

# Groton Daily Independent

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**Groton Community Calendar**  
The Groton Area School District will be closed on Friday, November 11, 2022.

**Friday, Nov. 11 - VETERAN'S DAY**  
Senior Menu: Goulash, green beans, baked apples, whole wheat bread.  
**Postponed to Monday:** Veteran's Day Program, 2 p.m., GHS Arena

**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.

**Sunday, Nov. 13**  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship/Congregational Meeting, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

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

UMC: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday school and Christmas Program Practice, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Fall Dinner, 11:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

St. John's worship, 9 a.m.; Zion Lutheran worship, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

Snow Queen Contest, 7 p.m.

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

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

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## Rural electric customers without power

Northern Electric Cooperative had this post on their social media page last night:

Northern Electric Cooperative members in Brown and Spink counties should prepare to spend Thursday night without electricity as thick ice and windy conditions continue to hinder power restoration efforts.

Nearly 700 members were without power as of 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 10. Co-op crews have struggled to stay ahead of the outages as they continue to encounter thick ice, downed lines, and broken branches and trees. Crews have also found at least 25 broken poles.

There were 579 members without power in Brown County and 104 members without power in Spink County at 4:00 p.m. on November 10. Line crews from Cam-Wal Electric Cooperative from Selby, SD, H-D Electric Cooperative from Clear Lake, SD, and Sioux Valley Energy from Colman, SD, will begin assisting Northern Electric on Friday morning.

Members of the public are urged to stay at least 40 feet away from any damaged infrastructure and downed power lines. Some broken wires were discovered by co-op crews on Thursday that were still live and were burning the ground. If members of the public encounter broken wires and downed lines they should call 605-225-0310 to report the damage.

## 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

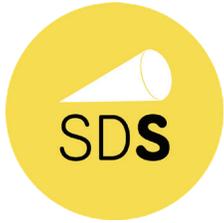
GrotonChamber.com

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**Trees and power lines were blanketed with ice from the ice storm that hit the area Wednesday and Thursday. Large branches came down in Groton and there were a few that landed on service lines.**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Tripp County will need court order to investigate mismatch between hand count and audit

Hand counting experience ranges from hiccups to headaches for three SD counties

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 10, 2022 5:30 PM

Barb Desersa was awake 40 hours straight between Election Day and Wednesday.

Nearly a quarter of that time was spent supervising volunteers hand-counting ballots for Tripp County.

"We left at 5:30 a.m.," said Desersa, who serves as auditor for Tripp and Todd counties. "We went home, showered and then went back to work."

Several races had to be recounted by volunteer counting boards – sometimes three or four times that night. When the counting stopped around 5 a.m. Desersa and her team "pushed them to the state" and left. The majority of the volunteers had already worked 12-hour shifts as poll workers.

Tripp County was the first in South Dakota county to hand count its ballots since 2004, according to the Secretary of State's Office. County commissioners leaned on a little-used state law to overrule Desersa's authority after hearing from a group of South Dakotans who spent months pushing commissioners across the state to force hand counts.

On election night and into the following morning, Desersa compared the hand counted votes to a tabulator to prove tabulating machines are accurate.

"I couldn't believe how long it took," Desersa added. "We had problems balancing, and there were more voters than normal (for a midterm election). It was just such a long ballot; it took everyone a long time to do each ballot and everybody was tired."

And they're not done counting.

A Thursday vote canvas revealed a discrepancy in a single precinct between the number of official, completed ballots recorded in poll books and the number of audited ballots. It is unclear at this point how the error occurred.

The county now needs a court order to reopen that precinct's ballot box to investigate. Deputy Auditor Marcia Haukaas said it wouldn't have become a week-long process if the county had used its tabulator as an official reporting method, though this issue would've popped up no matter what.

"We wouldn't have been able to officially record that precinct done until we figured out the problem that night — we would have recounted how many ballots were unused, recounted all the used ballots and then we would have ensured everything was legit," Haukaas said, adding that it wouldn't have required a court order to check the ballots again that night. "Now we're going backwards and trying to have people



**Tripp County will be the first South Dakota county in two decades to hand count ballots in an election, according to the Secretary of State's Office.**

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remember things that happened on a 23-hour day with no sleep afterward.”

The intended court order will have no effect on the official tally, but is meant to put both the auditor’s office and county commissioners’ minds at ease.

The precinct in question had 356 names written in the poll book, and hand counters recorded votes for that same number of ballots. But the tabulator ran through 281 votes. The auditor’s office had recorded that only 313 ballots should have been used in the precinct, Haukaas said.

Haukaas hopes it’s human error.

“I don’t want people thinking the machine is doing something wrong, because it was just off in this one precinct but was right on all the other 12 precincts,” Haukaas said. “This is just a mystery right now.”

While Tripp County was the only one to send hand-counted results to the Secretary of State’s Office, Fall River County and Butte County also hand-counted a small number of votes after running ballots through tabulator machines.

The same group that convinced Tripp County Commissioners to order a hand count tried to persuade county commissioners in Butte and Fall River counties to completely hand count votes, The two county auditors and their commissioners, however, opted to partially count votes as an “audit” of the system instead.

“I wanted to try and figure out what the process is and how we can use this data and experience,” said Butte County Auditor Annie Capp. “If the state moves that way (to require hand-counting ballots), we’ll have a better idea of what we need to do.”

It took Butte County volunteers about an hour to prepare and hand count three races on 270 ballots, each from a different precinct. A county-wide hand count would have taken several hours, Capp said.

The hand count for one precinct was inaccurate, but Capp didn’t make the volunteers recount.

“This was an experiment. I didn’t want them to overthink or overwork,” Capp said. “The first time they counted one of the races they had seven more tick marks than they had ballots.”

For Fall River, it took two and a half hours to count three races on 331 ballots from two of the county’s smallest precincts. All hand-counted counties had between three and five counting boards for a precinct.

Fall River Auditor Sue Ganje, who has served as auditor since 2005, has been involved with elections since 1984, when she was an election clerk. She remembers when the state hand counted all its ballots, so she had an easier time running the show.

Instead of recruiting counters from her pool of precinct workers, she recruited “fresh eyes” to count after the polls closed.

The counters were off by one vote for one race in each precinct compared to the tabulators, Ganje said, which is normal based on interpretation by counters.

“Hand counters determine the voter’s intent, whereas the tabulator goes through the scanner and just scans the ovals,” Ganje said. “The board did very well.”

Ganje and her team were up until 2 a.m. running ballots from Fall River and Oglala Lakota County through tabulator machines and partially hand counting.

Both Capp and Ganje were happy with the results of their audits. One of Ganje’s counters had expressed doubts about South Dakota’s election process and tabulator machines.

“I felt good having that person on the board,” Ganje said. “I wanted them to know what the process was like.”

To assuage doubts, Ganje said the state should implement post-election partial audits, similar to what happened in Fall River and Butte counties.

“If that’s what it would take to get the confidence back with voters, maybe that’s what we need to do,” Ganje said.

Capp said both tabulators and hand counting should be used for checks and balances.

“We can’t just trust the machine is doing everything. People program it. It still has a lot of human interaction, and humans can make errors,” Capp said. “I think it’s great to have those checks and balances.”

Desersa believes that the tabulators should be enough. With the test decks, demonstrations auditors

run before the election and current checks and balances in place, she said she'd prefer a post-election audit that doesn't involve hand-counting every ballot in her county – or across the state.

"We'll have time to forget about it before the next election, but I think it's pointless unless the whole state orders it. It just doesn't make sense to me," Desersa said. "Why go back in time to hand counting when we have machines that are perfectly capable of tabulating the vote?"



**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>

### Minneapolis Fed President: let immigration meet labor demand to boost economy

**More immigrants will be important to meeting national needs says Kashkari.**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 10, 2022 1:44 PM**

A steady stream of immigrants will be important to the funding future of entitlement programs in the U.S. and for the health of the economy as a whole, the president of the Federal Reserve in Minneapolis told an audience in Brookings this week.

President Neel Kashkari shared those insights at South Dakota State University on Wednesday evening during a conversation about inflation, the labor market, and the economy.

#### Demographic trends point to challenges

The U.S. faces major economic hurdles, Kashkari told the crowd, particularly as people have fewer children.

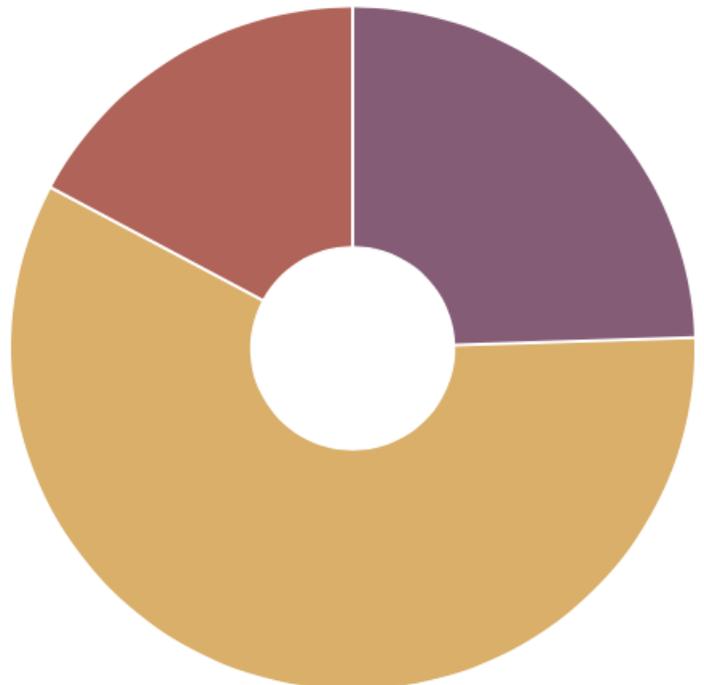
"We've been able to supplement our growth with immigration throughout our history," Kashkari said. "And the question is whether we are willing to embrace that going forward. For one, I hope we are, because it's a very powerful way to continue driving our economy."

More workers would help uphold some major entitlement programs, such as Social Security and Medicaid, Kashkari said. Current workers are paying for retiree benefits, rather than banking funds for their own retirement.

"As our society is aging, that ratio is getting imbalanced and these programs run into a challenge," he said.

Age of South Dakotans in 2020

Under 18 18-65 Over 65



Source: 2020 Census

Resolving that labor force issue is what Kashkari considers the number one way to boost the U.S. economy. In light of lower birth rates, the clearest path to a wider labor force "is fixing our immigration system so that we have an immigration system that meets the needs of our economy," Kashkari said.

Kashkari said the pandemic pushed more people to retire early, and to drop out of the workforce altogether.

"Inflation comes from more demand for goods and services than there is the supply of goods and services," Kashkari said. "Because we're missing all these workers, our economy's potential to supply goods and services is lower than it otherwise would have been."

### **S.D. faring better than U.S. in population**

The workforce picture isn't quite as dire in South Dakota as it may be in other states, although its population growth looks different from zip code to zip code.

South Dakota's total population is up by 8.9% from 2010, according to 2020 Census numbers. The state has the nation's second-fastest-growing Hispanic population. The Hispanic population increased from 2.7% in 2010 to 4.4% in 2020.

The population growth hasn't come from maternity wards, however. The number of live births in the state was generally steady over the last decade, until 2016 where the state saw the number of births drop from 12,270 to 10,951 in 2020.

Urban areas like Sioux Falls continue to add children to their school systems, even as birth rates and class sizes continue to decline in much of the state.

That reality for school districts in the Sioux Falls metro area isn't tied to higher birth rates, however. The state's largest city and the smaller towns that surround it saw their collective kindergarten class size hit a figure 28.9% higher than the graduating class from 2022. Most of that growth came through in-state movement from rural to urban areas and in-migration from other states.

But none of that means Sioux Falls is without reliance on international migration. Sanford, for example, is planning to hire 40 international nurses over the next year in Sioux Falls.

### **Fed role in inflation management**

The Federal Reserve is the nation's central bank, created by Congress in 1913 to help manage the ups and downs of the U.S. economy. The government developed 12 regional banks – the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis being the ninth.

The Fed has a dual mandate to maintain price stability and low unemployment.

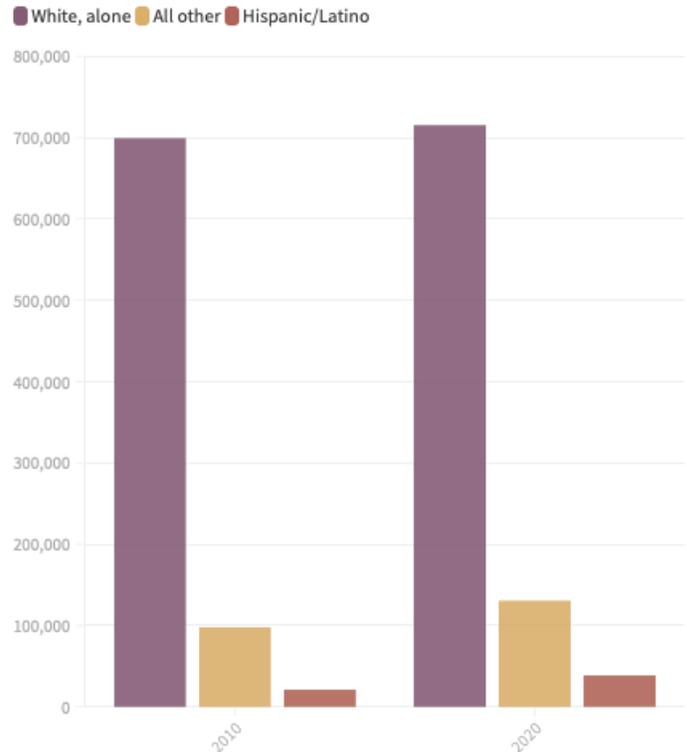
That job is really a balance, Kashkari said, because low unemployment leads to higher wages, which leads to higher prices, which can prompt the Fed to raise interest rates to cool the economy.

"That is how we typically think of it (the Federal Reserve) working," Kashkari said. "That is not what has happened in the past couple of years."

Unemployment is low in the U.S., but today's inflation isn't driven by high wages, Kashkari said. Global supply chain issues caused by the pandemic, an overstimulated economy and the Russian invasion of Ukraine are behind the inflation of 2022.

"You are seeing wages rise in the economy, but those wages are trying to catch up to the inflation ...

### **Demographic shift in South Dakota from 2010 to 2020**



Source: 2010, 2020 US Census

our traditional models for analyzing the economy are not working very well right now," Kashkari said.

That's not great news for South Dakota markets.

Farm and ranch production expenditures for the Plains Region, for example, are already up 16% from 2020 to 2021, according to the USDA.

### 'A bunch of weird stuff' happening

Higher interest rates make loans – which businesses use to grow and people use for major purchases like homes and vehicles – more costly. The goal is to allow the supply chain to catch up, Kashkari said.

Kashkari believes inflation is going to come down. But "how long that process takes, I don't know exactly."

New technologies for automating labor and improved productivity will help ease the nation's labor scarcity burden, Kashkari said. And broadband access and remote work are creating new opportunities for people to live and work in rural areas.

Another complicating factor: workers' share of annually produced income in the U.S. has declined over the last three decades, he said, despite companies' high demand for labor.

"There's a bunch of weird stuff happening in the economy right now," Kashkari said. "That makes it hard to neatly say 'this is purely supply, this is purely demand.'"



**JOSHUA HAIAR**  

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



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### USDA foresees dip in exports of pork and beef, continued growth for chicken

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 10, 2022 2:12 PM**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) expects the U.S. to export less pork and beef in the near future, but exports of chicken should continue to grow.

The department's 10-year projections of the U.S. agriculture market say that the 3.6 billion pounds of beef exported in 2022 will dip to 2.9 billion in 2024. Exports are projected to slowly recover to 3.3 billion pounds by 2032.

That will come as a result of global inflation and U.S. drought conditions, said President of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, Eric Jennings. He said high prices have pushed consumers to cheaper foods, and the drought has forced ranchers to cut herd sizes.

"The price of that beef is going to go up because the supply is coming down," Jennings said. "So, it's not as bad as it might appear."

Per capita consumption of beef is also projected to decline from 58.9 pounds per person to 55.5 pounds



**A steer** (courtesy USDA).

(-3.4) in 2032, according to the USDA.

It's hard to say what's driving less beef consumption trends with certainty, Jennings said, but beef being a more expensive meat option during record inflation and fewer cattle available overall doesn't help.

### More pork and chicken

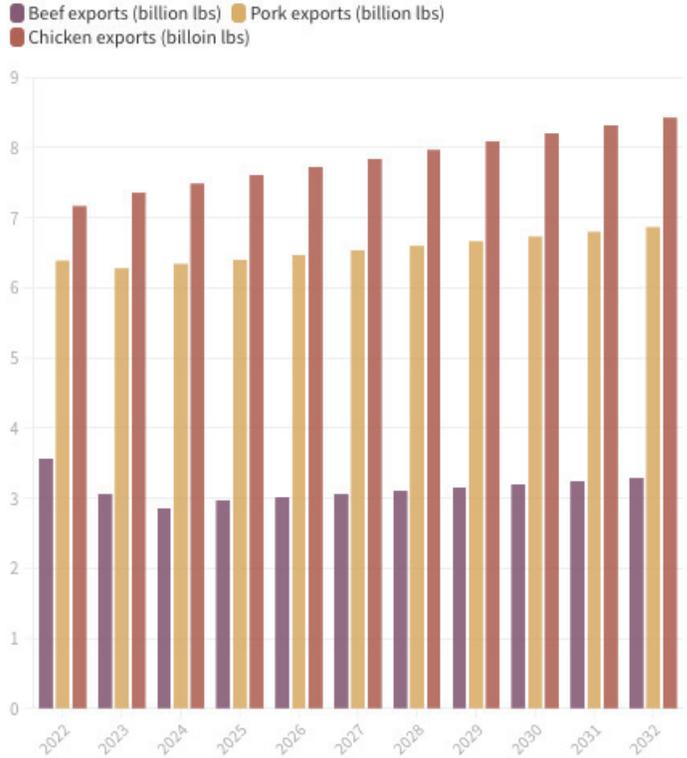
If anything is certain, it's that the decline isn't driven by future consumers wanting less meat in their diets.

By 2032, pork consumption is projected to grow from 51.6 pounds per person to 56.3 pounds (+5.2), while chicken consumption is expected to jump from 96.6 pounds to 106 (+5.4) in 2032.

The changing export projections are less severe for those two meat markets, as well. Pork exports could drop from 6.4 billion pounds in 2022 to 6.3 billion in 2023, then steadily grow to 6.9 billion in 2032. U.S. chicken exports will hold steady, the USDA report said. That market will likely grow from 7.2 billion pounds exported in 2022 to 8.4 in 2032.

### USDA 10-year projections for livestock exports

Per billion pounds exported



Source: [USDA](#)



### JOSHUA HAIAR



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



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Record-setting number of women elected as governors in midterms

**Gov. Noem one of 12 female executives endorsed by voters**

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - NOVEMBER 10, 2022 2:51 PM**

WASHINGTON — The United States' ceiling for female governors was shattered this week, with voters in 12 states electing women to the role, breaking the prior record of nine set for the first time back in 2004.

While not all of the gubernatorial campaigns have been called as of Thursday afternoon, Arizona and Oregon voters had two female candidates on their ballots, ensuring those states have elected a woman to the governor's mansion, regardless of whether the Democrat or Republican candidate wins.

Women were also elected to lead their states in Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, New York and South Dakota.

In total, there were 25 women running in gubernatorial races this year out of 36 total campaigns, a significant increase from the 16 female candidates who ran for governor in 2018.

Voters also elected the nation's first openly lesbian governor in Massachusetts, though if the Democratic candidate wins in Oregon the country will get its first two openly lesbian governors. The Associated Press has not yet called the Oregon race, although the candidate, Tina Kotek, has declared victory.

#### Why women are breaking through

Kelly Dittmar, director of research at the Center for American Women and Politics, said Thursday several factors led women candidates to break through the record this year.

Female governors, she said, now have a longer record of showing women can succeed in the role, helping to erode some stereotypes that have hamstrung female candidates. Voters have also begun to reevaluate what they value in a leader.

"Seeing some of the failed leadership at executive levels of men might have also helped some of these women," Dittmar said.

The last few election cycles, Dittmar said, have set a foundation for more female candidates as voters watched them win an increasing number of high-ranking positions, like governor, leading to more "public conversations about the importance of women in leadership."

"That helps to soften the ground for women," she said.

Women have increasingly moved up the ranks in statehouses, boosting the pool of women well positioned to run, a place that used to be dominated by male candidates, she said.

"For the governor's office, it's a sole office and there's often a line of folks who are waiting to run for that position. And that line has been made up of men," Dittmar said. "And it's often been informed by men. In



**Gov. Kristi Noem of South Dakota meets with supporters in Rapid City on Nov. 7, 2022.**

(Kevin Eilbeck for South Dakota Searchlight)

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other words, who sits at that table deciding who's going to run next and who's going to be backed have often been small groups of politically powerful men."

This election year also had a lot of turnover and opportunity for female candidates, combined with the fact that several women have stepped up following scandals by male politicians over the years.

## **The women elected as their states' chief executives:**

- South Dakota voters overwhelmingly reelected Republican Gov. Kristi Noem with 65% of the vote. Democratic challenger Jamie Smith, a delegate in the state House of Representatives, received 35% of the vote.

- In Alabama, more than 67% of voters reelected Republican Gov. Kay Ivey, who was first sworn in on April 10, 2017, as the first woman to hold the role in the state. Ivey, who was formerly the state's lieutenant governor, stepped into the governorship after former Gov. Robert Bentley resigned after he pleaded guilty to campaign finance law violations.

- Arizona voters haven't yet learned whether Democratic candidate Katie Hobbs or Republican nominee Kari Lake will become their next governor. Hobbs, Arizona's secretary of state, held 50.3% of the vote as of Thursday midday, while Lake held 49.7%. Kansas Gov.

- Sarah Huckabee Sanders, former President Donald Trump's press secretary, won her election in Arkansas with 63% of the vote, becoming that state's first female governor. Sanders defeated Democrat Chris Jones, who received 35% of the vote.

- In Iowa, Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds secured reelection with 58% of the vote, handily winning out over Democratic challenger Deidre DeJear.

- Kansans reelected Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly by a narrow margin over GOP challenger Derek Schmidt, the state's attorney general. Kelly received 49.2% of the vote to Schmidt's 47.7%. Kelly said Wednesday the state had voted "for civility, for cooperation, for listening to one another and for a spirit of bipartisan problem-solving that's become all too rare in our politics today."

- Maine Democratic Gov. Janet Mills got the backing of 55% of voters for another term in the Pine Tree State, defeating Republican nominee Paul LePage, who was the state's governor from 2011 to 2019. LePage received 43% of the vote. "Tonight the people of Maine sent a pretty clear message, a message that we will continue to move forward, not go back," Mills said Tuesday night. "We will continue to fight problems, not one another."

- More than 63% of Massachusetts voters elected Democrat Maura Healey as their first woman governor and one of the country's first openly lesbian governors this week. She defeated former state Rep. Geoff Diehl, who got 35% of the vote.

- Michigan Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer secured reelection to a second term over Republican challenger Tudor Dixon. Fifty-five percent of voters backed Whitmer, compared to 44% supporting Dixon. Whitmer said in her victory speech that her win "reminds us all that our governor's office does not belong to any person or political party. It belongs to all of us, the people of Michigan."

- In New Mexico, 52% of voters backed Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's reelection, rejecting a challenge to her tenure from Republican Mark Ronchetti, who received 46% of the vote.

- New Yorkers elected Gov. Kathy Hochul as the state's first female governor over Republican U.S. House Rep. Lee Zeldin. Hochul became the state's current governor after she stepped up from her role as lieutenant governor following former Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo resignation in August 2021 amid multiple sexual harassment allegations. Hochul received 53% of the vote to Zeldin's 47%.

- In Oregon, either Tina Kotek, the Democratic candidate, or Christine Drazan, the Republican nominee, will become the state's top executive, though counting continues in the especially close race. As of midday Thursday, Kotek had 46.7% of the vote to Drazan's 43.9%.



