

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar

Wednesday, Nov. 16

Senior Menu: Ham loaf, sweet potatoes, peas, acini depepi fruit salad, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Eggs and breakfast potatoes.
School Lunch: Chicken strips, fries.
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.
UMC: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.; UMYF/FCCLA Food Drive, 6 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

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

Thursday, Nov. 17

Senior Menu: Taco salad, Mexican rice, seasonal fresh fruit, breadstick.
School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.
School Lunch: Hot dogs, chips.
Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA "Praise & Thanksgiving" - Program: Sarah, Hostess: Nigeria.
UMC: Bible Study with Ashley, 6:30 p.m.; Newsletter items due.
State A Volleyball Tourney in Sioux Falls

Friday, Nov. 18

Senior Menu: Chili, corn bread, coleslaw, lime pear Jell-O.
School Breakfast: Biscuit and Jelly
School Lunch: Mac and cheese, peas.
State A Volleyball Tourney in Sioux Falls
JH GBB hosts Milbank (7th at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade game)

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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Weather delayed Veteran's Day Program

The weather did not cancel the Veteran's Day Program that was scheduled for Friday, but only postponed it to Monday with all activities being held. The breakfast was held at the elementary school with the program in the afternoon. Five Veterans were honored this year with the Quilt of Honor. The quilts were made by Karen Wolter. Dr. Tracy Diefenbach talked about the DTOM ranch near Warner and the services that are provided for the Veterans.

Music was provided by the school's music department. The All State Chorus members sang the "Star Spangled Banner"; The 8-12 choir sang, "Of Thee I Sing, America!"; The JK/Kindergarten and First Graders sang, "This Land is Your Land"; the second and third graders sang, "I'm A Yankee Doodle Dandy"; the fourth and fifth graders sang, "Let Freedom Ring"; the 6-7 choir sang, "For Which it Stands"; and the 8-12 Band performed the Service Songs; and along with the entire student body and band, "America the Beautiful" was sung. The Groton American Legion Post #39 presented the colors and Jayden Schwan performed "Taps."



The All State Chorus students sang the "Star Spangled Banner," under the direction of Scott Glodt. Pictured are Cadance Tullis, Anna Bisbee, Carter Barse, Axel Warrington, Kianna Sanders, Shaylee Peterson, Rebecca Poor, Ellie Weismantel. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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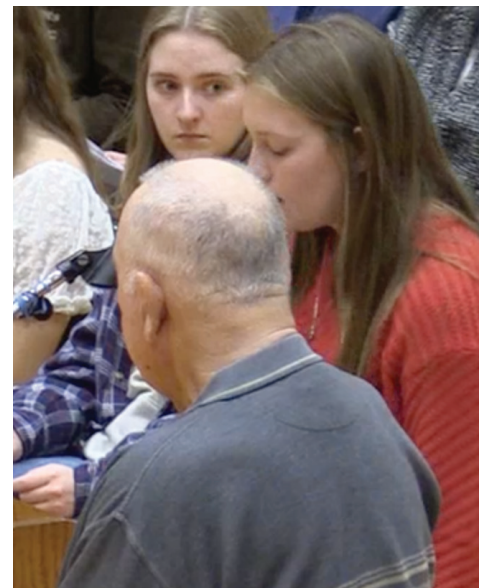
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Mia Crank read the story about Stanley Monson, Sr. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Logan Warrington read the story about Charles Robinson. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Jaedyn Penning read the story about Edward Stauch. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Lucas Carda read the story about Bob Voss. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Jerica Locke read the story about Thomas Belden. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Jayden Schwan performed "Taps."
(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



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Cadance Tullis and Gracie Traphagen gave the introductory remarks. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Dr. Tracy Diefenbach talked about the services provided for Veterans, free of charge, at the DTOM ranch. For more information about their ranch, go to dtom220.org. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Shaylee Peterson gave the introduction for the Groton Legion Auxiliary, who presented Quilts of Honor to several Veterans. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Pictured are the readers, guest speaker, Veterans and their wives. In back, left to right, are Shaylee Peterson, Jerica Locke, Connie Stauch, Chris Reder from DTOM, Jaedyn Penning, Logan Warrington, Mia Crank, Lucas Carda, Nina Monson, Dr. Tracy Diefenbach from DTOM, and Charlene Voss; in front are Thomas Belden, Edward Stauch, Charles Robinson, Stanley Monson, Sr., and Bob Voss. (Photo by Jan Seibel)

Skating Rink tarp high on the discussion for this year

There was discussion on putting a tarp on the skating pond to help with the water containment. A tarp to cover the pond ranges from \$3,800 to \$4,500. There was discussion of then putting gravel on it which would amount to an additional \$10,000. Time was of the essence with the next council meeting set for December 6. It will take time to order the tarp, get the gravel and put the tarp down before water can be put on it. No decision was made, but further research into the tarp for this year is being done. The company would come out to install the tarp at a rate of \$190 per hour per person; however, the council figured that city employees and other volunteers could do it to save that money.

The bills included \$13,255.13 to have electrical service installed at the Groton Municipal Airport. An easement for the utilities for the airport and a construction contract with Northern Electric was approved.

A change order for Dahme Construction was approved which resulted in a reduction of \$92,753.12. A pay request in the amount of \$185,419 for McGuire Iron was approved.

The park bathrooms were discussed. Councilman Karyn Babcock said she would like to see what the city could get with a FEMA grant which would cover about 75 percent of the cost. Councilman Kevin Nehls said the council needs to look at plans before a decision could be made. Councilman Brian Bahr said there are other options for a storm shelter without going the FEMA route. A Land Conservation Grant would be a possibility with the park bathrooms. There are colonies in the area that do precast buildings. Bahr will be looking into the precast option.

The 2023 salary ordinance was approved at a 3 percent wage increase for all full time city employees. The 2023 Appropriation Ordinance was approved which amounts to \$2,034,935.

The Holiday Lighting Contest was approved with the winners receiving credits on their utility bills. First place would be \$100, second place \$75 and third place \$50. Judging will be December 10.

Curb and gutter around the soccer field was discussed. There are some areas that streets need to be repaired.

The following were hired for working at the skating rink: Kelsie Frost as manager; attendants Emma Schinkel, Shalyn Foertsch, Aspen Johnson, Anna Fjeldheim, Carly Guthmiller, Cadence Feist, Ashley Johnson, Emma Kutter, Gretchen Dinger, Abby Yeadon, Kayleigh McGannon and Leah Jones. The wage was set at \$10.80 per hour for attendants and the manager will get \$11.40 per hour plus \$250 a month.

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Groton City Financial Report

October 2022

Dacotah Bank Checking Acct	\$ 3,528,160.86
General Cash	\$ 300.00
SD FIT Acct	\$ 1,565,388.25
Dacotah Bank Water CD	\$ 85,379.54
Cemetery Perp Care CD	\$ 32,876.69
Total	\$ 5,212,105.34

Invested In		
Cash	\$ 300.00	0.01%
Dacotah Bank	\$ 3,646,417.09	69.96%
SD Fit	\$ 1,565,388.25	30.03%
Total	\$ 5,212,105.34	100.00%

	Beginning	Revenue	Expenses	Transfers	Ending
	Cash Balance				Cash Balance
General	\$ 1,113,363.32	\$ 115,150.85	\$ 86,183.22		\$ 1,142,330.95
Bed, Board, Booze Tax	\$ 143,824.65	\$ 2,947.63			\$ 146,772.28
Baseball Uniforms	\$ 1,710.20				\$ 1,710.20
Airport	\$ 37,972.29	\$ 426.22	\$ 31.25		\$ 38,367.26
**Debt Service	\$ (80,841.55)	\$ 430.11	\$ 7,077.87		\$ (87,489.31)
Cemetery Perpetual Care	\$ 34,756.69				\$ 34,756.69
Water	\$ 402,214.25	\$ 137,968.46	\$ 36,082.01		\$ 504,100.70
Electric	\$ 2,838,491.61	\$ 129,780.77	\$ 81,722.74		\$ 2,886,549.64
Wastewater	\$ 301,058.80	\$ 17,784.60	\$ 29,948.91		\$ 288,894.49
Solid Waste	\$ 53,461.36	\$ 11,318.09	\$ 10,322.11		\$ 54,457.34
Family Crisis	\$ 12,076.40	\$ 400.00	\$ 333.49		\$ 12,142.91
Sales Tax	\$ 10,768.00	\$ 8,506.65	\$ 9,736.32		\$ 9,538.33
Employment	\$ (2,329.74)		\$ 54.75		\$ (2,274.99)
Utility Prepayments	\$ 88,169.78	\$ (2,132.59)			\$ 86,037.19
Utility Deposits	\$ 93,111.30	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 499.96		\$ 94,111.34
Other	\$ 2,100.32				\$ 2,100.32
Totals	\$ 5,049,907.68	\$ 424,080.79	\$ 261,992.63	\$ -	\$ 5,212,105.34

**Debt to be Paid		
**2015 Refinance	\$ 1,972,637.49	by 12/1/2035
Total Debt	\$ 1,972,637.49	

\$266,747.00 ARPA GRANT (Received to General)
 \$89,223.86 Water tower loan payment

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Google settlement nets \$4.2 million for South Dakota

BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 15, 2022 4:17 PM

South Dakota is set to collect a portion of a massive settlement against tech giant Google over privacy violations.

Attorneys general from Oregon and Nebraska were among those that led the legal challenge against Google. South Dakota was one of 29 states to join final settlement talks.

The action questioned the legality of the company's location tracking, which logged user locations in certain applications even after users explicitly turned off location tracking on their phones.

The \$391.5 million settlement, announced Monday, amounts to the largest privacy related multi-state attorney general settlement in U.S. history.

South Dakota will get \$4,244,505 from the settlement. Acting Attorney General Mark Vargo called the settlement a win for South Dakota smartphone users.

"This is an important day for consumers who need to be able to make informed decisions in a transparent landscape," Vargo said in a prepared statement. "We will always fight for the privacy rights of our citizens."

The investigation into Google's privacy practices was an outgrowth of a story from the Associated Press pointing out that the act of turning off a smartphone's location tracking was not enough to keep Android phones from tracking user locations on all apps and services. The AGs investigation revealed that Google

**'TIS THE
SEASON TO
SHOP LOCAL**

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce



misled consumers about location tracking in violation of state privacy laws and had done so since at least 2014.

In addition to the cash payout to 40 states, Google will be required to:

Show additional information to users whenever they turn a location-related account setting "on" or "off";

Make key information about location tracking unavoidable for users (i.e., not hidden); and

Give users detailed information about the types of location data Google collects and how it's used at an enhanced "Location Technologies" webpage.

Attorney General spokesman Stewart Huntington said the \$4.2 million will be deposited into the state's consumer protection fund "to be used at the discretion of the Attorney General for the benefit and education of South Dakota consumers and for the enforcement of the consumer protection laws."



JOHN HULT ✉ 🐦

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

Tabulator catches human error in Tripp County post-election audit

'To me, that shows that the machine is more accurate than humans,' auditor says

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - 1:48 PM

The case of Tripp County's 75 "missing" ballots has been solved, County Auditor Barb Desersa said this week.

The discrepancy emerged last week after a hand count of ballots in the only county in South Dakota in nearly 20 years to perform one. The mismatch does not have any impact on election results.

Tripp County officials were prepared to ask for a court order to reopen a ballot box to find the answer, but the question was resolved without one. The human error explanation for the mismatch, it turned out, was right there in the records from the vote tabulator – the machine that county commissioners had ordered Desersa not to use to tally the county's official, reportable Election Day results.

A Thursday vote canvas revealed a discrepancy in a single precinct between the number of official, completed ballots recorded in the poll book and the number of audited ballots in one precinct.

Several races had to be recounted by Tripp County's volunteer counting boards – sometimes three or four times on election night. The last precinct to come in, Colome, had mismatched numbers according to the tabulator audit the next day.

Desersa ran the audit to prove to her county commissioners and residents that the machine was accurate.

The mismatched numbers prove the point, Desersa said Monday.

Each ballot handed out on Election Day is identified by precinct, she said, with the precinct name printed on the bottom of each ballot. Somehow staff placed 100 ballots labeled for another precinct in the Colome-labeled ballot box ahead of the election. Those ballots were then used and voted on during Election Day in Colome.

While the poll books and hand counts were accurate with the number of ballots for that precinct, the tabulator recognized that 75 of the ballots from the Colome precinct were originally labeled for another precinct, Clearfield.

Days after the election, those 75 ballots were found tallied in the tabulator's history for the Clearfield precinct, rather than for Colome, even though they recorded Colome votes.

"Nobody noticed they were (labeled as) Clearfield ballots instead of Colome all day," Desersa said. "They're written on the bottom. But it shows the machine is more accurate because it knew to put those Clearfield ballots into the precinct. It read it as 'those don't belong there.' It was human error."

Staff didn't realize the problem at first because they run ballots through the machine by precinct rather than in a county-wide batch. Colome was the last precinct, so they didn't think to check other precinct numbers. It was after they found a handful of unused Clearfield-labeled ballots inside Colome's unused

ballot box that they realized what had happened.

"The machine caught it," Desersa said. "To me, that shows that the machine is more accurate than humans."

While the mystery of the 75 ballots is solved, Desersa still believes it'll be a long week. Word has spread that the tabulator "lost" 75 ballots, and people who doubt the machine's accuracy are using it as fodder, even though Desersa and her staff believed it was human error from the beginning.

"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," Deputy Auditor Marcia Haukaas told South Dakota Searchlight last week.

Desersa encourages anyone who still has doubts about tabulators and their accuracy to come into her office so she can show them how the tabulators work and how the discrepancy happened.

"It's not over. It's been a nightmare," Desersa said. "To me, it's plain as day (that the machine is more accurate), but I know there are others that don't see it that way and question it."



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.

Water quality group gives Big Sioux River an 'F' grade over E. coli contamination

Cattle waste runs off of fields and into public waters during rainfall

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 15, 2022 12:01 PM

A water conservation non-profit gives the Big Sioux River an 'F' grade over E. coli levels beyond what's considered safe by the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR).

Nitrate levels in the river, fueled in part by agricultural fertilizer runoff, are also rising.

The report card was presented Monday evening at Augustana University in Sioux Falls by Friends of the Big Sioux River (FBSR) in the form of its 2022 water quality summary of the Big Sioux River watershed.

A watershed is an area of land with a common set of waterways and streams that all drain into a single larger body of water, such as a river. To assess the Big Sioux watershed, FBSR took 500 samples at 18 locations along the river, from Dell Rapids to Akron.

The group reports that over 75% of water samples taken throughout 2022 had E. coli levels considered "unsafe for emersion."

Water quality degrades in the Big Sioux River as it flows south, according to the nonprofit's report. The southern monitoring sites at Newton Hills and Akron have higher levels of contaminants.

The primary cause of the unsafe levels is cattle feces, which runs off from farms after rainfall events and makes its way to public waters. A water sample taken just south of Brandon two days after record rain showed E. coli levels almost 200 times higher than the DANR's allowable limits.

Pollution high in spite of dry conditions

This year's results are telling, given that the region didn't receive a lot of rain, said FBSR Treasurer Rachel Koos.

Some Sioux Falls residents want to see the state do something about contaminants. A river with high levels of E. coli running through the state's largest city is not safe, they say – especially given children play along the river.

FBSR has turned the water sample findings over to DANR. The department is required to issue a water quality report every two years for the federal government.

DANR did not immediately reply to a request for comment regarding the department's efforts to limit cattle feces from entering the Big Sioux River watershed.

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DANR's biannual reports have shown high levels of E. coli for years.

Travis Entenman, managing director of FBSR, said the state offers a lot of "carrots" to keep livestock waste out of public water. It may be time for some "sticks," Entenman said.

"The fines that we give after someone violates a permit could have more teeth to them. Maybe it's getting cattle out of the water bodies altogether like in many eastern states," Entenman said. "Or, we could look at what Minnesota has done with mandatory buffer strips."

A buffer strip is a vegetated area along a stream or river that helps filter out the waste and soil prior to entering the water. Buffer strip root systems prevent soil erosion along the stream and river banks.

Nitrates on the radar

FBSR also tests for nitrate levels, which continue to rise but are within safe levels. However, for the second year in a row, nitrates in one water sample exceeded safe levels in the Big Sioux River.

Nitrogen is one of the necessary nutrients for plant growth — it's often applied to fields in the form of fertilizer. Nitrates are a combination of nitrogen and oxygen.

Nitrates can be carried into watersheds by drain tiles, which are perforated pipes buried under farmland to remove excess water during wet seasons. They stabilize the water table for the crops a farmer has planted, but they also carry anything water soluble with that water — like nitrates.

The number of drain tile projects increased in eastern South Dakota in the 2000s, generally because of increased precipitation and demand for higher yields. Some farmers have taken advantage of the drought to install drain tile where fields had previously been too wet to get the tile installed.

Iowa has experienced the downsides of drain tile, however.

Des Moines had to build nitrate removal facilities in response to drain tiling.

Newborns began developing Infant Methemoglobinemia, or "blue baby syndrome," where nitrogen levels starve the body of oxygen.

The Big Sioux River is not at that level yet, according to Koos, the FBSR treasurer

"Nitrates are not a really big problem for us right now. But we want to proactively watch it because we know how big of a problem that can be," Koos said.

'Heartland River'

The impetus for the event was the release of "Heartland River," a collection of essays that aim to tell the story of the Big Sioux River.

The book was not conceived as a means to advance water quality discussions, but some authors feature in the book hope its documentation of the river's history and cultural significance can serve to inform them.

