right now," said David Urban, a former Trump adviser and Florida resident.

But beyond the Trump-DeSantis shadow primary, Florida's evolution from perennial swing state to trending Republican stronghold was stunning.

DeSantis won the governor's office four years ago by 32,436 votes out of more than 8.2 million cast, a margin so narrow that it required a recount. As the final votes were being counted on Wednesday, his lead exceeded 1.5 million votes. DeSantis' margin of victory was set to exceed the margins of Florida's last four governor's races combined.

The Florida GOP has benefited from an influx of Republican voters moving to the state during the Trump years. In the four years since DeSantis was elected, Republicans have erased a voter registration advantage that Florida Democrats had guarded for decades. When registration closed for the 2018 election, Democrats enjoyed a 263,269-vote advantage. At the end of September, Republicans had a lead of 292,533 voters.

At the same time, about three-quarters of Florida Republicans identify as a supporter of the Make America Great Again, or MAGA, movement, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 3,300 voters in Florida. That's significantly higher than the roughly two-thirds of Republicans nationally who say the same.

Central to those gains is the shift among Latino voters.

More than half of Florida's Latino voters went for Republicans DeSantis and Rubio over Democrats Charlie Crist and Val Demings, AP VoteCast found. That's a shift from 2020, when Latino voters leaned toward Biden over Trump.

The Latino vote in Florida is more complex than many other parts of the country, a blend of Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics. Cuban voters, notably older ones, had already securely been in the GOP's corner, with Trump earning about 6 in 10 voters in 2020. This year, DeSantis earned a

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whopping three-quarters of Cuban voters.

Yet DeSantis did relatively well among most voting blocs.

The Florida governor made modest gains even among Black voters, who continue to back Democrats overwhelmingly; 18% of Black voters in Florida backed the Republican. He was supported by both men and women and voters across age groups. Majorities of college graduates and suburban voters supported him. Moderate voters split about evenly between DeSantis and Crist.

Lilly DeLisi, a Puerto Rican voter who identified as liberal before Trump launched his candidacy in 2015, said she supports whoever she thinks has a better handle of the economy as the country reels from record-high inflation. She was supportive of DeSantis.

"I don't have to love who's in charge," DeLisi said. "Just to know that my dollar is going to go farther and that my gas and my money won't be stretched so far, then I am going to vote for that person."

Indeed, it's unclear whether the GOP's gains with Latino voters are part of a fundamental shift in Florida or an anomaly related to a difficult political environment for Democrats. The Florida GOP's success did not necessarily play out in other states like Texas, where Republicans were equally bullish.

Juan Martinez, an adviser for the conservative Libre Initiative, said he continues to regard the Latino vote as a swing-vote community that can move in any direction in future elections. Latino voters, he said, require year-round attention to deliver political victories.

"One day they can vote Republican, the next election they can vote Democrat," Martinez said. "Educate on issues. Forget about the drama in Washington, D.C., and the division. They want real solutions."

National Democrats, meanwhile, have signaled little interest in competing for Latino votes in Florida. National campaign committees over the last year largely ignored the state, which is among the most expensive from a campaign perspective.

Florida Democratic strategist Jose Parra called on his party to do some "soul searching."

"They need to think about whether they are going to concede Florida forever," he said. "To me, that's ludicrous given the fact that we were the largest swing state in the country, and the path to the White House for Republicans was impossible without Florida."

"Instead of throwing up their hands," Parra said, "they should make a long-term investment."

Mindfulness worked as well for anxiety as drug in study

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Mindfulness meditation worked as well as a standard drug for treating anxiety in the first head-to-head comparison.

The study tested a widely used mindfulness program that includes 2 1/2 hours of classes weekly and 45 minutes of daily practice at home. Participants were randomly assigned to the program or daily use of a generic drug sold under the brand name Lexapro for depression and anxiety.

After two months, anxiety as measured on a severity scale declined by about 30% in both groups and continued to decrease during the following four months.

Study results, published Wednesday in the journal JAMA Psychiatry, are timely. In September, an influential U.S. health task force recommended routine anxiety screening for adults, and numerous reports suggest global anxiety rates have increased recently, related to worries over the pandemic, political and racial unrest, climate change and financial uncertainties.

Anxiety disorders include social anxiety, generalized anxiety and panic attacks. Affected people are troubled by persistent and intrusive worries that interfere with their lives and relationships. In the U.S., anxiety disorders affect 40% of U.S. women at some point in their lives and more than 1 in 4 men, according to data cited in U.S. Preventive Services Task Force screening recommendations.