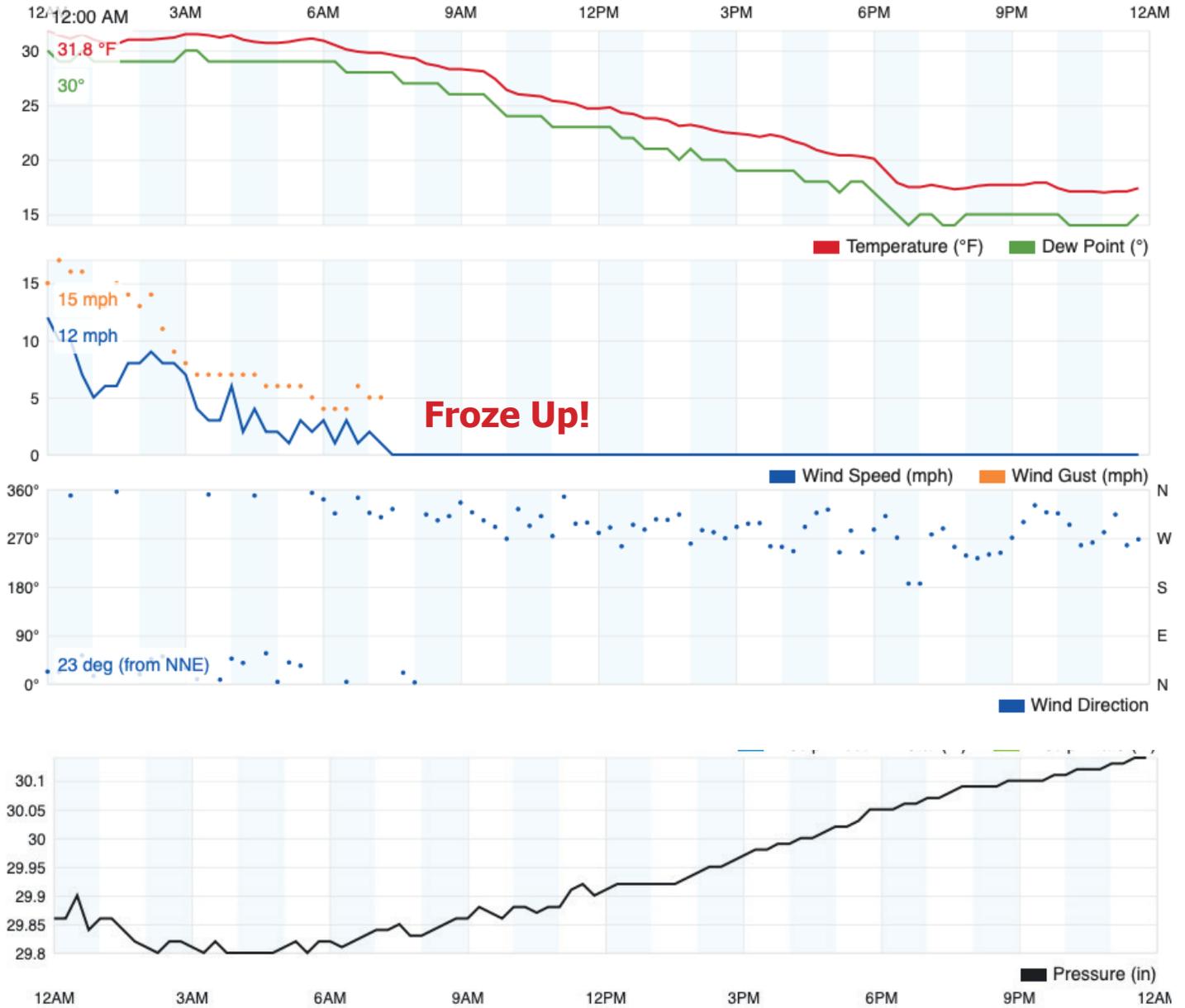
## **JENNIFER SHUTT**

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Veterans Day	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Chance Flurries and Blustery	Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Chance Snow 40%	Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy 30%
High: 24 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: 9 °F	High: 26 °F	Low: 15 °F	High: 27 °F

## Temperatures Staying Cold This Week!

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
						
<i>Gusty</i> 20° 13° 1% 1% NW 20 - 25 G35	<i>Breezy</i> 19° 5° 1% 1% S 15 - 20 G30	25° 4° 1% 7% E 9 - 13 G25	24° 12° 30% 30% SW 9 - 13 G25	20° 7° 9% 10% NW 10 - 15	22° 3° 10% 3% NW 10 - 15	<i>Breezy</i> 22° 5° 2% 12% NW 15 - 20 G25

### 7 Day Forecast - Aberdeen, SD

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
						
<i>Breezy</i> 23° 12° 1% 1% NW 15 - 20 G30	25° 6° 0% 0% SW 10 - 15 G25	32° 9° 0% 1% SE 10 - 15 G25	25° 10° 11% 11% S 9 - 13 G20	25° 10° 4% 6% NW 10 - 15	<i>Breezy</i> 30° 9° 7% 3% NW 10 - 15	<i>Breezy</i> 27° 12° 2% 14% NW 15 - 20

### 7 Day Forecast - Pierre, SD

Updated: 11/11/2022 5:53 AM CST

There could be some light snow developing by Sunday night across northeast South Dakota into western Minnesota. But, throughout the 7 day forecast, expect temperatures to remain below freezing, and below climate normal for this time of year.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 31.8 °F at Midnight

Low Temp: 17.0 °F at 11:00 PM

Wind: Frozen

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 43 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 70 in 1912

Record Low: -8 in 1966

Average High: 45°F

Average Low: 21°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.33

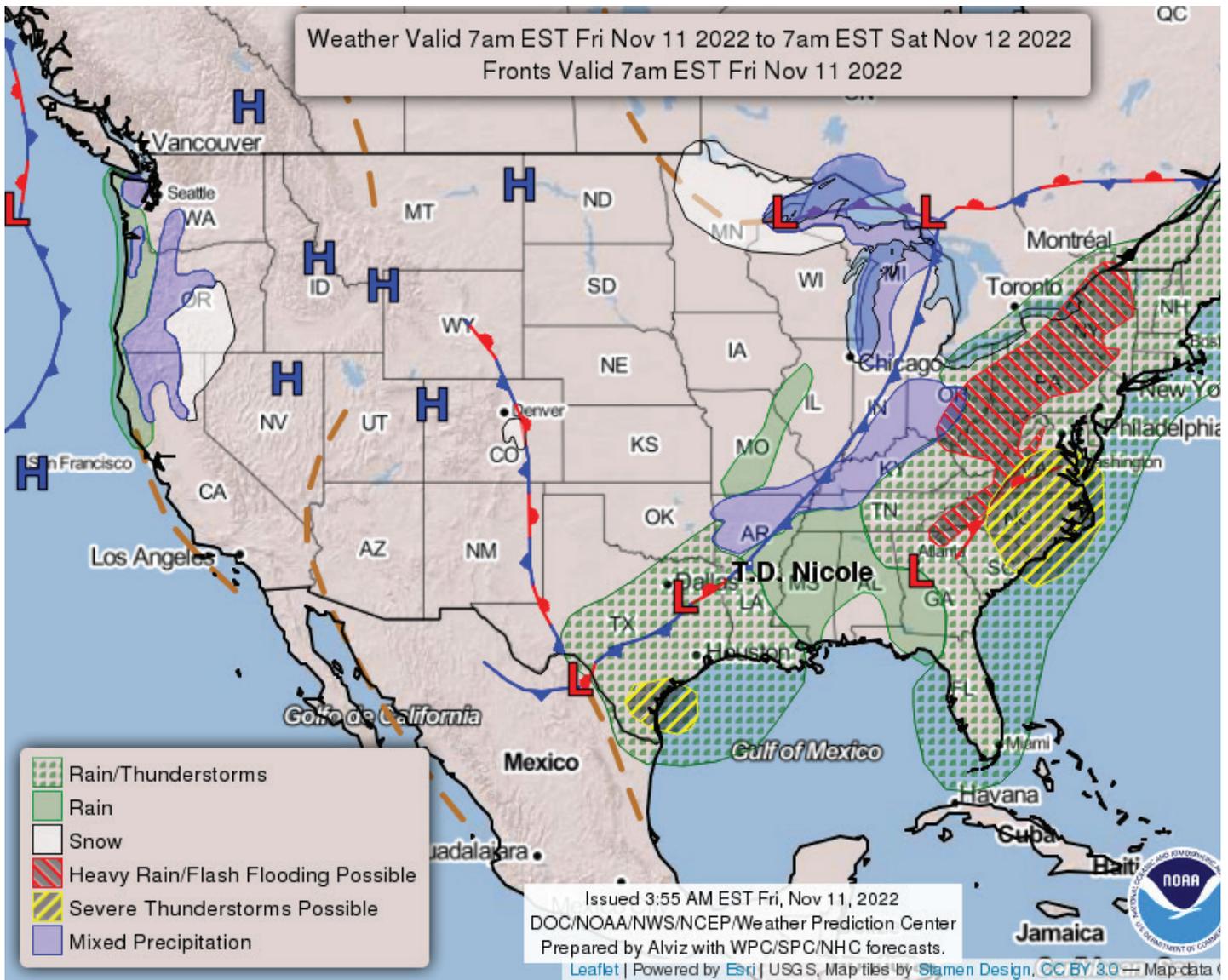
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.80

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 5:08:21 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:25:54 AM



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## Today in Weather History

November 11th, 1982: Wet snow and winds gusting to over 50 mph snapped almost a thousand power lines and poles. Snowfall amounts were 4 to 6 inches but ranged to nearly a foot or more in Brookings County. A wind gust of 75 mph was recorded in McCook County. Several semi-trucks jackknifed on ice-covered roads, and numerous other automobile accidents were reported due to the snow and strong winds.

November 11th, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 14 inches fell across central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota on November 11th and 12th, causing driving difficulties throughout the region. Many vehicles became stuck in the snow or slid into ditches. There were also several accidents, and many events were canceled. Some snowfall amounts include 14.0 inches in Miller; 13.8 inches near Mellette; 12.5 inches in Highmore; 11.5 inches near Iona; 11 inches in Wilmot; 10 inches in Aberdeen, near Bryant, and Artichoke Lake MN; 9.5 inches in Clark; and 9.0 inches in Clear Lake, near Onida, and Webster.

1911: A powerful cold front, known as the Great Blue Norther of 1911, produced some of the most extreme temperature changes to the Nation's midsection. Ahead of the cold front, a warm and moist environment caused a severe weather outbreak with several strong tornadoes reported in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan. An estimated F4 tornado occurred from Janesville to Milton, Wisconsin, and caused extensive damage to several farms and killed nine people. The citizens of Janesville, Wisconsin, reported blizzard conditions with a temperature near zero within an hour of the tornado.

1940: An Armistice Day storm raged across the Great Lakes Region and the Upper Midwest. A blizzard left 49 dead in Minnesota, and gales on Lake Michigan caused shipwrecks resulting in 59 deaths. Up to seventeen inches of snow fell in Iowa, and at Duluth MN, the barometric pressure reached 28.66 inches. The blizzard claimed a total of 154 lives and killed thousands of cattle in Iowa. Huge snowdrifts isolated whole towns.

1955 - An early arctic outbreak set many November temperature records across Oregon and Washington. The severe cold damaged shrubs and fruit trees. Readings plunged to near zero in western Washington, and dipped to 19 degrees below zero in the eastern part of the state. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A deepening low pressure system brought heavy snow to the east central U.S. The Veteran's Day storm produced up to 17 inches of snow in the Washington D.C. area snarling traffic and closing schools and airports. Afternoon thunderstorms produced five inches of snow in three hours. Gale force winds lashed the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast. Norfolk VA reported their earliest measurable snow in 99 years of records. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure brought snow to parts of the Rocky Mountain Region. Totals in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado ranged up to 10 inches at Summitville. Evening thunderstorms produced large hail in central Oklahoma and north central Texas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Veteran's Day was an unseasonably warm one across much of the nation east of the Rockies. Temperatures warmed into the 70s and 80s from the Southern and Central Plains to the southern half of the Atlantic coast. Thirty-four cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Saint Louis MO with a reading of 85 degrees. Calico AR and Gilbert AR reported record highs of 87 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### PROMISES? NO! PROMISES!

Years ago, a firm handshake and a sincere look in the eye meant that "my word is my bond as long as I live." No more questions were required, and no exceptions were included. "If I said it, I meant it, and I will do it. I will not deny what I said nor offer any excuses if I fail!"

How different it is today. Contracts, warranties, and agreements are written with clauses that are vague, difficult to understand, and often need the interpretation of an attorney. Word of mouth promises rarely last longer than the time it takes to speak them.

How different it is with God. In Psalm 105 we are reminded of His faithfulness to Israel. If He said it, He did it. If He promised something, there is proof in His Word that He made it happen. All the promises He made have been fulfilled and provide proof that "God is a Man of His Word." This should give us courage for today and hope for the future.

Some Biblical scholars who have carefully researched His word have identified 3,000 promises in the Bible! Furthermore, all of them, except one – Christ's second coming - have been fulfilled. And, we can be confident that He will fulfill that promise at the appointed time. If He said it, He did it – or, we know, will certainly do it!

So, here are two great promises we can claim right now: "The Lord is a stronghold in the day of trouble!" Whenever we can't handle "things," we have His unfailing word that He certainly can! We can claim this promise!

"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in My name." What a wonderful, never-ending, open-ended promise if we call on Him in faith and trust.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to take You at Your Word: To realize that you have never failed and never will, and to claim Your promises and know that You will fulfill them. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He remembers his covenant forever. Psalm 105:8a



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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News from the **AP** Associated Press

## Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

State Playoffs=

Class 9A=

Championship=

Gregory 36, Warner 23

Class 9B=

Championship=

Hitchcock-Tulare 50, Herreid/Selby Area 28

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

State Playoffs=

Class AA=

Round of 16=

Harrisburg def. Mitchell, 25-20, 25-15, 25-15

Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Brookings, 25-18, 25-19, 25-18

Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Watertown, 25-18, 21-25, 25-17, 25-15

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

## Maly leads No. 21 Creighton women past South Dakota 74-51

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Morgan Maly matched her career-high with 21 points and had 10 rebounds for her second career double-double and No. 21 Creighton completed a sweep of the Mount Rushmore state with a 74-51 win over South Dakota on Thursday night.

The Bluejays (2-0), who opened the season with a win at No. 23 South Dakota State, got 16 points from Molly Mogensen and 12 from Carly Bachelor. Lauren Jensen, who had the first 30-point outing in a Creighton opener since 2000, also had 12.

South Dakota (1-1) led 19-12 after one quarter, but the Bluejays dominated the second 21-3 to lead 33-22 at the half. After making 5 of 22 shots in the first 10 minutes, Creighton was 9 of 16.

South Dakota was up 22-14 less than two minutes into the second quarter and didn't score again, missing its last nine shots. The Coyotes went from 7-of-13 shooting to 1 of 12 with five turnovers.

Creighton finished shooting 47% after its cold start, going 10 of 14 in the fourth quarter.

Grace Larkins scored 20 points for the Coyotes, who lost all five starters and their coach from last year's NCAA Tournament team. South Dakota, which made a record 19 3-pointers in its season opener, went 2 of 17 from the arc and shot 30%.

Creighton coach Jim Flanery is now 4-7 against South Dakota and 10-5 against South Dakota State, both strong mid-major programs with multiple NCAA berths.

The Bluejays, who play No. 22 Nebraska on Tuesday, made a run to the Elite Eight last season to earn their first-ever preseason ranking.

## 1st winter storm of season rolling through Montana, Dakotas

By DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — The first winter storm of the season to blast off from the Rockies was unloading its energy Thursday primarily in North Dakota, where it could dump up to 18 inches (46 centimeters) of

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snow and kick up winds as high as 50 mph (80 kph), the National Weather Service said.

The system started with a round of freezing drizzle that made driving tricky in the Dakotas. It led to a chain reaction crash that totaled a state trooper's vehicle and closed Interstate 94 in eastern North Dakota for several hours Wednesday night and shut down I-29 in eastern North Dakota for a few hours on Thursday morning.

Travel was hazardous throughout southern North Dakota by Thursday afternoon, when I-94 was closed from Dickinson in the west to Jamestown in the east, a distance of about 200 miles (322 kilometers). The move was due to zero visibility, blowing snow and icy conditions. Officials also warned of impassable secondary roads.

"Vehicles may become stranded and emergency responders may not be able to reach you safely," the North Dakota Department of Transportation said in a release.

The state's capital city, Bismarck, was at a standstill with numerous closings and cancellations. A scheduled appearance by comedian Bert Kreischer was postponed to March and Kreischer's tour bus got stuck in the snow before reaching the city. About a dozen people responded to a rescue plea by Kreischer on social media, The Bismarck Tribune reported.

Storm warnings were issued Thursday for western Montana, for southwestern through northeastern South Dakota and for northwestern Minnesota, but meteorologist Carl Jones said North Dakota was getting the worst of it.

"It's mainly driven by heavy snow amounts," said Jones, who works out of the weather service's eastern North Dakota office in Grand Forks. "We are talking 1- to 2-inch per hour rates over a pretty wide swath."

A blizzard was hammering central North Dakota. Jacqueline Swiftbird, a cashier at the Flying J truck stop in Mandan, Bismarck's neighboring city, said a semi-trailer that had been hauling other vehicles was stuck outside her window. She said she was the only cashier who could make it into work and that she picked up employees for restaurants and other shops in the travel center.

"It is extremely, extremely hazardous out there," Swiftbird said. "I am really busy being the only cashier but I would rather not have any other employees try to make it here in these conditions."

Snow totals by late afternoon Thursday included about 13 inches (33 centimeters) in Bismarck, 16 inches (41 centimeters) in New Salem, 14 inches (36 centimeters) in Steele, 10 inches (25 centimeters) in Harvey and 9 inches (23 centimeters) in Williston.

The crash involving the North Dakota trooper's vehicle happened about 6:30 p.m. Wednesday on I-94 near Jamestown, the state Highway Patrol said. The officer had gotten out of a vehicle after seeing a semi jackknife on the road and the patrol car was struck by a passenger car. The trooper was not injured.

There were seven additional crashes at the same location, all in quick succession. Several people were transported to a Jamestown hospital with injuries, including one person with a broken leg, the patrol said.

Jones, the meteorologist, said the first storm is always a learning or relearning experience.

"We kind of lean on that. That first storm, if you will, of the season, we really try to get the message out to be extra cautious," Jones said. "We're really trying to remind people to practice good safe driving habits and get their winter survival kits into their vehicles."

## South Dakota Sen. Thune's win breaks 'curse,' defies Trump

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Neither South Dakota's "Curse of Karl" nor the invocations of former President Donald Trump weighed on Republican Sen. John Thune this week as he breezed to a historic fourth term that could see him ascend to lead the GOP's Senate caucus.

The Republican senator, coming off a reelection victory in which he won 70% of the vote, told The Associated Press on Thursday that he wanted to stay "focused on solutions," especially on inflation, rather than bombastic political styles that "make a point over making a difference." It's a conservative style that has been effective for Thune in deep-red South Dakota, which he has represented in the Senate since 2005.

Only one other South Dakota senator has won four terms: Sen. Karl Mundt, whose time in Congress

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from the 1930s to the 1970s inspired a joke in state political circles known as the "Curse of Karl." Three other senators — Democrats George McGovern and Tom Daschle, as well as Republican Larry Pressler — tried to convince South Dakotans to grant them four Senate terms. They all failed, with Daschle losing to Thune in 2004.

Thune, 61, admitted to some "bare knuckles campaigns where you're just tearing the bark off each other" over the years. But this year's campaign was a quiet one in which his Democratic challenger came nowhere near his \$17 million in campaign funds. Thune hardly acknowledged opponent Brian Bengs, an Air Force veteran and university professor, and instead ran ads that featured his granddaughter and panned President Joe Biden's economic policies.

"Congratulations for breaking the curse," read the cake at Thune's Tuesday victory party.

In the campaign season's early stages, however, the curse seemed to have some life to it. Trump had called for a primary challenger to Thune after the senator derided his false claims that the 2020 election was stolen, then Thune hesitated for weeks to announce his candidacy as he considered retiring from politics.

But a potential post atop the Senate GOP leadership awaits. Thune, currently the No. 2 Senate Republican, expressed support for the current leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. Thune also didn't shy away from discussing his own leadership aspects when it comes time to pick a new leader, saying he knows how to both lay out a "clearly defined vision" for the caucus and marshal support for it.

Karl Rove, an influential Republican strategist, praised Thune at a fundraiser for law enforcement in Sioux Falls this week, telling the crowd that "South Dakota is hitting way above its weight with him in the United States Senate."

With ballots in a handful of Senate contests still being counted, it's not clear whether Thune's GOP will gain the majority. Thune said he would do "whatever I can" to help Republican candidate Hershel Walker, who has a turbulent past, including allegations of violence against his family and accusations that he paid for the abortions of two women he dated. Walker's looming Georgia runoff against Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock could determine who controls the Senate.

"I do think that there is an expectation in our country that checks and balances is a good thing," Thune said of the push for the GOP to control Congress. "And if you have a divided government, sometimes that can present an opportunity to do some really consequential things."

Amid the GOP's failure to quickly sweep to victory as many expected, Thune mostly blamed the quality of the candidates that the party has put forward this year. Among some Republicans, blame has landed at Trump's feet for trying to prove his enduring political influence by endorsing more than 330 candidates. Many of them were inexperienced and deeply flawed.

Thune, who did not receive Trump's endorsement, said it was proof his party needed to look past the former president: "You can't have a party that's built around one person's personality. You got to have a party that's built on something that's more durable."

## **Biden off to climate talks, 1st leg of around-the-world trip**

By ZEKE MILLER and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is heading to a global climate meeting with a giant domestic investment in tow — and he's likely to face questions about how far the U.S. will go to pull other large greenhouse gas emitters along.

His attendance Friday at the U.N. climate conference, known as COP27, in the resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, is the first stop on an around-the-world trip that will also take him to a meeting of Southeast Asian leaders in Cambodia and a Group of 20 summit meeting for leaders of the world's largest economies in Bali, Indonesia.

Biden boarded Air Force One late Thursday buoyed by a stronger-than-expected showing by the Democratic Party in Tuesday's midterm elections, congressional passage this year of the largest climate investment in U.S. history and Russian military setbacks on the Ukrainian battlefield.

At the climate conference, Biden will discuss a new supplemental rule coming Friday that cracks down on

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methane emissions, a measure that expands on a similar regulation his administration released last year.

The 2021 rule targeted emissions of methane — a potent greenhouse gas that contributes significantly to global warming — from existing oil and gas wells nationwide, rather than focusing only on new wells as previous Environmental Protection Agency regulations have done. But this year's rule goes a step further and affects all drilling sites, including smaller wells that emit less than 3 tons (2.7 metric tonnes) of methane per year.

He also will spotlight one of his key domestic successes — the Democrats' massive health care and climate change bill known as the Inflation Reduction Act.

The U.S. commitment of some \$375 billion over a decade to fight climate change gives Biden greater leverage to press other nations to make good on their pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition the global economy toward cleaner energy sources.

Biden will be in a far different position from last year's gathering, which came about during a particularly unhappy stretch in the bill's tortuous path to passage.

That summit resulted in additional global commitments to meet the temperature targets agreed to in the Paris Climate Accord, which Biden rejoined after his predecessor, Donald Trump, pulled the U.S. from the deal.

In his remarks, Biden will also argue that "good climate policy is good economic policy," while calling on all major emitting countries to "align their ambition" to the international goal of trying to limit future global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), according to the White House.

But even with these fresh efforts, America and the world have a long way to go to meet emissions targets that scientists hope will contain global warming. And the political will for more investment — as the global economy faces new headwinds — is shrinking.

Speaking at the COP27 summit Wednesday, former U.S. vice president and climate activist Al Gore called Biden a "climate hero in my book," adding that "passage of the Inflation Reduction Act represents the most significant pro-climate legislation ever passed by any nation in all of history."

It remained to be seen whether Biden would address the item top of mind at the climate talks: loss and damage. That's international negotiations language for asking rich countries like the United States, the top historic polluting nation, to pay what are essentially reparations for damages caused to poorer vulnerable nations that don't emit much heat-trapping carbon dioxide.

In the past, the U.S. has been against even talking about the issue, but it has now softened its stance, agreeing to discussions. Biden's climate envoy, John Kerry, has even mentioned it in speeches. However, the U.S. doesn't want liability to be part of any deal and when it comes to paying, Congress and the public have been reluctant to embrace many types of climate aid — and this is the most controversial type.

"I wish the U.S. would say something constructive about loss and damage" because it could get a vital issue moving, Princeton University climate and global affairs professor Michael Oppenheimer said.

Global eagerness for shifting away from fossil fuels has been tempered by the roiling of world energy markets after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At home and abroad, Biden is pressing oil and gas producers to boost production to meet demand and bring down prices that have funded the Kremlin's war effort.

Prospects for a significant breakthrough are further dampened as major emitters such as China and India are sending less-senior delegations. Biden administration officials have tried to lower expectations for results and instead cast the meeting as a return to U.S. leadership on the issue.

Biden leaves Washington with votes still being tallied in key races that will determine control of both chambers of Congress. Still, the president was buoyed as Democrats performed stronger than expected. He was likely to learn the results of the races that will sharply impact his ability to get things done in Washington while he was overseas.

Meanwhile, Trump appeared set to announce another bid for the White House while Biden was in Asia, a contrast the incumbent's advisers felt would only benefit Biden.

While in Egypt, Biden will hold a bilateral meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, where they are to discuss the two nations' strategic partnership, the Israel-Palestinian conflict and regional se-

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curity issues.

Egypt's foreign minister Sameh Shoukry told The Associated Press on Thursday that he understood Biden's visit in Sharm el-Sheikh to be "an indication of the political will to move the process forward" on tackling global warming.