David O'Hara, director of sustainability at Augustana University, said if people learn the history of the river, they may come to care more about it.

"It wasn't that long ago that this river was clear as glass," O'Hara said. "This is going to down to asking the question, 'how can we, along the banks of the Big Sioux River, become leaders in water and soil conservation in such a way that we're making money doing that.'"



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.

Studies show gains against childhood hunger were lost after child tax credit ended

BY: DAVID DEWITT - NOVEMBER 15, 2022 5:20 PM

An article in the Journal of the American Medical Association in October confirmed previous research that food insecurity increased substantially after the expiration of federal monthly advanced child tax credits on Jan. 15, 2022.

The study looked at the period between January and July of this year in a series of national surveys, and found a nearly 25% increase in food insufficiency, impacting Black, Hispanic and Indigenous families the most.

The article published Oct. 21 in JAMA, "Association of the Expiration of Child Tax Credit Advance Payments With Food Insufficiency in US Households," involved a cross-sectional study of repeated surveys from a nationally representative sample of 592,044 U.S. households.

"The findings of this study suggest that the loss of monthly (child tax credit) payments was associated with an increase in the prevalence of households with children in the U.S. reporting sometimes or often not having enough to eat, a condition associated with adverse health outcomes across the life span," the article's findings conclude.

The Advance Child Tax Credit (CTC) monthly payments from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) were administered to more than 35 million households with children in the U.S. between July and December 2021. Numbers from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities show the credits benefited an estimated 2.37 million children in Ohio. The tax credits were associated with a substantial decrease in food insufficiency, the study said.

Under ARPA, three major changes to the credit were enacted for tax year 2021: an expansion of eligibility to include families earning very low or no income; a boost in credit amounts from a maximum credit of \$2,000 per child per year previously to \$3,000 per child aged 6 to 17 per year and \$3,600 per child younger than 6 per year; and provision for half of the credit as an advanced monthly payment between July and December 2021.

As a result of these changes, an estimated 92% of families with children were eligible to receive \$250 to \$300 monthly per child between July and December 2021, the study said. National data show that parents report spending the monthly CTC payments on food, utilities, rent, clothing, and educational expenses, the article said.

These monthly payments expired in January 2022 after U.S. Congress failed to extend the policy.

During a series of surveys done by researchers, just before CTC expiration, unadjusted household food insufficiency was 12.7% among households with children.

In late January and early February 2022, following the first missed CTC monthly payment, 13.6% of households with children reported food insufficiency, increasing to 16% by late June and early July 2022.

"Given the well-documented associations between inability to afford food and poor health outcomes across the life span, Congress should consider swift action to reinstate this policy," the JAMA article recommended.

These latest findings reflect earlier research done by the national nonpartisan Brookings Institution research group and published in April 2022 in a report titled, "The impacts of the 2021 expanded child tax credit on family employment, nutrition, and financial well-being."

Brookings researchers said the temporary tax credit expansion "was unprecedented in its reach," and that it lifted 3.7 million children out of poverty as of December 2021.

"The expanded CTC significantly improved food security and healthy eating among those eligible," Brookings found.

Moreover, that study said, around 70% of CTC recipients who were negatively affected by inflation said the payments helped them to better manage higher prices.

Apart from increased food security, other areas Brookings said the tax credits helped families included statistically significant declines in credit card debt compared to those not eligible; reductions in reliance

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on high-cost financial services such as payday loans and pawn shops, and also reduced rates of selling blood plasma; increased ability to manage emergency expenses and strengthening of family emergency funds; and significant declines in evictions.

Brookings also found the credit allowed families of color to make significant investments in their children's long-term educational outcomes. Black, Hispanic and other non-white households were more likely to use the credit for child care and education expenses, Brookings found.



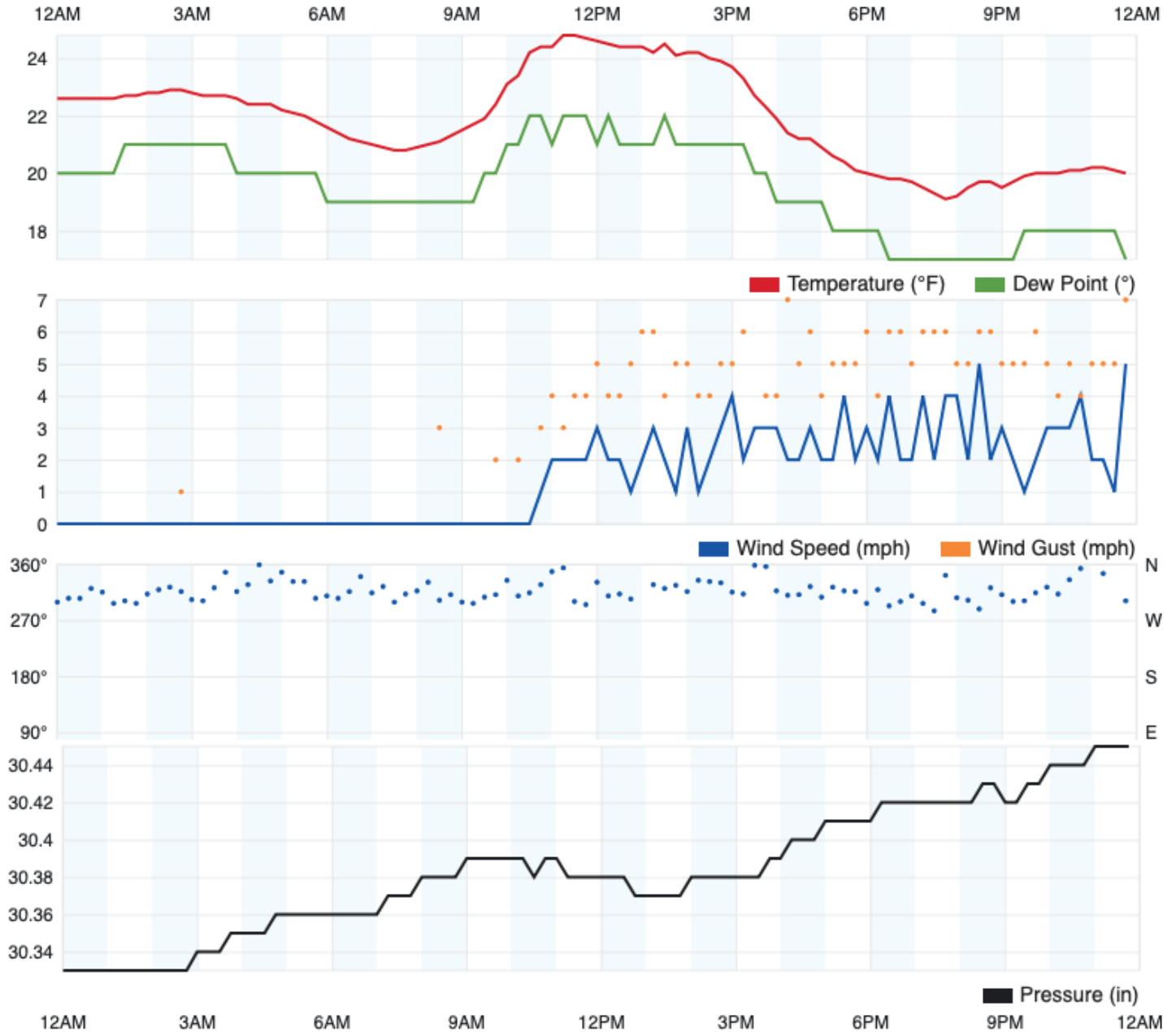
DAVID DEWITT

Ohio Capital Journal Editor-in-Chief David DeWitt has more than 15 years experience covering Ohio government, politics and policy, including education, health care, crime and courts, poverty, state and local government, business, labor, energy, environment, and social issues. He has worked for the National Journal, The New York Observer, The Athens NEWS, and Plunderbund.com. He holds a bachelor's degree from Ohio University's E.W. Scripps School of Journalism and is a board member of the E.W. Scripps Society of Alumni and Friends.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
 60%	 30%	 20%				
Mostly Sunny then Snow Likely	Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Slight Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Mostly Cloudy and Blustery then Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 24 °F	Low: 13 °F	High: 19 °F	Low: 1 °F	High: 17 °F	Low: 4 °F	High: 16 °F



Blowing Snow Threat Looms For Thursday

November 16, 2022
4:41 AM

Key Messages

- Travel could be impacted...factor in some extra time and take it slow!
- **Expect a strong cold front's passage today to result in:**
 - ◆ Strong northwest winds developing by tonight and persisting through Friday...
 - ◆ Isolated/Scattered snow showers and pre-existing snow on the ground to combine with strong winds to create areas of blowing snow...
 - ◆ Where pre-existing ice still coats trees and power infrastructure, these strong winds could cause damage and power interruptions

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	11/16 Wed				11/17 Thu				11/18 Fri						
	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am
Aberdeen	21	23	20	24	29	30	36	43	39	36	36	25	24	23	23
Britton	23	25	22	24	29	29	37	43	39	39	36	26	24	22	21
Eagle Butte	29	35	33	32	33	37	40	43	43	44	40	30	29	29	29
Eureka	25	29	28	29	32	36	40	44	44	41	38	26	25	24	23
Gettysburg	24	28	29	29	31	36	41	46	46	43	39	28	26	26	25
Kennebec	25	29	30	28	30	33	38	47	46	44	40	29	29	29	28
McIntosh	36	38	35	33	37	39	44	49	47	46	41	28	26	26	28
Milbank	21	21	20	20	23	26	32	37	36	33	31	25	25	25	23
Miller	24	24	23	24	29	31	35	44	44	43	37	25	25	25	26
Mobridge	24	28	26	30	30	35	40	38	40	41	39	28	23	22	21
Murdo	26	32	32	29	30	33	40	48	47	46	43	30	28	25	26
Pierre	21	25	28	24	26	30	33	40	41	40	38	25	25	25	24
Redfield	20	21	20	24	29	30	38	47	44	40	37	24	25	24	23
Sisseton	23	25	26	24	29	30	35	38	38	38	36	28	28	26	26
Watertown	23	24	23	23	28	30	35	40	39	38	36	28	28	25	26
Webster	24	28	26	26	32	32	40	45	45	45	40	29	28	25	26
Wheaton	20	18	18	21	23	25	30	33	31	31	29	25	25	24	22

Blowing snow is a concern because of the strong winds expected to develop later tonight into Thursday.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 24.8 °F at 11:30 AM

Low Temp: 19.1 °F at 7:45 PM

Wind: 7 mph at 4:15 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 31 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 71 in 2001

Record Low: -12 in 1955

Average High: 42°F

Average Low: 19°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.44

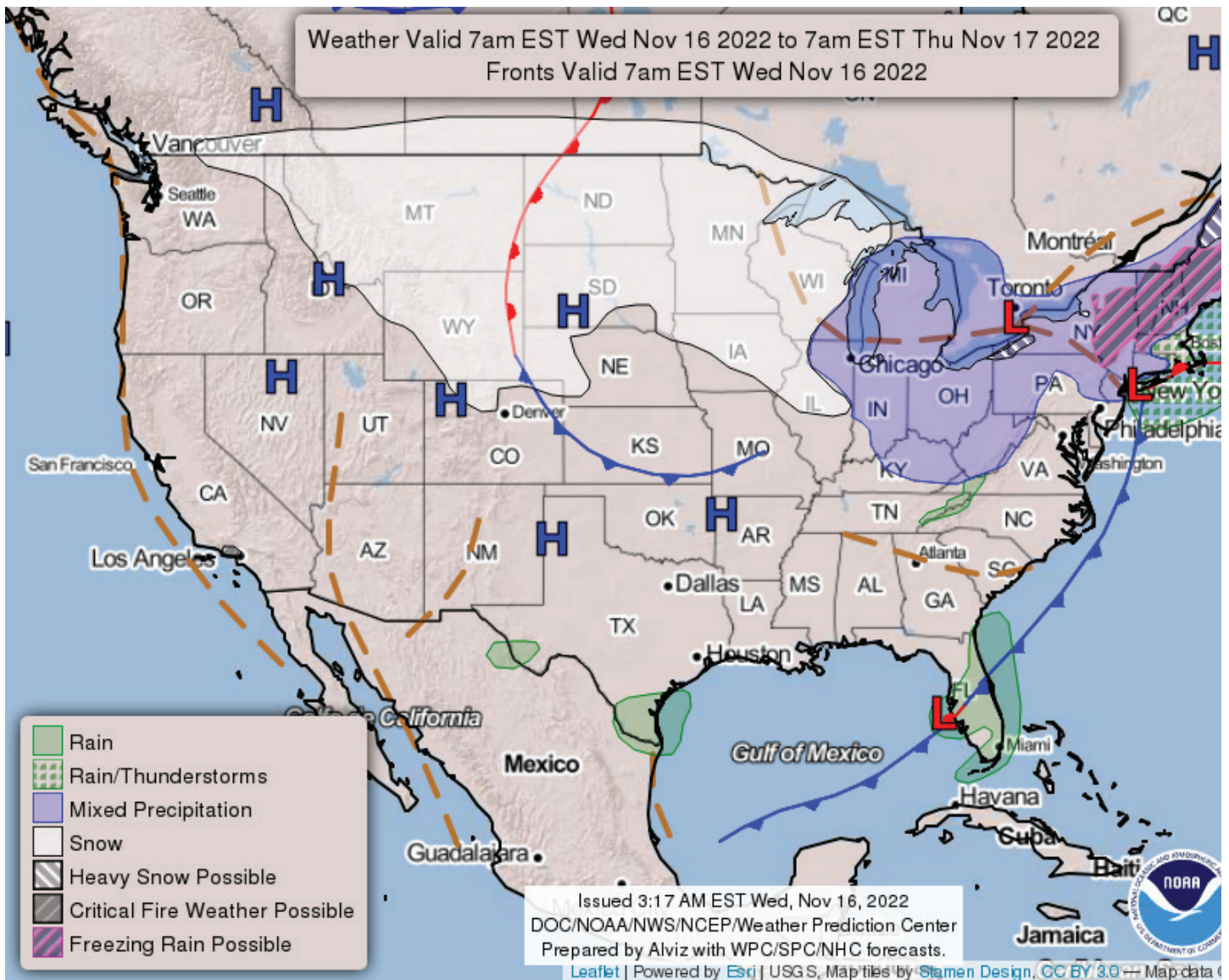
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.91

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 5:03:01 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:32:45 AM



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Today in Weather History

November 16, 1996: An area of low pressure brought 6 to 9 inches of snowfall to most of central and parts of north-central South Dakota on the 16th, while widespread freezing rain associated with the warm front of the system, along with 4 to 10 inches of snow, fell in northeast South Dakota. Travel was significantly affected, and a few minor accidents occurred during the storm. Several sporting events and activities were postponed or canceled. Strong north winds late on the 16th into early the 17th resulted in near-blizzard conditions across northeast South Dakota. Some storm total snowfall amounts include, 9.0 inches 12SSW of Harrold; 8.5 inches near Highmore; 8.2 inches in Roscoe; 8.0 in Eureka; 7.9 inches near Mellette; 7.0 inches in Waubay; 6.5 inches in Murdo and Redfield; 6.0 inches in Kennebec and Miller; 5.5 inches near Victor; and 5.3 inches in Sisseton.

1958 - More than six inches of snow fell at Tucson, AZ. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1959 - The most severe November cold wave in U.S. history was in progress. A weather observing station located 14 miles northeast of Lincoln MT reported a reading of 53 degrees below zero, which established an all-time record low temperature for the nation for the month of November. Their high that day was one degree above zero. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - High winds and heavy snow created blizzard conditions across parts of eastern Colorado. Wind gusts reached 68 mph at Pueblo, and snowfall totals ranged up to 37 inches at Echo Lake. In Wyoming, the temperature dipped to 14 degrees below zero at Laramie. Strong thunderstorms in Louisiana drenched Alexandria with 16.65 inches of rain in thirty hours, with an unofficial total of 21.21 inches north of Olla. Flash flooding in Louisiana caused five to six million dollars damage. (15th-16th) (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A powerful low pressure system in the north central U.S. produced high winds across the Great Lakes Region, with wind gusts to 60 mph reported at Chicago IL. Heavy snow blanketed much of Minnesota, with eleven inches reported at International Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Snow and gusty winds invaded the north central U.S. Winds gusting to 40 mph produced wind chill readings as cold as 25 degrees below zero, and blizzard conditions were reported in Nebraska during the late morning hours. High winds around a powerful low pressure system produced squalls in the Great Lakes Region. Winds gusted to 63 mph at Whitefish Point MI, and snowfall totals in Michigan ranged up to 19 inches at Hart, north of Muskegon. (15th-16th) (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006: An early morning F3 tornado killed eight people, injured 20 others and left 100 people homeless in Riegelwood, North Carolina. This storm was the second deadliest tornado in the state in the past 50 years.
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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE MEMORIES OF A HOLY GOD

It almost seems contradictory when we read these words of the Psalmist: "For He remembered His holy promise." It's as if God were in a grocery store, and just as He began to walk through the parking lot to His car, He stopped and said, "Oh my. I forgot the milk! I'm glad I thought of it." But, not so.

As Psalm 105 ends, the author reminds us of the faithfulness of our God. So, he wanted to remind the readers, once again, that whether or not they were faithful to Him, He was faithful to them. He made a covenant with Abraham, and through the many generations from the day that covenant was made until that very moment, He was always with them. When they felt alone, He made His presence known. When they needed protection, He was there to guard them. When they were hungry, He provided food to nourish them. When they were weak and weary, they could rely on His power.