Mindfulness is a form of meditation that emphasizes focusing only on what's happening at the moment and dismissing intrusive thoughts. Sessions often start with breathing exercises. Next might be "body scans" — thinking about each body part systematically, head to toe. When worried thoughts intrude, participants learn to briefly acknowledge them but then dismiss them.

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Instead of ruminating over the troubling thought, "you say, 'I'm having this thought, let that go for now,'" said lead author Elizabeth Hoge, director of Georgetown University's Anxiety Disorders Research Program. With practice, "It changes the relationship people have with their own thoughts when not meditating."

Previous studies have shown mindfulness works better than no treatment or at least as well as education or more formal behavior therapy in reducing anxiety, depression and other mental woes. But this is the first study to test it against a psychiatric drug, Hoge said, and the results could make insurers more likely to cover costs, which can run \$300 to \$500 for an 8-week session.

The results were based on about 200 adults who completed the six-month study at medical centers in Washington, Boston and New York. Researchers used a psychiatric scale of 1 to 7, with the top number reflecting severe anxiety. The average score was about 4.5 for participants before starting treatment. It dropped to about 3 after two months, then dipped slightly in both groups at three months and six months. Hoge said the change was clinically meaningful, resulting in noticeable improvement in symptoms.

Ten patients on the drug dropped out because of troublesome side effects possibly related to treatment, which included insomnia, nausea and fatigue. There were no dropouts for that reason in the mindfulness group, although 13 patients reported increased anxiety.

The study "is reaffirming about how useful mindfulness can be when practiced effectively," said psychologist Sheehan Fisher, an associate professor at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine who was not involved in the study.

Dr. Scott Krakower, a psychiatrist at Zucker Hillside Hospital in New York, said mindfulness treatments often work best for mildly anxious patients. He prescribes them with medication for patients with more severe anxiety.

He noted that many people feel they don't have time for mindfulness meditation, especially in-person sessions like those studied. Whether similar results would be found with online training or phone apps is unknown, said Krakower, who also had no role in the study.

Olga Cannistraro, a freelance writer in Keene, New Hampshire, participated in an earlier mindfulness study led by Hoge and says it taught her "to intervene in my own state of mind."

During a session, just acknowledging that she was feeling tension anywhere in her body helped calm her, she said.

Cannistraro, 52, has generalized anxiety disorder and has never taken medication for it. She was a single mom working in sales during that earlier study — circumstances that made life particularly stressful, she said. She has since married, switched jobs, and feels less anxious though still uses mindfulness techniques.

World Cup: French company charged with forced labor in Qatar

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A subsidiary of French construction company Vinci was handed preliminary charges Wednesday of forced labor and other alleged violations of the rights of migrant workers hired to build infrastructure in Qatar around the World Cup.

The company denies the charges and is appealing them, and accused magistrates of rushing through the decision ahead of the tournament opening Nov. 20.

But a human rights group behind the initial legal complaint against Vinci seven years ago hailed Wednesday's move as a breakthrough, after protracted efforts to hold the company accountable for the alleged abuses.

Leading up to the World Cup, Qatar has faced scrutiny for its labor laws and treatment of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers, mostly from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and other South Asian countries.

Vinci subsidiary Vinci Construction Grands Projets was given preliminary charges of holding multiple people in servitude through forced labor; submitting workers to conditions and lodging incompatible with human dignity; and obtaining services from people who were vulnerable or in a situation of dependence, according to a judicial official and French advocacy group Sherpa.

Sherpa filed the original complaint in 2015, along with several former workers.

Sherpa said it collected testimonies about the working conditions at some construction sites operated by Vinci's subsidiary, which included working in temperatures over 45 C (113 F) with insufficient water, the withholding of passports, and lack of access to showers in accommodations.

The charges are "a strong signal for these economic players who profit from modern slavery," Sherpa president Sandra Cossart told The Associated Press. "We hope that it will make things move."

Vinci said earlier this week that its representatives were being summoned by investigating magistrates to face potential charges in the case.

Reacting to the charges Wednesday, the Vinci subsidiary's lawyer Jean-Pierre Versini-Campinchi said on France-Info radio that the company will seek to have the decision annulled.

He denounced what he called "the insufficient time frame given to lawyers to lay out useful responses, and the hasty choice of the date (for the summons), just a few days before the opening of the football World Cup."

Vinci said Monday that none of the projects awarded to its Qatari unit QDVC had any connection to the World Cup, and that it is committed to improving "the living and working conditions of all workers at its construction sites, all around the world."