"We hope ... it will resonate within the collective will of the negotiating groups that the United States is party to, but also in creating a momentum for the conference, for the parties to deliver what is expected," he said.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Biden would also broach the issue of human rights with El-Sisi, whose government has taken an authoritarian turn, and with other leaders on the trip.

"He feels you're not the American president — you're not really doing your job as American president — if you're not raising issues of human rights," said Sullivan.

Sullivan said Biden and other senior officials would also advocate for the release of imprisoned Egyptian pro-democracy activist Alaa Abdel-Fattah, whose family said they were told by prison officials he was undergoing an undefined medical intervention amid a hunger strike that escalated Sunday.

After the brief stop in Egypt, Biden will continue on to Cambodia for a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to reinforce the U.S. commitment to the region in the face of China's increasing assertiveness.

Later, in Indonesia, Biden is set to hold his first sitdown as president with a newly empowered Chinese President Xi Jinping, who was awarded an unprecedented third, five-year term as the Chinese Communist Party leader during the party's national congress last month amid increasingly strained U.S.-China relations.

The White House has been working with Chinese officials over the last several weeks to arrange the meeting. Biden told reporters Wednesday that he intended to discuss with Xi growing tensions between Washington and Beijing over the self-ruled island of Taiwan, trade policies, Beijing's relationship with Russia and more.

"What I want to do with him when we talk is lay out what each of our red lines are and understand what he believes to be in the critical national interests of China, what I know to be the critical interests of the United States," Biden said. "And determine whether or not they conflict with one another."

Biden will also aim to demonstrate global resolve to stand up to Russia over its invasion of Ukraine and meet with two critical new partners in the effort to support Ukraine's defense: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni. Russian President Vladimir Putin announced Thursday that he was skipping the gatherings, averting a potentially awkward encounter. Sullivan said Biden had no plans to interact with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who is attending in Putin's stead.

In Cambodia, Biden will also discuss North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs in a trilateral meeting with leaders of South Korea and Japan.

## **In election, support for abortion rights was about much more**

By JOCELYN GECKER and NUHA DOLBY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — To Mona Cohen, a lifelong Philadelphia Democrat, democracy is under attack in the United States. In the midterm elections, she lists a woman's right to abortion as one of many fleeting freedoms she voted to defend.

Cohen, 68, feared the Supreme Court's decision in June to eliminate women's constitutional protections for abortion was only the beginning of a broader erosion of rights. So she backed Democrats in her state of Pennsylvania, where the party flipped a U.S. Senate seat and won the contest for governor against a pair of Donald Trump loyalists.

A government dominated by Republicans, Cohen said, "would have gone on to impede contraception, to impede marriage equality, to impede any kind of civil rights that we as a society have fought for in the past 50 years."

Support for abortion rights did drive women to the polls in Tuesday's elections. But for many, the issue took on higher meaning, part of an overarching concern about the future of democracy.

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Women, especially Democratic women, were more likely than men to say the Roe v. Wade reversal was a top factor in their vote, according to AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of more than 94,000 voters in the midterm elections. More women also said the reversal made them angry, and said abortion had a major impact on their decision to turn out and which candidate they supported.

But the future of democracy was an even greater factor than Roe for women voters. In interviews with AP reporters, many women linked their concerns about abortion to fears for the country.

"I'm not glad that we had to have this abortion drama happen, but I'm glad that it brought a new conversation to the table about what democracy should be to our country," said Pennsylvania resident Brianna McCullough, 20, a sophomore at Chatham University in Pittsburgh. "If they can take this away, they can take anything away from people. And I don't think that's right."

Heading into this week's election, Republicans were expected to seize control of Congress. That's still a possibility, with several races too close to call, but Democrats denied Republicans the sweeping nationwide victory they had expected.

Abortion "may have made the difference in some key races where the elections were really competitive," said Ashley Kirzinger, director of survey methodology at KFF, which designed questions for and published an analysis of VoteCast.

Many Democratic candidates advocated for abortion rights on the campaign trail. But they also cast their Republican rivals' "extreme" attitudes on abortion as one example of a broader threat to the country's democratic institutions, including its election systems.

In Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, Democrats who won tight governors' races will appoint people who run the state's elections. In Michigan, Democrats won races for governor and secretary of state, defeating candidates who opposed abortion rights and had denied the 2020 election results.

"Michigan is a good place to be right now," said Ellie Mosko, 40, an attorney and mother of three in the Detroit area. Democrats also championed a successful ballot measure that enshrines the right to abortion in the state constitution. Moreover, Democrats took control of the state Senate for the first time in 40 years.

"The key issues for me are the preservation of democracy and voter rights," Mosko said, "because without that we can't preserve women's access to reproductive freedom."

Voters in California and Vermont also chose to enshrine abortion protections in their state constitutions on Tuesday, while voters in Kentucky and Montana rejected anti-abortion amendments.

Republican candidates did gain ground in some states, including Ohio and Florida, potentially paving the way for more state bans on women's abortion access. But the GOP elsewhere lost contests that would have allowed them to advance restrictions easily.

Among Black and Latina women across age groups, majorities of whom backed Democratic candidates, at least half said Roe played a major impact in their decision to vote. The Democrats also were buoyed by white women under 50 — about half said it had a major impact on their decision to turn out, compared with about a third of older white women.

Reproductive rights were a driving factor for Alison Brock McGill, 38, a Black mother with a 2-year-old son. She moved in 2020 from New York to Atlanta, where a recent conversation reminded her she was not in Brooklyn anymore.

At her recent annual OB-GYN visit, the topic of having a second child came up. The doctor reminded her that in Georgia, a woman now has until around six weeks' gestation to terminate a pregnancy. After that, the doctor would have to refer her to a physician in another state if she wanted an abortion.

Georgia's new law, banning most abortions once cardiac activity is detected, took effect after the Supreme Court ruling overturning Roe v. Wade.

"I was just blown away by that," said McGill. "At six weeks, nobody knows anything."

That's a major reason she voted Democratic up and down the ticket, including for Sen. Raphael Warnock, whose hotly contested U.S. Senate race is advancing to a runoff with his Republican rival, the former football star Herschel Walker.

Still, for many women, the country's inflation woes outweigh abortion. About two-thirds of Republican women said inflation was their primary consideration, compared with about a third of Democratic women.

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"A woman might need an abortion once or twice in her lifetime, but I need to feed these kids every day," said Kelly Morris, 60, a registered Republican in Dayton, Ohio, and mother of nine.

In Ohio, Trump-endorsed JD Vance won an open U.S. Senate seat, and the GOP swept statewide offices. A ban on abortions after six weeks of pregnancy is currently blocked by a lower court in Ohio but is being appealed. Three conservative victories on Ohio's Supreme Court, plus an upcoming appointment by Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, mean that ban is likely to come before a court with a 4-3 GOP majority.

Still, for abortion rights-opponent Elizabeth Lamoreaux of suburban Cincinnati, the election was about more than that. She cared about inflation, border security and "the whole LGBT alphabet issue" — in particular, opposing transgender rights for youth.

Said Lamoreaux: "I feel as if our country as a whole is sort of a dumpster fire now."

AP VoteCast is a survey of the American electorate conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago for Fox News and The Associated Press. The survey of 94,296 voters was conducted for nine days, concluding as polls closed. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The survey combines a random sample of registered voters drawn from state voter files; self-identified registered voters using NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population; and self-identified registered voters selected from nonprobability online panels. The margin of sampling error for voters is estimated to be plus or minus 0.5 percentage points. More details at <https://ap.org/votecast>.

## **Biden tightens methane emissions rule amid push for more oil**

By MATTHEW DALY and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — The Biden administration is ramping up efforts to reduce methane emissions, targeting the oil and gas industry for its role in global warming even as President Joe Biden has pressed energy producers for more oil drilling to lower prices at the gasoline pump.

Biden was set to announce on Friday a supplemental rule cracking down on emissions of methane — a potent greenhouse gas that contributes significantly to global warming and packs a stronger short-term punch than even carbon dioxide — as he attends a global climate conference in Egypt.

The new rule by the Environmental Protection Agency follows up on a methane rule Biden announced last year at a United Nations climate summit in Scotland. The 2021 rule targets emissions from existing oil and gas wells nationwide, rather than focusing only on new wells as previous EPA regulations have done.

The new rule goes a step further and takes aim at all drilling sites, including smaller wells that emit less than 3 tons (2.7 metric tonnes) of methane per year. Small wells currently are subject to an initial inspection but are rarely checked again for leaks.

The proposal also requires operators to respond to credible third-party reports of high-volume methane leaks.

The Biden administration will embark on "a relentless focus to root out emissions wherever we can find them," White House national climate adviser Ali Zaidi said Friday at climate negotiations in Egypt, hours before the president was set to speak at the international climate summit.

Oil and gas production is the nation's largest industrial source of methane, the primary component of natural gas, and is a key target for the Biden administration as it seeks to combat climate change. The United States is among more than 100 countries that have pledged to cut methane emissions by 30% by 2030 from 2020 levels.

"We must lead by example when it comes to tackling methane pollution — one of the biggest drivers of climate change," said EPA Administrator Michael Regan, who also is in Egypt for the climate talks. The new, stronger standards "will enable innovative new technology to flourish while protecting people and the planet," he said.

"Our regulatory approach is very aggressive from a timing standpoint and a stringency standpoint," Regan said at a briefing in Egypt. The old and new rules should be able to prevent more than 80% of the energy waste, about 36 million tons (32.6 million metric tonnes) of carbon emissions, he said.

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Leakage from wells and pipelines is why former Vice President Al Gore and others call natural gas “a bridge to nowhere.” In an interview with The Associated Press, Gore said: “When you work the math, a leakage of 2 to 3% of the methane completely negates the climate advantage of methane gas. And, tragically, the wildcatters that do most of the hydrological fracturing do not pay attention to the methane leakage. You have leakage in the LNG (liquefied natural gas) process, you have leakage in pipelines, you have leakage in the use.”

The supplemental rule comes as Biden has accused oil companies of “war profiteering” and raised the possibility of imposing a windfall tax on energy companies if they don’t boost domestic production.

Biden has repeatedly criticized major oil companies for making record-setting profits in the wake of Russia’s war in Ukraine while refusing to help lower prices at the pump for the American people. The Democratic president suggested last week that he will look to Congress to impose tax penalties on oil companies if they don’t invest some of their record-breaking profits to lower costs for American consumers.

Besides the EPA rule, the new climate and health law approved by Congress in August includes a methane emissions reduction program that would impose a fee on energy producers that exceed a certain level of methane emissions. The fee, set to rise to \$1,500 per metric ton of methane, marks the first time the federal government has directly imposed a fee, or tax, on greenhouse gas emissions.

The law allows exemptions for companies that comply with the EPA’s standards or fall below a certain emissions threshold. It also includes \$1.5 billion in grants and other spending to help operators and local communities improve monitoring and data collection for methane emissions, with the goal of finding and repairing natural gas leaks.

Multiple studies have found that smaller wells produce just 6% of the nation’s oil and gas but account for up to half the methane emissions from well sites.

“We can’t leave half of the problem on the table and expect to get the reductions that we need to get and protect local communities from pollution,” said Jon Goldstein, senior director of regulatory affairs for oil and gas at the Environmental Defense Fund.

The oil industry has generally welcomed direct federal regulation of methane emissions, preferring a single national standard to a hodgepodge of state rules.

Even so, oil and gas companies have asked the EPA to exempt hundreds of thousands of the nation’s smallest wells from the upcoming methane rules.

## Russia claims all troops gone from city in southern Ukraine

By HANNA ARHIROVA and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

MYKOLAIV, Ukraine (AP) — The Russian Defense Ministry said Friday that it finished pulling out its troops from the western bank of the river that divide’s Ukraine’s southern Kherson region, including the only provincial capital that Moscow had captured since invading the neighboring country.

In a statement carried by Russian state news agencies, the ministry said the withdrawal was completed at 5 a.m. on Friday, and not a single unit of military equipment was left behind. The retreat nonetheless marks another huge setback for Russia in its 8 1/2-month war in Ukraine.

The Kremlin remained defiant Friday, insisting the development in no way represented an embarrassment for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Moscow continues to view the entire Kherson region as part of Russia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

He added that the Kremlin doesn’t regret holding festivities just over a month ago to celebrate the illegal annexation of Kherson and three other occupied or partially occupied regions of Ukraine.

Shortly before the Russian announcement, the office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the situation in the Kherson region as “difficult.” It reported Russian shelling of some of the villages and towns Ukrainian forces reclaimed in recent weeks during their counteroffensive in the Kherson region.

Ukrainian officials were wary of the Russian pullback announced this week, fearing their soldiers could get drawn into an ambush in Kherson city, which had a prewar population of 280,000. Military analysts also had predicted it would take Russia’s military at least a week to complete the troop withdrawal.

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Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said Thursday that the retreating Russian troops laid mines throughout Kherson to turn it into a "city of death." He also predicted they would shell the city after relocating across the Dnieper River.

Having previously warned that the Russian retreat might be a trap, some quarters of the Ukrainian government barely disguised their glee at the pace of the withdrawal.

"The Russian army leaves the battlefields in a triathlon mode: steeplechase, broad jumping, swimming," Andriy Yermak, a senior presidential adviser, tweeted. Social media videos apparently filmed by soldiers on routes toward Kherson showed villagers hugging the Ukrainian troops.

Recapturing the city could provide Ukraine a strong position from which to expand its southern counteroffensive to other Russian-occupied areas, potentially including Crimea, which Moscow seized in 2014.

From its forces new positions on the eastern bank, however, the Kremlin could try to escalate the war, which U.S. assessments showed may already have killed or wounded tens of thousands of civilians and hundreds of thousands of soldiers.

A Russian S-300 missile strike overnight killed six people in Mykolaiv, a city about 68 kilometers (42 miles) from Kherson's regional capital, Zelenskyy's office said Friday morning. Rescue crews sifted through the rubble of a five-story residential building in search of survivors.

Standing in front of what used to be his family's apartment, Roman Mamontov, 16, awaited news about his missing mother.

Mamontov said he found "nothing there" when he opened an apartment door to look for his mother after the missile struck. Friday was her 34th birthday, the teenager said.

"My mind was blank at that moment. I thought it could not be true," he said. "The cake she prepared for the celebration is still there."

Zelenskyy called the missile strike "the terrorist state's cynical response to our successes at the front."

"Russia does not give up its despicable tactics. And we will not give up our struggle. The occupiers will be held to account for every crime against Ukraine and Ukrainians," Zelenskyy said.

The president's office said Russian drones, rockets and heavy artillery strikes across eight regions killed at least 14 civilians between Thursday morning and Friday morning.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, over 50 rockets were fired overnight around cities and towns located across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, according to Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko.

The state of the key Antonivskiy Bridge that links the western and eastern banks of the Dnieper in the Kherson region remained unclear Friday, and could be key in determining whether the Russians did in fact all leave Kherson city.

Russian media reports suggested the bridge was blown up following the Russian withdrawal; pro-Kremlin reporters posted footage of the bridge missing a large section. But Sergei Yeliseyev, a Russian-installed official in the Kherson region, told the Interfax news agency that "the Antonivskiy Bridge hasn't been blown up, it's in the same condition."

## Tropical Depression Nicole moves through Georgia

By MIKE SCHNEIDER and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

WILBUR-BY-THE-SEA, Fla. (AP) — Tropical Depression Nicole was moving through Georgia on Friday morning after a day of causing havoc as it churned through Florida as a hurricane and then a tropical storm.

The remnants of the rare November hurricane could dump as much as 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain over the Blue Ridge Mountains, the National Hurricane Center said. Flash and urban flooding will be possible as the rain spreads into the eastern Ohio Valley, Mid-Atlantic and New England through Saturday.

Nicole had spent Thursday cutting across central Florida after making landfall as a hurricane early that morning near Vero Beach. The brunt of the damage was along the East Coast well north of there, in the Daytona Beach area. The storm made it to the Gulf of Mexico on Thursday evening before turning north.

The storm caused at least two deaths and sent homes along Florida's coast toppling into the Atlantic

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Ocean and damaged many others, including hotels and a row of high-rise condominiums. It was another devastating blow just weeks after Hurricane Ian came ashore on the Gulf Coast, killing more than 130 people and destroying thousands of homes.

Nicole was the first hurricane to hit the Bahamas since Hurricane Dorian, a Category 5 storm that devastated the archipelago in 2019. For storm-weary Floridians, it was only the first November hurricane to hit their shores since 1985 and only the third since recordkeeping began in 1853.

Nicole was sprawling, covering nearly the entire weather-weary state of Florida while also reaching into Georgia and the Carolinas before dawn on Thursday. Tropical storm-force winds extended as far as 450 miles (720 kilometers) from the center in some directions as Nicole turned northward over central Florida.

Although Nicole's winds did minimal damage, its storm surge was more destructive than might have been in the past because seas are rising as the planet's ice melts due to climate change, said Princeton University climate scientist Michael Oppenheimer. It adds up to higher coastal flooding, flowing deeper inland, and what used to be once-in-a-century events that will happen almost yearly in some places, he said.

"It is definitely part of a picture that is happening," Oppenheimer said. "It's going to happen elsewhere. It's going to happen all across the world."

Officials in Volusia County, northeast of Orlando, said Thursday evening that building inspectors had declared 24 hotels and condos in Daytona Beach Shores and New Smyrna Beach to be unsafe and ordered their evacuations. At least 25 single-family homes in Wilbur-by-the-Sea had been declared structurally unsafe by building inspectors and also were evacuated, county officials said.

"Structural damage along our coastline is unprecedented. We've never experienced anything like this before," County Manager George Recktenwald said during a news conference earlier, noting that it was not known when evacuated residents can safely return home.

A man and a woman were killed by electrocution when they touched downed power lines in the Orlando area, the Orange County Sheriff's Office said. Nicole also caused flooding well inland, as parts of the St. Johns River were at or above flood stage and some rivers in the Tampa Bay area also nearing flood levels, according to the National Weather Service.

All 67 Florida counties were under a state of emergency. President Joe Biden also approved an emergency declaration for the Seminole Tribe of Florida, ordering federal help for the tribal nation. Many Seminoles live on six reservations around the state.

Parts of Florida were devastated by Hurricane Ian, which struck as a Category 4 storm. Ian destroyed homes and damaged crops, including orange groves, across the state — damage that many are still dealing with — and sent a storm surge of up to 13 feet (4 meters) onshore, causing widespread destruction.

## **In Egypt, host of COP27, a small step toward green energy**

By SAMY MAGDY and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

BENBAN, Egypt (AP) — From a distance, the endless landscape of solar panels stretching toward the horizon can easily be mistaken for crops nearing harvest. But here in the desert in southern Egypt, workers have been cultivating another precious commodity: electricity.

After the sun strikes the photovoltaic solar panels, a thermal charge generates electricity that runs to four government-owned power stations distributing power across Egypt's national grid.

It's part of the country's push to increase renewable energy production. With near-perpetual sunshine and windy Red Sea coastlines, experts say Egypt is well-positioned to go green.

Yet it is also a developing country and like many others faces obstacles in making the switch. Much of its infrastructure depends on fossil fuels to power the nation of some 104 million people.

The solar panel farm — Egypt's flagship project named Benban, after a local village — puts it at the African continent's forefront when it comes to renewable energy. But questions remain over Egypt's long-term green energy strategy, and whether there are enough incentives for the cash-strapped government to supply 42% of the country's electricity from renewable resources by 2035, as it has announced.

Karim el-Gendy, an expert at Chatham House who specializes in urban sustainability and climate policy,

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says Egypt has failed to meet its goal of having 20% of its electricity sourced from renewables by 2022. The current figure is now closer to 10%, according to the International Energy Agency.

There's less demand for solar energy, partly due to the influx of natural gas, thanks to new discoveries located in Egypt's section of the Mediterranean Sea.

"We have seen less interest in the past couple of years in integrated renewable energy projects in Egypt, both in terms of solar, in the south, and wind," he said.

As host of this year's global climate summit, known as COP27 and now underway in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt has said it will pressure other nations to implement climate promises made at previous conferences. Egypt is not bound by any carbon emissions cap, but it has vowed to mitigate and curb its emission rises across key polluting sectors, such as electricity and transport.

Its use of natural gas has also helped, allowing Egypt to move away from burning coal and oil, much dirtier industries — but nevertheless, gas is still a fossil fuel.

The government has revealed few details on how it will implement or finance the 2035 vision. Foreign investment will likely play a big part, as countries in Europe look south for solar power. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has allotted \$10 billion of funding for over 150 projects across Egypt, with Benban claimed as one of its major successes.

The sprawling farm is designed to grow as demand for solar energy increases.

"It offers great potential for us and other investors," said Faisal Eissa, general manager for Egypt at Lekela, a Dutch company that has invested in Benban.

Egypt's New and Renewable Energy Authority claims Benban has already reduced the country's annual greenhouse emission output. But there is still a long way to go. In 2020, renewables accounted for 6% of Egypt's energy consumption, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, with petroleum products accounting for 36% and natural gas for 57%. Coal accounted for just 1%.

Egypt may also have less of an incentive to invest in renewables as it grapples with domestic challenges, including an economic crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, Russia's war in Ukraine and a years-long government crackdown on dissent. Last month, Cairo reached a preliminary deal with the International Monetary Fund that would allow access to a \$3 billion loan.

Effects of climate change are already being felt in the Nile River Delta, where rising seas have brought on creeping salt that eats away roots and cakes farms, devastating the livelihoods of Egyptian farmers.

The Arab world's most populous country accounts for only 0.6% of global carbon dioxide emissions. But it faces high levels of urban pollution. Most of the population lives in densely packed neighborhoods along the fertile banks of the Nile and its northern delta. Here, car fumes and mass transport running on diesel clog the streets. Egyptians' exposure to air pollution is, on average, 13 times higher than the World Health Organization's recommended guidelines. It was responsible for 90,559 premature deaths in 2019, according to statistics gathered by the United Nations.

The country's congested capital city of Cairo is the second top source of greenhouse gas emissions, after the giant offshore Zohr gas field, according to the Climate TRACE.

The remaining 90% of Egypt's land is uninhabitable desert. By better utilizing the vast expanse and coastlines, the Abu Dhabi-based International Renewable Energy Agency said the North African country could generate over half of its electricity from renewables by 2030.

It's a different way of viewing the country's sun-scorched landscape.

"People here have started to look at the sun as a source of power," said Ahmed Mustafa, who runs one of the area's many new logistics companies that work alongside Benban's developers and engineers, supplying them with equipment.

For the locals, the solar farm has been transformative. Thousands worked at the site when it was under construction, and many stayed as technicians and cleaners once it became fully functional.

Ultimately, the development of more wind and solar capabilities will come down to what makes business sense for the government, despite its expressions of good intent, according to el-Gendy.

"The need to expand its renewable sector all depends on Egypt's commercial interests," he said.

## Ukraine war's environmental toll to take years to clean up

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

DEMYDIV, Ukraine (AP) — Olga Lehan's home near the Irpin River was flooded when Ukraine destroyed a dam to prevent Russian forces from storming the capital of Kyiv just days into the war. Weeks later, the water from her tap turned brown from pollution.

"It was not safe to drink," she said of the tap water in her village of Demydiv, about 40 kilometers (24 miles) north of Kyiv on the tributary of the Dnieper River.

Visibly upset as she walked through her house, the 71-year-old pointed to where the high water in March had made her kitchen moldy, seeped into her well and ruined her garden.

Environmental damage from the 8-month-old war with Russia is mounting in more of the country, with experts warning of long-term consequences. Moscow's attacks on fuel depots have released toxins into the air and groundwater, threatening biodiversity, climate stability and the health of the population.

Because of the war, more than 6 million Ukrainians have limited or no access to clean water, and more than 280,000 hectares (nearly 692,000 acres) of forests have been destroyed or felled, according to the World Wildlife Fund. It has caused more than \$37 billion in environmental damage, according to the Audit Chamber, a nongovernmental group in the country.

"This pollution caused by the war will not go away. It will have to be solved by our descendants, to plant forests, or to clean the polluted rivers," said Dmytro Averin, an environmental expert with Zoi Environment Network, a non-profit organization based in Switzerland.

While the hardest-hit areas are in the more industrial eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, where fighting between government troops and pro-Russian separatists has been going on since 2014, he said, the damage has spread elsewhere.

"In addition to combat casualties, war is also hell on people's health, physically and mentally," said Rick Steiner, a U.S. environmental scientist who advised Lebanon's government on environmental issues stemming from a monthlong war in 2006 between that country and Israel.

The health impact from contaminated water and exposure to toxins unleashed by conflict "may take years to manifest," he said.

After the flood in Demydiv, residents said their tap water turned cloudy, tasted funny and left a film on pots and pans after cooking. The village was under Moscow's control until April, when Russian troops withdrew after failing to take the capital.

Ukrainian authorities then began bringing in fresh water, but the shipments stopped in October when the tanker truck broke down, forcing residents to again drink the dirty water, they said.