God has been, is and will be true to what He says. And, He is faithful to keep His word to whomever He gives it. Wherever we look in history - in times of defeat and delay - it does not mean that God has forgotten what He has promised. God is always faithful to His holy promises. His promises are holy and sacred because they come from a God who is holy and sacred. Through days that seemed unbearable and nights that had no stars, God was always with them - working out His will in His way according to His plan.

God calls us to Himself to make us like Himself. He will do whatever it takes to restore His image in us. Remember: God is a "working in us God" and always faithful.

Prayer: Give us patience and perseverance, faith and willingness, hope and trust, Lord, as we become like You. Help us to remember our promises to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham. Psalm 105:42



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 Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

06-19-28-46-61, Mega Ball: 18, Megaplier: 2

(six, nineteen, twenty-eight, forty-six, sixty-one; Mega Ball: eighteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$238,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 76,000,000

Sanford Health and Fairview Health Services Announce Intent to Combine, Creating New Health System Focused on Providing Accessible, High-Quality Health Care to Patients Across Rural, Urban Communities

SIOUX FALLS, S.D., & MINNEAPOLIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Nov 15, 2022--

Sanford Health, the largest rural health system in the United States, and Fairview Health Services, one of the leading providers of health care in Minnesota, have signed a non-binding letter of intent to combine and create a new health system. Together, the combined system will bring together Sanford Health's experience serving rural populations with Fairview Health Services' experience in serving urban populations across complementary geographic footprints. The combined system will be uniquely positioned to provide more people access to high-quality, equitable health care, accelerate population health and value-based care, and drive clinical innovation to benefit rural, urban and indigenous communities across the Midwest.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20221114005995/en/>

"Our organizations are united by a shared commitment to advance the health and wellbeing of our communities," said Sanford Health President and CEO Bill Gassen. "As a combined system, we can do more to expand access to complex and highly specialized care, utilize innovative technology and provide a broader range of virtual services, unlock greater research capabilities and transform the care delivery experience to ensure every patient receives the best care no matter where they live."

"With Sanford Health, Fairview Health Services has found a partner that shares our midwestern values and our commitment to affordable, accessible and equitable care delivery," said Fairview Health Services President and CEO James Hereford. "Our complementary capabilities mean that together, we are uniquely positioned to improve clinical outcomes, develop new care delivery models, expand opportunities for employees and clinicians across our broader operational footprint, and apply our combined resources to positively impact the wellbeing of our patients and communities today and for decades to come."

The combined system will:

Drive value through quality care and improved outcomes; Support health equity; Improve the patient experience; Help support more affordable care in the communities we serve; Provide opportunities for continued employee growth and clinical advancement; and Foster a culture of innovation that enables us to recruit and retain the best and brightest across our operational footprint. Sanford Health and Fairview Health Services will remain nonprofit entities, each with their own regional presence, leadership and regional boards in the markets they serve. Upon close of the transaction, the name of the parent company will be Sanford Health. Sanford Health CEO Bill Gassen will serve as President and CEO of the combined system, and Fairview Health Services CEO James Hereford will serve as Co-CEO for a period of one year

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post-closing.

The governing boards of both health systems have approved proceeding with necessary steps, such as due diligence and review processes, with the goal of organizing Fairview Health Services and Sanford Health under a single integrated health system. The intention is for a definitive agreement to be signed and the closing of the transaction is anticipated in 2023, pending antitrust and other necessary reviews and closing conditions.

Sanford Health, Fairview Health Services and their partners are committed to ensuring the patients, residents and communities they serve continue to have access to exceptional care from their clinicians during the completion of this process.

About Sanford Health

Sanford Health, the largest rural health system in the United States, is dedicated to transforming the health care experience and providing access to world-class health care in America's heartland. Headquartered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the organization serves more than one million patients and 220,000 health plan members across 250,000 square miles. The integrated health system has 47 medical centers, 2,800 Sanford Health physicians and advanced practice providers, 170 clinical investigators and research scientists, more than 200 Good Samaritan Society senior care locations and world clinics in 8 countries around the globe.

About Fairview Health Services

Fairview Health Services is a Minneapolis-based nonprofit health system driven to heal, discover, and educate for longer, healthier lives. Founded in 1906, Fairview Health Services provides exceptional care to patients and communities as one of the most comprehensive and geographically accessible systems in Minnesota. The Fairview Health Services system includes 31,000 employees across eleven hospitals, more than 80 primary and specialty care clinics, 36 retail and specialty pharmacies, rehabilitation centers, physician network, senior care housing and long-term care facilities, and medical transportation.

Dentlinger leads South Dakota St. over St. Bonaventure 66-62

By The Associated Press undefined

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Matt Dentlinger had 16 points in South Dakota State's 66-62 victory against St. Bonaventure on Tuesday night.

Dentlinger added six rebounds for the Jackrabbits (2-1). Charlie Easley added nine points while going 3 of 8 (1 for 5 from distance), and he also had four steals. Luke Appel shot 3 of 3 from the field and 3 for 4 from the line to finish with nine points.

Kyrell Luc led the Bonnies (1-2) in scoring, finishing with 17 points, five assists and six steals. Yann Farell added 16 points and 11 rebounds for St. Bonaventure. In addition, Daryl Banks III finished with 14 points and two steals.

Dentlinger scored 10 points in the first half and South Dakota State went into halftime trailing 32-30. Tanner Te Slaa led South Dakota State with seven points in the second half as their team outscored St. Bonaventure by six points over the final half.

NEXT UP

South Dakota State plays Wednesday against Arkansas on the road, and St. Bonaventure hosts Bowling Green on Saturday.

Climate talks deal with fast coming deadlines, slow progress

By FRANK JORDANS, SAMY MAGDY and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — With an end-of-the-week deadline rushing at them faster than agreements are coming out of them, negotiators at the U.N. climate summit are in a difficult spot.

Talks in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh got off to a plodding start and are behind the pace of previous meetings as government ministers return to Egypt to take over negotiations with three days left before the scheduled close Friday.

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"I think we still have a long way to go. But I'm I remain hopeful that we can come to good conclusions," European Union's top climate official, Frans Timmermans, said Wednesday.

A small thaw in relations between the United States and China at the Group of 20 meeting in Bali has boosted hopes that the world's top two polluters can help get a deal over the line in Egypt.

U.S. climate envoy John Kerry confirmed Wednesday that he and his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua had resumed formal talks after they were frozen three months ago by China in retaliation for U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan.

Asked what his goal for the outcome of the meeting was, Kerry was cautious, however.

"We'll have to see, it's a late start," he said.

Coming into this year's annual U.N. climate conference, known as COP27, the host Egypt had declared the overarching drive would be to implement past promises, including firming up cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to meet the 2015 Paris accord's headline goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit).

Instead, delegates have been haggling over whether to even restate the 1.5 degree goal. That objective got a boost when the G-20 meeting in Bali ended with a statement that endorsed the 1.5 degree target and made 49 references to climate.

Officials from developing nations, meanwhile, are pushing for rich countries to make good on pledges of further financial aid for those struggling to cope with global warming. One significant aspect of that could be payments for "loss and damage" resulting from climate change, which developed countries have long resisted for fear of being held financially liable for the carbon dioxide they've pumped into the atmosphere for decades.

But there has been a softening of positions among some rich nations that now acknowledge some form of payment will be needed, just not what.

"Countries that are particularly affected, who themselves bear no blame for the CO2 emissions of industrial nations such as Germany, rightly expect protection against loss and damage from climate change," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said as she departed for Egypt.

She acknowledged that negotiators have "a difficult path" ahead of them for a substantial agreement.

Asked about the issue of loss and damage, EU Executive Vice-President Timmermans said: "We're all willing to find some substantial steps forward, but we're not there yet."

The middle of the second weeks of climate summits in general are "a deep valley of anxiety," said Christiana Figueres, the former United Nations climate chief who was at more than 20 summits but not the one in Egypt. She said that's because there is such a big desire for something to come out of talks, but "it's also the moment in which people begin to be much more aware of the short time horizon that is left to be able to deliver something by Friday."

That pressure "makes us act on the double and hopefully be more creative and also more conciliatory than we were perhaps in the first week," Figueres said.

Geopolitical tensions have been reflected at this year's talks, with European Union delegates walking out of a speech Tuesday by Russia's special climate representative, and a small group of Ukrainian and Polish activists briefly disrupting a Russian side event.

Brazilian President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva received a more enthusiastic welcome at the talks in Egypt. He met late Tuesday with Kerry and was due to hold talks with other top leaders, despite not yet being in office.

Brazil's efforts on climate change are seen as vital because its Amazon rainforest territory provides a vast "carbon sink" to the world where emissions can be stored, whereas deforestation would fuel global warming.

Poland, NATO say missile landing wasn't Russian attack

By VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

PRZEWODOW, Poland (AP) — Poland said Wednesday there is "absolutely no indication" that a missile

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which came down in Polish farmland, killing two people, was a intentional attack on the NATO country, and that neighbor Ukraine likely launched the Soviet-era projectile as it fended off a Russian air assault that savaged its power grid.

"Ukraine's defense was launching their missiles in various directions and it is highly probable that one of these missiles unfortunately fell on Polish territory," said Polish President Andrzej Duda. "There is nothing, absolutely nothing to suggest that it was an intentional attack on Poland."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, at a meeting of the military alliance in Brussels, agreed with the assessment.

"An investigation into this incident is ongoing and we need to await its outcome. But we have no indication that this was the result of a deliberate attack," Stoltenberg told reporters.

The preliminary findings came after U.S. President Joe Biden and other Western backers of Ukraine had thrown their weight behind the investigation and amid repeated assertions from Russia that it didn't fire the missile.

Biden said it was "unlikely" that Russia fired the missile but added: "I'm going to make sure we find out exactly what happened."

The missile came down Tuesday near Poland's border with Ukraine. Three U.S. officials said preliminary assessments suggested it was fired by Ukrainian forces at an incoming Russian one. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

That assessment and Biden's comments at the Group of 20 summit in Indonesia contradicted information earlier Tuesday from a senior U.S. intelligence official who told The Associated Press that Russian missiles crossed into Poland.

Former Soviet-bloc country Ukraine maintains stocks of Soviet- and Russian-made weaponry, including air-defense missiles, and has also seized many more Russian weapons while beating back the Kremlin's invasion forces.

Ukrainian air defenses worked furiously against the Russian assault Tuesday on power generation and transmission facilities, including in Ukraine's western region that borders Poland. Ukraine's military said 77 of the more than 90 missiles fired were brought down, along with 11 drones.

The Kremlin on Wednesday denounced Poland's and other countries' initial reaction to the missile incident and, in rare praise for a U.S. leader, hailed the response of the U.S.

"We have witnessed another hysterical, frenzied, Russophobic reaction that was not based on any real data," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Wednesday. He added that "immediately, all experts realized that it could not have been a missile linked to the Russian armed forces," and pointed to a "restrained, much more professional reaction" of the U.S. and its president, Joe Biden.

In Brussels, NATO countries were coming together Wednesday for emergency talks. There was no immediate proof that Tuesday's blast was a deliberate, hostile attack on NATO member Poland that could trigger the alliance's provisions for a collective military response.

Russia denied any involvement. But Ukraine was under countrywide Russian bombardment Tuesday by barrages of cruise missiles and exploding drones, which clouded the picture of what exactly happened in Poland and why.

In Europe, NATO members Germany and the U.K. were among those stressing the need for a full investigation. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz warned against jumping to conclusions "in such a serious matter."

Still, Scholz and others also laid overall but not specific blame on Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

"This wouldn't have happened without the Russian war against Ukraine, without the missiles that are now being fired at Ukrainian infrastructure intensively and on a large scale," Scholz said.

U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak echoed that assessment, saying: "This is the cruel and unrelenting reality of Putin's war."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called it "a very significant escalation." On the other end of the spectrum, China was among those calling for calm and restraint.

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Former Soviet-bloc country Ukraine maintains stocks of Soviet- and Russian-made weaponry, including air-defense missiles, and has also seized many more Russian weapons while beating back the Kremlin's invasion forces.

Damage from the aerial assault in Ukraine was extensive and swaths of the country were plunged into darkness. Zelenskyy said about 10 million people lost power but tweeted overnight that 8 million were subsequently reconnected, with repair crews laboring through the night. Previous Russian strikes had already destroyed an estimated 40% of the country's energy infrastructure.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg called the meeting in Brussels of the alliance's envoys. The U.N. Security Council also planned to meet Wednesday for a previously scheduled briefing on the situation in Ukraine.

If Russia had deliberately targeted Poland, it would risk drawing NATO into the conflict.

Polish media reported that the strike took place in an area where grain was drying in Przewodow, a village near the border with Ukraine.

Russia's Defense Ministry denied being behind "any strikes on targets near the Ukrainian-Polish border" and said in a statement that photos of purported damage "have nothing to do" with Russian weapons.

The Russian bombardment also affected neighboring Moldova. It reported massive power outages after the strikes in Ukraine disconnected a power line to the small nation.

The assault killed at least one person in a residential building in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. It followed days of euphoria in Ukraine sparked by one of its biggest military successes — the retaking last week of the southern city of Kherson.

With its battlefield losses mounting, Russia has increasingly resorted to targeting Ukraine's power grid, seemingly hoping to turn the approach of winter into a weapon by leaving people in the cold and dark.

UK inflation accelerates to 41-year high of 11.1%

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's inflation rate rose to a 41-year high in October, fueling demands for the government to do more to ease the nation's cost-of-living crisis when it releases new tax and spending plans Thursday.

Consumer prices jumped 11.1% in the 12 months through October, compared with 10.1% in September, the Office for National Statistics said Wednesday. The new figure exceeded economists' expectations of 10.7%.

Higher prices for food and energy drove Britain's inflation rate to the highest since October 1981, the ONS said. It exceeds the record 10.7% inflation seen last month in the 19 European countries using the euro currency and the U.S. rate of 7.7%, which slowed in October.

The figures come a day before Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt is scheduled to unveil a new budget amid growing calls for higher wages, increased benefits and more spending on health and education as raging inflation erodes the spending power of people across the country.

Those demands are complicating Hunt's efforts to close an estimated 50 billion-pound (\$59 billion) budget shortfall and restore the government's financial credibility after former Prime Minister Liz Truss' disastrous economic policies undermined investor confidence and sparked turmoil on financial markets.

"We cannot have long-term, sustainable growth with high inflation," Hunt said after the inflation figures were released. "Tomorrow I will set out a plan to get debt falling, deliver stability, and drive down inflation while protecting the most vulnerable."

Governments and central banks around the world are struggling to contain widespread inflation that began to accelerate as the global economy recovered from the coronavirus pandemic, then soared after Russia's invasion of Ukraine restricted supplies of natural gas, oil, grain and cooking oil. While there is little policymakers can do to combat such external shocks, those price increases are becoming embedded as producers pass their costs on to consumers and workers demand higher wages, posing a longer term threat to economic growth.

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The Bank of England earlier this month forecast that U.K. inflation would peak at around 11% in the fourth quarter and begin falling early next year. The bank has approved eight consecutive interest rate increases, pushing its key rate to 3%, as policymakers try to bring inflation back in line with their 2% target.

Hunt said the government had a duty to help the Bank of England control inflation and act responsibly with the nation's finances. The comment was a stark contrast to the message from Truss, who said it was the government's responsibility to spur growth, setting up a tug-of-war between a government with its foot on the economic gas pedal and a central bank attempting to cool the economy with higher borrowing costs.

The European and U.S. central banks also have been hiking rates aggressively, though the Federal Reserve is expected to temper them going forward after inflation slowed to 7.7% last month from 8.2% in September.

But U.K. inflation has yet to peak.

Food prices rose 16.4% in the 12 months through October — the biggest jump since September 1977 — as supermarkets passed on rising costs to consumers, the statistic office said. The cost of electricity and natural gas jumped 24%, even after the government capped energy prices to shield consumers from the impact of the energy crisis tied to the war in Ukraine.

Shona Lowe, a financial planning expert at the fund manager abrdn, said that understandably, inflation was a top concern for most households.

"Unfortunately, the U.K. is not yet following in the footsteps of the U.S. when it comes to inflation easing," she said. "In fact, the Bank of England announced last week that it does not expect inflation to fall until the middle of next year, so consumers need to prepare for further pressure on their finances."

NASA's mightiest moon rocket lifts off 50 years after Apollo

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's new moon rocket blasted off on its debut flight with three test dummies aboard Wednesday, bringing the U.S. a big step closer to putting astronauts back on the lunar surface for the first time since the end of the Apollo program 50 years ago.

If all goes well during the three-week, make-or-break shakedown flight, the crew capsule will be propelled into a wide orbit around the moon and then return to Earth with a Pacific splashdown in December.

After years of delays and billions in cost overruns, the Space Launch System rocket thundered skyward, rising from Kennedy Space Center on 8.8 million pounds (4 million kilograms) of thrust and hitting 100 mph (160 kph) within seconds. The Orion capsule was perched on top and, less than two hours into the flight, busted out of Earth's orbit toward the moon.

"It was pretty overwhelming," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. "We're going out to explore the heavens, and this is the next step."

The moonshot follows nearly three months of vexing fuel leaks that kept the rocket bouncing between its hangar and the pad. Forced back indoors by Hurricane Ian at the end of September, the rocket stood its ground outside as Nicole swept through last week with gusts of more than 80 mph (130 kph). Although the wind caused some damage, managers gave the green light for the launch.