The construction group has worked on some of the infrastructure that will be used during the World Cup, including the Doha metro connecting the airport with the historic city center, and the Lusail light-rail transit system transportation network.

The judicial official said that the preliminary charges relate to work carried out in connection with the World Cup. The official was not authorized to be publicly named discussing an ongoing investigation.

Preliminary charges under French law mean there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed but allow magistrates more time for investigation before deciding whether to send the case to trial.

Burst sewage pipe adds to infrastructure woes at COP27

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — First there was no water. Then there was too much of the wrong kind. Attendees of this year's U.N. climate conference in Egypt found themselves stepping over streams of foul-smelling fluid Wednesday after a pipe or tank holding liquid waste appeared to have burst near one of the venue's main thoroughfares.

The incident was the latest of several infrastructure and planning problems that have emerged this week during the conference, which runs through Nov. 18. Participants have complained that basic necessities such as drinking water and food are not available or require lengthy queuing under the simmering Sinai sun. Floors sometimes buckle and toilet paper in the various venues has frequently run out.

The problems raise broader issues about planning for an event meant to help solve climate change and promote green living.

Giant AC units blow cold air into vast tent-like buildings with little insulation and doors wide open. Empty rooms are brightly lit into the night. Solar panels, wind turbines or electric vehicles are hard to find.

The event's Egyptian hosts didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Questions around sustainability have dogged U.N. climate meetings for years. For example, during the meeting in Katowice, Poland, in 2018, hot air had to be pumped into the prefabricated buildings to keep participants warm in sub-zero temperatures. Last year in Glasgow, Scotland, the plastic wrapping of sandwiches and drinks being stored in open refrigerated units raised eyebrows.

Responding to criticism, many recent hosts have highlighted their efforts to keep the talks green, with vegan food, recycling containers and various "carbon offsets" for unavoidable emissions caused by the conference.

This year's meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, a resort by the Red Sea, drew 33,449 participants at the last count, many of whom arrived by plane.

Climate talks host Egypt gets green energy, transport deals

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BY SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Egypt, the host of this year's U.N. climate talks, is racking up a number of deals to green its energy and transport systems still heavily reliant on heavily polluting fossil fuels.

The agreements include a \$10 billion investment to replace "inefficient thermal power plants" with clean energy like wind or solar, funded by institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the African Development Bank, HSBC and CitiBank.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and the Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said the two countries would establish a major green hydrogen plant — which would use renewable energy to generate hydrogen — in Egypt's Ain el-Sokhna on the Red Sea.

The project will have a capacity to produce 100 megawatts of green hydrogen once completed, officials said. They added that the project as well as others on food and transportation are part of Egypt's national Nexus of Water, Food and Energy program, which was launched in July. The program aims to mobilize climate funding and investments to support the country's transition to clean energy.

Norwegian renewable energy company Scatec will take the lead in developing the hydrogen project. The company already has a footprint in Egypt, having developed the Benban solar park, one of the world's largest, in the Aswan province of upper Egypt.

Last week, Germany announced that it had also signed a preliminary deal with Egypt to buy more natural gas and help the North African nation develop facilities for hydrogen production.

According to the International Energy Agency, Egypt currently gets more than 90% of its electricity from natural gas and oil. Scientists say the use of such fossil fuels need to be replaced worldwide by renewable energy sources as soon as possible to tackle climate change.

"The energy matrix of Egypt, but also many other countries, is shifting radically in terms of the integration of renewable energy, of electrification, of transport," said Achim Steiner, the head of the U.N. Development Program.

In recent years, Egypt has intensified efforts to embrace alternative renewable energy and shift away from fossil fuel dependency. El-Sissi's government aims to generate 42% of the country's electricity from renewable sources by 2035, according to the country's New and Renewable Energy Authority.

German rail operator Deutsche Bahn announced this week that its subsidiary DB International Operations won a contract to operate and maintain Egypt's new high-speed network.

The deal, signed on the sidelines of the two-week climate talks in Sharm el-Sheikh, is worth over a billion euros (dollars) and will initially run for 15 years.

With Egypt's population projected to grow from 104 to 160 million by 2050, the country is hoping high-speed rail will provide a cleaner and safer alternative to its often congested roads.

The first line will connect Alexandria, Cairo and a new administrative capital from 2025. Two further lines linking Abu Simbel, Luxor and Hurghada on the Red Sea will be added later, connecting 90% of Egypt's population to the network.