"We don't have another option. We don't have money to buy bottles," Iryna Stetcenko told The Associated Press. Her family has diarrhea and she's concerned about the health of her two teenagers, she said.

In May, the government took samples of the water, but the results have not been released, said Vyacheslav Muga, the former acting head of the local government's water service. The Food Safety and Consumer Protection agency in Kyiv has not yet responded to an AP request for the results.

Reports by other environmental groups, however, have shown the effects of the war.

In recent weeks, Russia has targeted key infrastructure like power plants and waterworks. But even in July, the U.N.'s environmental authority already was warning of significant damage to water infrastructure including pumping stations, purification plants and sewage facilities.

A soon-to-be-published paper by the Conflict and Environment Observatory, a British charity, and the Zoi Environment Network, found evidence of pollution at a pond after a Russian missile hit a fuel depot in the town of Kalynivka, about 30 kilometers (about 18 miles) southwest of Kyiv.

The pond, used for recreation as well as a fish farm, showed a high concentration of fuel oil and dead fish on the surface -- apparently from oil that had seeped into the water. A copy of the report was seen by the AP.

Nitrogen dioxide, which is released by burning fossil fuels, increased in areas west and southwest of

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Kyiv, according to an April report from REACH, a humanitarian research initiative that tracks information in areas affected by crisis, disaster and displacement. Direct exposure can cause skin irritation and burns, while chronic exposure can cause respiratory illness and harm vegetation, the report said.

Ukraine's agriculture sector, a key part of its economy, also has been affected. Fires have damaged crops and livestock, burned thousands of hectares of forest and prevented farmers from completing the harvest, said Serhiy Zibtsev, forestry professor at Ukraine's National University of Life and Environmental Sciences.

"The fires are so massive," he said, adding that farmers "lost everything they were harvesting for winter."

The government in Kyiv is providing assistance when it can.

In Demydiv and surrounding villages, flood victims were given the equivalent of \$540 each, said Liliia Kalashnikova, deputy head of the nearby town of Dymer. She said the government would do everything it could to prevent long-term environmental effects, but she didn't specify how.

Governments have an obligation to minimize environmental risks for the population, especially during war, said Doug Weir, research and policy director for the Conflict and Environment Observatory, a U.K.—based monitoring organization.

Some Ukrainians have already lost hope.

"I feel depressed — there's water all around and under my house," said Demydiv resident Tatiana Samoilenko. "I don't see much changing in the future."

## African nations push for funding to adapt to climate change

By WANJOHI KABUKRU Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Battling droughts, sandstorms, floods, wildfires, coastal erosion, cyclones and other weather events exacerbated by climate change, the African continent needs to adapt, but it needs funds to do so, leaders and negotiators from the continent said at the U.N. climate summit.

It's one of the main priorities for the African Group of Negotiators at the summit, known as COP27, currently underway in Egypt. Ephraim Shitima, the group's chair, said Africa is keen to see the outcomes of the negotiations translated into action for the continent where millions are facing climate-related disasters.

Shitima said the summit "should provide solutions to the millions of people in the continent," adding that Africa needs finance to adapt to extreme weather as well as "to facilitate just energy transition and boost renewable energy uptake."

A recent study released by the World Bank said that climate-related events will squeeze more than 132 million people into poverty worldwide with African countries losing between 10% and 15% of their GDP by 2050.

Africa produces only 4% of the world's planet warming emissions despite making up 17% of the world's population but is particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Climate finance for adapting to climate-related disasters and stopping them from getting worse remains a thorny issue at climate negotiations. A promise of \$100 billion a year in climate funding is yet to be fulfilled despite being two years past its deadline.

Speakers at the Africa Pavilion at the conference mulled over how to close the gap between the continent's financial needs on climate and what it actually receives, which is currently estimated by the African Development Bank to be between \$160 billion and \$340 billion by 2030.

Earlier this week Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne called for the taxing of fossil fuel firms profits to support developing countries and small island states to adapt to climate change and move toward clean energy.

"We know they make extortionate profits," he said. He added that countries would seek compensation for climate harms from major polluters, known as loss and damage in climate negotiations.

"We see this loss and damage funding as a form of solidarity of nations standing with each other and as form of funding to countries that are in distress," Brown said.

Seychelles President Wavel Ramkalawan said leaders in the Alliance of Small Island States are also seeking new finance facilities for loss and damage.

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"We are definitely pushing for that," Ramkalawan told The Associated Press.

The Least Developing Countries group, which represents some 46 low income nations have also put money for adaptation and loss and damage among their top demands.

"COP27 must keep adaptation at the center," said Madeleine Sarr, the chair of the LDC group, adding that the group "want to see how the shortfall in the \$100 billion per year promise will be made up."

## UN to seek out methane emitters with data from space

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Big emitters of the heat-trapping gas methane can expect a call from the United Nations starting next year, when the global body launches a new platform to combine existing systems for tracking the potent greenhouse gas from space.

The U.N. Environment Programme said Friday that the new Methane Alert and Response System — MARS for short — is intended to help companies act on major emissions sources but also provide data in a transparent and independent way.

It draws on satellite measurements performed by NASA and the European, German and Italian space agencies. Data from private satellite operators will also be incorporated in future.

"Each of these instruments give us a correct answer to a question that is slightly different, because each of them see different things," said Manfredi Caltagirone, head of the International Methane Emissions Observatory at UNEP. "So the only way you can have a correct picture is to connect them all together."

The data will be released 45 to 75 days after it is gathered, meaning companies will have sufficient time to fix the leaks by the time they become public.

"We think it is important not to just create a shaming tool, but to engage the operators and governments so they can act on the specific event," said Caltagirone.

Releasing the measurements on a U.N.-backed platform would also ensure that it is considered neutral and reliable, providing a standard that prevents companies from "shopping around" for data that makes them look best, he said.

There will be no way to force any emitters to take action though.

"We are realistic that certain companies and certain countries will be more cooperative than others," said Caltagirone. "But we can make sure this information is available to those who are interested in it."

The first data will be published in the second half of next year, focusing on large methane leaks. As it matures, the platform will incorporate less dramatic but equally significant sources of emissions such as livestock and rice farms.

Cutting methane emissions worldwide is key to the Paris climate accord's ambitious goal of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times. The United States, European Union and others last year launched a pledge to cut overall methane emissions worldwide by 30% by 2030.

## Politics of Israel and Iran ensnare 1st World Cup in Mideast

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Qatar may hope soccer fans ignore politics at the first World Cup in the Middle East. But Israel and Iran, foes locked in conflicts across the region, are bringing sensitive flashpoints to the tournament's doorstep.

Israel is not competing, but it sees the massive spectacle as a way to further integrate into the Middle East after establishing ties with two of Qatar's Gulf Arab neighbors. Thousands of Israeli tourists, long shunned, are expected to fly to the Qatari capital of Doha on unprecedented direct flights.

Iran, convulsed by protests that erupted over the Sept. 16 death of a 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Amini, in the custody of the country's morality police, has much at stake. The pitch could provide Iranian activists a vast audience for a protest. Or it could deliver Iran a victory on the world stage in a first-round match against its rival, the United States.

The tournament's location in the Persian Gulf emirate, just a short flight away from Israel and Iran, adds

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another layer of tension. Iranian and Israeli fans have rubbed shoulders at World Cups before, but never at such an event in their own backyard.

"It's always possible for Israeli and Iranian tensions to play out," said Mehrzad Boroujerdi, an Iran expert and college dean at Missouri University of Science and Technology. "One can expect hard-liners to try and make a statement."

For Israel, sporting tournaments have been pivotal in its quest for acceptance despite the unresolved conflict with the Palestinians.

In 2018, two years before the United Arab Emirates formalized relations with Israel, the Israeli national anthem played and the country's flag flew at a judo competition in Abu Dhabi. The scene of an Israeli Cabinet minister weeping as she sang "HaTikva" in the UAE capital induced whiplash after years of Arab and Iranian players refusing handshakes with Israelis and pulling out of matches.

The so-called Abraham Accords that Israel struck in 2020 with Bahrain, Morocco and the UAE marked a decisive turn in the region. The prospect of Israeli normalization with Qatar, which helps bankroll the Gaza Strip's militant Hamas rulers, may appear far-fetched after Doha shuttered an Israeli trade office there in 2008.

But the unprecedented influx of thousands of Israeli fans into the conservative Muslim country could advance Israel's ambitions to become just another country in the region, experts say.

In a breakthrough agreement announced Thursday, Qatar promised to allow soccer fans from Israel and the Palestinian territories to fly directly to Doha. That includes residents of the occupied West Bank and the blockaded Gaza Strip, who ordinarily wouldn't be able to travel out of Tel Aviv.

"The sign that Qatar is letting Israelis travel there for the World Cup is an indication that they're willing to soften their stance on Israel," said Emmanuel Navon, a senior fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies.

In another first, Israel will set up a temporary consular service for citizens at the tournament even though the countries have no diplomatic relations. To avoid any backlash from the Palestinians, Qatar stressed "its stance on normalization (with Israel) has not changed."

Many Israelis are seizing on the tournament as a rare opportunity to see an emirate otherwise off-limits.

"There's only this one time that we can go," said Gil Zilber, a fan from the Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Gan with World Cup tickets. "I hear they (Qatar) support Hamas but I'm not afraid."

Iran — and its soccer showdown with the U.S. on Nov. 29 — has also thrust the World Cup into combustible politics.

The protests sweeping Iran have morphed into one of the boldest challenges to the ruling clerics since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Security forces have sought to quash dissent, killing over 270 people, according to rights groups.

Iranian activists have demanded that FIFA, world soccer's global governing body, eject Iran from the World Cup, citing the country's violent crackdown and restrictions on female fans in soccer stadiums. Ukraine's top soccer club also made the request over Iran's military support for Russia in its war on Ukraine. Iran is still competing, however.

What will happen on the field — whether team members wear armbands in solidarity with the protests as they did during the 2009 Green Movement or shake hands with their American rivals as they did in 1998 — is a fraught question. Already, dissidents abroad have called for protests during the matches.

Some Iranian players have spoken out in support of the protest movement. In an Instagram post later deleted, Iran's international striker Sardar Azmoun said he would sacrifice his place in the tournament for "one hair on the heads of Iranian women." In an act of defiance, he did not celebrate when he scored at a match in Vienna in late September.

Former soccer stars have been more vocal. Two were arrested over their support for the protests.

"Soccer players in Iran have always sided with the people," said Alex Vatanka, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington.

They will be closely watched. When Iranian climber Elnaz Rekabi competed in South Korea without wear-

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ing her country's mandatory headscarf, she became a lightning rod of the protest movement. Some expect a similar international incident at the World Cup. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi tasked his foreign minister last week with "predicting and preventing possible problems," state-run IRNA news agency reported.

"Considering the geographical proximity to Iran and the fact that exposing the regime has become so important, we will likely see Iranians and expats utilizing the World Cup as a spectacle to voice their protest," Boroujerdi said.

Iran initially sought to cash in on that proximity — promoting its island hotels to World Cup fans — but the plans quickly fell apart. Meanwhile, foreigners have been arrested amid the protests. A Spanish hiker trekking from Madrid to the World Cup disappeared after crossing into Iran.

"No one is willing to visit Iran in the current situation," Tehran-based tour agent Omid Gholamhosseini said.

The country's economic crisis has also made it difficult for Iranian fans to afford the trip, he added.

Despite the looming problems, some believe the World Cup can still offer an escape from hard realities — some sense of togetherness and collective joy — even if just for a moment.

"It's a great feeling," said Dayan, a 38-year-old fan from northern Iran going to Qatar. He gave only his first name, fearing reprisals for speaking to a foreign journalist. "We, as Iranians, can be part of the celebration without any distance to the outside world."

## **EXPLAINER: Islam in Qatar explained ahead of FIFA World Cup**

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Qatar is a Muslim nation, with laws, customs and practices rooted in Islam. The country is neither as liberal as Dubai in the United Arab Emirates nor as conservative as parts of Saudi Arabia. Most of its citizens are Sunni Muslim.

Qatar's most powerful clan originates from the Arabian Peninsula's landlocked interior, where the Wahhabi ideology was born. Its national mosque is named after the 18th century religious figure, Mohammed Ibn Abdul-Wahhab, who spurred the ultraconservative interpretation of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism.

Visitors to this mosque and others in Qatar are asked to dress conservatively, with men covering their knees and women preferably donning loose-flowing robes known as abayas and headscarves.

Unlike Saudi Arabia, where adherence to Wahhabism led to strict segregation of unmarried men and women, banned women from driving and kept concerts, cinemas and even yoga off-limits for decades, Qatar has long sponsored the arts, allowed women to participate in high levels of governance and encouraged tourists to feel at ease in the country. It also permits the sale of alcohol in licensed hotels and bars.

As fans travel to Qatar for the FIFA World Cup this year, here's a look at how Islam is practiced in the country:

### **ISLAM IN QATAR**

Mosques in Qatar amplify the Muslim call to prayer five times a day on loudspeakers, including at dawn and dusk.

It is common to hear Muslims use phrases such as "alhamdulillah", which means "praise be to God" or "thank God," and "Inshallah," which means "if God wills it." The traditional Arabic Muslim greeting of "as-salamu alaikum," means "peace be upon you." References to God, such "ya Allah" and "Allahu akhbar," can be heard in times of tribulation or celebration.

Muslims believe God revealed the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad. He is not only considered part of a long line of major prophets, including Moses and Jesus, but is also considered the last prophet in Islam.

Islam is a monotheistic religion with belief in only one God. Muslims believe the Quran is a continuation of the core values of the Torah and Bible.

Qatar's laws are rooted in Islamic Shariah law, but also includes civil laws.

### **TABOOS IN QATAR**

Most Qatari women wear the modest head covering or headscarf, known as hijab, and the long black robes known as abayas. Qatari men dress in traditional long, loose white garments known as a "thoub" — pronounced "thuwb."

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In general, tourists are expected to dress in a way that is sensitive to Qatar's norms, including avoiding public displays of affection such as kissing, even between married couples. Transparent clothing and skin-baring is reserved strictly for pools and beaches.

Some Muslim women also prefer not to shake hands with men to whom they are not directly related. In greetings, it is customary to allow women to initiate handshakes if they choose.

While alcohol is permitted at hotel restaurants and bars, it is illegal to consume it in general public spaces. Though it might be somewhat tolerated during the World Cup, it is otherwise not allowed to be openly drunk in public. At the World Cup, alcohol will be available in certain public "designated areas".

Drugs are also strictly prohibited in Qatar, as is homosexuality and crossdressing. World Cup organizers have told The Associated Press that anyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, can come "without fear of any sort of repercussions."

## TOLERANCE FOR OTHER RELIGIONS

Qatar's laws punish "offending" Islam or any of its rites or beliefs, as well as committing blasphemy against Islam, Christianity or Judaism.

The circulation of texts that provoke religious strife or contain material that defames one of these three religions is a punishable offense. The government closely monitors and censors websites, newspapers, magazines and books if they display content deemed as derogatory of Islamic values.

Authorities generally permit various faiths to practice privately, but proselytizing for any religion other than Islam may result in a prison sentence. Hotels and stores, however, display Christmas trees and decorations in December.

The only religions registered in Qatar to have their own places of worship are Islam and Christianity, according to the U.S. State Department.

## Democrats pad narrow leads in Arizona Senate, governor races

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Democrats padded their narrow leads in key Arizona contests on Thursday, but the races for U.S. Senate and governor were still too early to call with about a fifth of the total ballots left to be counted.

Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly led Republican Blake Masters by 5.6 percentage points, while Democrat Katie Hobbs had a much tighter lead of 1.4 points against Republican Kari Lake in the governor's race. Democrats also led in the races for secretary of state and attorney general.

Election officials in Maricopa County, which includes metro Phoenix and more than 60% of voters, expected to begin reporting results Friday from a crucial group of ballots — nearly 300,000 mail ballots that were returned on Election Day. That group has swung wildly in recent election cycles, from strongly Democratic in the 2018 midterms to strongly Republican in 2020.

The races will hinge on whether those late-counted ballots look more like 2018 or 2020.

The answer will determine who wins extremely tight races for U.S. Senate and House, as well as governor, secretary of state and attorney general. At stake are control of Congress and the rules for the 2024 presidential election in a crucial battleground state.

In the House, three-term Democratic Rep. Tom O'Halleran lost his race Thursday to Republican Eli Crane, a businessman and former Navy SEAL, after his rural district was redrawn to become significantly more conservative. Democrats had hoped O'Halleran's long history in the area and his background as a retired cop could help him survive.

Former President Donald Trump's lies about the 2020 election have rejiggered voting patterns across the country and especially in Arizona, which has played a starring role in conspiracy theories suggesting the outcome was tainted. That makes it even more complicated for news organizations to declare winners because historical data doesn't necessarily apply.

It could take several days before it's clear who won some of the closer contests, as was the case in the 2018 and 2020 elections. About 500,000 ballots remained uncounted, most of them in metro Phoenix and

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Tucson.

Maricopa County officials emphasized that this year's process was no different than in previous years. "This is how things work in Arizona and have for decades," said Bill Gates, the Republican chair of the county board of supervisors. He said staff are working 14 to 18 hours a day and will continue through the weekend.

"We are doing what we can and still maintaining accuracy," Gates said.

Protracted vote counts have for years been a staple of elections in Arizona, where the overwhelming majority of people vote with mail ballots and many wait until the last minute to return them. But as Arizona has morphed from a GOP stronghold to a competitive battleground, the delays have increasingly become a source of national anxiety for partisans on both sides.

Processing mail ballots is time-consuming because officials have to verify that the voters didn't vote in person and that the signatures on their ballot envelopes match those on file. Maricopa County officials said they received a record number of mail ballots returned on Election Day.

With Republicans still in the hunt, it remained unclear whether the stronger-than-expected showing for Democrats in much of the U.S. would extend to Arizona.

Republicans were antsy for more results, believing the remaining ballots strongly favor them.

The GOP nominated a slate of candidates who earned Trump's endorsement after falsely claiming his loss to President Joe Biden was tainted. Lake claimed Thursday morning that Maricopa County officials are "slow rolling" the release of results to make it look like Democrats are doing better than they actually are.

"We're going to win this and there's not a darn thing they can do about it, but they're trying to pour cold water on this movement," Lake told conservative radio host Charlie Kirk. "This movement is on fire, and no amount of water is going to put that fire out. We the people are taking our government back."

Gates pushed back on Lake's accusations of a purposely slow count and said ballots were counted in the order in which they came in.

"We are absolutely not slow rolling it," he said. "And if their team had been paying attention before the election, they would've heard us talking about this over and over again, that we were not going to have results on election night, that it would take days."

Lake has pledged 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.

"This election will be determined by the voters, not by the volume at which an unhinged former television reporter can shout conspiracy theories," Hobbs wrote on Twitter.

Officials in Maricopa County said they were able to count 17,000 ballots cast in person on Election Day that were affected by a printing mishap. The printer problem at 70 of 223 vote centers prevented on-site vote-counters from reading those ballots, a problem that slowed voting in some locations and infuriated Republicans who were counting on strong Election Day turnout.

Republicans who control the three-member board of supervisors in southeastern Arizona's GOP-heavy Cochise County cited the problem in Maricopa County as they urged the state Supreme Court to let them hand-count all the ballots cast in the election. They're appealing a decision that blocked them from going beyond the traditional hand-count of a small sample of ballots, which is meant to test the accuracy of tabulation machines.

Election and technology experts note that the machines are tested, certified and retested and are not only faster but much more accurate than counting by hand, which can be prone to errors.

## **Pelosi faces uncertain future weeks after attack on husband**

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The morning after the midterm election, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi slipped on a sterling silver whistle given to her by her husband, who was attacked last month by an intruder at their

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San Francisco home.

The whistle was similar to those worn by coaches or drill sergeants, and she wore it at her office after a long night of watching election returns. Staff members were assembled for a pizza party lunch in the same conference room where she has led her party through some of the most tumultuous times at the U.S. Capitol.

She blew the whistle as she entered, and the staff cheered. With the races close and many votes still being counted, it was time for the waiting to begin. The final results will determine which party controls the House — and Pelosi's own future.

The Democratic leader, whose plans are uncertain, has arrived at a crossroads: The nation's first, and only, female speaker could be forced to relinquish the gavel if Republicans win majority control, a potential defeat coming just weeks after the chilling assault that fractured her husband's skull.

This could be the end of Pelosi's long tenure in Congress. Or not.

Many expect her to retire rather than lead Democrats in a shrunken minority. The attack on her husband, Paul, made her exit seem even more likely. He was assaulted less than two weeks before the election, when a man invaded their home searching for his wife.

And yet after rising to become perhaps the most consequential House speaker in decades, Pelosi is not one to simply step aside. When asked ahead of the election if she had decided to stay or go, she said only that the attack on her spouse of nearly 60 years would be a factor.

"I have to say my decision will be affected about what happened," Pelosi said on CNN.

The response became something of a Rorschach test on Capitol Hill: Some believe Pelosi will retire to spend time with her family — she and her husband are both 82. Others sensed her driven determination to stay on the job.

A cohort of younger Democratic lawmakers, some who have spent years in Congress, are waiting for Pelosi and other top House leaders to pass the baton. She had once said this would be her last term in leadership, but that was four years ago, and she no longer mentions it.

"That's a conversation for another day," Pelosi said on election night on the PBS "NewsHour."

Pelosi's rise instantly established her place in history — not only as the first female speaker, but as the only speaker in 70 years to have won the office twice, in 2007 and again in 2019.

But it's what Pelosi did with the gavel — steering the Affordable Care Act into law with Barack Obama and twice impeaching Donald Trump — that seals her legacy as one of the strongest political figures in America.

The day after the election, she arrived in Egypt for the international COP-27 climate change conference as she works to project U.S. influence abroad. One of her first pieces of legislation as a new lawmaker 35 years ago was climate-related.

For years, Pelosi has been ridiculed by Republicans, her image lampooned more than any other in endless GOP campaign ads.

Top Republicans, including former President Donald Trump, downplayed the attack on her husband and spread misinformation about it. A vulgar fringe theory quickly made its way into the mainstream at a time of rising threats against elected officials.

"A lot of people would wither under the pressure that she's under," said Douglas Brinkley, a professor of history at Rice University.

Brinkley said it would be sad if Pelosi's career ended after "such a grotesque moment." But he compared her to other powerful figures, including Coretta Scott King, who continued in public service after the assassination of her husband, Martin Luther King Jr.

"I see that spirit in her, that no-quit — the grit," Brinkley added, saying it reminded him of Theodore Roosevelt.

"She takes slings and arrows by the second, from all different corners, but she constantly keeps a kind of political courage, personal integrity, and no-nonsense demeanor about her," he said. "She's legendary."

It's possible that Pelosi will relinquish the gavel but stay in office for some time. After easily winning

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another two-year term representing her California district, she is eligible to be sworn in with the rest of the new Congress on Jan. 3.

She has called serving as the representative from San Francisco her "greatest honor" since first being elected to public office in 1987.

Paul Pelosi was struck in the head with a hammer, suffering the skull fracture and other injuries, authorities said. He was released after nearly a week in the hospital following successful surgery. His wife has said that his recovery will be "a long haul."

The intruder, 42-year-old David DePape, broke into the couple's home demanding "Where is Nancy?" She was in Washington at the time. DePape has been charged with attempted murder.

DePape told police he wanted to talk to the speaker and would "break her kneecaps" if she didn't satisfactorily answer his questions. His idea was for Pelosi to be wheeled into Congress to show other Democrats there were "consequences" to their actions. He is being held without bail.

The attack carried echoes of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol when Trump told supporters to "fight like hell" for his presidency on false claims that the 2020 election was rigged.

A mob loyal to Trump stormed the Capitol trying to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden's victory. Some called "Where's Nancy?" as they roamed the halls.

Asked on CNN about those who made light of the attack on her husband, Pelosi said: "It's really sad for the country that people of that high visibility would separate themselves from the facts and the truth in such a blatant way."

But she also said that this is a time for healing — for her, the Congress and the country.

"This institution is a great institution," Pelosi said, recalling her father, a former congressman and mayor, teaching her about the Capitol as a young girl.

A portrait of Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, hangs on the wall of the conference room of her Capitol office.

"To see the assault on Jan. 6 on this Capitol was something that was so devastating and traumatic for many of us," she said, noting the echoes in the attack on her husband. "So I think it's really important for us to find a way to restore unity in the Congress of the United States."

## Watches, daggers and cricket ice cream: Asian summit treats

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A custom wristwatch from Cambodian leader Hun Sen at the ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh, a foot-long dagger at the G-20 meetings in Bali, and cricket ice cream and Thai noodles with worm sauce at the APEC talks in Bangkok.

World leaders have a surfeit of swag and surprises awaiting them as they attend back-to-back-to-back summits in Asia starting this week.

Hun Sen raised eyebrows a few weeks ago when he announced that he would be having special-edition watches made for U.S. President Joe Biden and other leaders attending the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit, which runs through the weekend. Many speculated the former mid-level Khmer Rouge commander would feature his own mug on the timepiece in the narcissistic vein of autocratic leaders in the past, like Iraq's Saddam Hussein or Libya's Muammar Gaddafi.