An estimated 15,000 people jammed the launch site, with thousands more lining the beaches and roads outside the gates, to witness NASA's long-awaited sequel to Project Apollo, when 12 astronauts walked on the moon from 1969 and 1972. Crowds also gathered outside NASA centers in Houston and Huntsville, Alabama, to watch the spectacle on giant screens.

Cheers accompanied the rocket as it rode a huge trail of flames toward space, with a half-moon glowing brightly and buildings shaking as though hit by a major quake.

"For the Artemis generation, this is for you," launch director Charlie Blackwell-Thompson called out, referring to all those born after Apollo. She later told her team: "You have earned your place in history."

The liftoff marked the start of NASA's Artemis lunar-exploration program, named after Apollo's mythological twin sister. The space agency is aiming to send four astronauts around the moon on the next flight, in 2024, and land humans there as early as 2025.

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The 322-foot (98-meter) SLS is the most powerful rocket ever built by NASA, with more thrust than either the space shuttle or the mighty Saturn V that carried men to the moon. A series of hydrogen fuel leaks plagued the summertime launch attempts as well as countdown tests. A fresh leak erupted at a new location during Tuesday night's fueling, but an emergency team managed to tighten the faulty valve on the pad. Then a U.S. Space Force radar station went down, resulting in another scramble, this time to replace an ethernet switch.

"The rocket, it's alive. It's creaking. It's making venting noises. It's pretty scary," said Trent Annis, one of the three men who entered the blast danger zone to fix Tuesday night's leak. "My heart was pumping. My nerves were going. But yeah, we showed up today."

Orion should reach the moon by Monday, more than 230,000 miles (370,000 kilometers) from Earth. After coming within 80 miles (130 kilometers) of the moon, the capsule will enter a far-flung orbit stretching about 40,000 miles (64,000 kilometers) beyond.

The \$4.1 billion test flight is set to last 25 days, roughly the same as when crews will be aboard. The space agency intends to push the spacecraft to its limits and uncover any problems before astronauts strap in. The mannequins — NASA calls them moonequins — are fitted with sensors to measure such things as vibration, acceleration and cosmic radiation.

Nelson cautioned "things will go wrong" during this demo. A few minor issues already have cropped up in flight, although preliminary indications were the boosters and engines performed well.

"There's definitely relief that we're underway," mission manager Mike Sarafin told reporters. But he added: "I personally am not going to rest well until we get safely to splashdown and recovery."

The rocket was supposed to have made its dry run by 2017. Government watchdogs estimate NASA will have spent \$93 billion on the project by 2025.

Ultimately, NASA hopes to establish a base on the moon and send astronauts to Mars by the late 2030s or early 2040s.

But many hurdles still need to be cleared. The Orion capsule will take astronauts only to lunar orbit, not the surface.

NASA has hired Elon Musk's SpaceX to develop Starship, the 21st-century answer to Apollo's lunar lander. Starship will carry astronauts back and forth between Orion and the lunar surface, at least on the first trip in 2025. The plan is to station Starship and eventually other companies' landers in orbit around the moon, ready for use whenever new Orion crews pull up.

Reprising an argument that was made during the 1960s, Duke University historian Alex Roland questions the value of human spaceflight, saying robots and remote-controlled spacecraft could get the job done more cheaply, efficiently and safely.

"In all these years, no evidence has emerged to justify the investment we have made in human spaceflight — save the prestige involved in this conspicuous consumption," he said.

NASA is waiting until this test flight is over before introducing the astronauts who will be on the next one and those who will follow in the footsteps of Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.

Most of NASA's corps of 42 active astronauts and 10 trainees were not even born yet when Apollo 17 moonwalkers Gene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt closed out the era, 50 years ago next month.

"We are jumping out of our spacesuits with excitement," astronaut Christina Koch said Tuesday.

After a nearly yearlong space station mission and all-female spacewalk, Koch, 43, is on NASA's short list for a lunar flight. So is astronaut Kayla Barron, 35, who finally got to witness her first rocket launch, not counting her own a year ago.

"It took my breath away, and I was tearing up," Barron said. "What an amazing accomplishment for this team."

Qatar's World Cup denounced for 'washing' country's image

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

Qatar's decision to launch itself into hosting the 2022 World Cup was a head-scratcher from the start.

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Why, some wondered, would a Middle Eastern kingdom with fewer than 3 million people and little soccer tradition want to host the sport's biggest event?

Skeptics say the country wanted to use the prestige of the World Cup, which starts Sunday, to remake its image as an oil producer with few international connections and a shaky human-rights record.

They viewed the move, which will cost the country some \$220 billion, as a classic case of "sportswashing" — using sports as a forum to cast a country or company as different than many people perceive.

It is hardly a new concept, and Middle Eastern oil money has long been a major player. Where many see rich nations spending money to join the global elite, other see nefarious attempts to hide undesired reputations.

"The Qatar World Cup kickstarted discussion about sportswashing and human rights in football and it has been very steep learning curve for us all," Norway soccer federation president Lise Klaveness said at a recent Council of Europe event.

Germany's interior minister also expressed concern about bringing the event to Qatar, saying "no World Cup takes place in a vacuum."

"There are criteria that have to be kept to, and then it would be better not to award to such states," minister Nancy Faeser said last month in a move that sparked diplomatic tensions.

Qatar's leader, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, has fought back, saying the country "has been subjected to an unprecedented campaign that no host country has ever faced."

The World Cup is just one way Qatar is using its massive wealth to project influence. By buying sports teams, hosting high-profile events, and investing billions in European capitals — such as buying London's The Shard skyscraper — Qatar has been integrating itself into international finance and a network of support.

Paris-Saint Germain (PSG) of Ligue 1 is owned by the emir of Qatar. His 2011 purchase came a year after Qatar won the right to host the World Cup. For many, it felt like it was scripted to show that the country has soccer bona fides. Some of PSG's players are among the world's most famous — Neymar, Kylian Mbappé and Lionel Messi — and all will be in the World Cup.

America's own Christian Pulisic is on Premier League team Chelsea, which was owned by a Russian oligarch, Roman Abramovich.

Abramovich was widely hailed as that team's savior during his 19 years of club control but put the team up for sale this year due to sanctions related to his country's invasion of Ukraine.

The new LIV Golf league is bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, which also owns another Premier League team, Newcastle, while defending English champion Manchester City is Abu Dhabi-owned.

Some of those teams' best players, including Kevin de Bruyne, Kieran Trippier and Bruno Guimarães, will play for Belgium and England and Brazil in the World Cup.

None of these players, or owners, received the same sort of public condemnation as those in golf who left the PGA Tour to play for LIV. Just as was the case when the soccer teams were purchased, there has never been any mystery about who funded LIV, which has brazenly branded itself as a disruptive force in golf that will change the sport for the better.

According to the CIA, journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed on the orders of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman in 2018. The Saudi Public Investment Fund's involvement became more of a lightning rod when Phil Mickelson said out loud what many already felt.

"They are scary (expletives)," the six-time major champion said in a much-cited interview with golf writer Alan Shipnuck of the FirePit Collective.

Families of 9/11 victims became vocal critics of LIV golf, pointing out Saudi Arabia's shaky human-rights record and the country's connection to the attacks.

"Despite (his) being truthful, it's not good for Mickelson's image," said Jamal Blades, a soccer-loving London tech firm manager who occasionally blogs about sports and recently completed his Master's in sports business and innovation. "But sportswashing takes place all over the world in some form, where there are people, or governments, or businesses attaching themselves to big and small events everywhere."

One high-profile advertiser, the U.S. Department of Defense, was looking for some positive publicity and a tie-in with America's favorite sport, but the deal inadvertently triggered a public-relations problem when

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Colin Kaepernick took a knee during "The Star-Spangled Banner."

"When (a company) wants to be the official sponsor of a team or a league, what they are trying to do is create an affinity to improve the reputation of (the company) and get sports fans to think of (that company) in some way other than as a commodified producer of" what that company sells, said Stephen Ross, the executive director of the Penn State Center for the Study of Sports in Society.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, used the occasion of the Winter Olympics in Beijing to hold a summit and show solidarity this year. Later in those games, IOC president Thomas Bach showed up with Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai to watch Eileen Gu, an American-born freestyle skier who was competing for China, win her first gold medal. Peng's public appearance came after her safety had been in question for months following her appearing on social media to accuse a former top-ranking Chinese official of sexual assault.

Heads turned when the Asian Winter Games announced it would hold the 2029 version of its event in Saudi Arabia, a desert country that is spending some \$500 billion to build a winter resort it claims will be environmentally sustainable. The Saudis have long held golf, tennis and F1 events in their country despite having little tradition in those sports.

"The Saudi case is almost like the quintessential case of success for sportswashing," Ross said of the country that led the world by exporting \$95.7 billion in crude petroleum in 2020.

Qatar, which ranks 19th in oil exports and also shares the world's largest underwater natural-gas field with Iran, wanted to get into the act, too.

It hosted world gymnastics and track titles, both of which were preludes to the World Cup, which is costing the country an estimated \$220 billion. The country might be banking on the reality that, regardless of the issues that dog a host in the lead-up, most worldwide sporting events are ultimately judged by the quality of the event itself.

The country recruited hundreds of fans to receive free trips to the World Cup in exchange for promoting positive content on social media about the event and the host.

With the World Cup approaching, human rights and corruption allegations have emerged as prime topics, and figure to remain that way until the championship trophy is awarded on Dec. 18.

Whether that's fair depends whom you ask.

Greg Norman, the frontman for LIV Golf, said this summer on Tucker Carlson's show on Fox News that Aramco, Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil company, sponsors events on the Ladies' European Tour but that tour receives very little criticism.

"Not one word has been said about them, right?" Norman said. "But why is it — why is it on the guys? Why are we the ogres? What have we done wrong?"

Same-sex marriage faces Senate test with GOP votes uncertain

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Staring down the prospect of divided government in the next Congress, Senate Democrats are moving forward with legislation this week to protect same sex and interracial marriages. It's a vote that's "as personal as it gets," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said.

Schumer is holding a test vote on the bill Wednesday, betting that at least 10 Republicans will vote with all 50 Democrats to move forward with the legislation to ensure that same-sex and interracial marriages are legally recognized nationwide. The bill has gained steady momentum since the Supreme Court's June decision that overturned Roe v. Wade and the federal right to an abortion. An opinion at that time from Justice Clarence Thomas suggested that an earlier high court decision protecting same-sex marriage could also come under threat.

If the Senate votes to move forward with the legislation, a final vote could come as soon as this week, or by the end of the month, while Democrats still control the House. Republicans are on the verge of winning the House majority and would be unlikely to take up the issue next year.

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"I firmly believe that passing bipartisan marriage protections would be one of the more significant accomplishments in what's already been a significantly productive Congress," Schumer said on the Senate floor. "It will do so much good for so many people who want nothing more than to live their lives without the fear of discrimination."

Congress has been moving to protect same-sex marriage as support from the general public — and from Republicans in particular — has sharply grown in recent years, as the Supreme Court's 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges decision legalized gay marriage nationwide. Recent polling has found more than two-thirds of the public supports same-sex unions.

Still, it's not yet certain whether Democrats have the 10 votes they need to overcome a filibuster on Wednesday and get a bill through the 50-50 Senate. So far, at least three Republicans have said they will vote for the legislation and are working with Democrats to pass it: Maine Sen. Susan Collins, North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis and Ohio Sen. Rob Portman.

Most Republicans have stayed quiet on whether they will support it, but those pushing the bill say they believe the 10 GOP votes are there. Democrats delayed consideration of the legislation until after the mid-term elections, hoping that would relieve political pressure for some Republicans who might be wavering on the bill.

And a proposed amendment to the legislation, negotiated by supporters to bring more Republicans on board, would clarify that it does not affect the rights of private individuals or businesses — rights that are already enshrined in law. Another tweak would make clear that a marriage is between two people, an effort to ward off some far-right criticism that the legislation could endorse polygamy.

The legislation would repeal the Clinton-era Defense of Marriage Act and require states to recognize all marriages that were legal where they were performed. The new Respect for Marriage Act would also protect interracial marriages by requiring states to recognize legal marriages regardless of "sex, race, ethnicity, or national origin."

Some Republicans say the changes are not enough. Republican Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, who had hinted that he might support it before he won reelection last week, said this week that he would not, citing concerns about religious liberty.

Still, the growing GOP support for the issue is a sharp contrast from even a decade ago, when many Republicans vocally opposed same-sex marriages. The legislation passed the House in a July vote with the support of 47 Republicans — a larger-than-expected number that gave the measure a boost in the Senate.

On Tuesday, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints became the most recent conservative-leaning group to back the legislation. In a statement, the Utah-based faith said church doctrine would continue to consider same-sex relationships to be against God's commandments, but that it would support rights for same-sex couples as long as they didn't infringe upon religious groups' right to believe as they choose.

Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin, a Democrat who is the first openly gay senator and has been working on gay rights issues for almost four decades, says the newfound openness from many Republicans on the subject reminds her "of the arc of the LGBTQ movement to begin with, in the early days when people weren't out and people knew gay people by myths and stereotypes."

Baldwin says that as more individuals and families have become visible, hearts and minds have changed. "And slowly laws have followed," she said. "It is history."

Schumer said the issue is personal to him, as well.

"Passing the Respect for Marriage Act is as personal as it gets for many senators and their staffs, myself included," Schumer said. "My daughter and her wife are actually expecting a little baby in February. So it matters a lot to so many of us to get this done."

In 'zero-COVID' China, 1 case locks down Peking University

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese authorities locked down a major university in Beijing on Wednesday after finding one COVID-19 case as they stick to a "zero-COVID" approach despite growing public discontent.

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Peking University students and faculty were not allowed to leave the grounds unless necessary and classes on the main campus — where the case was found — were moved online through Friday, a university notice said. Still, some people could be seen entering and leaving the main campus Wednesday in the Chinese capital's Haidian district.

Beijing reported more than 350 new cases in the latest 24-hour period, a small fraction of its 21-million population but enough to trigger localized lockdowns and quarantines under China's "zero-COVID" strategy. Nationwide, China reported about 20,000 cases, up from about 8,000 a week ago.

Authorities are steering away from citywide lockdowns to try to minimize the impact on freedom of movement and a sagging economy. They want to avoid a repeat of the Shanghai lockdown earlier this year that paralyzed shipping and prompted neighborhood protests. Revised national guidelines issued last week called on local governments to follow a targeted and scientific approach that avoids unnecessary measures.

Peking University has more than 40,000 students on multiple campuses, most in Beijing. It was unclear how many were affected by the lockdown. The 124-year-old institution is one of China's top universities and was a center of student protest in earlier decades. Its graduates include leading intellectuals, writers, politicians and businesspeople.

Lockdowns elsewhere have sparked scattered protests. Earlier this week, videos posted online showed crowds pulling down barriers in the southern city of Guangzhou in a densely built area that is home to migrant workers in the clothing industry.

Guangzhou, an industrial export hub near Hong Kong, reported more than 6,000 new cases in what is the nation's largest ongoing outbreak. The pandemic led the Badminton World Federation to move next month's HSBC World Tour Finals from Guangzhou to Bangkok, the federation announced this week.

Other cities with major outbreaks include Chongqing in the southwest, Zhengzhou in Henan province and Hohhot, the capital of the Inner Mongolia region in the north.

In Zhengzhou late last month, workers fled their dormitories at a sprawling iPhone factory, some climbing over fences to get out. Apple subsequently warned that customers would face delays in deliveries of iPhone14 Pro models.

Chinese officials and state media have stressed that the government is fine-tuning but not abandoning what it calls a "dynamic" zero-COVID policy, after rumors of an easing sparked a stock market rally earlier this month.

Israel deploys remote-controlled robotic guns in West Bank

By SAM McNEIL Associated Press

AL-AROUB REFUGEE CAMP, West Bank (AP) — In two volatile spots in the occupied West Bank, Israel has installed robotic weapons that can fire tear gas, stun grenades and sponge-tipped bullets at Palestinian protesters.

The weapons, perched over a crowded Palestinian refugee camp and in a flashpoint West Bank city, use artificial intelligence to track targets. Israel says the technology saves lives — both Israeli and Palestinian. But critics see another step toward a dystopian reality in which Israel fine-tunes its open-ended occupation of the Palestinians while keeping its soldiers out of harm's way.

The new weapon comes at a time of heightened tensions in the occupied West Bank, where unrest has risen sharply during what has been the deadliest year since 2006. The victory by former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-line alliance, which includes an extreme right-wing party with close ties to the settler movement, has raised concerns of more violence.

Twin turrets, each equipped with a watchful lens and a gun barrel, were recently installed atop a guard tower bristling with surveillance cameras overlooking the Al-Aroub refugee camp in the southern West Bank. When young Palestinian protesters pour into the streets hurling stones and firebombs at Israeli soldiers, the robotic weapons unleash tear gas or sponge-tipped bullets on them, witnesses say.

About a month ago, the military also placed the robots in the nearby city of Hebron, where soldiers often clash with stone-throwing Palestinian residents. The army declined to comment on its plans to deploy the

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system elsewhere in the West Bank.

Palestinian activist Issa Amro said Hebron residents fear the new weapon might be misused or hacked with no accountability in potentially lethal situations. People also resent what they say is a weapons test on civilians, he added.

"We are not a training and simulation for Israeli companies," he said. "This is something new that must be stopped."

There are no soldiers next to the machines. Instead, the weapons are operated by remote control. At a touch of a button, soldiers nestled inside a guard tower can fire at selected targets.

The army says the system is being tested at this stage and fires only "non-lethal" weapons used for crowd control, such as sponge-tipped bullets and tear gas. Residents of Al-Aroub say the turrets have repeatedly drenched the hillside camp in gas.