Biden's next 2 years: Changes afoot whatever midterms bring

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden's record was on the ballot even if his name wasn't. And no matter the final bottom line of Tuesday's midterm elections, his presidency is set for profound changes.

Biden watched from the White House into the early morning hours Wednesday, making congratulatory calls to more than 30 Democratic candidates and huddling with advisers to watch the incoming returns. The White House announced that he was to deliver remarks and hold a rare press conference on Wednesday afternoon to discuss the results.

In public, the president professed optimism to the end, telling Democratic state party officials on election eve that "we're going to surprise the living devil out of people."

In private, though, White House aides have been drawing up contingencies should Republicans take control of one, or both, chambers of Congress — a scenario Biden acknowledged would make his life

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“more difficult.”

Control of Congress was still hanging in the balance on Wednesday morning, but returns pointed to surprising Democratic strength as the party notched victories in key races, including Pennsylvania’s Senate race where John Fetterman flipped a Republican-controlled seat that is key to the party’s hopes of maintaining control of the chamber.

Regardless of the outcome, the votes will help reshape the remainder of Biden’s term after an ambitious first two years and will reorder his White House priorities.

The president last week appealed for Americans to be patient as votes are counted and to avoid engaging in conspiracy theories, a message he was likely to repeat Wednesday about pending returns.

Biden, in his first two years, pushed through sweeping bills to address the coronavirus pandemic, rebuild the nation’s infrastructure, address climate change and boost U.S. competitiveness with China — all with the slimmest of congressional majorities. Now, aides and allies say, his focus will turn to preserving those gains, implementing the massive pieces of legislation — perhaps while under intense GOP oversight — sustaining effective governance in an even more charged environment and shoring up his party’s standing ahead of the next presidential election.

Biden’s job approval has rebounded from lows this summer, but he remains less than popular with mid-term voters. According to the AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of over 93,000 voters across the country, about 6 in 10 disapprove of how he is handling the economy. A similar proportion disapprove of how he’s handling the presidency at large.

Should Republicans win control of Congress, Biden allies are gearing up for fights on keeping the government funded and its financial obligations met, sustaining support for Ukraine and protecting his signature legislative achievements from repeal efforts. Republican wins could also usher in a host of GOP candidates whom Biden has branded as threats to democracy for refusing to acknowledge the results of the 2020 presidential race, limiting potential avenues of cooperation and exposing new challenges ahead of 2024.

The Biden administration has been preparing for months for an expected flood of GOP investigations should Republicans take over one or both chambers, devising legal and media strategies to address probes into everything from the chaotic U.S. military pullout from Afghanistan to presidential son Hunter Biden’s business dealings.

If the Republicans take power, Princeton University historian Julian Zelizer said, history shows it would be “very effective” for Biden to “focus on their extremism, and to turn their new power against them.”

White House aides and allies have been closely monitoring the clamoring on the right to investigate or even impeach Biden. While they have pledged to cooperate on what they see as legitimate oversight, they are eager to exact a political toll on Republicans should they overreach, casting the GOP as focused on investigations instead of the issues most important to Americans’ lives.

The potential shift comes as Biden, at 79, has repeated his intention to run for reelection. He will need to make a final decision soon, perhaps teeing up a rematch against former President Donald Trump, who has teased his own expected announcement for Nov. 15.

In a potential warning sign for 2024, around two-thirds in the AP VoteCast survey said they think Biden is not a strong leader. More than half say the president isn’t honest or trustworthy and that he doesn’t have the mental capability to serve effectively as president.

A bad midterm outcome doesn’t preclude a president’s reelection — historically incumbents are strongly favored to win another term. But Princeton University historian Julian Zelizer said that even presidents who manage to defy history and avoid major losses or hold their majorities are forced to change course for the balance of their terms.

“What effective presidents do, is they make defending what they’ve already done a priority,” he said. “And then come election time, your record, even if it hasn’t grown since the midterms, it looks good. What you don’t want is it to be dismantled, not to be able to implement it, and then your opponent in 2024 is going to say, ‘Look, what he did was just terribly ineffective and didn’t work.’”

In a tacit admission of his narrowed ambitions, Biden’s midterm message to voters has largely focused on

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promoting his accomplishments and warning of the consequences of a GOP takeover. The larger elements of his 2020 agenda that fell to the cutting room floor during his two years of legislating — such as expanding free early childcare and two years of community college — have hardly factored into his speeches.