But the final product, which Hun Sen said was designed and made in Cambodia, is a sleek silver timepiece with coppery-gold hands and a leather strap, with "ASEAN Cambodia 2022" imprinted on its face.

Hun Sen did not say what the gift was worth as he unveiled it this week on his Facebook page, but did say he'd be wearing it himself at all three summits — foregoing one of the rare, designer wristwatches in his collection whose \$1 million-plus price tags have been a source of grumbling in impoverished Cambodia.

In addition to Biden, many other world leaders who will be receiving the Cambodian watch, including Australia's Anthony Albanese, Canada's Justin Trudeau and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, will travel from Phnom Penh next to the Indonesian island of Bali where there are some traditional trinkets in store for them at the Group of 20 summit.

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G-20 organizers this year say the leaders, also expected to include China's Xi Jinping, will be asked to wear colorful shirts made of the traditional Balinese woven fabric endek, similar to those that Indonesia gave out at the 2013 APEC meetings they hosted in which the country revived the on-again, off-again summit tradition of a group photo in what some have dubbed "silly shirts."

The tradition was started in 1993 by then-President Bill Clinton, who gave out leather bomber jackets as a memento to leaders in attendance as a way to lighten the mood of the serious economic talks.

In Indonesia, all 120 member and non-member states' representatives attending will also be given shawls made from another Balinese fabric known as gringsing, typically red, off-white and black woven in a geometric pattern.

Leaders will also receive a traditional kris dagger, a distinctive asymmetrical knife usually between 11 and 14 inches long with a wavy blade.

According to organizers, each dagger takes between one and six months to make, and while used as combat weapons in the past they are today typically worn at special ceremonies.

There were no "silly shirts" last year at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meetings, held virtually due to the pandemic, with host New Zealand instead providing merino wool scarves for the men and capes for the women.

It looks like Thailand doesn't plan on reviving the shirts this year at the upcoming APEC summit in Bangkok. Instead, organizers say they will be giving leaders silk neckties and shawls, as well as handkerchiefs and face masks.

There is culinary excitement, however, as the country, renowned for its cuisine, brings in Thai food startups selected from a competition to highlight sustainability under a concept dubbed "plate to planet."

Biden isn't expected to be on hand for the APEC meetings, but Vice President Kamala Harris, Xi and others will be given the opportunity to try out dishes like carb-free ramen noodles made from egg white protein, milk-free ice cream with kale and passion fruit, low-sodium Thai noodles with a sauce made from sandworms, and ice cream made from the protein from crickets, government spokesman Anucha Bura-pachaisri said.

Celebrity chef Chumpol Chaengprai is preparing the gala dinner to cap the event, under the concept of "sustainable Thai gastronomy." Its menu has not yet been announced.

## **Dubbed torture, ID policies leave transgender people sterile**

By KRISTEN GELINEAU Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — She was the only woman soldier working in the guard room, surrounded by men who harassed and frightened her after she said she was transgender. She tried to ignore them as they opened up their shirts and pretended to rape each other, while beckoning her to join them.

And then one day, as Lune Loh stood under the searing Singaporean sun, one of those men took his rifle and tried to shove it between her legs.

She was a woman. She was not supposed to be here, because Singapore's compulsory, two-year military service is required only for 18-year-old men. But under Singapore law, she was still considered a man, because she had not undergone surgery that would render her sterile.

Across the world, scores of countries still require transgender people to submit to such surgeries before their genders are legally recognized, a practice international human rights bodies have condemned as torture. These policies have left untold numbers of transgender people with an agonizing choice between their fertility and their identity.

For those who opt against surgery, the policies' consequences can be severe, limiting their prospects for jobs, housing, marriage and safe passage through the world. Since their identification documents list their genders as the opposite of how they present in public, they can easily be outed, leading to everything from bureaucratic hassles to life-threatening confrontations.

For some, the fear of being outed is so intense that they withdraw from the world. Loh, however, has taken the opposite approach, becoming an unusually visible transgender rights activist in Singapore, a

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rigidly controlled city-state that only announced it would decriminalize sex between men in August.

Now 25, Loh is still healing from the wounds of her military past. And she finds herself grappling with questions about her future, like whether any company will ever employ her, or whether she will ever be able to have a biological child.

And so, though speaking out carries risk, silence for Loh is not an option.

"People are not getting housing, people are not getting jobs ... that's basically what we're fighting for," she says. "We just want to help people survive another day, another month, another year."

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At the heart of the debate over gender recognition laws is the importance of identity.

The legal documents that define our identity are crucial to navigating life and the world, from getting a bank loan to crossing a border. In much of the world, changing gender markers on identification documents remains impossible. Other countries allow such changes, but often with draconian prerequisites including sterilization, psychiatric interventions, and — for any married person — mandatory divorce.

"There's a lot of requirements in most of these laws imposed on trans people which are all violating the basic human rights — the right to privacy, the right to bodily integrity, the right to non-discrimination, the right to identity," says Julia Ehrt, executive director of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, or ILGA World.

Surgery makes some transgender people feel more comfortable in their bodies, but others consider it medically unnecessary, invasive and painful or prohibitively expensive. Some people simply cannot have it for medical reasons.

Gender-confirmation surgery can involve a variety of procedures that alter a person's sexual characteristics, some of which lead to permanent sterility. While the law in some countries explicitly spells out that sterilization must be an outcome for legal gender recognition, in most cases the ultimate intentions behind these policies are unclear and likely varied. But whether rendering transgender people sterile is the goal of these mandates, it's generally the result.

In the U.S., 13 states and territories have a surgical requirement to update gender markers on birth certificates, and four require it for updating driver's licenses, according to Olivia Hunt, policy director for the National Center for Transgender Equality. The states do not clarify what procedures they will accept.

Even after surgery, the process of obtaining a legal gender change can be convoluted and humiliating. In Australia, two states require two separate examinations of post-surgery genitalia by doctors, who must sign statutory declarations confirming "a surgical procedure involving the alteration of a person's reproductive organs." Any false statement by the doctor, the New South Wales state form warns, could result in two years' imprisonment.

"We don't even force sex offenders to be sterilized in this country, but you're forcing transgender people just to get a birth certificate? Come on," says Kirsti Miller, a New South Wales woman who underwent gender-confirmation surgery in 2006, and was forced to divorce her childhood sweetheart. New South Wales removed the divorce mandate in 2018.

In Singapore, the surgery requirement has affected even children, says Coen Teo, executive director of TransBefrienders, a non-profit supporting transgender youth.

Singaporeans under 21 must get parental consent to undergo gender-confirmation surgery, a landmine for transgender children reluctant to tell their conservative families about their transition. But if they don't, they are required at many schools to use bathrooms and wear uniforms that match the gender marker on their national identity card, causing anguish.

"They don't feel themselves in school, so they can't concentrate in school, so a lot of them don't do well. And I'm speaking from experience," says Teo, a transgender man.

Most gender-confirmation procedures are not offered in Singapore, forcing several teens at TransBefrienders to travel overseas and spend possibly tens of thousands of dollars.

"They want to get back in school, they want to get back their life," Teo says. "It's a huge hurdle for them."

In a statement to The Associated Press, the Ministry of Home Affairs said the information on Singaporeans' national identity cards reflects a person's "sex," which the government determines based on the

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person's "biological and physical attributes." To change that marker requires "proof of surgery, and the complete alteration of one's physical reproductive attributes," the ministry said.

"This allows the government to implement policies and laws based on sex in a consistent manner," the ministry said.

Human rights watchdogs have spent years demanding an end to policies like these. In a 2013 report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture urged governments to outlaw forced or coerced sterilization in all circumstances. The following year, seven U.N. agencies, including the World Health Organization, said gender recognition policies requiring sterilization "run counter to respect for bodily integrity, self-determination and human dignity."

Many countries have been slow to respond. In 2019, Japan's Supreme Court upheld as constitutional the country's gender recognition law that requires surgical sterilization.

Some governments, however, have made changes. In 2012, Argentina became the first country to grant legal gender recognition based entirely on self-determination. In 2018, Sweden became the first country to financially compensate transgender people who were sterilized under its old policy.

Germany is considering similar compensation. Around 10,000 transgender Germans were sterilized under the country's former policy, according to advocacy group Bundesverband Trans(asterisk).

Cathrin Ramelow, a 58-year-old German transgender woman, is fighting for compensation and an apology from the government. In 2000, she underwent surgical sterilization, welcoming the chance to end her double life. But afterwards, she says, she agonized over what she had lost.

"You know there's something wrong with you and you can't have children anymore," she says. "I cried some days."

Years later, Loh would make the opposite choice. But she found that it, too, came with a steep cost.

Tucked against the wall of a spare room in Loh's apartment is the camouflage backpack she carried during her two years of enforced military service. One recent afternoon, she plunges a slender arm inside it and pulls out her old helmet, staring at it briefly before shoving it away.

They are artifacts of a time she likens to torture. She remains vanishingly thin from the eating disorder she developed during her service, an attempt to counter the masculinization of her body from the intense physical drills.

Loh is a poet with a wide grin, brainy and sensitive, eager to chat about philosophy, politics, art and music. But when she talks about her army days, her easy laugh turns nervous and her face goes dark.

She was raised as a boy by a protective mother and a conservative, stern father she grew to fear. Though he socialized Loh to be masculine, she knew early on that her body did not match who she was. Her first realization — or "flash point" — that something was off came one night at age 8, when she caught her distorted reflection in a window and suddenly imagined herself with long hair.

More flashpoints would follow until at 17, she read an article about transgender people coming out late in life. That was, she says, the moment her "egg cracked": How much longer will you wait, she asked herself, before you live the life you want?

She would wait one more year, until after her father had left the family. Her mother, Stella Wong, would embrace Buddhism, and ultimately Loh's identity.

"Everything is impermanent, whether you are male or female," says Wong, whose normally cheerful manner morphs into rage when strangers stare at her daughter. "In Buddhism, gender is nothing."

Yet by the time Loh began transitioning, she had been conscripted under Singapore's National Service requirement.

The Ministry of Defense's public position on transgender people — reiterated in a statement to the AP — is simply: "Those who are legally declared female will not be required to serve."

There are backdoor ways to sometimes get an exemption, but they are unofficial and often unknown, as with Loh. And she did not want to undergo sterilizing surgery because her conservative upbringing left her wanting her own biological children — or at least the potential for them.

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"Does the government not want trans people to have children of their own?" she asks.

And so, riddled with dread, she started her service, steeling herself as the silky black hair she had begun growing out was summarily shaved off.

The other soldiers made sexual comments and asked what color underwear she was wearing. One man repeatedly asked for sex in messages that left her so frightened, he began haunting her nightmares.

She despised combat training, having to roll around in the jungle with the men. She cried afterwards in her mother's arms. Panic attacks set in. She became suicidal.

Poetry was a lifeline. In between exercises, she lay in her bunk, typing poems into her phone. After her shifts, she put on makeup and a wig and went to open mic nights around the city that drew members of the LGBTQ community.

One poem she wrote then, "Moonface," detailed her exhaustion over her warring identities, "that whiplash whenever you take off the wig."

"I just felt like the faces of the moon. Sometimes you're showing half your face," she says.

She survived her service and entered university, where she fully socially transitioned. But her legal status as male continued to cause problems, forcing her to live, uncomfortably, on the male corridor of her dormitory. She was arrested for participating in a protest for transgender rights without a permit outside the Ministry of Education building, and given a year's probation.

Meanwhile, Loh found herself fretting about her future in ways most early-20-somethings don't have to. She wanted to start hormone replacement therapy, but worried it would permanently affect her fertility. And she could not freeze her sperm for non-medical reasons because "social freezing" is not allowed in Singapore.

Loh researched fertility clinics overseas, but became discouraged by the cost and the complexities of accessing her gametes, or reproductive cells, from Singapore. She began to rage at the limitations placed upon her life.

"I have no avenue to fall back on," Loh says. "I have to go to another country to possibly pay more to preserve my gametes. Why do I have to go through all that? Why do I have to risk my own body?"

Loh had to weigh more than the risk to her fertility. She had to weigh the risk a mismatched ID card could pose to her life.

In 2019, Loh and her family travelled to neighboring Malaysia for a day of shopping. Loh handed the Malaysian immigration officer her passport, which lists her gender as male.

The officer stared at Loh, and when she spoke, her voice was steely. "You should go cut your hair," she snapped.

The words sent a chill through Loh. She knew that in Malaysia, simply being transgender is considered a crime. She had read stories about transgender people there being mobbed and killed.

She hurried across the border. Now, she makes sure to sweep her long hair back at checkpoints.

"I'm terrified of traveling now partially because of that," she says. "I still think about it to this day."

Given the prevalence of violence against transgender people, mismatched IDs can present a grave danger while traveling, says Ehrt of ILGA World.

"When you're in a position of vulnerability such as you are at a checkpoint, or you need to cross a border, then of course it's aggravated when your ID doesn't match," Ehrt says. "If a trans person of color has a nonmatching ID card and wants to cross a border, that is a catastrophe."

A 2015 survey of nearly 28,000 transgender people in the U.S. found that almost a third of those who presented a mismatched ID had endured negative experiences, including harassment and assault, according to the National Center for Transgender Equality, which conducted the study.

For a few, the fear of discrimination is so intense that they are reluctant to leave not only their country but even their house.

Jojo, a 32-year-old transgender woman, has spent years largely confined to her parents' Singapore home. She spoke on condition that her full name not be used to avoid harassment.

"The thought of being in situations where I need to present the identity card and having confrontations

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terrifies me," she said by e-mail.

She steps outside only occasionally for short walks, and survives on the support of her financially strapped parents. She has no current plans to undergo surgery, and thus no prospect of obtaining an identity card that matches how she looks. She hopes one day the surgery requirement will be replaced with something less invasive, such as requiring a person to live for two years in their preferred gender.

Loh doesn't see that happening any time soon.

"I feel like the earth will cook us alive faster than we can get legal gender recognition," Loh says. "It's an uphill battle and I'm already exhausted."

For those whose identities are denied by the state, the result can be financial ruin.

This is particularly true in Singapore, where government benefits are designed around heterosexual families, especially when it comes to finding a home. Eighty percent of Singaporeans live in government-subsidized housing. The catch: If you're under 35, you can only get that housing if you're married. And same-sex marriage remains banned.

"The reality is that the gender marker in Singapore is something that gives you access to different things and different resources," says Loh. "Every single policy that benefits people is tied to getting a heterosexual arrangement."

At 25, Mick Yang wonders how much longer he will have to wait before he can afford to move out of his parents' home. As a transgender man who opted against sterilizing surgery, the state still considers him a woman. So he cannot get married and thus cannot access subsidized housing for at least another decade.

The policy also means his chances of having a biological child are slim, as only married women are allowed to use frozen eggs to conceive.

"I don't like the idea of not even having that option," says Yang. "As I get older and more of my peers move into that life stage, then I think it gets more aggravating and agonizing to feel that lack of freedom and rights."

Conversations with colleagues excited about their new subsidized apartments leave him feeling gutted.

"I've contributed just as much to this place and care as much and yet I cannot etch out a home for myself or any conceivable future family," he says.

Having a mismatched ID can also limit transgender people's employment prospects.

Although Teo of TransBefrienders passed the interview for an aviation training role, he was rejected after he produced his ID, which outed him as transgender. His would-be employers, he says, told him the conservative Ministry of Education might reject his application to be a trainer because his appearance clashes with his gender marker.

It all becomes a frustrating loop: Because finding work is difficult, transgender people tend to be less affluent, which means many can't afford unsubsidized housing, let alone the surgery for a legal gender change.

Among the many fears Loh has about her future, finding a job tops the list. "Will they reject me because I'm trans?" she wonders.

Loh's mother worries about how her daughter will navigate a future in which so many options have already been ripped away.

"But I have no choice," Wong says. "Because in Singapore, we abide by the rules. Me too."

Loh finds solace in the rare spots on the island that feel cocooned from the rules. One recent evening, that spot is a softly lit loft where poets have gathered for an open mic night.

Loh laughs and embraces her friends, sliding past a bar lined with more books than bottles of booze. The crowd is a mix of genders, races and sexual orientations.

Here, there is no judgement, no stares, no ID cards required. Loh revels in the freedom to be herself. "This is literally my space," she says.

She sifts through her phone, debating which poem to perform, ultimately selecting one about her hard-won identity as a woman.

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Soon it's her turn at the microphone. The audience listens, rapt, snapping their fingers in support as she lays bare her pain and perseverance.

The applause washes over her. She smiles as she is seen, by her peers if not her government, for exactly who she is: A woman.

## Asian stocks surge after lower US inflation eases rate fears

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stock markets surged Friday after U.S. inflation eased by more than expected, spurring hopes the Federal Reserve might scale down plans for more interest rate hikes.

Hong Kong's market benchmark jumped 5.4%. Seoul and Sydney rose almost 3%. Shanghai and Tokyo also advanced. Oil prices edged higher.

Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index soared 5.5% on Thursday for its best day in 2 1/2 years after the government reported consumer prices rose 7.7% over a year ago in October. That was lower than the 8% expected by economists and the fourth month of decline.

The announcement "drove a 'more dovish' calibration of interest rate expectations," said Yeap Jun Rong of IG in a report.

The Fed and central banks in Europe and Asia are raising rates to cool inflation that is at multi-decade highs. Investors worry they might tip the global economy into recession. They hope lower inflation might prompt the Fed to ease off plans for more increases.

Forecasters warned Thursday it was too early to be certain prices are under control. Fed officials have said rates might have to stay elevated for some time.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index soared to 16,948.96 and the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo gained 2.7% to 28,186.34.

The Shanghai Composite Index added 1.2% to 3,073.36 after the ruling Communist Party promised to alter quarantine and other anti-virus tactics to reduce the cost of China's severe "zero-COVID" strategy that has disrupted the economy.

The Kospi in Seoul rose 2.8% to 2,471.10 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 was 2.4% higher at 7,128.40. New Zealand, Singapore and Jakarta gained while Bangkok declined.

On Wall Street, the S&P gained to 3,956.37, propelled by big gains for tech heavyweights. Amazon soared 12.2%, Apple rose 8.9% and Microsoft climbed 8.2%.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 3.7%, or more than 1,200 points, to 33,715.37.

The Nasdaq composite, dominated by tech stocks, shot up 7.4% to 11,114.15 for its best day since March 2020, when Wall Street was rebounding from a crash at the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

Investors were reassured that U.S. inflation was declining from its June peak of 9.1%, though forecasters said the Fed's campaign to cool price rises was far from over.

Traders expect the Fed to raise its benchmark lending rate in December but by a smaller margin of half a percent following four increases of 0.75 percentage points, triple its usual margin. That benchmark stands at a range of 3.75% to 4%, up from close to zero in March.

The Fed is trying to slow economic activity to reduce pressure for prices to rise.

The latest figures are a sign the Fed is "on the right path," but it will face "a lot of variables" over the next few quarters, said Edward Moya of Oanda in a report. He said the benchmark rate could be raised to 5% and "if inflation proves to be stickier, it could be as high as 5.50%."

Core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy prices and is more closely watched by the Fed, was 6.3% over a year earlier, down from September's 6.6% and below the consensus forecast of 6.5%. Core prices rose 0.3% month on month, half of September's 0.6% gain.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury, which helps set rates for mortgages and other loans, fell to 3.82% from 4.15%. The two-year yield, which more closely follows expectations for Fed action, fell to 4.32% from 4.62% and was on pace for its sharpest fall since 2008.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude gained 29 cents to \$86.76 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose 64 cents to \$86.47 on Thursday. Brent crude, the

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price basis for international oil trading, advanced 27 cents to \$93.94 per barrel in London.

The dollar rose to 142.08 yen from Thursday's 141.83 yen. The euro edged up to \$1.0186 from \$1.0180.

## US judge in Texas strikes down Biden loan-forgiveness plan

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

A U.S. judge in Texas on Thursday blocked President Joe Biden's plan to provide millions of borrowers with up to \$20,000 apiece in federal student-loan forgiveness — a program that was already on hold as a federal appeals court in St. Louis considers a separate lawsuit by six states challenging it.

District Court Judge Mark Pittman, an appointee of former President Donald Trump based in Fort Worth, said the program usurped Congress' power to make laws.

"In this country, we are not ruled by an all-powerful executive with a pen and a phone. Instead, we are ruled by a Constitution that provides for three distinct and independent branches of government," Pittman wrote.

He added: "The Court is not blind to the current political division in our country. But it is fundamental to the survival of our Republic that the separation of powers as outlined in our Constitution be preserved."

The debt forgiveness plan would cancel \$10,000 in student loan debt for those making less than \$125,000 or households with less than \$250,000 in income. Pell Grant recipients, who typically demonstrate more financial need, would get an additional \$10,000 in debt forgiven.

The cancellation applies to federal student loans used to attend undergraduate and graduate school, along with Parent Plus loans.

The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had put the forgiveness plan on hold Oct. 21 while it considered an effort by the states of Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, Arkansas and South Carolina to block the program.

While the stay temporarily stopped the administration from actually clearing debt, the White House has encouraged borrowers to continue applying for relief, saying the court order did not prevent applications or the review of applications.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the administration disagreed with Thursday's ruling and the Department of Justice had filed an appeal. She said so far 26 million people had applied for debt relief, and 16 million people had already had their relief approved. The Department of Education would "quickly process their relief once we prevail in court," she said.

"The President and this Administration are determined to help working and middle-class Americans get back on their feet, while our opponents — backed by extreme Republican special interests — sued to block millions of Americans from getting much-needed relief," she said in a statement.

The legal challenges have created confusion about whether borrowers who expected to have debt canceled will have to resume making payments come Jan. 1, when a pause prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic is set to expire.

Economists worry that many people have yet to rebound financially from the pandemic, saying that if borrowers who were expecting debt cancellation are asked to make payments instead, many could fall behind on the bills and default.

In his order Thursday, Pittman said the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003, commonly known as the HEROES Act, did not provide the authorization for the loan forgiveness program that the Biden administration claimed it did.

The law allows the secretary of education to "waive or modify any statutory or regulatory provision applicable to the student financial assistance programs ... as the Secretary deems necessary in connection with a war or other military operation or national emergency."

The administration argued that the student loan relief was thus authorized as a means of dealing with the national emergency of the pandemic. Pittman disagreed, finding that a program of such massive import required clear congressional authorization. The HEROES Act "does not provide the executive branch clear congressional authorization to create a \$400 billion student loan forgiveness program," he wrote.

Pittman also rejected the government's arguments that the plaintiffs who brought the lawsuit lacked

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standing. Plaintiffs Myra Brown and Alexander Taylor both have student loans, but Brown is ineligible for debt relief because her loans are commercially held, and Taylor is not eligible for the full \$20,000 because he didn't receive a Pell grant.

The administration said they weren't harmed by the loan forgiveness program and their "unhappiness that some other borrowers are receiving a greater benefit than they are" did not give them grounds to sue.

Pittman said they were harmed, however, because the government did not take public comment on eligibility requirements for the program, meaning they had no chance to provide input on a program they would be at least be partially excluded from.

Reaction to the ruling was predictably mixed along political fault lines. The Student Borrower Protection Center blasted Pittman as a "right-wing federal judge," saying "tens of millions of student loan borrowers across the country now have their vital debt relief blocked as a result of this farcical and fabricated legal claim."

Rep. Virginia Foxx of North Carolina, the ranking Republican on the House education committee, celebrated it.

"Yet another nail has been added to the coffin of President Biden's illegal student loan bailout, and hard-working taxpayers across the country are rightfully rejoicing," she said. "This administration continues to operate as if its own self-appointed authority in transferring billions of dollars in student loans is legitimate, but the rule of law says otherwise."

## Tropical Storm Nicole weakens to depression, reaches Georgia

By MIKE SCHNEIDER and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

WILBUR-BY-THE-SEA, Fla. (AP) — Tropical Storm Nicole weakened to a tropical depression Thursday night as it crossed the Florida Panhandle on its way north into Georgia.

The storm had sent Florida homes toppling into the Atlantic Ocean earlier Thursday and threatened a row of high-rise condominiums in places where Hurricane Ian washed away the beach and destroyed seawalls only weeks ago.

At 10 p.m., a National Hurricane Center advisory said the center of the storm was about 20 miles (35 kilometers) north of Tallahassee with maximum sustained winds of 35 mph (55 kmh). It was moving to the northwest at 15 mph (24 kmh).

The storm, which caused at least two deaths, was the first November hurricane to make landfall in Florida in 37 years and only the third on record. It delivered another devastating blow just weeks after Ian came ashore on the Gulf Coast, killing more than 130 people and destroying thousands of homes.

Although Nicole's winds died down after it made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane at about 3 a.m. Thursday near Vero Beach, its storm surge slammed into the shoreline in the neighboring barrier island communities of Wilbur-by-the-Sea and Daytona Beach Shores, sending some homes crashing into the ocean.