"We don't open the window, we don't open the door. We know not to open anything," said shopkeeper Hussein al-Muzyeen.

Robotic weapons are increasingly in operation around the world, with militaries expanding their use of drones to carry out lethal strikes from Ukraine to Ethiopia. Remote-controlled guns like the Israeli system in the West Bank have been used by the United States in Iraq, by South Korea along the border with North Korea, and by various Syrian rebel groups.

Israel, known for its advanced military technologies, is among the world's top producers of drones capable of launching precision-guided missiles. It has built a fence along its boundary with the Gaza Strip equipped with radar and underground and underwater sensors. Above ground, it uses a robotic vehicle, equipped with cameras and machine guns, to patrol volatile borders. The military also tests and utilizes state-of-the-art surveillance technology such as face recognition and biometric data collection on Palestinians navigating the routines of the occupation, such as applying for Israeli travel permits.

"Israel is using technology as a means to control the civil population," said Dror Sadot, spokeswoman for Israeli rights group B'Tselem. She said that even supposedly non-lethal weapons like sponge bullets can cause extreme pain and even be deadly.

The turrets in Al-Aroub were built by Smart Shooter, a company that makes "fire control systems" that it says "significantly increase the accuracy, lethality, and situational awareness of small arms." The company boasts contracts with dozens of militaries around the world, including the U.S. Army.

Speaking at the company's headquarters in Kibbutz Yagur in northern Israel, Chief Executive Michal Mor said the gun requires human selection of targets and munitions.

"They always have a man in the loop making the decision regarding the legitimate target," she said.

She said the system minimizes casualties by distancing soldiers from violence and limits collateral damage by making shots more accurate.

In a densely populated area like Al-Aroub, she said soldiers can monitor specific people in a crowd and lock the turret onto specific body parts. The system fires only after algorithms assess complex factors like wind speed, distance, and velocity.

The military said such safeguards minimize the risk to soldiers and improve supervision over their activities. It also said the technology allows soldiers to target "less sensitive" areas of the body to minimize harm and avoid shooting bystanders.

"In this way, the system reduces the likelihood of inaccurate fire," it said.

But Omar Shakir, the Israel and Palestine Director at Human Rights Watch, said Israel is on a "slide toward the digital dehumanization of weapons systems." By using such technologies, Shakir said Israel is creating "a powder keg for human rights abuse."

Violence in the West Bank has surged over the past several months as Israel has ramped up arrest raids after a spate of Palestinian attacks within Israel killed 19 people last spring. The violence has killed more than 130 Palestinians this year and at least another 10 Israelis have been killed in recent attacks.

Israel says the raids aim to dismantle militant infrastructure and that it has been forced to act because of the inaction of Palestinian security forces. For Palestinians, the nightly incursions into their towns have

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weakened their own security forces and tightened Israel's grip over lands they want for their hoped-for state. Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war.

In Al-Aroub, residents say the machines fire without warning.

"It is very fast, even faster than the soldiers," said Kamel Abu Hishesh, a 19-year-old student. He described almost nightly clashes where soldiers storm the camp as the automated gun fires tear gas up and down the hill.

Paul Scharre, vice president of the Washington think tank Center for a New American Security and a former U.S. Army sniper, said that without emotion and with better aim, automated systems can potentially reduce violence.

But he said the absence of international norms for "killer robots" is problematic.

Otherwise, he said, it's just a matter of time before these automated systems are equipped to use deadly force.

EXPLAINER: The AP guides to Qatar ahead of FIFA World Cup

By The Associated Press undefined

Qatar will be the home of the FIFA World Cup beginning Nov. 20, marking the first time the Mideast has hosted the world-watched tournament.

This year's World Cup also marks the first time it will be played in November and December, in part due to the sweltering summer heat of this small, energy-rich desert sheikhdom on the Arabian Peninsula.

All these changes — as well as the cultural sensitivities of the competition being held in one of the Arab world's more conservative nations — have soccer fans curious about what to expect.

The Associated Press, relying on both local correspondents in the Persian Gulf and its international sportswriters covering the tournament, have put together a series of explainers to help answer some of those questions.

They include:

1. Explaining the history and politics of Qatar;
2. How to travel to Qatar and what to expect on arrival;
3. Examining the traditional and international sports of Qatar;
4. Looking at the role of women in Qatar;
5. Surveying Qatar's role on the international diplomatic stage;
6. Understanding Muslim prayer and traditional dress in Qatar;
7. Exploring Qatar's natural gas-fueled economy;
8. Qatar's laws on alcohol and drugs; dress code and sexuality;
9. How Qatar relies on desalination for its water in the desert nation; and
10. Qatar's claims about how the World Cup will be the first to be "carbon-neutral."

Do you have questions still unanswered about Qatar and the World Cup? Reach out directly to the AP via social media on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter to query our staff.

As climate change progresses, trees in cities struggle

MANUEL VALDES Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — As the driest summer in Seattle's record books ended, trees across the city were sounding silent alarms.

It was the latest in a string of Seattle summers in the last decade, including a record-breaking heat dome in 2021, to feature drier conditions and hotter temperatures that have left many trees with premature brown leaves and needles, bald branches and excessive seeding — all signs of stress.

"You see it in big leaf maples and hemlocks, just loaded with cones or seeds, it's kind of their last-ditch effort to reproduce," said Shea Cope, an arborist at Washington Park Arboretum, a sprawling 230-acre (93 hectare) park north of downtown.

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This summer was fatal for three "significant" trees in the park's pine collection, including an 85-year-old Japanese red pine infected with fungus left by beetles.

"We're losing conifers faster than our broad leaf, deciduous ones," Cope added as he surveyed a towering knobcone pine with half its canopy dead.

Cities worldwide have promised to plant more carbon-absorbing trees to help fight climate change. Research has shown the shade of mature trees also helps reduce unhealthy "heat islands," especially in poor neighborhoods. President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act infused \$1.5 billion into the Forest Service's urban tree program — money for cities to do even more planting and maintenance.

CLIMATE THREAT TO URBAN FORESTS

Life in a city can be especially hard for a tree, and those challenges are escalating with global warming. Researchers from France and Australia analyzed the impact of hotter temperatures and less rain on more than 3,100 tree and shrub species in 164 cities across 78 countries. They found about half the trees already were experiencing climate conditions beyond their limits. They also concluded that by 2050 nearly all tree species planted in Australian cities will not be able to survive in urban areas.

"If trends hold, we are going to have a lot of trees die," said Nicholas Johnson, an arborist for Seattle City Parks. "Under heat, trees get weak — just like people."

Heat and drought force trees to spend energy surviving that would otherwise go to regeneration, growth or fighting off disease and pests, Johnson said. "Everything outside is trying to eat a tree. The stresses become compounded."

Human-caused climate change also fuels more extreme weather such as intense wind, rain and freezing temperatures.

"It's not the gradual change that's going to be the problem, it's these extreme swings of too much water, too little water, too much wind, and storm intensities are going to cause these rapid changes," said David Nowak, a retired scientist for the U.S. Forest Service.

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 wiped out about 10% of the trees in New Orleans, said Michael Karam, Director of Parks and Parkways. And in 2021, he added, Hurricane Ida uprooted many new saplings.

"The need to increase the canopy is greater than in years past," he said. "But the benefits in an urban setting remain the same. On any hot day, go in the shade and you're reminded that trees are such a benefit to public health and welfare."

A 2018 study by Nowak found that 25 states had seen significant tree declines earlier that decade.

Housing and commercial construction, compacted soil, pollution and even car crashes contribute to a city's canopy loss.

Cities are familiar with large scale tree loss, but usually one kind of tree is affected, such as birches killed by a borer pest. With climate change, researchers are concerned canopy loss will outpace the rate of newly planted trees reaching maturity, which takes 10 to 20 years.

"A rising rate of tree mortality is coming to a city near you," said Aaron Ramirez, a tree researcher at Reed College.

Between 2016 and 2021, Seattle lost 1.7% of its tree canopy, about 255 acres (255 hectares) of trees, according to a city report blaming climate change in part. To the south, Portland, Oregon last year saw its first reduction in canopy since it began keeping records two decades ago.

"We've spent a lot of time talking about the health of our forest in our natural, rural areas as we've seen increased stress from disease, insect infestation, drought — leading to catastrophic wildfires. But the fact is our urban forest, our urban trees, are equally stressed," said Washington State Commissioner of Public Lands Hillary Franz.

'ASSISTED MIGRATION'

Rows of small black plastic pots bathe in morning sunlight at a maintenance lot for the city of Bellevue, Washington. All hold juvenile giant sequoias, just a few inches tall, that the city is growing for climate resilience.

Sequoias are not native to the Pacific Northwest, but tree managers in this city east of Seattle are planting more of them because they handle drought and pests.

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"Once these trees are established, they grow incredibly fast," said Rick Bailey, supervisor of the city's forest management program. Native trees still make up about 70% of new trees planted.

Non-native trees have been brought to cities for a long time. Climate change, however, is prompting many arborists to consider increasing them in their city's arboreal palette — a practice called "assisted migration."

Arborists are looking for non-native species without "invasive tendencies," said Scott Altenhoff of Oregon's Urban and Community Forest Program.

Still, much research needs to be done to study resilient trees, said Ramirez of Reed College, whose lab found that an Alaska cedar did better in a hot summer than varieties from Oregon and California.

Planting more non-native trees is augmenting something city arborists have learned from decades of tree deaths: diversity in the types and ages of trees planted is key to keeping urban forests alive.

INCREASING COSTS

The small Puget Sound city of Burien, Washington, with around 80 employees, added one more in March: their first tree manager. The hiring was part an increased focus on the city's canopy.

"We just had a discussion about 'Can we get a water truck? Or something like that?'" said Josh Peter, the new arborist. "Because as we do have these increasing dry spells... I'd rather plant one tree and maintain it really well than plant 10 trees and then not maintain it."

Costs of maintaining urban forests hit budgets in different ways. A new water truck is also being considered in New Orleans after this dry year. In Bellevue, the city growing giant sequoias, a large chunk of tree maintenance goes toward an increasing number of dead tree removals.

"We are not keeping up with level of maintenance and protection that is needed to make sure we're not losing them," said Evan Mallen of Georgia Tech, who said more cities need legislation to protect existing trees.

On a recent rainy week, volunteers for the Seattle parks department planted dozens of trees in a park west of the city. Among them was a western red cedar planted in the shadow of the exposed roots of a fallen oak.

"Life always finds a way," said Johnson, the department's arborist. "And in Seattle, people are helping life find a way."

NASA fixes new leak, resumes fueling moon rocket for launch

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA managed to plug a leak late Tuesday night while fueling its new moon rocket for a middle-of-the-night launch, its third try to put an empty capsule around the moon for the first time in 50 years.

Hydrogen fuel sprouted from a valve on the launch pad — a different location than leaks during previous launch attempts. Two technicians and a safety official rushed into the blast zone to tighten the valve, with emergency rescue workers on standby.

The quick repair fixed the leak, allowing hydrogen to resume flowing into the rocket. But then a Space Force radar tracking site went down because of a bad ethernet switch, leading to yet another scramble. The problems pushed the launch into the wee hours of Wednesday, as the countdown clocks held at the 10-minute mark.

"We are slipping indefinitely into the launch window," said NASA launch commentator Derrol Nail.

Fuel leaks plagued the first two attempts in late summer, then a pair of hurricanes caused more delays. While engineers never pinpointed the cause of the escaping hydrogen, they altered the fueling process to minimize leakage and expressed confidence that all the plumbing in the 322-foot (98-meter) rocket would remain tight and intact.

NASA added an hour to the operation to account for the slower fill-up, vital for reducing pressure on the fuel lines and keeping the seals in place. It seemed to work, but an intermittent hydrogen leak cropped up near the end of the six-hour operation. This particular leaky valve is on the launch platform, not the

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rocket, officials stressed, and is needed to replenish liquid hydrogen as it dissipates from the core stage. The rocket was gassed up with nearly 1 million gallons (3.7 million liters) of super-cold hydrogen and oxygen, when the latest leak occurred.

NASA expected 15,000 to jam Kennedy Space Center for the launch in the wee hours of Wednesday morning, with thousands more lining the beaches and roads outside the gates. The space agency had two hours to get the rocket off, before standing down until Saturday.

The debut of the Space Launch System rocket, known as SLS, had three test dummies but no astronauts inside the crew capsule on top, which NASA hoped to put into lunar orbit.

This first test flight was expected to last three weeks, ending with a splashdown in the Pacific. NASA's top priority for the \$4.1 billion mission is to verify the capsule's heat shield during reentry, so four astronauts can strap in for the next moonshot in 2024. That would be followed by a two-person lunar landing in 2025.

NASA last sent astronauts to the moon in December 1972, closing out the Apollo program.

Michelle Obama opens tour for new book, 'The Light We Carry'

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michelle Obama says it helps to focus on what you can control when you feel out of control.

Among the things she could control during the death and isolation of the pandemic, the racial unrest and threats to democracy were her spools of yarn and her knitting needles.

She labels such thinking the "power of small," and she writes in her new book, "The Light We Carry: Overcoming in Uncertain Times," that by focusing on a small task like knitting she was able to get through the worry, anxiety and stress of the past few unsettling years.

"The interesting thing about knitting and using your hands and making something is that it is meditative," the former first lady said Tuesday night at the Warner Theater in Washington, where she kicked off a monthlong, six-city publicity tour to promote the book.

"In so many ways, it is like a faith," she said, seated on stage with a friend, former daytime talk-show host Ellen DeGeneres, who engaged Mrs. Obama in nearly 90 minutes of often humorous conversation. "It's a thing that shuts your worrying mind and lets your hands take over."

And therein lies the power, she said.

"I think about the knit and the purl, and the knit and the purl, and a row and a row and a row," the former first lady said, naming different stitches and techniques used in knitting. "And if you keep it up, and you're focused, you have a sweater."

In the book, published Tuesday, she shares the contents of her "personal toolbox" — the habits and practices, attitudes and beliefs, and even physical objects that she uses to overcome her feelings of fear, helplessness and self doubt.

"This book is meant to show you what I keep there and why, what I use professionally and personally to help me stay balanced and confident, what keeps me moving forward even during times of high anxiety and stress," she wrote in the introduction.

The 58-year-old wife of former President Barack Obama and mother of adult daughters Malia and Sasha wrote that the book, her third, is not a how-to manual, but rather is a "series of honest reflections on what my life has taught me so far."

"Keep in mind, too, that everything I know, all the various tools I lean on, have come to me only through trial and error, over years of constant practice and reevaluation," she wrote. "I spent decades learning on my feet, making mistakes, adjustments, and course corrections as I went. I've progressed only slowly to where I am today."

"The Light We Carry" is Mrs. Obama's first new work since the 2018 release of her bestselling memoir, "Becoming," which has sold more than 17 million copies worldwide, by far the most popular book by a previous first lady or modern president, including her husband.

As first lady, she wrote "American Grown," a book about the produce garden she had planted at the

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White House in 2009.

Mrs. Obama opened the tour in Washington and has events planned at Philadelphia's The Met, Atlanta's Fox Theatre, the Chicago Theatre and San Francisco's Masonic before the tour closes at the YouTube Theater in Los Angeles.

Seated in a plush purple chair on stage at the nearly 100-year-old Washington theater, Mrs. Obama discussed her feelings after the 2016 election in which her husband was succeeded by Donald Trump. Coincidentally, Trump announced a third run for president during her appearance.

"If you guys recall, I said, 'Don't vote for this guy,'" she said, meaning Trump, who sought to undo much of Obama's record as president. "It hurt because you wonder — was it a rebuke of the eight years, the sacrifice we made? Was it complacency? What was it?"

The former first lady also discussed overcoming her fear of change and coming to the realization that she could not stand in the way of her husband's desire to run for president in 2008. He had given her veto power over his decision.

"Opportunity is on the other side of that," she said, speaking of fear.

She also talked about the pandemic, saying her family handled it better than most because they were already used to isolation from the eight years they lived in the White House "bubble."

She spoke about how hard it was as first lady — and still is — to make new friends she can trust, and how fun it is to watch her daughters "adult" as they share an apartment in California. The girls had returned to Washington to live with their parents during the pandemic.

Sasha had completed one semester at the University of Michigan before she came back home. Malia, who was enrolled at Harvard, spent her senior year at home and ended up missing out on a graduation ceremony because of COVID-19. So her parents staged a ceremony in their backyard, complete with commencement speakers.

"It was me, and Barack," Mrs. Obama said, laughing. "We told her how lucky she was. She got us both."

Second boat of over 100 Rohingya lands on Indonesian beach

By YAYAN ZAMZAMI Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AP) — Over 100 Rohingya Muslims traveling in a wooden boat have landed on an Indonesian beach, the second group in as many days to arrive in the island nation's northernmost province of Aceh.

The group of 61 men, 36 women and 22 children that landed Wednesday morning in North Aceh district's Bluka Teubai village were taken to the fisherman hall and will stay there while waiting for further information from the local authorities, said Nawafil Mahyudha, head of Dewantara sub-district.

A group of 110 weak and hungry Rohingya refugees also landed in the North Aceh district on Tuesday after traveling in a boat for more than a month. They were aiming for Malaysia after leaving Myanmar but were stranded in Aceh waters.

In March, 114 Rohingya refugees were also found on a beach in neighboring Bireuen district.

Hundreds of thousands Rohingya Muslims have fled from Buddhist-majority Myanmar to refugee camps in Bangladesh since August 2017, when the Myanmar military launched operations in response to attacks by a rebel group. Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of Rohingya homes.