What hints he has given about what he hopes to pass in the coming two years have been conditioned on the slim chance that Democrats expand their thin majorities in Congress: passing an assault weapons ban, voting reform and a law codifying a right to abortion nationwide.

Pressed Monday on why Biden hadn't done more to outline what he hopes to accomplish in his next two years, Jean-Pierre said: "Why not just tell the country what we have done? Why not just lay that out? Which we have."

The president's advisers have stressed the headwinds facing Democrats this year, as inflation combines with historical trends that are unfavorable to the party in control of the White House. They maintain that Biden's agenda remains popular with voters and has been embraced, not shunned, by his party's candidates — unlike 2010, when Democrats fled from the unpopularity of the Affordable Care Act, the Obama-era health law, and went on to lose 63 House seats and six Senate seats.

Republicans under Trump lost 40 House seats but gained two Senate seats in 2018, and Democrats under Bill Clinton lost 52 House seats and eight Senate seats in 1994.

Biden allies have begun considering areas of potential bipartisan cooperation that could also pay 2024 dividends should Republicans block them, such as veterans' care and lowering insulin costs for all Americans. The Democrats' August health care and climate bill capped the drug's cost at \$35 a month for seniors.

Cedric Richmond, the former Louisiana congressman and ex-Biden aide who is now a top adviser to the Democratic National Committee, said Biden would focus on areas of bipartisan cooperation in the second half of his first term.

"Regardless of who's in, he's going to work to try to accomplish his goals," Richmond said. He pointed to Biden's ability to push through the infrastructure bill and a law to improve veterans' health care as areas "where he brought Republicans along, so he's going to continue doing what he's doing, which is busting his tail to get accomplishments."

Newly discovered photos show Nazi Kristallnacht up close

By ILAN BEN ZION Associate Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Harrowing, previously unseen images from 1938's Kristallnacht pogrom against German and Austrian Jews have surfaced in a photograph collection donated to Israel's Yad Vashem memorial, the organization said Wednesday.

One shows a crowd of smiling, well-dressed middle-aged German men and women standing casually as a Nazi officer smashes a storefront window. In another, brownshirts carry heaps of Jewish books, presumably for burning. Another image shows a Nazi officer splashing gasoline on the pews of a synagogue before it's set alight.

Yad Vashem — The World Holocaust Remembrance Center released the photographs on the 84th anniversary of the November pogrom also known as Kristallnacht, or "The Night of Broken Glass." Mobs of Germans and Austrians attacked, looted and burned Jewish shops and homes, destroyed 1,400 synagogues, killed 92 Jews and sent another 30,000 to concentration camps.

The violence is widely considered a starting point for the Holocaust, in which Nazi Germany murdered 6 million Jews.

Jonathan Matthews, head of Yad Vashem's photo archive, said the photos dispel a Nazi myth that the attacks were "a spontaneous outburst of violence" rather than a pogrom orchestrated by the state. Firefighters, SS special police officers and members of the general public are all seen in the photos participating in the Kristallnacht. The photographers themselves were an integral part of the events.

Matthews said these were the first photos he was aware of depicting actions taking place indoors, as "most of the images we have of Kristallnacht are images from outside." Altogether, he said, the photos "give you a much more intimate image of what's happening."

The photos were taken by Nazi photographers during the pogrom in the city of Nuremberg and the nearby town of Fuerth. They wound up in the possession of a Jewish American serviceman who served in Germany during World War II — how, precisely is uncertain, he never talked about them to his family.

His descendants, who declined to give his name, donated the album to Yad Vashem as part of the institution's effort to collect Holocaust-era objects kept by survivors and their families.

Yad Vashem said the photos help demonstrate how the German public was aware of what was going on, and that the violence was part of a meticulously coordinated pogrom carried out by Nazi authorities. They even brought in photographers to document the atrocities.

Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan said the photos will "serve as everlasting witnesses long after the survivors are no longer here to bear testimony to their own experiences."

Despite Nazi censorship, The Associated Press was able to send pictures from Kristallnacht when it happened that were widely used in the U.S. The images included a burning synagogue, a youth preparing to clean up glass from a Jewish shop that had been vandalized, and people standing outside damaged shops in the aftermath of the attacks.

Pakistan FM seeks compensation for damages caused by floods

By KELVIN CHAN and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Pakistan's foreign minister repeated calls for compensation for the unprecedented destruction caused to the country by this summer's flooding, saying debt relief could be a mechanism for doing so.

Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari told The Associated Press on Wednesday at the U.N. climate summit in Egypt that the world is unequipped to deal with weather-related disasters of this scale and urged countries to find ways to address the issue.