Officials in Volusia County, which is northeast of Orlando, said Thursday evening that building inspectors had declared 24 hotels and condos in Daytona Beach Shores and New Smyrna Beach to be unsafe and had ordered their evacuations. At least 25 single-family homes in Wilbur-by-the-Sea had been declared structurally unsafe by building inspectors and also were evacuated, county officials said.

"Structural damage along our coastline is unprecedented. We've never experienced anything like this before," county manager George Recktenwald said during a news conference earlier, noting that it's unknown when it will be safe for evacuated residents to return home.

The county's sheriff, Mike Chitwood, said in a social media post that multiple coastal homes in Wilbur-by-the-Sea had collapsed and that several other properties were at "imminent risk." He said most bridges to the beachside properties had been closed to all but essential personnel and a curfew was in effect.

Krista Dowling Goodrich, who manages 130 rental homes in Wilbur-By-The-Sea and Daytona Beach Shores as director of sales and marketing at Salty Dog Vacations, witnessed backyards collapsing into the ocean just ahead of the storm.

In the aftermath, the backsides of about seven colorful houses along Highway A1A had disappeared.

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One modern house was missing two bedrooms and much of its living room as water lapped below its foundations. On a partially collapsed wall, decorations spelled out "Blessed" and "Grateful." Goodrich burst into tears when she saw it.

"Half of the house is gone, but we did manage to get out family photos yesterday," Goodrich said. "It is overwhelming when you see this. These are hard-working people who got to this point in their lives and now they lose it all."

In Daytona Beach Shores, where beachfront bathrooms attached to the city's Beach Safety Ocean Rescue building collapsed, officials deemed several multistory buildings unsafe and went door-to-door telling people to grab their possessions and leave.

"These were the tall high-rises. So the people who wouldn't leave, they were physically forcing them out because it's not safe," Goodrich said.

The homeowners association at the Marbella condominiums in Daytona Beach Shores had just spent \$240,000 to temporarily rebuild the seawall Ian destroyed in September, said Connie Hale Gellner, whose family owns a unit there. Live video from the building's cameras showed Nicole's storm surge washing the seawall away.

"We knew it wasn't meant to stop a hurricane, it was only meant to stop the erosion," Gellner said. But after Nicole, the building's pool deck "is basically in the ocean," Gellner said. "The problem is that we have no more beach. So even if we wanted to rebuild, they'll probably condemn the building because the water is just splashing up against the building."

Nicole was sprawling, covering nearly the entire weather-weary state of Florida while also reaching into Georgia and the Carolinas before dawn on Thursday. Tropical storm-force winds extended as far as 450 miles (720 kilometers) from the center in some directions as Nicole turned northward over central Florida.

Although Nicole's winds did minimal damage, its storm surge was more destructive than might have been in the past because seas are rising as the planet's ice melts due to climate change, said Princeton University climate scientist Michael Oppenheimer. It adds up to higher coastal flooding, flowing deeper inland, and what used to be once-in-a-century events will happen almost yearly in some places, he said.

"It is definitely part of a picture that is happening," Oppenheimer said. "It's going to happen elsewhere. It's going to happen all across the world."

A man and a woman were killed by electrocution when they touched downed power lines in the Orlando area, the Orange County Sheriff's Office said. Nicole also caused flooding well inland, as parts of the St. Johns River were at or above flood stage and some rivers in the Tampa Bay area also nearing flood levels, according to the National Weather Service.

Although Nicole made landfall near Vero Beach, it caused no significant damage there, officials said. Part of a fishing pier washed away in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, but the brunt of the storm hit north of its center. By 1 p.m., Nicole's maximum sustained winds were down to 45 mph (70 kph) as it moved toward Tallahassee.

The rare November hurricane could dump as much as 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain over the Blue Ridge Mountains by Friday, the hurricane center said. Flash and urban flooding will be possible as the rain spreads into the eastern Ohio Valley, Mid-Atlantic, and New England through Saturday.

Nicole was the first hurricane 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 first November hurricane to hit their shores since 1985 and only the third since recordkeeping began in 1853.

All 67 Florida counties were under a state of emergency. President Joe Biden also approved an emergency declaration for the Seminole Tribe of Florida, ordering federal help for the tribal nation. Many Seminoles live on six reservations around the state.

The skeletal remains of six people believed to be from a Native American burial ground were unearthed by Nicole's wind and waves on a Hutchinson Island beach, according to the sheriff's office in Martin County, which is about 160 miles (257 kilometers) south of Volusia County.

"Detectives are working diligently to preserve and carefully remove the remains that are exposed with

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the utmost care and respect," the sheriff's office said in a news release. The remains will be taken to a medical examiner and then to the state Bureau of Archaeological Research.

Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a Thursday news conference in Tallahassee that about 333,000 customers were without power at mid-morning, about 2.9% of the state's total. He said there were 17,000 electricity linemen ready to begin restoring power and that numerous other assets including rescue boats and vehicles will be deployed as needed.

Disney World and Universal Orlando Resort announced they likely would not open as scheduled Thursday. Almost two dozen school districts closed schools and 15 shelters opened along Florida's east coast, the governor said.

Parts of Florida were devastated by Hurricane Ian, which struck as a Category 4 storm. Ian destroyed homes and damaged crops, including orange groves, across the state — damage that many are still dealing with — and sent a storm surge of up to 13 feet (4 meters) onshore, causing widespread destruction.

## Democrat Tina Kotek wins Oregon governor's race

By CLAIRE RUSH and ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Tina Kotek has been elected Oregon's next governor, extending longtime Democratic control of the state and dashing Republican hopes for a rare win in a top race on the West Coast of the United States.

Kotek joins Maura Healey of Massachusetts as the first openly lesbian elected governors in the United States.

"It is an absolute honor," Kotek said. "I can tell you that being who I am is important to Oregonians across the state. Lots of young people have come up to me and said thank you for running and thank you for being who you are."

The former longtime speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives had faced a stiff challenge from Republican Christine Drazan, who is also an ex-legislator.

Kotek stood in front of a fountain in Portland Thursday morning a few steps from the Willamette River and told an invitation-only crowd of reporters and supporters displaying her campaign signs that she was ready to get to work.

She said she plans to travel around Oregon starting in January to talk to community leaders about issues facing the state, particularly the shortage of affordable housing and addiction. She said her priorities are addressing homelessness, expanding access to mental health and addiction treatment and working to bridge the divisions in the state.

Kotek told reporters she has spoken with Drazan and Johnson, a former state senator who ran as an unaffiliated candidate and who conceded Tuesday night.

The Drazan campaign had said it hoped as more ballots were counted the results would cut into Kotek's lead.

Tuesday is the last day for election officials to receive valid postmarked ballots by mail. There could be tens of thousands of uncounted ballots still in the mail in a state with 3 million registered voters.

Oregon was the first state to institute vote-by-mail but the 2022 election is different because a 2021 law passed by the Legislature allows ballots to be counted if they were postmarked by 8 p.m. on election day. Previously, votes needed to be received by election day.

Like other GOP lawmakers, Drazan was opposed to the 2021 postmark bill when it went through the Legislature.

"Deadlines are deadlines," she said in a House committee back then. "I think that it is going to create some challenges, and I think it's going to create some legal complexity when it comes to some of these elections with close turnout."

Johnson's wild-card presence in the race had buoyed GOP hopes they could win an Oregon governor's race for the first time in 40 years and break Democrats' dominance of statewide races in Oregon, California and Washington state.

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Kotek was the longest serving Oregon House speaker. Drazan is a former leader of the Republican minority in the House. Democrats were so worried that they could lose the governorship that President Joe Biden came to Portland to boost Kotek's chances.

Secretary of State Shemia Fagan said verifying the results takes time, with every signature on every ballot envelope needing to be is verified.

Democrats warned that a Drazan victory could threaten abortion rights, environmental protections and democratically run elections in the state.

Drazan blames Democrats for homelessness, crime and inflation, saying picking Kotek would be like reelecting Gov. Kate Brown, who was barred by term limits from running again.

## Report: Tweets with racial slurs soar since Musk takeover

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

Instances of racial slurs have soared on Twitter since Elon Musk purchased the influential platform, despite assurances from the platform that it had reduced hateful activity, a digital civil rights group reported Thursday.

Researchers at the Center for Countering Digital Hate found that the number of tweets containing one of several different racial slurs soared in the week after Musk bought Twitter.

A racial epithet used to attack Black people was found more than 26,000 times, three times the average for 2022. Use of a slur that targets trans people increased 53%, while instances of an offensive term for homosexual men went up 39% over the yearly average.

Examples of offensive terms used to target Jews and Hispanics also increased.

All told, the researchers looked at nearly 80,000 English-language tweets and retweets from around the world that contained one of the offensive terms they searched for.

"The figures show that despite claims from Twitter's Head of Trust and Safety, Yoel Roth, that the platform had succeeded in reducing the number of times hate speech was being seen on Twitter's search and trending page, the actual volume of hateful tweets has spiked," according to the analysis from the center, a nonprofit with offices in the U.S. and United Kingdom.

Roth resigned Thursday, joining the large number of Twitter employees who have either resigned from Twitter or been laid off since Musk took control.

A day before, Roth acknowledged the recent increase in hate speech on the site but said the platform had made significant progress in bringing the numbers down.

"We've put a stop to the spike in hateful conduct, but that the level of hateful activity on the service is now about 95% lower than it was before the acquisition," Roth said in remarks broadcast live on Twitter. "Changes that we've made and the proactive enforcement that we carried out are making Twitter safer relative to where it was before."

An executive confirmed Roth's resignation to coworkers on an internal messaging board seen by The Associated Press on Thursday.

On Oct. 31, Twitter announced that 1,500 accounts had been removed for posting hate speech. The company also said it had greatly reduced the visibility of posts containing slurs, making them harder to find on the platform.

"We have actually seen hateful speech at times this week decline (asterisk)below(asterisk) our prior norms, contrary to what you may read in the press," Musk tweeted last week.

Musk has described himself as a free speech absolutist, and he is widely expected to revamp Twitter's content moderation policies. While he said no changes have been made so far, Musk has made significant layoffs at the company, raising questions about its ability to police misinformation and hate speech before Tuesday's midterm election.

It may take some time to accurately assess the platform's performance in the election and to determine whether Twitter has adopted a different strategy for content that violates its policies, said Renee DiResta, research manager at the Stanford Internet Observatory.

"The civic integrity policy was unchanged," DiResta said of Twitter under its new ownership. "Now, there is a difference between having a policy and enforcing a policy."

Shortly after Musk purchased Twitter, some users posted hate speech, seemingly to test the boundaries of the platform under its new owner.

Within just 12 hours of Musk's purchase being finalized, references to a specific racist epithet used to demean Black people shot up by 500%, according to an analysis conducted by the Network Contagion Research Institute, a Princeton, New Jersey-based firm that tracks disinformation.

Twitter did not immediately respond Thursday to messages seeking comment on the findings of the new report.

## Musk warns Twitter's survival is at stake as staff quits

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Elon Musk warned Twitter employees Thursday to brace for "difficult times ahead" that might end with the collapse of the social media platform if they can't find new ways of making money.

Workers who survived last week's mass layoffs are facing harsher work conditions and growing uncertainty about their ability to keep Twitter running safely as it continues to lose high-level leaders responsible for data privacy, cybersecurity and complying with regulations.

That includes Yoel Roth, Twitter's head of trust and safety — a previously little-known executive who became the public face of Twitter's content moderation after Musk took over and who had been praised by Musk for defending Twitter's ongoing efforts to fight harmful misinformation and hate speech. An executive confirmed Roth's resignation to coworkers on an internal messaging board seen by The Associated Press.

The developments were part of another whirlwind day in Musk's acquisition of the social media platform. It began with an email to employees from Musk on Wednesday night ordering workers to stop working from home and show up in the office Thursday morning. He called his first "all-hands" meeting Thursday afternoon. Before that, many were relying on the billionaire Tesla CEO's public tweets for clues about Twitter's future.

"Sorry that this is my first email to the whole company, but there is no way to sugarcoat the message," wrote Musk, before he described a dire economic climate for businesses like Twitter that rely almost entirely on advertising to make money.

"Without significant subscription revenue, there is a good chance Twitter will not survive the upcoming economic downturn," Musk said. "We need roughly half of our revenue to be subscription."

At the staff meeting, Musk said some "exceptional" employees could seek an exemption from his return-to-office order but that others who didn't like it could quit, according to an employee at the meeting who spoke on condition of anonymity out of a concern for job security.

The employee also said Musk appeared to downplay employee concerns about how a pared-back Twitter workforce was handling its obligations to maintain privacy and data security standards, saying as CEO of Tesla he knew how that worked.

Musk's memo and staff meeting echoed a livestreamed conversation trying to assuage major advertisers Wednesday, his most expansive public comments about Twitter's direction since he closed a \$44 billion deal to buy the social media platform late last month and dismissed its top executives. A number of well-known brands have paused advertising on Twitter.

Musk told employees the "priority over the past 10 days" was to develop and launch Twitter's new subscription service for \$7.99 a month that includes a blue check mark next to the name of paid members — the mark was previously only for verified accounts. Musk's project has had a rocky rollout with an onslaught of newly bought fake accounts this week impersonating high-profile figures such as basketball star LeBron James and the drug company Eli Lilly to post false information or offensive jokes.

In a second email to employees, Musk said the "absolute top priority" over the coming days is to suspend "bots/trolls/spam" exploiting the verified accounts. But Twitter now employs far fewer people to help him do that.

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An executive last week said Twitter was cutting roughly 50% of its workforce, which numbered 7,500 earlier this year.

Musk told employees in the email that "remote work is no longer allowed" and the road ahead is "arduous and will require intense work to succeed," and that they will need to be in the office at least 40 hours per week.

Twitter's ongoing exodus includes the company's chief privacy officer, Damien Kieran, and chief information security officer Lea Kissner, who tweeted Thursday that "I've made the hard decision to leave Twitter."

Roth's resignation is a "huge loss" for Twitter's reliability and integrity, said his former coworker and friend Emily Horne.

"He's worked incredibly hard under very challenging circumstances, including being personally targeted by some of the most vicious trolls who were active on the platform," said Horne, who oversaw global policy communications at Twitter until 2018. "He stayed through all of that because he believed so deeply in the work his team was doing to promote a public conversation and improve the health of that conversation."

Cybersecurity expert Alex Stamos, a former Facebook security chief, tweeted Thursday that there is a "serious risk of a breach with drastically reduced staff" that could also put Twitter at odds with a 2011 order from the Federal Trade Commission that required it to address serious data security lapses.

"Twitter made huge strides towards a more rational internal security model and backsliding will put them in trouble with the FTC" and other regulators in the U.S. and Europe, Stamos said.

The FTC said in a statement Thursday that it is "tracking recent developments at Twitter with deep concern."

"No CEO or company is above the law, and companies must follow our consent decrees," said the agency's statement. "Our revised consent order gives us new tools to ensure compliance, and we are prepared to use them."

The FTC would not say whether it was investigating Twitter for potential violations. If it were, it is empowered to demand documents and depose employees.

In an email to employees seen by the AP, Musk said "Twitter will do whatever it takes to adhere to both the letter and spirit of the FTC consent decree."

"Anything you read to the contrary is absolutely false. The same goes for any other government regulatory matters where Twitter operates," Musk wrote.

Twitter paid a \$150 million penalty in May for violating the 2011 consent order and its updated version established new procedures requiring the company to implement an enhanced privacy protection program as well as beefing up info security.

Those new procedures include an exhaustive list of disclosures Twitter must make to the FTC when introducing new products and services — particularly when they affect personal data collected on users.

Musk is fundamentally overhauling the platform's offerings and it's not known if he is telling the FTC about it. Twitter, which gutted its communications department, didn't respond to a request for comment Thursday.

Musk has a history of tangling with regulators. "I do not respect the SEC," Musk declared in a 2018 tweet.

The Securities and Exchange Commission recently examined for possible tardiness his disclosures to the agency of his purchases of Twitter stock to amass a major stake. In 2018, Musk and Tesla each agreed to pay \$20 million in fines over Musk's allegedly misleading tweets saying he'd secured the funding to take the electric car maker private for \$420 a share. Musk has fought the SEC in court over compliance with the agreement.

The consequences for not meeting FTC's requirements can be severe — such as when Facebook had to pay \$5 billion for privacy violations.

"If Twitter so much as sneezes, it has to do a privacy review beforehand," tweeted Riana Pfefferkorn, a Stanford University researcher who said she previously provided Twitter outside legal counsel. "There are periodic outside audits, and the FTC can monitor compliance."

## Soccer-inspired art show heads to World Cup in Qatar

By PAUL BYRNE and EMILIO SANABRIA Associated Press

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay (AP) — Keeping your eye on the ball takes on a new meaning when you consider the World Cup-dedicated collection by Paraguayan artist Lili Cantero.

Decoratively detailing the lavish stadiums of the upcoming tournament in Qatar — the first to take place in the Middle East — as well as the most sought after players and teams, Cantero is preparing the last details of her soccer-inspired art show, “8 Stadiums, 8 Champions, 1 Dream: Qatar 2022.”

“We are going to be exhibiting 25 works in total consisting of boots, soccer balls, also canvases and 3D structures,” the 29-year-old Cantero said.

Centered on the concept of the No. 8, the work aims to highlight the history of the World Cup, which has been won by only eight countries. Brazil has won the most World Cup titles with five, followed by Italy and Germany with four, Uruguay, Argentina and France with two, and England and Spain with one each.

Supported by the Paraguayan embassy in Qatar, in conjunction with the Katara Cultural Village in the Qatari capital, the exhibit “inspired by soccer, the World Cup, different cultures” will open on Nov. 18 in Doha, two days before the tournament starts.

While the hand-painted balls will be at the center of the show, the adorned soccer shoes will be presented within a 3D display projecting them onto representations of the World Cup stadiums in Qatar.

They also project the image of Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the horse and falcon, and other symbols related to Middle Eastern, Latin American and Paraguayan culture.

Cantero’s talent was thrust into the limelight back in 2018. A pair of soccer shoes adorned with her art and detailed with a gallery of black and white images of Lionel Messi and his family was sent to the player.

After an image of the Argentina captain posing with the shoes was widely shared on social media, Cantero’s career soared with requests for designs from professional players outside of her native Paraguay, including former Brazil forward Ronaldinho. She personally got to present the shoes to Ronaldinho illustrating a kiss his mother had given him after winning the Ballon d’Or award in 2005 as the best soccer player in the world.

“When I paint for players, what I try to do is to look for the humanization of the figure, because many times the player is like an idol and many people forget that behind that player there is a person,” Cantero said.

An insight into Cantero’s unique take on her sports-inspired muse goes back to her youth. From her atelier on the outskirts of Asunción she remembers flipping through the pages of an encyclopaedia at home, mesmerized by the works of famous painters. In school, she once decorated white sandals with bright motifs. In college, she painted sandals again as part of an assigned project, where students launched their own small businesses. By word of mouth, friends who played soccer began asking her to paint their shoes. Eventually, she began designing for a local sports store and getting requests from professional athletes.

Only days ahead of her departure for Qatar, Cantero’s inward eye also jumps to the future.

“I would like to continue growing, expanding to work with other regions and countries,” Cantero said, “work on projects more centered in the United States, since the next World Cup will be in the United States, Mexico, Canada.”

## Russia withdrawing, Ukrainian official fears ‘city of death’

By JOHN LEICESTER and YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia said it began withdrawing troops from a strategic Ukrainian city Thursday, creating a potential turning point in the grinding war, while a Ukrainian official warned that Russian land mines could render Kherson a “city of death.”

Ukrainian officials acknowledged Moscow’s forces had no choice but to flee Kherson, yet they remained cautious, fearing an ambush. With Ukrainian officials tight-lipped with their assessments, reporters not present and spotty communications, it was difficult to know what was happening in the port city, where the residents who remained after tens of thousands fled were afraid to leave their homes.

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A forced pullout from Kherson — the only provincial capital Moscow captured after invading Ukraine in February — would mark one of Russia's worst war setbacks. Recapturing the city, whose pre-war population was 280,000, could provide Ukraine a launching pad for supplies and troops to try to win back other lost territory in the south, including Crimea, which Moscow seized in 2014.

Ukrainian forces seem to be scoring more battlefield successes elsewhere in the Kherson region and closing in on the city. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday night the pace has increased so much that residents "are now checking almost every hour where our units have reached and where else our national flag was raised."

The armed forces commander-in-chief, Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhny, said Kyiv's forces have advanced 36.5 kilometers (22.7 miles) and retaken 41 villages and towns since Oct. 1 in the province, which the Kremlin has illegally annexed. That included 12 settlements on Wednesday alone.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said Russian troops laid mines throughout Kherson as they withdrew to turn it into a "city of death" and predicted they would shell it after relocating across the Dnieper River.

From these new positions, the Kremlin could try to escalate the 8 1/2-month war, which U.S. assessments showed may already have killed or wounded tens of thousands of civilians and hundreds of thousands of soldiers.

Arkadiy Dovzhenko, who fled Kherson in June, said his grandparents still living there told him Thursday that "the Russians were bringing a lot of equipment into the town and also mining every inch of it."

Zelenskyy said Thursday night his forces were racing to remove land mines from 170,000 square meters (65,637 square miles) nationwide, and planned also to do so in Kherson. A spokeswoman for Ukraine's southern military, Natalia Humeniuk, said on Ukrainian television that resistance forces working behind enemy lines "carefully collect information" about critical infrastructure threatened by mines.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu ordered a troop withdrawal from Kherson and nearby areas on Wednesday after his top general in Ukraine reported that a loss of supply routes during Ukraine's southern counteroffensive made a defense "futile."

Shoigu's ministry reported Thursday a "maneuver of units of the Russian group" to the Dnieper River's eastern bank, also known as its left bank.

On Thursday, Ukrainian officials appeared to soften the skepticism they had expressed over whether the Russians were really on the run or trying to trap Ukraine's soldiers. "The enemy had no other choice but to resort to fleeing," armed forces chief Zaluzhny said, because Kyiv's army destroyed supply systems and disrupted Russia's local military command.

Still, he said the Ukrainian military could not confirm a Russian withdrawal.

Alexander Khara, of the Kyiv-based think tank Center for Defense Strategies, echoed those concerns, saying he remained fearful that Russian forces could destroy a dam upriver from Kherson and flood the city's approaches. The former Ukrainian diplomat also warned of booby traps and other possible dangers.

"I would be surprised if the Russians had not set up something, some surprises for Ukraine," Khara said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who just over a month ago celebrated the annexation of Kherson and three other Ukrainian regions and vowed to defend them by any means, has not commented on the withdrawal.

A resident said Kherson was deserted Thursday and that explosions could be heard from around Antonivskiy Bridge — a key Dnieper River crossing that Ukrainian forces have repeatedly bombarded.

"Life in the city seems to have stopped. Everyone has disappeared somewhere and no one knows what will happen next," said Konstantin, a resident whose last name was withheld for security reasons.

He said Russian flags have disappeared from the city's administrative buildings, and no signs remain of the Russian military personnel who earlier moved into the apartments of evacuated residents. Russian state news agency Tass reported that emergency services such as police officers and medical workers would leave along with the last Russian troops.

Halyna Lugova, head of the Ukrainian administration of Kherson city, told Ukrainian television Thursday

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that the Russian military was moving vehicles towards the Antonivskiy Bridge. Lugova, who is now based in Ukrainian-controlled territory, described conditions in the city as brutal.

Kherson remains without power, heating and internet service, gas stations in the city are closed, and there is no fuel, she said. The city also has run out of medications for cancer and diabetes patients. Ukrainian news reports said the Russians blew up the local television center, some of the cellphone towers and energy infrastructure.

Ukrainian officials have been cautious at other times in declaring victories against a Russian force that at least initially outgunned and outnumbered Ukraine's armed forces.

Orysia Lutsevych, head of the Ukraine Forum at international affairs think-tank Chatham House, said the reticence explains "why, until Ukrainians are in the city, they don't want to declare that they have it (in) control."

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was similarly cautious. He spoke to Zelenskyy on Thursday, and his office said they agreed "it was right to continue to exercise caution until the Ukrainian flag was raised over the city."

Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Wednesday he believed a retreat was underway, but that Russia had amassed as many as 30,000 troops in Kherson and that a full withdrawal could take several weeks.

One analyst noted that the Ukrainian army has destroyed bridges and roads as part of its counteroffensive, making a quick transfer of Russian troops across the Dnieper River impossible.

"The main question is whether the Ukrainians will give the Russians the opportunity to calmly withdraw, or fire at them during the crossing to the left bank," Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said. "The personnel can be taken out on boats, but the equipment needs to be taken out only on barges and pontoons, and this is very easily shelled by the Ukrainian army."

Putin's allies rushed to defend the retreat as tough, but necessary. However, Pro-Kremlin political analyst Sergei Markov broke ranks and described the move as "Russia's biggest geopolitical loss since the collapse of the Soviet Union" and warned that "political consequences of this huge loss will be really big."