Groups of Rohingya have attempted to leave the camps in Bangladesh by sea to seek better life in other Muslim-majority countries in the region. Malaysia has been a common destination for the boats even though many Rohingya refugees who land there face detention.

Although neighboring Indonesia is not a signatory to the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention, the U.N. refugee agency said that a 2016 presidential regulation provides a legal framework governing the treatment of refugees on boats in distress near Indonesia and helps them disembark in the country.

Poland: Russian-made missile fell on our country, killing 2

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By VANESSA GERA, ZEKE MILLER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland said early Wednesday that a Russian-made missile fell in the country's east, killing two people, though U.S. President Joe Biden said it was "unlikely" it was fired from Russia.

The blast, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy decried as "a very significant escalation," prompted Biden to call an emergency meeting of G-7 and NATO leaders. A deliberate, hostile attack on NATO member Poland could trigger a collective military response by the alliance.

But key questions around the circumstances of the missile launch remained amid the confusion caused by a blistering series of Russian airstrikes across the nearby border in Ukraine, none larger than who fired it. Russia denied any involvement in the Poland blast.

Three U.S. officials said preliminary assessments suggested the missile was fired by Ukrainian forces at an incoming Russian one amid the crushing salvo against Ukraine's electrical infrastructure Tuesday. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

That assessment and Biden's comments at the Group of 20 summit in Indonesia contradict information earlier Tuesday from a senior U.S. intelligence official who told the AP that Russian missiles crossed into Poland.

The Polish government said it was investigating and raising its level of military preparedness. Biden pledged support for Poland's investigation.

A statement from the Polish Foreign Ministry identified the weapon as being made in Russia. President Andrzej Duda was more cautious, saying that it was "most probably" Russian-made but that its origins were still being verified.

"We are acting with calm," Duda said. "This is a difficult situation."

Biden's decision to convene the emergency meeting upended schedules for the final day of the Group of 20 meeting in Indonesia.

Biden, who was awakened overnight by staff with the news of the missile while attending the summit, called Polish President Andrzej Duda to express his condolences. On Twitter, Biden promised "full U.S. support for and assistance with Poland's investigation," and "reaffirmed the United States' ironclad commitment to NATO."

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg called the meeting of the alliance's envoys in Brussels. The U.N. Security Council also planned to meet Wednesday for a previously scheduled briefing on the situation in Ukraine. The strike in Poland was certain to be raised.

Poland's statement did not address whether the strike could have been a targeting error or if the missile could have been knocked off course by Ukrainian defenses.

In their statements, Poland and NATO used language that suggested they were not treating the missile blast as an intentional Russian attack, at least for now. A NATO statement called it a "tragic incident."

If Russia had deliberately targeted Poland, it would risk drawing the 30-nation alliance into the conflict at a time when it is already struggling to fend off Ukrainian forces.

Polish media reported that the strike took place in an area where grain was drying in Przewodów, a village near the border with Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry denied being behind "any strikes on targets near the Ukrainian-Polish border" and said in a statement that photos of purported damage "have nothing to do" with Russian weapons.

Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau summoned the Russian ambassador and "demanded immediate detailed explanations," the government said.

The strike came to light as Russia pounded Ukraine's energy facilities with its biggest barrage of missiles yet, striking targets across the country and causing widespread blackouts.

The barrage also affected neighboring Moldova. It reported massive power outages after the strikes knocked out a key power line that supplies the small nation, an official said.

The missile strikes plunged much of Ukraine into darkness and drew defiance from Zelenskyy, who shook his fist and declared: "We will survive everything."

In his nightly address, the Ukrainian leader said the strike in Poland offered proof that "terror is not limited by our state borders."

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"We need to put the terrorist in its place. The longer Russia feels impunity, the more threats there will be for everyone within the reach of Russian missiles," Zelenskyy said.

Russia fired at least 85 missiles, most of them aimed at the country's power facilities, and blacked out many cities, he said.

The Ukrainian energy minister said the attack was "the most massive" bombardment of power facilities in the nearly 9-month-old invasion, striking both power generation and transmission systems.

The minister, Herman Haluschenko, accused Russia of "trying to cause maximum damage to our energy system on the eve of winter."

The assault killed at least one person in a residential building in the capital, Kyiv. It followed days of euphoria in Ukraine sparked by one of its biggest military successes — the retaking last week of the southern city of Kherson.

The power grid was already battered by previous attacks that destroyed an estimated 40% of the country's energy infrastructure.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has not commented on the retreat from Kherson since his troops pulled out in the face of a Ukrainian offensive. But the stunning scale of Tuesday's strikes spoke volumes and hinted at anger in the Kremlin.

By striking targets in the late afternoon, not long before dusk, the Russian military forced rescue workers to labor in the dark and gave repair crews scant time to assess the damage by daylight.

More than a dozen regions — among them Lviv in the west, Kharkiv in the northeast and others in between — reported strikes or efforts by their air defenses to shoot missiles down. At least a dozen regions reported power outages, affecting cities that together have millions of people. Almost half of the Kyiv region lost power, authorities said.

The deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, said a total of 15 energy targets were damaged and claimed that 70 missiles were shot down. A Ukrainian Air Force spokesman said Russia used X-101 and X-555 cruise missiles.

With its battlefield losses mounting, Russia has increasingly resorted to targeting Ukraine's power grid, seemingly hoping to turn the approach of winter into a weapon by leaving people in the cold and dark.

The strikes came as authorities were already working furiously to get Kherson back on its feet and beginning to investigate alleged Russian abuses there and in the surrounding area. The southern city is without power and water.

The retaking of Kherson dealt another stinging blow to the Kremlin. Zelenskyy likened the recapture to the Allied landings in France on D-Day in World War II, saying both were watershed events on the road to eventual victory.

But large parts of eastern and southern Ukraine remain under Russian control, and fighting continues.

In other developments, leaders of most of the world's economic powers were drawing closer to approval of a declaration strongly denouncing Russia's invasion.

On Tuesday, Biden and Zelenskyy pressed fellow G20 leaders at the summit in Indonesia for a robust condemnation of Russia's nuclear threats and food embargoes. More discussion and a possible vote were expected Wednesday.

Rent stabilization measures win in US midterm election

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Ballot measures in the U.S. to build more affordable housing and protect tenants from soaring rent increases were plentiful and fared well in last week's midterm elections, a sign of growing angst over record high rents exacerbated by inflation and a dearth of homes.

Voters approved capping rent increases at below inflation in three U.S. cities: Portland, Maine, and Richmond and Santa Monica in California. Another measure was leading in the vote count in Pasadena outside of Los Angeles. In Florida, voters in Orange County, which includes Orlando, overwhelmingly passed a rent stabilization measure but a court ruling means it's unlikely to go into force.

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There were also dozens of proposals on the Nov. 8 ballot raising money for and authorizing construction of affordable housing, said Diane Yentel, president and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition. Many passed.

"Housing is a winning campaign issue. It's one that voters show up for and it's one that should cause policymakers at all levels to act," said Yentel, adding that even a loss can be a win.

"The act of organizing itself builds strength, it builds power, and it builds connections and it builds momentum," she said.

Calls for more affordable homes and policies to keep tenants housed have been growing as homelessness increases even in places outside coastal urban centers such as San Francisco and Los Angeles. Moreover, teachers, police and other public servants say they cannot afford to live in the places where they work, resulting in nightmare commutes and staffing shortages.

Backers say rent control policies are needed to curb sharp increases that put tenants at risk of eviction. They say protections are especially needed now as more corporations snap up rental housing for profit. As of 2018, the U.S. Census Bureau found businesses owned nearly half of rental units.

"The market is out of whack, the government needs to step in and regulate it so there can be stability," said Leah Simon-Weisberg, a tenants rights attorney and chair of the rent board in Berkeley, California.

Opponents say rent control increases costs for landlords, the majority of whom are mom-and-pop operations with a handful of units each. Restricting rents will spur disinvestment in rental stock and discourage construction of affordable housing.

"Decades of empirical research have shown this policy does not help the underlying cause of the housing shortage that we have now. If anything, it makes the housing challenge more acute," said Ben Harrold, public policy manager at the National Apartment Association.

Most states preempt cities and counties from enacting rent stabilization, the result of lobbying by the real estate industry in the 1970s. Still, in cities accustomed to rent regulation voters approved stronger rent caps and more tenant protections.

The California cities of Richmond and Santa Monica easily approved measures to tighten existing rent increase maximums to 3%, significantly less than the state cap of 10%. In Oakland, across the bay from San Francisco, voters expanded eviction protections for tenants.

In Portland, Maine, 55% of voters approved a measure to slim down an existing rent cap, from 100% of the consumer price index to 70%. The proposal also dictates a host of other tenant protections, such as limiting security deposits to one month's rent and requiring 90 days notice for a rent increase or lease termination.

A ballot measure in Pasadena to cap annual rent increases at 75% of the consumer price index had more than 52% of the vote late Tuesday, and the campaign declared victory. The campaign's finance coordinator, Ryan Bell, said organizers went all out to reach voters but also, the timing was right.

"The pandemic really made it clear that people who are renting their housing are insecure by definition. Their housing could be taken away from them in some cities for no cause and a massive rent increase is functionally an eviction," he said. "There's just more and more stories."

Meanwhile, the rent cap overwhelmingly approved by voters in Orange County, Florida, is on hold. A court ruled it didn't meet what it acknowledged was an "extremely high bar" set by a state law that requires a housing emergency be identified before a rent cap can be put in place.

Nearly 60% of voters approved the measure after rents that jumped 25% between 2020 and 2021 and another double-digit increase this year. The Board of County Commissioners in Orange was scheduled to meet Thursday to decide whether to appeal.

Tenant advocates and landlords do agree on the need for more affordable housing, and cities and counties in Arizona, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Texas and Ohio were among those that approved bond measures for more units, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

In Colorado, voters approved a sweeping measure to set aside roughly \$300 million a year for programs that curb homelessness and promote affordable housing. But in Denver, where Zillow data shows median

rental prices jumped \$600 in two years, 58% of voters rejected a \$12 million proposal to expand free legal counsel for all tenants facing eviction.

The eviction fund would have been financed by a \$75 annual fee on landlords.

For Drew Hamrick, vice president of government affairs for the Apartment Association of Metro Denver, the opposing argument "that resonated the most was that this \$12 million tax was going to end up being paid for by the consumer regardless of what political outlook you have."

Biden: 'Unlikely' missile that hit Poland fired from Russia

By SEUNG MIN KIM, ZEKE MILLER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

NUSA DUA, Indonesia (AP) — President Joe Biden said Wednesday it was "unlikely" that a missile that killed two in NATO-ally Poland was fired from Russia, but he pledged support for Poland's investigation into what it had called a "Russian-made" missile.

Biden spoke after he convened an "emergency" meeting of the Group of Seven and NATO leaders in Indonesia Wednesday morning for consultations on the explosion that killed two people in the eastern part of Poland near the Ukraine border.

"There is preliminary information that contests that," Biden told reporters when asked if the missile had been fired from Russia. "It is unlikely in the lines of the trajectory that it was fired from Russia, but we'll see."

Three U.S. officials said preliminary assessments suggested the missile was fired by Ukrainian forces at an incoming Russian missile amid a crushing salvo against Ukraine's electrical infrastructure Tuesday. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Ukraine still maintains stocks of former Soviet and Russian-made weaponry, including the S-300 air-defense missile system.

The president, who was awakened overnight by staff with the news of the missile explosion while in Indonesia for the Group of 20 summit, called Polish President Andrzej Duda early Wednesday to express his "deep condolences" for the loss of life. Biden promised on Twitter "full U.S support for and assistance with Poland's investigation," and "reaffirmed the United States' ironclad commitment to NATO."

Biden said that he briefed the allies on his conversations with Duda and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and that there was "Total unanimity among the folks at the table" to support Poland's investigation into the explosion.

"I'm going to make sure we find out exactly what happened," Biden said. "And then we're going to collectively determine our next step as we investigate."

Meeting at a large round table in a ballroom in his hotel, the U.S. president hosted the leaders of the G-7, which includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the European Union, along with the president of the European Council and the prime ministers of NATO allies Spain and the Netherlands.

Biden held a separate meeting later with new British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, in their first extended conversation since he took office last month.

"We're going to continue to support Ukraine as long as Russia continues their aggression," Biden said alongside Sunak, adding that he was "glad we're on the same page" in backing Ukraine.

A statement from the Polish Foreign Ministry identified the missile as being made in Russia. But Poland's president, Duda, was more cautious about its origin, saying that officials did not know for sure who fired it or where it was made. He said it was "most probably" Russian-made, but that is being still verified. If confirmed, it would be the first time since the invasion of Ukraine that a Russian weapon came down on a NATO country.

Biden also said the leaders condemned "the latest series of Russian missile attacks," referring to the confirmed Russian strikes in recent days that have targeted Ukraine's power grid and caused widespread blackouts.

"The moment when the world came together at the G-20 to urge de-escalation, Russia continues to

escalate in Ukraine, while we're meeting," Biden said. "There were scores and scores of missile attacks in western Ukraine."

Biden and his allies had set out to isolate Russia at the G-20 summit and the group's final communique was expected to show that "most" of the nations in the G-20 condemn Russia's invasion.

Underscoring the extraordinarily tense situation, CIA Director William Burns was in Kyiv on Tuesday during the barrage of Russian missiles. He remained in the U.S. embassy in Kyiv during the strikes.

Burns briefed Zelenskyy and Ukrainian officials on his meeting in Turkey with the head of Russia's foreign intelligence service, according to another U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters.

Burns told Ukrainian officials that he had delivered a U.S. warning to Russia not to use nuclear weapons, the U.S. official said.

In addition to Biden's conversations, Secretary of State Antony Blinken held talks with his Polish and Ukrainian counterparts Wednesday, the State Department said.

Army Gen. Mark Milley spoke with Polish Chief of the General Staff Gen. Rajmund Andrzejczak on Tuesday. The Joint Staff said the two generals discussed the explosion in Poland and the loss of life there. He provided no other details.

Trump seeks White House again amid GOP losses, legal probes

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump on Tuesday launched his third campaign for the White House just one week after a disappointing midterm showing for Republicans, forcing the party to again decide whether to embrace a candidate whose refusal to accept defeat in 2020 sparked an insurrection and pushed American democracy to the brink.

"In order to make America great and glorious again, I am tonight announcing my candidacy for president of the United States," Trump said before an audience of several hundred supporters in a chandeliered ballroom at his Mar-a-Lago club, where he stood flanked by American flags and banners bearing his "Make America Great Again" slogan.

"America's comeback starts right now," he said, formally beginning the 2024 Republican primary.

Another campaign is a remarkable turn for any former president, much less one who made history as the first to be impeached twice and whose term ended with his supporters violently storming the Capitol in a deadly bid to halt the peaceful transition of power on Jan. 6, 2021.

Trump also enters the race in a moment of deep political vulnerability. He hoped to launch his campaign in the wake of resounding GOP midterm victories, fueled by candidates he elevated during this year's primaries. Instead, many of those candidates lost, allowing Democrats to keep the Senate and leaving the GOP with a path to only a bare majority in the House.

Trump has been blamed for the losses by many in his party, including a growing number who say the results make clear it's time for the GOP to move past him and look to the future, with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis emerging from last week's elections as an early favorite.

In addition to trying to blunt his potential rivals' rise, Trump's decision to launch his candidacy before the 2022 election had been fully decided also comes as he faces a series of escalating criminal investigations, including several that could lead to indictments. They include the probe into hundreds of documents with classified markings that were seized by the FBI from Mar-a-Lago and ongoing state and federal inquiries into his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

As Trump has spent the last months teasing his return, aides have been sketching out the contours of a campaign that is being modeled on his 2016 operation, when Trump and a small clutch of aides defied the odds and defeated far better-funded and more experienced rivals by tapping into deep political fault lines and using shocking statements to drive relentless media attention.

Trump returned to that dark rhetoric in his speech Tuesday, painting the country under President Joe Biden in apocalyptic terms, describing "blood-soaked streets" in "cesspool cities" and an "invasion" at the

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border and earning cheers as he vowed to execute those convicted of selling drugs.

"We are a nation in decline," he said. "We are here tonight to declare that it does not have to be this way."

Trump notably avoided much talk of the 2020 election, eschewing the extreme conspiracy theories that often dominate his rallies. Still, the speech included numerous exaggerations and deflections as he cast himself as "a victim" of wayward prosecutors and the "festering, rot and corruption of Washington."

While Trump spoke before a crowd of several hundred, notably missing were many longtime supporters including previous campaign managers, aides and his daughter Ivanka, who released a statement saying that she does not plan to be involved in his campaign.

"While I will always love and support my father, going forward I will do so outside the political arena," she said in statement.

Even after the GOP's midterm losses, Trump remains the most powerful force in his party thanks to the loyalty of his base. For years he has consistently topped his fellow Republican contenders by wide margins in hypothetical head-to-head matchups. And even out of office, he consistently attracts thousands to his rallies and remains his party's most prolific fundraiser, raising hundreds of millions of dollars.

But Trump is also a deeply polarizing figure. Fifty-four percent of voters in last week's midterm elections viewed him very or somewhat unfavorably, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 94,000 voters nationwide. And an October AP-NORC poll found even Republicans have their reservations about him remaining the party's standard-bearer, with 43% saying they don't want to see him run for president in 2024.