"There's no pot of gold sitting anywhere or no financial international mechanism really available to deal with the tragedy of this scale," he said.

His comment comes as Pakistan races against time to arrange tents, food and other supplies for the flood victims ahead of winter just weeks away. Climate-induced flooding killed 1,739 people, displaced hundreds of thousands and caused around \$40 billion in damages, according to the World Bank.

"Many months on from the initial flooding and rainfall, there are still many areas that are underwater," said Bhutto-Zardari, adding that the World Health Organization warned that the country faces a health crisis because of waterborne diseases.

He added that instead of "charity" or "reparations" to pay for climate damage, nations should consider "out-of-the-box solutions that we could propose that can be a win-win for developing countries and developing countries".

One of these is for debts owed by developing countries to rich countries to be written off, allowing nations to spend that money on clean energy and adapting to worsening weather caused by climate change.

Experts say Pakistan is responsible for only 0.4% of the world's historic emissions that are blamed for climate change. The U.S. is responsible for 21.5%, China for 16.5% and the European Union for 15%.

Bhutto-Zardari said Pakistan will hold an international donor conference early next year to seek financial assistance to start the much-needed rehabilitation and reconstruction work in the flood-hit areas, where thousands of people still live in tents and makeshift homes.

Bhutto-Zardari's comments come more than a month after the United Nations issued a revised appeal, seeking five times' more international aid for Pakistan amid a surge in deaths from waterborne and other diseases. The U.N. in October raised its request to \$816 million from \$160 million, saying recent assessments pointed to the urgent need for long-term help lasting into next year.

Doctors in Pakistan's worst-hit southern Sindh province and southern Baluchistan are still trying to contain the outbreak of waterborne diseases, which have caused nearly 400 deaths in flood-affected areas since July. According to the World Health Organization, about 10% of Pakistan's health facilities were damaged in the floods, leaving millions without access to care.

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However, most of the people displaced by floods have returned to their homes.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited flood-hit areas in Pakistan in September, assuring Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif his maximum support in highlighting the ordeal of flood victims. Sharif this week also attended the climate change conference in Egypt and sought help in tackling the flood damage.

Bhutto-Zardari said Guterres has been talking about debt relief for climate-hit nations. "Pakistan is the eighth most climate-stressed country on the planet, but most climate-stressed countries on the planet are also debt stressed, and that debt is owed to developed countries," Bhutto-Zardari said.

So far, China and Washington have been the largest contributors in response to the floods in Pakistan, although several other countries also sent planeloads of aid, many flood victims in Pakistan say they were still without any help or they received too little aid from the government or aid agencies.

China's leader is not attending this year's climate summit, nor is the leader of India, Pakistan's top rival as well as one of the top polluting countries.

Bhutto-Zardari said "it would have been helpful had India participated at an appropriate level."

"And we do hope that our neighbors also take this issue seriously," he said. "This is truly something that we can only combat if we were together across the world and take our responsibilities seriously."

Police detain man after eggs thrown at King Charles III

LONDON (AP) — A 23-year-old man was arrested Wednesday after hurling eggs and vitriol at King Charles III and Camilla, the queen consort, as they walked in the northern England city of York.

The incident happened as the king and his wife were entering York through Micklegate Bar, a medieval gateway where monarchs are traditionally welcomed to the city.

Video footage showed several eggs in motion and smashed on the ground. None appeared to hit the royal couple, who continued to be greeted by local dignitaries and to meet assembled well-wishers.

Several police officers could be seen grappling with a man at a crowd barrier. Britain's PA news agency reported that the protester booed and shouted "This country was built on the blood of slaves" as he was being detained.

Other members of the crowd tried to drown him out by chanting "Shame on you" and "God save the King."

North Yorkshire Police said a 23-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of a public order offense and was being held in custody.

Charles and Camilla traveled to York as part of a series of engagements around the U.K. marking the start of the new king's reign. They attended a service at the city's cathedral, York Minster, and unveiled a statue of the king's mother, Queen Elizabeth II, who died in September after 70 years on the throne.

Kentucky, Michigan voters approve protecting abortion rights

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Voters in reliably red Kentucky rejected a ballot measure aimed at denying any state constitutional protections for abortion while voters in battleground Michigan enshrined abortion rights in their state's constitution — joining Democratic California and Vermont in taking that step.