## Police officer killed in suspected Brussels terror attack

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN and RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — A lone assailant killed one police officer and wounded another Thursday in a stabbing attack that two Belgian judicial officials said was suspected to be terrorism-linked. The suspect was shot and taken to a hospital.

Eric Van der Sypt, from the federal prosecutor's office, told The Associated Press the suspect was wounded by another police officers after the stabbing.

Van der Sypt added that investigators suspected the attack took place in a "terrorist context." The prosecutor's office told AP it took over the case because there is "a suspicion of a terror attack."

"One of our patrols was attacked by a man armed with a knife," police said, quoted by the newspaper Le Soir. "The two police officers then called for reinforcements. An officer from another patrol used his firearm to neutralize the attacker."

"The two injured detectives and the assailant were taken to hospital," police added.

Le Soir said one of the officers was stabbed in the neck and died from his injuries.

The newspaper Het Laatste Nieuws reported the suspect had gone to a police station Thursday morning warning that he would kill an officer. The ACV police trade union said in a Facebook post that it had information a person had gone to police earlier in the day threatening an attack. It added that the judicial authorities did not arrest him.

According to Belgian media, the attacker shouted "Allahu akbar," the Arabic phrase for "God is great," during the attack, which occurred around 7:15 p.m.

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo posted a message of condolences to the family and friends of the dead officer.

"Our police officers risk their lives every day to ensure the safety of our citizens," he said. "Today's tragedy demonstrates this once again."

Interior Minister Annelies Verlinden said she was in contact with the Brussels mayor, police chief and security services to coordinate the response to the attack. "Such violence against our people is unacceptable," she said.

Belgium has been hit by several terror attacks in the past decade, including suicide bombings in 2016 that killed 32 people and injured hundreds more in the Brussels subway and airport.

## **Snyder, Commanders, NFL, Goodell sued by DC attorney general**

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Washington Commanders owner Dan Snyder and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell were sued by the District of Columbia on Thursday, accused of colluding to deceive fans by lying about an inquiry into "sexual misconduct and a persistently hostile work environment" within the team.

The individual club and the league as a whole were also named in the consumer protection civil lawsuit, which D.C. Attorney General Karl Racine said was based on his office's investigation that began in the fall of 2021.

Racine said the defendants jointly "misled the public" about the contents of, and procedure surrounding lawyer Beth Wilkinson's examination of the team's workplace culture that began in 2020. His office seeks a court order that will force the league to release Wilkinson's findings.

"For years, the team and its owner have caused very real and very serious harm and then lied about it to dodge accountability," Racine said, also pointing a finger at Goodell and the NFL. "They did all of this to hide the truth, protect their images and let the profits continue to roll."

Racine said that even though the team practices in Virginia and plays its games in Maryland, it is strongly connected to Washington and violated D.C. consumers' rights. Racine said the capital city's Consumer Protection Procedures Act provides for fines of up to \$5,000 per lie — which his office estimated could result in millions of dollars in penalties.

Asked about a parallel review into the Commanders' finances and withholding money from season-ticket holders, Racine said, "There'll be more news on that next week." The U.S. House Committee for Oversight and Reform, which has one of a handful of other investigations into Snyder, referred a case about the club's potential financial improprieties to the Federal Trade Commission in April, citing questionable business practices related to ticket revenue.

NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said Wilkinson's investigation was thoroughly and comprehensively conducted, the league publicly released a summary and imposed a record-setting fine of \$10 million on the team and its ownership.

"We reject the legally unsound and factually baseless allegations made today by the D.C. Attorney General against the NFL and Commissioner Goodell and will vigorously defend against those claims," McCarthy wrote in an email.

Lawyers representing the Commanders said Snyder and his wife and co-owner, Tanya, acknowledged an unacceptable workplace culture more than two years ago and "have apologized many times for allowing that to happen."

"We agree with AG Racine on one thing: the public needs to know the truth," Commanders counsel John Brownlee and Stuart Nash said in a statement sent through a team spokesperson. "Although the lawsuit repeats a lot of innuendo, half-truths and lies, we welcome this opportunity to defend the organization — for the first time — in a court of law and to establish, once and for all, what is fact and what is fiction."

The filing Thursday in D.C. Superior Court says Snyder "cultivated an environment ... that glorifies sexual harassment and punishes victims for speaking out." According to the complaint, team "employees say the workplace was 'like the mafia' ... creating a culture of fear and paranoia."

"The misconduct did not just go to the top; it originated there," the court filing says, noting that a former long-time team executive said employees referred to Snyder as the "Chief Harassing Officer."

The complaint outlines ways in which the attorney general's office says Snyder has been accused of

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“further cultivating the team’s culture of sexual harassment,” such as bringing “women believed to be sex workers to work-related events,” overseeing the team’s cheerleading program and exercising “control over everything, from which cheerleading candidates made the cut, to which photos were used in the cheerleader calendar, to how revealing the cheerleading uniforms would be.”

The team remains the subject of multiple other ongoing investigations, including by the attorney general of Virginia, Congress and the NFL. Goodell has said there is no timetable for when former U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White’s review on behalf of the league will be completed.

Racine said the D.C. attorney general’s office will issue subpoenas and seek testimony under oath. He took a shot at Snyder’s virtual testimony with the House Oversight Committee by saying depositions are “not likely to occur on a yacht but in a conference room in the District of Columbia.”

The Snyders announced last week they hired Bank of America Securities to look into selling part or all of the team. A team spokesperson said they were “exploring all options” in regards to the organization that Forbes values at \$5.6 billion.

“If he sells the team,” Racine said, “he’s still a defendant.”

Racine said the lawsuit is happening in civil court because his office does not have criminal jurisdiction on the matter. He is leaving office Jan. 2 and expects successor Brian Schwalb to continue the case.

Lawyers Lisa Banks and Debra Katz, who represent more than 40 former team employees, said the civil complaint “is further evidence of what we’ve long known: that both the Commanders and the NFL have engaged in deception and lies designed to conceal the team’s decades of sexual harassment and abuse, which has impacted not only the victims of that abuse, but also consumers.”

Former club employees Megan Imbert and Melanie Coburn attended the news conference, and Imbert said she and others who worked for the team have been seeking accountability and transparency. She believes this is a significant step.

“This is kind of the moment we’ve been waiting for,” Imbert said. “We’ve been through a lot, even the past 2½ years, and it’s been scary, but I think the law’s on our side and I’m just looking forward to what the future holds. This is the most significant day of the past 2½ years for me.”

## Future of American democracy loomed large in voters’ minds

By GARY FIELDS and NUHA DOLBY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — This week’s ballot had an unspoken candidate — American democracy. Two years of relentless attacks on democratic traditions by former President Donald Trump and his allies left the country’s future in doubt, and voters responded.

Many of the candidates who supported the lie that Trump won the 2020 election lost races that could have put them in position to influence future elections. But the conditions that threatened democracy’s demise remain, and Americans view them from very different perspectives, depending on their politics.

In New Hampshire, voters reelected Republican Gov. Chris Sununu to a fourth term but rejected three congressional candidates who were either endorsed by Trump or aligned themselves with the former president. Instead, voters sent Democratic incumbents back to Washington.

Bill Greiner, a restaurant owner and community bank founder, said the Trump candidates won their Republican primaries by “owning the crazy lane” and then provided an easy playbook for Democrats in the general election.

Greiner, a Republican, said in past years he has fallen in line behind GOP nominees when his preferred candidates lost primaries, but he couldn’t vote for candidates who continued to deny the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election.

“The election was not stolen, and anyone who leads with and finishes with being an election denier is not going to do well,” he said. “I think that point was proven with exclamation marks.”

In the run-up to the midterm election, President Joe Biden put the spotlight on threats to American democracy, although critics suggested it was a ploy to take attention off his poor approval ratings and voter concerns about the economy.

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On Thursday, Biden said the nation's core principles had endured: "There were a lot of concerns about whether democracy would meet the test. And it did!"

Election Day showed Biden was not alone in his anxiety: 44% of voters said the future of democracy was their primary consideration, according to AP VoteCast, an extensive survey of more than 94,000 voters nationwide. That included about 56% of Democrats and 34% of Republicans.

But among Republicans, those who identify as being part of Donald Trump's Make America Great Again movement were more likely than others to say the future of democracy was the top factor when voting, 37% to 28%.

The concerns over democracy were shared by members of both major parties, but for different reasons: Only about a third of Republicans believe Biden was legitimately elected, according to the AP VoteCast survey, showing how widely Trump's continued false claims about the election have permeated his party.

Democrats, meanwhile, believed the spread of election lies and the number of Republican candidates repeating them were an assault on the foundation of democracy.

Several of the most vocal candidates who denied the results of the 2020 presidential election ended up losing races for statewide office that play some role in overseeing elections.

Trump and his supporters targeted races for Secretary of State, the office that oversees voting in most states, after being unable to overturn 2020 election results at the state level.

The AP VoteCast survey also showed the effect the false claims have had on how Americans view the security of elections. It found that MAGA Republicans were more likely to lack confidence in the midterm vote — about half of MAGA Republicans overall were not confident the vote would be counted accurately, but just 3 in 10 of their non-MAGA counterparts had those concerns.

There was no widespread fraud in the 2020 election or any credible evidence that it was tainted, as confirmed by federal and state election officials, exhaustive reviews in battleground states and Trump's own attorney general.

The former president's allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by dozens of courts, including by judges he appointed.

Still, the conspiracy theories run deep. They offered fertile ground for sowing mistrust when fairly routine problems arose Tuesday in Detroit and Maricopa County, Arizona. The trouble was easily solved, but not before it sparked recriminations on social media, including posts by Trump.

Arizona's Republican gubernatorial candidate, Kari Lake, raised the possibility of nefarious activity and has said if she wins, she would call a special session to make massive changes to Arizona election laws.

Questions about elections were directly on the ballot in several states.

In Nebraska, voters approved a voter ID proposal that was born in the aftermath of the 2020 election and the false claims of fraud. Michigan voters approved a wide-ranging initiative backed by voting-rights advocates. Among other things, it would expand early voting options, require state-funded return postage and offer drop boxes for absentee ballots. The measure also specified that the Board of State Canvassers has only a "clerical, nondiscretionary" duty to certify election results.

Long-term victory should not be declared, said Ron Daniels, president of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century: "The white nationalist, white supremacist, MAGA movement has been checked but not defeated."

He said Black voters, especially, were aware of what was at stake. The election deniers who would potentially nullify votes were part of a long history of efforts to deny people, especially people of color, representation.

The results were "dangerously close," Daniels said. "We have to wait to see the ultimate outcome."

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat who won reelection against a candidate who has repeated Trump's 2020 falsehoods, said she was heartened to see concessions from candidates who had previously refused to acknowledge that Biden's win was legitimate or who repeated Trump's election lies.

Among them was Minnesota Republican gubernatorial candidate Scott Jensen, who lost to the incumbent Democratic governor.

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"Tim Walz is the governor for four more years," he told supporters. "Republicans, quite frankly, we didn't have a red wave. It was a blue wave. And we need to stop, we need to recalibrate. We need to ask ourselves: 'OK, what can we learn from this? What can we do better?'"

Jenna Ellis, senior legal adviser for Pennsylvania Republican gubernatorial candidate Doug Mastriano, said on her podcast: "There isn't this kind of concern that we had in 2020. We can't just say, 'Oh my gosh, everything is stolen.' That's ridiculous for this election."

The fact that some of the strongest supporters of Trump's claims conceded could help "reestablish some of the norms of the democratic process that were trashed during Trump," Dartmouth historian Matthew Delmont said.

The question now is whether democracy is safe, or just safe today, he said.

## Sharp attacks on Trump from Rupert Murdoch's news outlets

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump has taken some hits in the aftermath of the midterm elections, but the unkindest cuts may have come from a source that was once among his biggest backers — the media empire of magnate Rupert Murdoch.

The New York Post's front cover on Thursday put Trump's face over the drawing of a boy from a well-known nursery rhyme. The headline: "Trumpty Dumpty."

"Don (who couldn't build a wall) had a great fall — can all of the GOP's men put the party back together again?" the newspaper wrote.

The Wall Street Journal's opinion section ran a sharp editorial headlined, "Trump is the Republican Party's Biggest Loser." While Fox News' biggest stars were relatively quiet, the former president heard enough discouraging words to attack the network on social media.

Trump was blamed for supporting losing or underperforming candidates like Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania, Don Bolduc in New Hampshire and Blake Masters in Arizona that cost Republicans a chance to make big gains in the House and Senate, as many had predicted.

The Journal's editorial mentioned each of those names and more, saying that Trump had "a perfect record of electoral defeat" since his victory over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election.

"Democrats succeeded again in making Trump a central campaign issue, and Mr. Trump helped them do it," the Journal said.

The newspaper on Thursday also ran a guest column touting Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis as an alternative to Trump for the 2024 presidential election, and an excerpt from former Vice President Mike Pence's new book headlined, "My last days with Donald Trump."

On the Post's website, veteran columnist John Podhoretz dubbed the former president "Toxic Trump."

Podhoretz wrote that Trump was "the political equivalent of a can of Raid" and "perhaps the most profound vote repellent in modern American history."

The Post ran an editorial urging DeSantis run for president. A day earlier, the newspaper's cover featured a triumphant picture of DeSantis with the headline, "DeFuture."

A spokesman for Murdoch's News Corp. said he had no comment on the editorial choices. It's not like the outlets have never criticized Trump, but the tone and timing were noteworthy.

Non-Murdoch affiliated conservative figures and outlets took some shots at Trump. The Washington Examiner wrote that Republicans needed to choose between electoral success or Trump, while American Thinker said Trump is devolving into a permanent liability, according to The Righting newsletter.

Some Fox News stars tread lightly into critical territory. Jesse Watters talked Wednesday of a 2024 presidential election rematch between Trump and President Joe Biden.

"Does Trump win?" Watters said. "I hope so. I love the guy. A week ago, I would have said slam dunk. But after how last night shook out, I don't know now. Democrats will walk over hot coals to vote against Trump, but will Republicans do that to vote against Joe Biden?"

Another Fox host, Laura Ingraham, didn't mention Trump's name but said the populist movement is

about ideas, not one person.

"If the voters conclude that you're putting your own ego or your own grudges ahead of what's good for the country, they're going to look elsewhere," she said.

Trump has all but promised that he would announce a 2024 candidacy as soon as next week. But his former White House press secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, said on Fox that no potential candidates should announce before the Dec. 6 runoff election for the U.S. Senate seat in Georgia. Dov Hikind, a "Fox & Friends" guest, said Trump should announce his support for DeSantis.

"Donald Trump, move on," he said.

That appeared unlikely, given that Trump recently referred to the Florida governor as "Ron DeSanctimonious." He also posted Wednesday on Truth Social that he got more votes in Florida in 2020 than DeSantis did this week — even though they were running for different offices and not against each other.

A Trump representative did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

The former president posted that Fox News was "really gone," and he disputed stories that he had backed losers. He was particularly critical of The New York Times for a story that said he was angry at his wife, Melania, and Fox News' Sean Hannity for pushing him to back Oz's Senate candidacy in Pennsylvania.

"I was not at all ANGRY," he wrote. "Fake news!"

## **AP source: US authorities investigate crypto exchange FTX**

By KEN SWEET and MICHAEL BALSAMO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The swift collapse of cryptocurrency exchange FTX sent more shockwaves through the crypto world on Thursday, with authorities now investigating the firm for potential securities violations and analysts bracing for a further downturn in crypto prices.

FTX had agreed earlier this week to sell itself to bigger rival Binance after experiencing the cryptocurrency equivalent of a bank run. Customers fled the exchange after becoming concerned about whether FTX had sufficient capital.

A person familiar with matter said that the Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission are examining FTX to determine whether any criminal activity or securities offenses were committed. The person could not discuss details of the investigations publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

This week's developments marked a shocking turn of events for FTX CEO and founder Sam Bankman-Fried, who was hailed as somewhat of a savior earlier this year when he helped shore up a number of cryptocurrency companies that ran into financial trouble.

The investigation into Bankman-Fried and FTX by those in the crypto world as well as securities regulators is centering on the possibility that the firm may have used customers' deposits to fund bets at Bankman-Fried's hedge fund, Alameda Research. In traditional markets, brokers are expected to separate client funds from other company assets. Violations can be punished by regulators.

Meanwhile, investors in popular digital currencies got some relief from the latest crypto crisis Thursday after days of selling. Bitcoin rose to \$17,691 after dropping as low as \$15,512 on Wednesday. Ethereum rose 12%. The gains came after a government report showing inflation cooled a bit last month gave a lift to riskier assets.

The crypto world had hoped that Binance, the world's largest crypto exchange, might be able to rescue FTX and its depositors. However, after Binance had a chance to look at the books of FTX, it became clear that the smaller exchange's problems were too big to solve.

A person familiar with the dealings between FTX and Binance described the books as a "black hole" where it was impossible to differentiate between the assets and liabilities of FTX the exchange and those of Alameda Research. This person spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

This person said Bankman-Fried committed the "ultimate sin" by tapping into FTX's custodial assets to fund Alameda Research.

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In a further illustration of FTX's financial straits, Bankman-Fried asked his investors Wednesday for \$8 billion to cover withdrawal requests, according to The Wall Street Journal, citing unnamed sources.

In a series of Tweets on Thursday, the FTX founder and CEO said that he did not have enough liquidity to cover withdrawals and that he was more leveraged than he had thought.

"I f(asterisk)(asterisk)(asterisk)ed up, and should have done better," he said.

The latest crisis in the crypto industry prompted renewed calls for stricter regulation. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the FTX developments "highlights why prudent regulation of cryptocurrencies is indeed needed. The White House, along with the relevant agencies, will again closely monitor the situation as it develops."

The collapse of the cryptocurrency's third largest exchange is likely to cause further disruption across the entire crypto world, analysts say, meaning Thursday's rally could be temporary.

"The unwinding of FTX, as well as its shock of confidence to the system, will cause crypto prices to fall even further leading to "a new cascade of margin calls," said analysts at J.P. Morgan in a note to investors. This would be similar to the selloff that happened after the collapse of the stable coin Terra earlier this year, where prices continued to decline weeks after its failure.

"This deleveraging is likely to last for at least a few weeks unless a rescue for Alameda Research and FTX is agreed quickly," J.P. Morgan analysts wrote.

The crypto industry is waiting to see what other companies are impacted by the FTX collapse. The venture capital fund Sequoia Capital said Thursday it is writing down its total investment of nearly \$215 million in FTX.

## Section of destroyed shuttle Challenger found on ocean floor

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A large section of the destroyed space shuttle Challenger has been found buried in sand at the bottom of the Atlantic, more than three decades after the tragedy that killed a schoolteacher and six others.

NASA's Kennedy Space Center announced the discovery Thursday.

"Of course, the emotions come back, right?" said Michael Ciannilli, a NASA manager who confirmed the remnant's authenticity. When he saw the underwater video footage, "My heart skipped a beat, I must say, and it brought me right back to 1986 ... and what we all went through as a nation."

It's one of the biggest pieces of Challenger found in the decades since the accident, according to Ciannilli, and the first remnant to be discovered since two fragments from the left wing washed ashore in 1996.

Divers for a TV documentary first spotted the piece in March while looking for wreckage of a World War II plane. NASA verified through video a few months ago that the piece was part of the shuttle that broke apart shortly after liftoff on Jan. 28, 1986. All seven on board were killed, including the first schoolteacher bound for space, Christa McAuliffe.

The underwater video provided "pretty clear and convincing evidence," said Ciannilli.

The piece is more than 15 feet by 15 feet (4.5 meters by 4.5 meters); it's likely bigger because part of it is covered with sand. Because there are square thermal tiles on the piece, it's believed to be from the shuttle's belly, Ciannilli said.

The fragment remains on the ocean floor just off the Florida coast near Cape Canaveral as NASA determines the next step. It remains the property of the U.S. government. The families of all seven Challenger crew members have been notified.

"We want to make sure whatever we do, we do the right thing for the legacy of the crew," Ciannilli said.

Roughly 118 tons (107 metric tons) of Challenger debris have been recovered since the accident. That represents about 47% of the entire vehicle, including parts of the two solid-fuel boosters and external fuel tank.

Most of the recovered wreckage remains buried in abandoned missile silos at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. The exception is a left side shuttle panel on display at Kennedy Space Center's visitor complex,

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alongside the charred cockpit window frame from shuttle Columbia, which broke apart over Texas during reentry in 2003, killing seven astronauts.

Far less has been recovered of Columbia — 42 tons (38 metric tons) representing 38% of the shuttle. The Columbia remains are stored in converted offices inside Kennedy's massive hangar.

Launched on an exceptionally cold morning, Challenger was brought down by eroded O-ring seals in the right booster. Columbia ended up with a slashed left wing, the result of foam insulation breaking off the external fuel tank at liftoff. Mismanagement was also blamed..

A History Channel documentary detailing the latest Challenger discovery airs Nov. 22.

## **Biden to meet China's Xi on Monday for Taiwan, Russia talks**

By AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will meet Monday with President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of next week's Group of 20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia, a face-to-face meeting that comes amid increasingly strained U.S.-China relations, the White House announced Thursday.

It will be the first in-person meeting between the leaders of the world's two biggest economies since Biden became president in January 2021 and comes weeks after Xi was awarded a norm-breaking third, five-year term as the Chinese Communist Party leader during the party's national congress.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement the leaders will meet to "discuss efforts to maintain and deepen lines of communication between" the two countries and to "responsibly manage competition and work together where our interests align, especially on transnational challenges that affect the international community."

The White House has been working with Chinese officials over the last several weeks to arrange the meeting. Biden on Wednesday told reporters that he intended to discuss with Xi growing tensions between Washington and Beijing over the self-ruled island of Taiwan, trade policies, Beijing's relationship with Russia and more.

"What I want to do with him when we talk is lay out what each of our red lines are and understand what he believes to be in the critical national interests of China, what I know to be the critical interests of the United States," Biden said. "And determine whether or not they conflict with one another."

The White House sought to downplay expectations for the meeting, telling reporters there was no joint communique or deliverables anticipated from the sit-down.

"I don't think you should look at this meeting as one in which there's going to be specific deliverables announced," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said. "Rather the two leaders are going to give direction to their teams to work on a number of areas, both areas where we have differences and areas where we can work together."

Biden and Xi traveled together in the U.S. and China in 2011 and 2012 when both leaders were serving as their respective countries' vice presidents, and they have held five phone or video calls since Biden became president in January 2021. But the U.S.-China relationship has become far more complicated since those getting-to-know-you talks in Washington and on the Tibetan plateau a decade ago.

As president, Biden has repeatedly taken China to task for human rights abuses against the Uyghur people and other ethnic minorities, Beijing's crackdowns on democracy activists in Hong Kong, coercive trade practices, military provocations against self-ruled Taiwan and differences over Russia's prosecution of its war against Ukraine.

Weeks before Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, the Russian president met with Xi in Beijing and the two issued a memorandum expressing hopes of a "no limits" relationship for their nations.

China has largely refrained from criticizing Russia's war but thus far has held off on supplying Moscow with arms.

"I don't think there's a lot of respect that China has for Russia or Putin," Biden said Wednesday. "And in fact, they've been sort of keeping the distance a little bit."

The leaders were also expected to address U.S. frustrations that Beijing has not used its influence to press

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North Korea to pull back from conducting provocative missile tests and to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Biden was set to discuss threats from North Korea with the leaders of South Korea and Japan a day before sitting down with Xi.

Sullivan said Biden would meet with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Seok Yeol on Sunday on the margins of the East Asia Summit in Cambodia, where North Korea's saber rattling is expected to be the focus of talks.

Xi's government has criticized the Biden administration's posture toward Taiwan — which Beijing looks eventually to unify with the communist mainland — as undermining China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Chinese president also has suggested that Washington wants to stifle Beijing's growing clout as it tries to overtake the U.S. as the world's largest economy.

Tensions over Taiwan have grown since House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August.

Biden said that he's "not willing to make any fundamental concessions" about the United States' Taiwan doctrine.

Under its "One China" policy, the United States recognizes the government in Beijing while allowing for informal relations and defense ties with Taipei. It takes a stance of "strategic ambiguity" toward the defense of Taiwan — leaving open the question of whether it would respond militarily were the island attacked.

Asked about the anticipated meeting, China's foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a Thursday news briefing that China was looking for "win-win cooperation with the U.S." while reiterating Beijing's concerns about the U.S. stance on Taiwan.

"The U.S. needs to stop obscuring, hollowing out and distorting the One China principle, abide by the basic norms in international relations, including respecting other countries' sovereignty, territorial integrity and noninterference in other countries' internal affairs," he said.

Biden caused a stir in Asia in May when at a news conference in Tokyo, said "yes" when asked if he was willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan if China invaded. The White House and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin were quick to clarify that there was no change in U.S. policy.

Beijing sees official American contact with Taiwan as encouragement to make the island's decades-old de facto independence permanent, a step U.S. leaders say they don't support. Pelosi is the highest-ranking elected American official to visit since then-Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1997.

Xi has stayed close to home throughout the global COVID-19 pandemic, where he has enforced a "zero-COVID" policy that has resulted in mass lockdowns that have roiled the global supply chains.