Trump's candidacy poses profound questions about America's democratic future. The final days of his presidency were consumed by a desperate effort to stay in power, undermining the centuries-old tradition of a peaceful transfer. And in the two years since he lost, Trump's persistent — and baseless — lies about widespread election fraud have eroded confidence in the nation's political process. By late January 2021, about two-thirds of Republicans said they did not believe Biden was legitimately elected in 2020, an AP-NORC poll found.

VoteCast showed roughly as many Republican voters in the midterm elections continued to hold that belief.

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

While some Republicans with presidential ambitions have long ruled out running against Trump, others, including Vice President Mike Pence, have been taking increasingly public steps toward campaigns of their own, raising the prospect of a crowded GOP primary.

That could ultimately play to Trump's advantage, as it did in 2016, when he prevailed over more than a dozen other candidates who splintered the anti-Trump vote.

Trump's decision also paves the way for a potential rematch with Biden, who has said he intends to run for reelection despite concerns from some in his party over his age and low approval ratings. The two men were already the oldest presidential nominees ever when they ran in 2020. Trump, who is 76, would be 82 at the end of a second term in 2029. Biden, who is about to turn 80, would be 86.

If he is ultimately successful, Trump would be just the second U.S. president in history to serve two nonconsecutive terms, following Grover Cleveland's wins in 1884 and 1892.

But Trump enters the race facing enormous challenges beyond his party's growing trepidations. The former president is the subject of numerous investigations, including the monthslong probe into the hundreds of documents with classified markings found at Mar-a-Lago.

Trump is also facing Justice Department scrutiny over efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. In Georgia, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis is investigating what she alleges was "a multi-state, coordinated plan by the Trump Campaign" to influence the 2020 results.

Some in Trump's orbit believe that running will help shield him against potential indictment, but there is no legal statute that would prevent the Justice Department from moving forward — or prevent Trump from continuing to run if he is charged.

Still, Trump's campaign will further complicate what is already a fraught decision by the Biden Justice

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Department, which will have to decide not only whether it believes Trump broke the law, but will face enormous political pressure for indicting the man who is now the sitting president's chief political rival. Already Trump has cast the probe as a politically motivated effort to derail his candidacy.

Aides who had succeeded in persuading Trump to delay his announcement until after the midterms had also urged him to wait until after next month's Senate runoff in Georgia. But Trump chose to ignore the advice.

It wasn't any secret what he had been planning.

At a White House Christmas party in December 2020, Trump told guests it had "been an amazing four years."

"We are trying to do another four years," he said. "Otherwise, I'll see you in four years."

Judge orders end to Trump-era asylum restrictions at border

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday ordered the Biden administration to lift Trump-era asylum restrictions that have been a cornerstone of border enforcement since the beginning of COVID-19.

U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan ruled in Washington that enforcement must end immediately for families and single adults, calling the ban "arbitrary and capricious." The administration has not applied it to children traveling alone.

Within hours, the Justice Department asked the judge to let the order take effect Dec. 21, giving it five weeks to prepare. Plaintiffs including the American Civil Liberties Union didn't oppose the delay.

"This transition period is critical to ensuring that (the Department of Homeland Security) can continue to carry out its mission to secure the Nation's borders and to conduct its border operations in an orderly fashion," government attorneys wrote.

Sullivan, who was appointed by President Bill Clinton, wrote in a 49-page ruling that authorities failed to consider the impact on migrants and possible alternatives.

The ruling appears to conflict with another in May by a federal judge in Louisiana that kept the asylum restrictions.

If Sullivan's ruling stands, it would upend border enforcement. Migrants have been expelled from the United States more than 2.4 million times since the rule took effect in March 2020, denying migrants rights to seek asylum under U.S. and international law on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The practice was authorized under Title 42 of a broader 1944 law covering public health.

Before the judge in Louisiana kept the ban in place in May, U.S. officials said they were planning for as many as 18,000 migrants a day under the most challenging scenario, a staggering number. In May, migrants were stopped an average of 7,800 times a day, the highest of Joe Biden's presidency.

Immigration advocacy groups have pressed hard to end Title 42, but more moderate Democrats, including U.S. Sens. Mark Kelly of Arizona and Raphael Warnock of Georgia, wanted it to stay when the administration tried to lift it in May.

The ban has been unevenly enforced by nationality, falling largely on migrants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador — in addition to Mexicans — because Mexico allows them to be returned from the United States. Last month, Mexico began accepting Venezuelans who are expelled from the United States under Title 42, causing a sharp drop in Venezuelans seeking asylum at the U.S. border.

Nationalities that are less likely to be subject to Title 42 have become a growing presence at the border, confident they will be released in the United States to pursue their immigration cases. In October, Cubans were the second-largest nationality at the border after Mexicans, followed by Venezuelans and Nicaraguans.

The Homeland Security Department said it would use the next five weeks to "prepare for an orderly transition to new policies at the border."

"We continue to work with countries throughout the Western Hemisphere to take enforcement actions against the smuggling networks that entice migrants to take the dangerous and often deadly journey to our land borders and to address the root causes of irregular migration that are challenging our hemisphere as a whole," the department said.

ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt said Sullivan's decision renders the Louisiana ruling moot.

"This is an enormous victory for desperate asylum seekers who have been barred from even getting a hearing because of the misuse of public laws," Gelernt said. "This ruling hopefully puts an end to this horrendous period in U.S. history in which we abandoned our solemn commitment to provide refuge to those facing persecution."

Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, policy counsel for the American Immigration Council, an immigrant advocacy group, distinguished Sullivan's ruling from the one by U.S. District Judge Robert Summerhays in Louisiana, an appointee of President Donald Trump, which applied only to how the Biden administration tried to end Title 42. Sullivan found the entire rule invalid.

Killer who stabbed 4 Idaho students to death still at large

By REBECCA BOONE and NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS Associated Press

MOSCOW, Idaho (AP) — The killer — or killers — who stabbed four University of Idaho students to death remained at large Tuesday, prompting many students to leave the campus in the idyllic small town despite police assurances that there was no imminent risk to the community.

So many students had left the scenic tree-lined campus in Moscow, Idaho, by Tuesday that university officials said a candlelight vigil scheduled for the next day would instead be held after the Thanksgiving break.

The students, all close friends, were found dead in an off-campus rental home around noon on Sunday, and officials said they likely were killed several hours earlier. Latah County Coroner Cathy Mabbutt told the Spokane, Washington-based television station KXLY that her preliminary investigation showed the students were stabbed to death. There is no indication that substance use was involved in the deaths, Mabbutt said.

The Moscow Police Department has not said whether investigators have identified any suspects, but maintained in a statement that the killings came in "an isolated, targeted attack and there is no imminent threat to the community at large." Police also said evidence from the scene indicates there is no broader risk, but provided no information about that evidence nor why they believe the victims were targeted.

Latah County Prosecutor Bill Thompson said he understands that the police claims that the public isn't at imminent risk seems contradictory to the facts that have been released so far about the killings.

"Obviously, there's no way police can say that there's no risk, but what they're seeing indicates that there's not a risk that this person will randomly attack people," Thompson said, noting that it's also not yet clear if it was one attacker or more.

"I don't think they're going to foreclose the possibility that it could be one or more people, but right now they don't know who is responsible," Thompson said.

The police department said investigators were working to establish a timeline of the victims' activities before they were killed. That includes reviewing video from a Twitch livestream that showed two of the victims chatting and getting a late night snack from a food truck in the hours before the slayings, said Thompson.

"They're in the process of identifying the other people who were there," at the food truck, Thompson said, "and what sort of contact did they have."

Autopsies scheduled for Wednesday could provide more information about the slayings.

Investigators were "following all leads and identifying persons of interest" in the case, the police statement said.

Police responding to a report of an unconscious person at the home Sunday discovered the students' bodies. The victims were identified as Ethan Chapin, a 20-year-old from Conway, Washington; Madison Mogen, a 21-year-old from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Xana Kernodle, 20, from Avondale, Arizona; and Kaylee Goncalves, 21, from Rathdrum, Idaho. Authorities have not described which of the victims lived in the home.

Kernodle's sister, Jazzmin Kernodle, wrote in a text to the AP that her family was confused and anxiously waiting for updates from the investigation.

"Xana was so happy and loved, and it breaks my heart," Jazzmin Kernodle wrote. The other students were also amazing people, she said, and her sister was lucky to have them in her life.

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"She was so lighthearted, and always lifted up a room. She made me such a proud big sister, and I wish I could have had more time with her," she wrote. "She had so much life left to live."

Photos on Instagram show the four as close-knit, longstanding friends. All were members of sororities or fraternities. Kernodle and Chapin were dating.

In one post, Kernodle wished Chapin a happy birthday, writing, "life is so much better with you in it, love you!" The caption was accompanied by a photo of Chapin in a chef's hat with Kernodle on his shoulders and wearing mouse ears.

Several weeks ago, Goncalves posted a series of photos showing her and Mogan growing up together. "I wouldn't have wanted anyone else to be the main character in all my childhood stories," she wrote.

"I love you more than life! My best friend forever and more," Mogen replied.

Another photo, apparently posted hours before they died, showed the four smiling and posing, seemingly carefree, along with two other friends. Chapin had his arm draped over Kernodle's shoulders, and Mogen was perched on Goncalves' shoulders.

"One lucky girl to be surrounded by these people every day," Goncalves wrote.

Signs of the community's grief and uncertainty were scattered throughout the small farming town on Tuesday. Moscow has about 26,000 residents but that population swells by about 11,000 when the students arrive.

A makeshift memorial with flowers, candles and notes was set up on a table in front of the Mad Greek restaurant in downtown Moscow where Kernodle and Mogen had worked. Four white pillar candles, each inscribed with the name of a slain student, burned in the center of the table.

The restaurant's owner wrote on Facebook that Mad Greek would close for a few days so staffers, friends and family could grieve "this incredible loss."

"Xana and Maddie have been servers here for several years and brought so much joy to our restaurant and all of those they encountered," the owner, Jackie Fischer, wrote. "You will be greatly missed. Thank you for being a part of our family/team, and for helping me so much over the years."

A flag flew at half-staff before the Sigma Chi fraternity, where Chapin was a member, just a short walk from the home where the four died.

The six-bedroom rental home remained surrounded by crime scene tape on Tuesday but had little sign of activity inside. A Latah County Sheriff's deputy stood guard near the driveway, and Idaho State Police officers were also at the scene.

Moscow police Captain Anthony Dahlinger said police were "trying to identify a suspect" but would not say if investigators had anyone in mind.

"These things are dynamic and constantly changing," Dahlinger said.

The University of Idaho canceled classes on Monday and said additional security staffers would be available to walk students across campus. Still, the lack of arrests and scarcity of information about the deaths prompted many to leave days before the Thanksgiving break was scheduled to begin.

The students who remained showed little sign of apprehension.

"I feel pretty safe," said student Nicole June on Tuesday. "I believe the police can do their job."

Nathan Lannigan, 18, said he was surprised with reports that there is no ongoing threat since a perpetrator has not been captured.

"That's a quick judgement, I think," Lannigan said.

In a Monday memo, University of Idaho President Scott Green urged university employees to be empathetic and flexible, and work with students who wanted to spend time with their families.

"Words cannot adequately describe the light these students brought to this world or ease the depth of suffering we feel at their passing under these tragic circumstances," Green wrote of the slain students.

The university said Chapin was a freshman, and Kernodle was a junior majoring in marketing and a member of the Pi Beta Phi sorority. Mogen was a senior also majoring in marketing who belonged to Pi Beta Phi, and Goncalves was a senior majoring in general studies and a member of the Alpha Phi sorority, the university said.

Weinstein attorney cross-examines accuser Siebel-Newsom

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jennifer Siebel Newsom, a documentary filmmaker and the wife of California Gov. Gavin Newsom, faced cross-examination from one of Harvey Weinstein's attorneys Tuesday about why her description of a 2005 encounter during which she says the filmmaker raped her has expanded since she first spoke with prosecutors.

The testimony came three weeks into the Los Angeles rape and sexual assault trial of Weinstein, and on the same day that the judge dismissed four of the 11 counts against him at the request of prosecutors.

Weinstein lawyer Mark Werksman pressed Siebel Newsom about what she said were frequent nightmares she'd been having about the encounter with Weinstein in a Beverly Hills hotel suite.

"Have you had a difficult time actually discerning what happened in a nightmare and what actually happened in a bedroom at the Peninsula Hotel?" Werksman asked.

"No, no," Siebel Newsom responded.

She explained that the new elements of her testimony, some of which she said under oath for the first time on Monday, were a result of having more time to process what happened.

"As we've gotten closer to this, and it's gotten more real, my need to clarify and be more detailed" has increased, Siebel Newsom said. "I had everything in a box, and I've been slowly sharing a little bit at a time, because this is so painful."

As Werksman kept returning to transcripts of her initial conversations with prosecutors in 2020, Siebel Newsom said that she did not think her initial conversations with police and prosecutors would lead to charges.

"I offered to talk to detectives initially to support other women, not to be up here on the witness stand," Siebel Newsom said.

She then teared up as she did occasionally Tuesday, though she was not nearly as emotional as she was during her intense and dramatic testimony a day earlier.

"You're the wife of the governor of California at the time and you're about to meet with the police and a deputy DA," Werksman said, "and you didn't think that the consequence of what you said was that you would be a victim in an indictment in a criminal indictment?"

Siebel Newsom said she thought her allegations were likely to be beyond the statute of limitations.

"I honestly was just telling my truth and I didn't know what the outcome was going to be," she testified.

Werksman, who says Siebel Newsom had consensual sex with Weinstein to advance her career, said during his questioning that her testimony showed she had not made her lack of consent clear during the encounter. He also showed her many friendly emails she sent to Weinstein in the years that followed that Werksman said would not have been sent by someone who had been raped.

She responded that she had set aside the assault in her mind, and the communications were an unfortunate necessity as a young actor like she was at the time.

"I was just surviving," she said.

Siebel Newsom is going by the name Jane Doe #4 at the trial, and like the others Weinstein is charged with raping or sexually assaulting, her real name is not being spoken in court. But both the prosecution and the defense have identified her as the governor's wife during the trial, and Siebel Newsom's attorney confirmed to The Associated Press and other news outlets that she is Jane Doe #4.

The governor, who last week sailed to a second term, was not in the courtroom for his wife's testimony.

She will now be the last of four women Weinstein is charged with assaulting to testify at the trial after Judge Lisa Lench dropped charges involving a fifth accuser.

Lench dismissed two counts of forcible rape and two counts of forcible oral copulation against the 70-year-old Weinstein.

The move had appeared likely since the trial's opening statements, when prosecutors only mentioned four women Weinstein was charged with assaulting, leaving out the accuser identified in an indictment

as Jane Doe #5.

The prosecutors at first kept the charges in place and left open the possibility that the woman would testify. But Deputy District Attorney Paul Thompson told the judge before testimony began Tuesday they would no longer pursue the Jane Doe #5 counts.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has not provided an explanation for why they opted to leave the woman out of the trial.

The remaining charges against Weinstein, who is serving a 23-year sentence for a conviction in New York, are two counts of rape and five other sexual assault counts.

He has pleaded not guilty and has said he didn't engage in nonconsensual sex.

Haiti fears spike in cholera cases as fuel blockade lifts

By EVENS SANON and DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Cholera cases are overwhelming Haiti as experts warn the situation could worsen now that the country is bustling once again after a paralyzing fuel blockade that lasted two months.

Dr. Jeanty Fils, a spokesman for Haiti's Ministry of Health, told The Associated Press that people are back on the streets and likely spreading cholera as the government struggles to find life-saving equipment including IV supplies amid an ongoing discussion on whether to request cholera vaccines.

"We need more resources," he said. "Cholera cases continue to climb in Haiti."

At least 175 people have died and more than 7,600 have been hospitalized, the Pan American Health Organization said Tuesday, although officials believe the numbers are much higher as a result of under-reporting.

Even so, the number of suspected cases had jumped by 33% in just a week.

The worsening situation prompted the United Nations to announce Tuesday that it, along with Haiti's government and other partners, was seeking \$146 million to help fight cholera. At least half a million people in Haiti are at risk of contracting the disease, according to PAHO and the World Health Organization.

"The surge in cases in recent weeks and the rapid spread of cholera in the country is worrying," said Ulrika Richardson, U.N. resident and humanitarian coordinator.

Fils noted that cholera cases were likely contained during the fuel blockade since gas stations were closed and many in the country of more than 11 million people remained at home.

"Now people are going to move around more," he said. "It could start spreading."

Stephanie Mayronne, medical operations manager for Doctors Without Borders, agreed.

She said if people sickened with cholera start traveling to areas with poor sanitation and a lack of drinking water, the number of cases will likely rise.

"It's a match that can light a fire," she said.

The number of patients seeking help at Doctors Without Borders hospitals in the capital of Port-au-Prince have spiked in recent weeks, with more than 6,500 admitted so far. Beds filled up so quickly that the aid group was forced to open a fifth center two weeks ago, said Alexandre Marcou, Haiti's field communication manager.

Inside that new center, mothers hovered over their children on a recent morning. One rearranged the tangle of intravenous cables surrounding her baby while another pumped the little cheeks of her young daughter to force her mouth open and give her an oral supplement. Nearby, adult patients sat in silence in plastic chairs with large white buckets between their legs, holding their head to one side with their arm. Some ate rice and red beans out of small containers that nurses later collected.

Marcou noted that people can survive cholera if treated on time, but the recent lack of fuel and ongoing violence between gangs that has worsened since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse has prevented Haitians from reaching hospitals and medical clinics.

"There's a huge security crisis. And we are tremendously lacking resources," said Ralph Ternier, chief medical officer in Haiti for the nonprofit Partners in Health. "The epidemic is spreading so quickly that vaccines are really the tool that we need."