The Kentucky result bucked the state's Republican-led Legislature, which had imposed a near-total ban on the procedure and put the proposed state constitutional amendment on the ballot. It also mirrored what happened in another red state, Kansas, where voters in August rejected changing that state's constitution to let lawmakers tighten restrictions or ban abortions.

The Tuesday ballot measures came months after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and the constitutional right to abortion it guaranteed to women nationwide. The decision in June has led to near-total bans in a dozen states.

Supporters of the push to protect abortion rights in Michigan collected more signatures than any other ballot initiative in state history to get it before the voters. It puts a definitive end to a 1931 ban on abortion that had been blocked in court but could have been revived. It also affirms the right to make pregnancy-

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related decisions about abortion and other reproductive services such as birth control without interference.

On Michigan State University's campus, junior Devin Roberts said that students seemed "fired up" and that he had seen lines of voters spilling out of the school's polling places throughout the day. The ballot measure was one of the main drivers of the high turnout, he said.

"There's a lot of energy for Prop 3 on campus right now, whether you agree with abortion or not," Roberts said. "I think students want to have the same rights that their parents had when they were younger."

Nationally, about two-thirds of voters say abortion should be legal in most or all cases, according to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of over 90,000 voters across the country. Only about 1 in 10 say abortion should be illegal in all cases.

About 6 in 10 also say the Supreme Court's abortion decision made them dissatisfied or angry, compared with fewer who say they were happy or satisfied.

James Miller, 66, of Flint, Michigan, said he thought of his daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters when he voted in favor of the measure.

"I think we should do the right thing for women," he said. "It's her body; it's her privacy."

Michelle Groesser, of Swartz Creek, Michigan, said she opposes abortion, even though she believes that any ban likely would have some narrow exceptions. "In a perfect world, I personally would want all life preserved," she said.

Opponents have contended the Michigan measure could have far-reaching effects on other laws in the state, such as one requiring parental notification of an abortion for someone under age 18. Legal experts say changes to other laws would only happen if someone sued and won, a process that could take years and has no certainty of success.

Even so, the messaging appeared to resonate with some Michigan voters, including Brian Bauer, 64, of Mundy Township, who said the proposal was confusing and voted against it.

Bauer is an abortion opponent who supports some limited exceptions, "but nobody's willing to throw (in) any kind of compromise ... it's either a yes or no vote."

Montana voters, meanwhile, were also considering newborn resuscitative care requirements with possible criminal penalties, including the rare case of an attempted abortion.

Kentucky lawmakers added the proposed amendment to the ballot last year, a move that some thought would drive more conservative voters to the polls. But after the Roe decision, abortion-rights supporters raised nearly \$1.5 million to fight it.

Initial returns indicated that thousands of Kentucky voters who backed GOP Sen. Rand Paul for reelection opposed the abortion amendment.

At a elementary school in Simpsonville, a small town outside of Louisville, 71-year-old voter Jim Stewart said he voted for Paul, calling him "the only one on TV making sense."

Stewart is a registered Republican and opposed to abortion, but still voted no on the amendment. "You got to have a little choice there."

Al Smith, 83, voted yes: "I don't believe in abortion at all, not for any circumstance," he said.

The reproductive-rights question in Vermont, came after Legislature passed a law in 2019 guaranteeing reproductive rights, including getting pregnant and having access to birth control. Supporters with the Reproductive Liberty Ballot Committee said the overturning of Roe meant "state-level protections are vital to safeguarding access to reproductive health care."

California already had passed several measures aimed at easing access to abortion and set aside millions of taxpayer dollars to help pay for some out-of-state abortion travel. On Tuesday, voters approved language that would explicitly guarantee access to abortion and contraception in the state constitution.

The question for Montana voters was whether to create criminal penalties for health care providers unless they do everything "medically appropriate and reasonable" to save the life of a baby after birth, including the rare possibility of birth after an attempted abortion.

Today in History: November 10, U.S. Marines first organized

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By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Nov. 10, the 314th day of 2022. There are 51 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 10, 1775, the U.S. Marines were organized under authority of the Continental Congress.

On this date:

In 1871, journalist-explorer Henry M. Stanley found Scottish missionary David Livingstone, who had not been heard from for years, near Lake Tanganyika in central Africa.

In 1919, the American Legion opened its first national convention in Minneapolis.

In 1928, Hirohito (hee-roh-hee-toh) was enthroned as Emperor of Japan.

In 1944, during World War II, the ammunition ship USS Mount Hood (AE-11) exploded while moored at the Manus Naval Base in the Admiralty Islands in the South Pacific, leaving 45 confirmed dead and 327 missing and presumed dead.