He made his first trip outside China since start of the pandemic in September with a stop in Kazakhstan and then onto Uzbekistan to take part in the eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organization with Putin and other leaders of the Central Asian security group.

U.S. officials were eager to see how Xi approaches the meeting after being newly empowered with a third term and consolidating his position as the unquestioned leader of the state, saying they would wait to assess whether that made him more or less likely to seek out areas of cooperation with the U.S.

They emphasized that party congress results reinforced the importance of direct engagement with Xi, rather than lower level officials whom they've found unable or unwilling to speak for the Chinese leader.

Sullivan says it "remains to be seen" what impact Xi's cementing another five years as Communist Party leader will have on his approach to the U.S.-China relationship.

## From sensation to struggles: Dem stars Abrams, O'Rourke fade

By PAUL J. WEBER and BILL BARROW Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Stacey Abrams and Beto O'Rourke catapulted to Democratic stardom in 2018 by defying expectations and nearly pulling off upsets in Georgia and Texas.

But they flopped four years later in governors' races Tuesday even as other Democrats muscled out remarkably resilient victories in the midterm elections: Abrams lost her rematch with Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp by 7 points, and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott clobbered O'Rourke by double digits.

The wipeouts have dimmed the bright future that Democrats once saw for two young sensations who

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openly explored national ambitions, pushed Republicans to the brink on tough turf and captivated liberal donors nationwide — but are now a combined 0-5 the last three election cycles despite no shortage of money, overflowing crowds or fawning media attention.

“Democrats owe a huge debt of gratitude to both Stacey Abrams and Beto,” said Tom Perez, who was chair of the Democratic National Committee when the duo burst on the scene in 2018.

Neither Abrams, 48, nor O’Rourke, 50, has said whether they will run again. Comebacks are a fixture of American politics, and as the disappointment of badly losing two campaigns that raised nearly \$200 million combined sank in this week among Democrats, many party figures and supporters were not ready to write them off.

But any third try — or, in the case of O’Rourke, who flamed out as a presidential candidate in 2019, a fourth try — won’t get easier.

No longer are they fresh faces. Other ambitious Democrats in Georgia and Texas could itch for their own turn. And voters who have had Abrams or O’Rourke on their ballots twice now have hardened in their opinions of them. In Georgia, polls showed Abrams generally trailing Kemp in favorability during their race.

Among Texas voters, about 4 in 10 said they had a favorable opinion of O’Rourke, while roughly half viewed him unfavorably, according to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of 3,400 voters in the state. It underscored how many Texans have shifted on the former El Paso congressman since 2018, when O’Rourke ran a more ideologically blurry campaign that came within 3 points of ousting Republican Sen. Ted Cruz.

But this time, while trying to become the first Democrat to win a governor’s race in Texas since 1990, the liberal positions O’Rourke took while running for president haunted him in the state’s vast rural areas that have fortified GOP power for decades.

“You cannot run as a Democrat and take this extreme position, being anti-gun, open borders. It doesn’t work for the rest of the state of Texas,” said Democratic Rep. Henry Cuellar, who won reelection Tuesday after crushing an unusually aggressive play by Republicans along the southern border.

Democratic pollster Zac McCrary, who has polled extensively in both Texas and Georgia, cautioned against oversimplifying Abrams and O’Rourke as losers even if it’s not clear what they’ve gained personally — or what their options are going forward.

So far, no incumbent governors have lost reelection this year, and McCrary said it would be foolish not to acknowledge the strengths of Abbott and Kemp. Certainly, Abrams faces additional scrutiny because she ran tens of thousands of votes behind Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock, who led Republican challenger Herschel Walker and now advances to a Dec. 6 runoff.

But McCrary said Walker’s troubles as a candidate — scrutiny on his past, his qualifications and his policy heft — must also be taken into consideration.

“It’s not as simple as looking at the two races and assuming that Raphael Warnock is so obviously a better candidate than Stacey Abrams,” he said.

Regardless of whether Abrams and O’Rourke run again, Democrats in Georgia and Texas shudder at the idea of them receding into private life. Both are singular fundraising and organizational powerhouses who, at least until now, have commanded an almost unrivaled ability among Democrats to quickly whip up millions of dollars and summon door-knockers into action.

Perez said President Joe Biden wouldn’t have won Georgia in 2020 and Warnock and Sen. Jon Ossoff couldn’t have given Democrats a Senate majority two months later without the groundwork Abrams set out.

“The infrastructure Stacey built may not have benefited her in the short run, but it has benefited democracy by putting Georgia in play,” he said.

Texas Democrats, meanwhile, are now back to recalibrating their hopes again, with or without O’Rourke.

“He’s going to have to make some decisions on what he wants to do,” said Texas Democratic Party Chair Gilberto Hinojosa, who struggled to find a candidate even willing to run against Abbott before O’Rourke got in the race last year. “But he remains extremely popular with the Democratic base.”

Addressing supporters after his loss Tuesday night, O’Rourke didn’t sound like he intended to go far. “I don’t know what my role or yours will be going forward, but I’m in this fight for life,” he said.

Brooke Hudspeth, a 36-year-old in suburban Dallas, voted for O’Rourke despite her doubts that it would

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work out this time or any other. "Texas is never going to go Democrat," she said. "If he wants to move on to a different state, he's welcome to."

## US consumer inflation eased to 7.7% over past 12 months

By PAUL WISEMAN and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Price increases moderated in the United States last month in the latest sign that the inflation pressures that have gripped the nation might be easing as the economy slows.

Consumer inflation reached 7.7% in October from a year earlier and 0.4% from September, the government said Thursday. The year-over-year increase, down from 8.2% in September, was the smallest rise since January. Stripping out volatile food and energy prices, "core" inflation rose 6.3% in the past 12 months and 0.3% from September.

The numbers were all lower than economists had expected.

Helping to ease inflation from September to October were used car prices, which dropped for a fourth straight month. Clothing and medical care also fell. Food price increases slowed. By contrast, energy prices rebounded in October after declines in August and September.

Even amid a tentative easing of inflation, the Federal Reserve is will likely continue raising interest rates to cool the economy and stem inflation. Yet data released Thursday raises the possibility that the Fed could at least slow its rate hikes — a prospect that sent U.S. markets soaring.

"We expect this to mark the start of a much longer disinflationary trend that we think will convince the Fed to halt its (hikes) early next year," said Paul Ashworth, chief North American economist at Capital Economics, a consulting firm. "With supply shortages normalizing, deflationary pressure is now finally showing up."

Many economists fear that the central bank's maneuvers could spark a recession by next year. The Fed has raised its benchmark interest rate six times in sizable increments this year, heightening the risk that the cost of borrowing money for homes, autos and other big-ticket items, will tip the world's largest economy into recession.

Lorie Logan, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, said Thursday's figures "were a welcome relief," but added "there is still a long way to go."

Acknowledging that rate hikes can lead to layoffs and falling home prices, Logan said the Fed "must do everything we can to restore price stability." Yet she also opened the door to a more modest pace of rate increases, saying "we should also try, if we can, to avoid incurring costs that are higher than necessary."

Thursday's data and reaction by officials like Logan make it more likely that the Fed will lift rates by a half-percentage point at its next meeting in December, economists said, a step down from the string of three-quarter point hikes this year.

In the midterm elections that ended Tuesday, roughly half of voters cited inflation as the top factor, according to VoteCast, an extensive survey of more than 94,000 voters nationwide conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago. About eight in 10 said the economy was in bad shape, and a slim majority blamed President Joe Biden for worsening inflation. Just under half said factors beyond Biden's control were to blame.

Economic anxieties may have contributed to the loss of Democratic seats in the House of Representatives, though Republicans failed to score the huge political gains that many had expected. And a sizable chunk of voters — 44%, according to VoteCast — said their top concern was the future of democracy, an issue emphasized by Biden and Democratic congressional candidates in an era of unfounded election denial.

Even before the release of Thursday's figures, inflation by some measures had begun to ease and could continue to do so in coming months. There is evidence that the robust pay increases of the past 18 months have leveled off and begun to fall. Though worker pay is not a primary driver of higher prices, it can compound inflationary pressures if companies offset higher labor costs by raising prices.

Except for automakers, which are still struggling to acquire the computer chips they need, supply chain disruptions have largely unwound.

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Malcolm Wilson, CEO of logistics firm GXO, said there has been significant improvement in supply chains. "Supply and manufacture has been a little easier," he said. "I wouldn't say all the disruptions have gone away, but it's been easier."

GXO, which operates warehouses on behalf of large companies, including manufacturers such as Boeing and large retail chains, has also found it easier to staff up for the holidays. Last year, the company had to pay additional bonuses to find the workers it needed, on top of pay raises the implemented over the past two years. This year it hasn't needed to pay the extra incentives to find people with more people looking for work.

"We are probably at the top of the inflation curve," Wilson said. Shipping costs for both overseas carriers and road transport have come down significantly since the height of the pandemic, he said.

The nation's job market remains resilient, however. Employers have added an average of 407,000 jobs a month, and the unemployment rate is 3.7%, close to a half-century low. Job openings remain at historically high levels.

But the Fed's rate hikes have inflicted severe damage on the American housing market. The average rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage has more than doubled over the past year and topped 7% this week. As a result, investment in housing collapsed in the July-September quarter, falling at a 26% annual rate.

Rents, according to outlets like ApartmentList and Zillow, have also begun to fall and that should begin to show up in government data soon, signaling weaker inflation.

The U.S. has managed to dodge inflation levels that have seeped into other national economies after a global pandemic. Inflation is squeezing people around the world, with Russia's invasion disrupting food and fuel supplies to countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, while their currencies have weakened against a strong U.S. dollar, further pushing up costs.

Higher prices are taking a higher toll in Europe, which is feeling the acute effects of an energy crisis triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine. Rising prices, especially for food and energy, have unleashed a wave of protests and strikes as the cost of living soars.

Inflation hit a record 10.7% in the 19-country euro area last month, largely driven by energy prices, and though European leaders have approved relief packages to help with energy bills, the discontent threatens political turmoil.

## Taliban official: Women banned from Afghanistan's gyms

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Taliban are banning women from using gyms in Afghanistan, an official in Kabul said Thursday, the religious group's latest edict cracking down on women's rights and freedoms since they took power more than a year ago.

The Taliban overran the country last year, seizing power in August 2021. They have banned girls from middle school and high school, despite initial promises to the contrary, restricted women from most fields of employment, and ordered them to wear head-to-toe clothing in public.

A spokesman from the Ministry of Virtue and Vice said the ban was being introduced because people were ignoring gender segregation orders and that women were not wearing the required headscarf, or hijab. Women are also banned from parks.

The ban on women using gyms and parks came into force this week, according to Mohammed Akef Mohajer, a Taliban-appointed spokesman for the Ministry of Virtue and Vice.

The group has "tried its best" over the past 15 months to avoid closing parks and gyms for women, ordering separate days of the week for male and female access or imposing gender segregation, he said.

"But, unfortunately, the orders were not obeyed and the rules were violated, and we had to close parks and gyms for women," said Mohajer. "In most cases, we have seen both men and women together in parks and, unfortunately, the hijab was not observed. So we had to come up with another decision and for now we ordered all parks and gyms to be closed for women."

Taliban teams will begin monitoring establishments to check if women are still using them, he said.

A female personal trainer told The Associated Press that women and men were not exercising or training

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together before at the Kabul gym where she works.

"The Taliban are lying," she insisted, speaking on condition of anonymity, fearing reprisals. "We were training separately.

On Thursday, she said two men claiming to be from the Ministry of Virtue and Vice entered her gym and made all the women leave.

"The women wanted to protest about the gyms (closing) but the Taliban came and arrested them," she added. "Now we don't know if they're alive or dead."

Taliban-appointed Kabul police chief spokesman Khalid Zadran said he had no immediate information about women protesting gym closures or arrests.

The U.N. special representative in Afghanistan for women, Alison Davidian, condemned the ban. "This is yet another example of the Taliban's continued and systematic erasure of women from public life," she said. "We call on the Taliban to reinstate all rights and freedoms for women and girls."

Hard-liners appear to hold sway in the Taliban-led administration, which struggles to govern and remains internationally isolated. An economic downturn has driven millions more Afghans into poverty and hunger as the flow of foreign aid has slowed to a trickle.

Kabul-based women's rights activist Sodaba Nazhand said the bans on gyms, parks, work, and school would leave many women wondering what was left for them in Afghanistan.

"It is not just a restriction for women, but also for children," she said. "Children go to a park with their mothers, now children are also prevented from going to the park. It's so sad and unfair."

## Palestinian seeks early release in case that shook Jerusalem

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — It was a crime that convulsed Jerusalem.

On a fall day seven years ago, 13-year-old Palestinian Ahmad Manasra and his 15-year-old cousin tore through the streets of a Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem, armed with knives. His cousin, Hassan, critically wounded a 13-year-old Israeli boy who was leaving a candy store and stabbed another Israeli man. He was shot dead by police. Ahmad was run over by a car, beaten and jeered by Israeli passers-by.

Now, Ahmad, a 20-year-old in isolation and tormented by psychosis, has asked for an early release from prison after completing two-thirds of his sentence. Several courts have rejected his request, arguing that even if prisoners would ordinarily be eligible for release after so long in prison, Ahmad — a "terror" convict — was not, regardless of his age or mental condition.

The Supreme Court will decide whether to hear his appeal in the coming days.

His case has been a lightning rod for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, incensing Israeli Jews who viewed Ahmad as a terrorist seeking to kill Jews his own age and enraging Palestinians who saw him as the victim of a vicious mob and unfair trial, punished for a crime his dead cousin committed. A graphic video of Ahmad lying in the street, bleeding from the head while Israelis taunted him, garnered millions of views.

Ahmad's lawyer argued at the time that he had sought to frighten Jews in retribution for Israeli policies toward Gaza, not kill them.

Over the past six years since Ahmad was convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to nine and a half years in prison, doctors say he developed schizophrenia in solitary confinement and tried to harm himself and others. As of Thursday, Ahmad has spent 354 days in isolation. On Tuesday, he told his lawyer he drank bleach. Just hours later, Israeli attorney general asked the Supreme Court to dismiss the appeal for Ahmad's early release, citing a 2018 counterterrorism amendment.

Ahmad's lawyers say it's the first time a parole committee retroactively applied the law that forbids early release for security cases. Rights groups have decried the law as creating two separate legal norms applying to Israeli and Palestinian convicts.

"People who commit rape are eligible for early release but Ahmad who was arrested at age 13 and with a prison sentence that's endangering his life is not," said Budour Hassan, an Amnesty International researcher.

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Typically in Israel, children under the age of 16 are sent to juvenile detention centers, where they get education and counseling in better conditions than normal prisons. Then judicial officials decide whether to transfer them. Ahmad was sent to a public prison after two years.

For Ahmad's family and supporters, his transformation from a child who cared for birds and loved soccer into a mentally ill high-security prisoner with a growing tendency toward despair is a dark warning about the violence of the Mideast conflict and its impact on the younger generation.

"When he was 13 and he needed his mom the most, he was thrown in prison," his mother, Maysoon Manasra, said from their home in Beit Hanina, in east Jerusalem. It's just across the highway from the settlement Pisgat Ze'ev, where surveillance footage had showed the knife-wielding boys chasing a man through the street. "The prison only offered pain."

A rights group, Defense for Children International-Palestine, estimates that 700 Palestinians under 18 are arrested every year in the occupied West Bank, and hundreds more in east Jerusalem. Between 2016-2021, the group documented 155 cases of prolonged solitary confinement in the West Bank, which Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war.

The teenagers are typically held in a 1-by-1.5-meter (3-by-5-foot) cell flooded with endless light, the group said. Their only human contact is with interrogators. They return to their families deeply scarred, said Ayed Abu Eqtaish, the group's accountability program director.

"We learn from their parents that they become a different person," he said.

According to Ahmad's family and lawyers, he is locked in a small cell for 23 hours a day. He struggles with paranoia and delusions that keep him from sleeping. Authorities first moved him to isolation in November 2021, following a scuffle with another inmate. He becomes so terrified by his hallucinations that he is taken to the psychiatric wing of Ramla Prison in central Israel every few months. Doctors give him injections to stabilize him before sending him back to solitary, his family says.

The Israeli Prison Service said Ahmad "is kept in a supervision cell and not solitary" due to "his mental state." It did not respond to questions about the difference between solitary and a supervision cell.

"His health condition stabilized and (there is) no reason for continued hospitalization," it said.

His father, Saleh Manasra, described the conditions as agonizing.

"He speaks to no one but the worms on the cell floor," he said. "He imagines someone is going to kill him. He imagines someone is chasing him."

Manasra said prison authorities often deny his requests to visit Ahmad. Through the plexiglass every few months, Manasra can tell his son "is getting worse and worse," he said. Ahmad's only plea is that he rejoin the other inmates.

Ahmad's mental anguish started soon after his arrest. Video leaked from his interrogation at age 13 shows him crying and pounding his head in frustration as Israeli interrogators shout questions at him about the attack.

At the time of Ahmad's arrest, children under the age of 14 could not be held criminally responsible under Israeli law. The trial dragged out. Ahmad was convicted after his 14th birthday. Two years later, lawmakers cited Ahmad's case as they passed a law allowing 12-year-olds to be imprisoned on terror charges.

"They're treated like adult security prisoners," said Naji Abbas, case manager at the nonprofit Physicians for Human Rights Israel.

After repeated requests, Israeli prison authorities allowed a doctor from the nonprofit to diagnose Ahmad, then 18. Considering he and his family have no previous psychiatric history, Jerusalem-based psychiatrist Noa Bar Haim attributed Ahmad's schizophrenia to the psychological toll of prison.

"His continued incarceration will inevitably cause his illness to deteriorate and create a permanent disability," she warned, recommending immediate release and intensive psychiatric care.

Instead, he was taken into isolation. Over the last two years, his lawyer Khaled Zabarqa said Ahmad has tried to saw his wrists with whatever sharp edge he could find in his cell.

Despite the extraordinary attention his case has drawn and the outrage it has spawned, his parents insist that growing up, Ahmad didn't understand the conflict that determined his life.

"They call him a terrorist. I don't think he even knew what he was doing or what that would mean,"

Maysoon said.

## Slightly more Americans apply for jobless benefits last week

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) —

The number of Americans applying for jobless benefits rose slightly last week, but the labor market remains healthy despite job cuts that have begun to spread across industries most affected by soaring interest rates, such as housing and technology.

Unemployment claims for the week ending Nov. 5 rose by 7,000 to 225,000 from 218,000 the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The four-week moving average declined by 250 to 218,750.

Applications for jobless claims, which generally track layoffs, have remained historically low this year, even as the Federal Reserve has cranked up its benchmark borrowing rate six times in its effort to cool the economy and tame inflation.

A strong job market is deepening the challenges the Federal Reserve faces as it raises interest rates at the fastest pace since the 1980s to try to bring inflation down from near a 40-year high. Steady hiring, solid pay growth and low unemployment have been good for workers, but have contributed to rising prices.

The government reported Thursday that consumer inflation reached 7.7% in October from a year earlier, the smallest year-over-year gain since January. Excluding volatile food and energy prices, "core" inflation rose 6.3% in the past 12 months and 0.3% from September.

Those number are still high, but came in lower than economists expected, giving a sliver of hope that the Fed will ease up on future rate hikes.

Last week, the Fed raised its short-term lending rate by another 0.75 percentage points, three times its usual margin, for a fourth time this year. Its key rate now stands in a range of 3.75% to 4%, the highest in 15 years.

Fed officials have admitted that part of their strategy is to loosen up the U.S. job market, which has been adding jobs at a furious pace the past two years after COVID-19 hit the U.S. and wiped out more than 20 million jobs.

The Labor Department reported last week that American employers added a healthy 261,000 jobs in October and that the unemployment rate rose from a five-decade low of 3.5% to 3.7%. Fed officials have signaled that the unemployment rate needs to be at least 4% to slow inflation, a threshold that could be met soon as more and more high-profile companies announce layoffs.

Facebook parent Meta said this week it was laying off 11,000 people, about 13% of its workforce, amid slumping revenue and broader tech industry woes. Twitter laid off about half of its 7,500-person staff after Elon Musk took over the company last week. The online real estate broker Redfin announced that it was laying off another 862 employees on Wednesday — after slashing 470 jobs in June — with the housing market in an eight-months-long slump. Redfin has shrunk its workforce by more than 25% since April and rival online broker Compass has also laid off hundreds of workers this year.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that total number of Americans collecting unemployment aid rose by 6,000 to 1.49 million for the week ending Oct. 29, a seven-month high, but still not a troubling level.

## 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

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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 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.

## Today in History: November 11, World War I armistice signed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Nov. 11, the 315th day of 2022. There are 50 days left in the year. Today is Veterans Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 11, 1918, fighting in World War I ended as the Allies and Germany signed an armistice in the Forest of Compiègne (kohm-PYEHN'-yeh).

On this date:

In 1620, 41 Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower, anchored off Massachusetts, signed a compact calling for a "body politick."

In 1831, former slave Nat Turner, who'd led a slave uprising, was executed in Jerusalem, Virginia.

In 1921, the remains of an unidentified American service member were interred in a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in a ceremony presided over by President Warren G. Harding.

In 1938, Irish-born cook Mary Mallon, who'd gained notoriety as the disease-carrying "Typhoid Mary" blamed for the deaths of three people, died on North Brother Island in New York's East River at age 69 after 23 years of mandatory quarantine.

In 1942, during World War II, Germany completed its occupation of France.

In 1966, Gemini 12 blasted off on a four-day mission with astronauts James A. Lovell and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. aboard; it was the tenth and final flight of NASA's Gemini program.

In 1972, the U.S. Army turned over its base at Long Binh to the South Vietnamese, symbolizing the end of direct U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War.

In 1987, following the failure of two Supreme Court nominations, President Ronald Reagan announced his choice of Judge Anthony M. Kennedy, who went on to win confirmation.

In 1992, the Church of England voted to ordain women as priests.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton ordered warships, planes and troops to the Persian Gulf as he laid out his

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case for a possible attack on Iraq. Iraq, meanwhile, showed no sign of backing down from its refusal to deal with U.N. weapons inspectors.

In 2004, Palestinians at home and abroad wept, waved flags and burned tires in an eruption of grief at news of the death of Yasser Arafat in Paris at age 75.

In 2020, Georgia's secretary of state announced an audit of presidential election results that he said would be done with a full hand tally of ballots because the margin was so tight; President-elect Joe Biden led President Donald Trump by about 14,000 votes out of nearly 5 million votes counted in the state. (The audit would affirm Biden's win.) Texas became the first state with more than 1 million confirmed COVID-19 cases.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery and said the Sept. 11 generation had "written one of the greatest chapters" in the country's military service, toppling a dictator and battling an insurgency in Iraq, pushing back the Taliban in Afghanistan and decimating al-Qaida's leadership.

Five years ago: The annual Pacific Rim summit stuck to its tradition of promoting free trade and closer regional ties, shrugging off the "America First" approach that was brought to the summit by President Donald Trump. After talking with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the summit, Trump told reporters that Putin had again insisted that Moscow had not interfered in the 2016 U.S. elections, and Trump said he believed Putin was sincere in making that claim; he accused Democrats of trying to sabotage relations between Washington and Moscow.

One year ago: Facing a surge in coronavirus infections that threatened to overwhelm Colorado hospitals, Gov. Jared Polis defied federal guidance on COVID-19 booster shots by issuing an order allowing all state residents 18 and older to get them. President Joe Biden saluted the nation's military veterans as "the spine of America" as he marked his first Veterans Day as president in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. A spokesman for his foundation confirmed that F.W. de Klerk, South Africa's last apartheid leader, who shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Nelson Mandela and oversaw the end of the country's white minority rule, had died at 85.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Narvel Felts is 84. Former Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., is 82. Americana roots singer/songwriter Chris Smither is 78. Rock singer-musician Vince Martell (Vanilla Fudge) is 77. The president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, is 77. Rock singer Jim Peterik (PEE'-ter-ihk) (Ides of March, Survivor) is 72. Golfer Fuzzy Zoeller is 71. Pop singer-musician Paul Cowsill (The Cowsills) is 71. Rock singer-musician Andy Partridge (XTC) is 69. Singer Marshall Crenshaw is 69. Rock singer Dave Alvin is 67. Rock musician Ian Craig Marsh (Human League; Heaven 17) is 66. Actor Stanley Tucci is 62. Actor Demi Moore is 60. Actor Calista Flockhart is 58. Actor Frank John Hughes is 55. TV personality Carson Kressley is 53. Actor David DeLuise is 51. Actor Adam Beach is 50. Actor Tyler Christopher is 50. Actor Leonardo DiCaprio is 48. Actor Scoot McNairy is 45. Rock musician Jonathan Pretus (formerly with Cowboy Mouth) is 41. Actor Frankie Shaw is 41. Musician Jon Batiste is 36. Actor Christa B. Allen is 31. Actor Tye Sheridan is 26. Actor Ian Patrick is 20.