In 1951, customer-dialed long-distance telephone service began as Mayor M. Leslie Denning of Englewood, New Jersey, called Alameda, California, Mayor Frank Osborne without operator assistance.

In 1954, the U.S. Marine Corps Memorial, depicting the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima in 1945, was dedicated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in Arlington, Virginia.

In 1969, the children's educational program "Sesame Street" made its debut on National Educational Television (later PBS).

In 1975, the U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution equating Zionism with racism (the world body repealed the resolution in Dec. 1991).

In 1982, the newly finished Vietnam Veterans Memorial was opened to its first visitors in Washington, D.C., three days before its dedication. Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev died at age 75.

In 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a former finance minister of Liberia, claimed victory in the country's presidential election.

In 2009, John Allen Muhammad, mastermind of the 2002 sniper attacks that killed 10 in the Washington, D.C. region, was executed. President Barack Obama visited Fort Hood, Texas, where he somberly saluted the 13 Americans killed in a shooting rampage, and pledged that the killer would be "met with justice — in this world, and the next."

In 2018, President Donald Trump, in France to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, canceled a visit to a cemetery east of Paris where Americans killed in that war are buried; rainy weather had grounded the presidential helicopter. Authorities in Northern California said 14 additional bodies had been found in the ruins from a fire that virtually destroyed the town of Paradise.

Ten years ago: Two people were killed when a powerful gas explosion rocked an Indianapolis neighborhood, damaging or destroying more than 80 homes. (Five people were later convicted of charges in connection with the blast, which prosecutors said stemmed from a plot to collect insurance money.)

Five years ago: Facing allegations of sexual misconduct, comedian Louis C.K. said the harassment claims by five women that were detailed in a New York Times report were true, and he expressed remorse for using his influence "irresponsibly." The National Republican Senatorial committee ended its fundraising agreement with Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore in light of allegations of sexual contact with a teenager decades earlier. President Donald Trump arrived in Vietnam to attend an international economic summit, telling CEOs on the sidelines of the summit, "We are not going to let the United States be taken advantage of anymore."

One year ago: Kyle Rittenhouse took the stand in his murder trial, testifying that he was under attack and acting in self-defense when he shot and killed two men and wounded a third during a turbulent night of street protests in Kenosha, Wisconsin. (Rittenhouse would be acquitted of all charges.) A judge in Michigan approved a \$626 million settlement for Flint residents and others who were exposed to lead-contaminated water; most of the money would come from the state. A New Jersey gym owner, Scott Fairlamb, who punched a police officer during the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, was sentenced to more than three

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years in prison. The government said prices for U.S. consumers jumped 6.2% in October compared with a year earlier, leaving families facing their highest inflation rate since 1990. Chris Stapleton was the big winner with six trophies including song and album of the year and Luke Combs claimed the biggest prize with entertainer of the year at the Country Music Association Awards.

Today's Birthdays: Blues singer Bobby Rush is 88. Actor Albert Hall is 85. Country singer Donna Fargo is 81. Former Sen. Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., is 79. Lyricist Tim Rice is 78. Actor Jack Scalia is 72. Movie director Roland Emmerich is 67. Actor Matt Craven is 66. Actor-comedian Sinbad is 66. Actor Mackenzie Phillips is 63. Author Neil Gaiman (GAY'-mihn) is 62. Actor Vanessa Angel is 59. Actor Hugh Bonneville is 59. Actor-comedian Tommy Davidson is 59. Actor Michael Jai (jy) White is 58. Country singer Chris Cagle is 54. Actor-comedian Tracy Morgan is 54. Actor Ellen Pompeo (pahm-PAY'-oh) is 53. Actor-comedian Orny Adams is 52. Rapper U-God is 52. Rapper-producer Warren G is 52. Actor Walton Goggins is 51. Comedian-actor Chris Lilley is 48. Contemporary Christian singer Matt Maher is 48. Rock singer-musician Jim Adkins (Jimmy Eat World) is 47. Rapper Eve is 44. Rock musician Chris Joannou (joh-AN'-yoo) (Silverchair) is 43. Actor Heather Matarazzo is 40. Country singer Miranda Lambert is 39. Actor Josh Peck is 36. Pop singer Vinz Dery (Nico & Vinz) is 32. Actor Genevieve Buechner is 31. Actor Zoey Deutch (DOYCH) is 28. Actor Kiernan Shipka is 23. Actor Mackenzie Foy is 22.