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The Pan American Health Organization told the AP that it is supporting Haiti's government in preparing a request for vaccines as well as to plan and implement vaccination campaigns. But it wasn't clear if and when that might happen.

In October, the World Health Organization announced a worldwide cholera vaccine shortage that has forced it to suspend the usual double-dose strategy "at a time of unprecedented rise in cholera outbreaks worldwide." At least 29 countries have reported cholera cases this year, compared with fewer than 20 on average for the past five years, the agency said.

Mayronne said cholera vaccines can be a useful tool, but noted that a single dose can lower one's risk by only 40%.

"In and of itself, a vaccine is not a be-all and end-all," she said.

Amid the lack of vaccines in Haiti, crushing poverty made worse by a spiraling economic crisis and double-digit inflation is contributing to the spread of cholera because many are unable to access or afford potable water or food that isn't contaminated.

Lovena Shelove, 30, lost her two-year-old son to cholera despite a kind neighbor who brought drinking water to try and revive the toddler after severe bouts of vomiting and diarrhea.

"I don't have anything in the house," she said in a soft voice. "I could not afford anything to provide for the kids."

Her other child, a 7-month-old daughter, is still hospitalized.

Cholera is caused by a bacteria found in contaminated food or water and is easily transmitted, especially in crowded and unhygienic conditions. Sanitation further worsened during the fuel blockade given that companies that supplied drinking water were forced to suspend operations.

Haiti's first outbreak occurred in 2010 after U.N. peacekeepers introduced the bacteria into the country's largest river by sewage runoff from their base. Nearly 10,000 people died, and thousands of others were sickened.

The number of cases eventually dwindled, and the World Health Organization was preparing to declare Haiti cholera-free until the government announced in early October that at least three people had died — the first deaths reported in three years.

Patrick Joseph, 40, was among the thousands recently hospitalized after he became severely dehydrated.

"I don't know where I got cholera from," he said, although he suspects it's from the water he buys from a seller who claims it's treated. "I feared that I would die if I did not go to the doctor."

It's a feeling familiar to street vendor Lucna Francois, who had been relying on well water because the fuel blockade prevented her from accessing potable water. The 24-year-old got so sick on a recent evening that she called a relative to take her to the hospital.

"I am dying," she recalled telling them. "I was very, very weak."

Fils, with Haiti's health ministry, said another big challenge the government faces is that many people don't believe cholera exists and are not taking measures to avoid becoming sick.

"Prevention, it's a must," he said. "It's not just a matter of drinking (clean) water."

Mormon church voices support for same-sex marriage law

By SAM METZ Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said Tuesday it would back proposed federal legislation to safeguard same-sex marriages, marking the latest show of support for the measure from conservative-leaning groups.

The nearly 17-million member, Utah-based faith said in a statement that church doctrine would continue to consider same-sex relationships to be against God's commandments. Yet it said it would support rights for same-sex couples as long as they didn't infringe upon religious groups' right to believe as they choose.

"We believe this approach is the way forward. As we work together to preserve the principles and practices of religious freedom together with the rights of LGBTQ individuals much can be accomplished to heal relationships and foster greater understanding," the church said in a statement posted on its website.

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Support for the Respect for Marriage Act under consideration in Congress is the church's latest step to stake out a more welcoming stance toward the LGBTQ community while holding firm to its belief that same-sex relationships are sinful. Still, its stance toward LGBTQ people — including those who grow up in the church — remains painful for many.

Patrick Mason, a professor of religious studies at Utah State University, said the church's position was both a departure from and continuation of its past stances — respecting laws yet working to safeguard religious liberty and ensuring they won't be forced to perform same-sex marriages or grant them official church sanction.

"This is part of the church's overall theology essentially sustaining the law of the land, recognizing that what they dictate and enforce for their members in terms of their behavior is different than what it means to be part of a pluralistic society," he said.

The faith opposes same-sex marriage and sexual intimacy, but it has taken a more welcoming stance to LGBTQ people in recent years. In 2016, it declared that same-sex attraction is not a sin, while maintaining that acting on it was.

The bill, which has won support from Democrats and Republicans, is set for a test vote in the Senate Wednesday, with a final vote as soon as this week or later this month. It comes after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion, with Justice Clarence Thomas issuing a concurring opinion indicating that an earlier high court decision protecting same-sex marriage could come under threat.

The legislation would repeal the Clinton-era Defense of Marriage Act and require states to recognize all marriages that were legal where they were performed. It would also protect interracial marriages by requiring states to recognize legal marriages regardless of "sex, race, ethnicity, or national origin." It makes clear that the rights of private individuals and businesses wouldn't be affected.

Utah's four congressmen — who are all members of the church — each voiced support for the legislation earlier this year.

The church's public stance is a stark contrast from 14 years ago, when its members were among the largest campaign contributors in support of California's Prop. 8, which defined marriage as between a man and a woman in response to cities such as San Francisco granting marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Troy Williams, the executive director of Equality Utah, said it was "thrilling" to see the church part of the coalition in support of the legislation.

"Despite differences we may have, we can always discover common ground on laws that support the strengthening of all families," Williams, who grew up a church member, said.

The faith opposes laws that would make it illegal for churches to not allow to same-sex couples to marry on their property. But it has supported state-based efforts to pass laws that prohibit employment and housing discrimination as long as they clarify respect for religious freedom.

The Respect for Marriage Act neither fully codifies the U.S. Supreme Court decision that enshrined a federal right to same-sex marriage nor details all religious liberty concerns of those who object to it.

Faith groups see it as vehicle for passing religious liberty protections they haven't been able to in the past, said Tim Schultz, the president of the 1st Amendment Partnership.

Schultz's organization is advocating for religious liberty on behalf of a coalition concerned with that subject — a coalition that includes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"Same-sex marriage has achieved broad appeal in our culture in significant part because it hasn't trampled on people who believe in traditional marriage," he said.

Florida's Scott takes on McConnell in bid for Senate leader

By BRIAN SLODYSKO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Florida Sen. Rick Scott said Tuesday that he will mount a long-shot bid to unseat Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, opening the latest front in an intraparty battle between allies of McConnell and former President Donald Trump over the direction of the GOP following a disappointing showing in last week's midterm elections.

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The announcement by Scott, who was urged to challenge McConnell by Trump, came hours before the former president was expected to launch a comeback bid for the White House. It escalated a long-simmering feud between Scott, who led the Senate Republican's campaign arm this year, and McConnell over the party's approach to reclaiming a Senate majority.

"If you simply want to stick with the status quo, don't vote for me," Scott said in a letter to Senate Republicans offering himself as a protest vote against McConnell in leadership elections on Wednesday.

Restive conservatives in the chamber have lashed out at McConnell's handling of the election, as well as his iron grip over the Senate Republican caucus. The leadership vote was scheduled for Wednesday morning, though it could be postponed if Texas Sen. Ted Cruz succeeds with his effort to delay it until after a Georgia runoff election in December.

A delay could give leverage to Trump-aligned conservatives who are hoping their clout will grow after the outcome of races in Georgia, where former NFL star Herschel Walker is challenging Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock, and Alaska, where moderate Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski faces a conservative challenger.

Yet it appears unlikely that their numbers could grow enough to put McConnell's job in jeopardy, given his deep support within the conference. And Trump's opposition is hardly new, as has been pushing for the party to dump McConnell ever since the Senate leader gave a scathing speech blaming the former president for the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Still, it represents an unusual direct challenge to the authority of McConnell, who is set to become the longest-serving Senate leader in history if he wins another leadership term.

"We may or may not be voting tomorrow, but I think the outcome is pretty clear," McConnell told reporters Tuesday. "I want to repeat again: I have the votes; I will be elected. The only issue is whether we do it sooner or later."

Scott was one in a small group of senators who wrote a letter to the Republican caucus over the weekend asking for a delay in this week's leadership elections "to have serious discussions within our conference as to why and what we can do to improve our chances in 2024."

Republican senators debated the path forward during their regular party lunch on Tuesday. Inside the room, roughly 20 senators spoke. Scott and McConnell traded what colleagues said were "candid" and "lively" barbs, sparring over the midterms, the quality of the GOP candidates who ran and their differences over fundraising. Senators made their individual cases for the two men.

Some members directly challenged Scott in McConnell's defense, including Maine Sen. Susan Collins, who questioned the Florida senator's management of the NRSC, according to a person familiar with the meeting.

Scott "disagrees with the approach that Mitch has taken in this election, and for the last couple of years he made that clear," said Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, who has called for a delay and to oust McConnell. "Senator McConnell criticized Senator Scott's management of the NRSC. I imagine we'll hear more of that tomorrow."

Among the many reasons Scott listed for mounting a challenge is that Republicans had compromised too much with Democrats in the last Congress — producing bills that President Joe Biden has counted as successes and that Democrats ran on in the 2022 election.

"I believe it's time for the Senate Republican Conference to be far more bold and resolute than we have been in the past," Scott said in the letter, sent to colleagues as the GOP meeting was still going on. "We must start saying what we are for, not just what we are against."

But as the leader of the National Republican Senatorial Committee following a disappointing election, Scott is also an imperfect vessel to achieve the aims of frustrated Republicans and Trump.

"If you're going to make this about assessing blame for losing an election, I don't know how the NRSC chairman gets off the hook," said North Dakota Sen. Kevin Cramer. "I think that would be the obvious problem he would have."

The feud between Scott and McConnell has been percolating for months and reached a boil as election

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results trickled in showing there would be no Republican Senate wave, as Scott predicted, according to senior Republican strategists. They and others interviewed about the feud were not authorized to discuss internal issues by name and insisted on anonymity.

Operatives for the two men have traded barbs for more than a year over the handling of Senate Republican political strategy — or, in the view of some, the lack thereof.

The feuding started not long after Scott took over the party committee in late 2020, which many in the party viewed as an effort to build his national political profile and donor network ahead of a potential presidential bid in 2024. Some were irked by promotional materials from the committee that were heavy on Scott's own biography, while focusing less on the candidates who are up for election.

Then came Scott's release of an 11-point plan early this year, which called for a modest tax increase for many of the lowest-paid Americans, while opening the door for cutting Social Security and Medicare, which McConnell swiftly repudiated even as he declined to offer an agenda of his own.

Staffers from Scott's Senate committee moved into triage mode almost immediately, reaching out to Republican campaigns across the country to gauge their frustration while offering messaging help, according to senior Republican strategists with direct knowledge of the situation who viewed it as an "unforced error."

"A strategic disagreement" is how Scott has characterized their divergent views.

In August, McConnell undercut Scott during a Senate GOP lunch. Shortly after Scott had made a request for committee donations from Republican senators, McConnell addressed the room and told the Senators to instead prioritize giving to Senate Leadership Fund, a super PAC controlled by longtime McConnell allies, according to two people familiar with the discussion.

Last week, McConnell's super PAC cut Scott out of their efforts to boost turnout in the Georgia runoff, with the super PAC teaming up with Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp's political operation instead.

The decision was driven in part by the fraying trust in Scott's leadership, as well as poor finances of the committee, which was \$20 million in debt, according to a senior Republican consultant.

For some Senate Republicans, however, the feud is irrelevant to their decision to support Scott.

"We got to have a plan for the American public and if we don't we can expect much more of the same," said Indiana Sen. Mike Braun, who is supporting Scott's challenge of McConnell.

Beyoncé ties Grammy record after leading nominations with 9

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Beyoncé has propelled herself into the highest Grammy echelon: The star singer claimed a leading nine nominations Tuesday, making her tied — with her husband Jay-Z — as the most nominated music act in the history of the awards show.

Beyoncé's "Break My Soul" reeled in record and song of the year nominations, while "Renaissance" — which ventured into the world of dancehall music — netted an album of the year nod. With Jay-Z also earning five nods this year, each spouse now holds the record for the most-ever Grammy nominations at 88 apiece.

Kendrick Lamar came away with the second-most nominations, with eight. Adele and Brandi Carlile both received seven nods. Harry Styles, Mary J. Blige, Future, DJ Khaled, The-Dream and mastering engineer Randy Merrill each picked up six.

Nearly half of this year's leading nominees — announced by the likes of Olivia Rodrigo, John Legend, Machine Gun Kelly and Smokey Robinson — are women and more than half are people of color, according to the recording academy. The ceremony will be held Feb. 5 in Los Angeles.

"This makes me feel very proud, but it makes me conscious of the fact that we have to maintain the work we have done," said Harvey Mason jr., the Recording Academy's CEO. He said there have been strides in the peer-driven voting system and increased membership, but he still believes more progress can be made.

"This year, I'm pleased with the result and work the voters did," he continued. "We have almost 13,000 voters now. It's really important work. I'm pleased to think they spent the time listening to the music and evaluating. I think you see by the type of nominations that they are not only going for just popular music

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or music that has a lot of streams. It's just music of high quality."

The academy added a special song for social change and five new categories including songwriter of the year, which Harvey says will further help diversify the 65th edition of the annual awards.

The non-classical songwriter category will recognize one individual who was the "most prolific" non-performing and non-producing songwriter for a body of new work during an eligibility year. It will take a different approach than song of the year, which awards the songwriters who wrote the lyrics or melodies to one song.

Harvey said implementing the songwriters category is a "significant" step forward for the music industry. Last year, a rule update allowed that any songwriter, producer, engineer or featured artist on a work nominated for album of the year could ultimately earn a nomination.

"The academy and voters are placing a high importance on the craft of songwriting," Harvey said of the new category, in which nominees include The-Dream, Amy Allen, Nija Charles, Tobias Jesso Jr. and Laura Veltz. "Personally, as a songwriter, I'm happy to see it being a significant part of our process. We realize that songwriting is at the heart of our industry. It's one of the building blocks for every artist's career."

Harvey said it's his priority to earn the trust from the music community including The Weeknd and Drake, who are still unwilling to submit any of their music. Drake declined to submit his album "Honestly Nevermind" for the awards, but the Canadian rapper still received four nominations — including album of the year for his co-writing efforts on Beyoncé's "Renaissance."

"Anything that has been looked at and talked about in the past, we're going to continue to look at it and improve it," Harvey said. "As we do that work, our hope is that all artists feel comfortable and confident with the work the academy does."

Beyoncé, the most decorated woman in Grammy history with 28 wins, could break the late Hungarian-British conductor Georg Solti's record for most awards won if she wins four awards. Solti, who has 31 Grammys, has held on to the record since 1997.

For the first time in Beyoncé's lauded career, she was nominated in the dance category. Her seventh studio project is up for best dance-electronic music album and "Break My Soul" is nominated for best dance-electronic recording. Other nominations include best R&B song for "Cuff It," R&B performance for "Virgo's Groove," traditional R&B performance for "Plastic Off the Sofa" and song written for visual media for "Be Alive," the Oscar-nominated song from the "King Richard" soundtrack.

Other album of the year nominees include: Adele's "30," ABBA's "Voyage," Bad Bunny's "Un Verano Sin Ti," Mary J. Blige's "Good Morning Gorgeous" (Deluxe), Carli's "In These Silent Days," Coldplay's "Music of the Spheres," Lamar's "Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers," Lizzo's "Special" and Styles' "Harry's House." Bad Bunny made history, with his album becoming the first sung entirely in Spanish to compete in the category.

Tracks competing with "Break My Soul" for record of the year include Styles' "As It Was," Doja Cat's "Woman," Adele's "Easy On Me," ABBA's "Don't Shut Me Down," Blige's "Good Morning Gorgeous," Steve Lacy's "Bad Habit," Lamar's "The Heart Part 5," Lizzo's "About Damn Time" and Carli's "You and Me On the Rock" featuring Lucius.

Three of Jay-Z's nominations came through DJ Khaled's "God Did," a song featuring Rick Ross, Lil Wayne, John Legend and Fridayy. The track is up for best rap performance and rap song along with song of the year, which also has Jay-Z nominated for his writing efforts on Beyoncé's "Break My Soul." The rapper also received a nod for album of the year for his work on his wife's "Renaissance" album.

Young Thug and Gunna both received nominations despite being currently locked up in a racketeering criminal case. The rappers are up for best rap song and rap performance through Gunna's "pushin P," featuring Thug and Future.

Christina Aguilera's comeback to Latin music with her self-titled album earned her two nominations for best Latin pop album and immersive audio album. Among the 10 nominees for best new artist are Muni Long, Latto and Eurovision winner Maneskin.

'Did not end well': New Pence book details split with Trump

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By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former Vice President Mike Pence blames Donald Trump for endangering his family “and all those serving at the Capitol” on Jan. 6 in a new memoir released Tuesday.

In “So Help Me God,” Pence recounts, for the first time in his own words, the Republican former president’s extraordinary effort to push him to overturn the results of the 2020 election and shares his account of the day thousands of rioters stormed the Capitol, with some chanting “Hang Mike Pence.”

“They had come to protest the result of the election and to prevent Congress from fulfilling its responsibility to open and count the Electoral College votes,” Pence writes. “And, as I later learned, many had come looking for me.”

The book, which traces Pence’s life in politics — from serving as youth coordinator for a local Democratic Party to watching then-Vice President Al Gore certify his election loss days after Pence had been sworn in as a member of Congress — largely defends Trump, glossing over and whitewashing many of his most contentious episodes. “I had always been loyal to President Donald Trump,” the book begins.

But Pence, who spent years refusing to publicly criticize his old boss, makes clear that Jan. 6, 2021, was a breaking point in which, he writes, Trump’s “reckless words had endangered my family and all those serving at the Capitol.”

“For four years, we had a close working relationship. It did not end well,” Pence writes, summing up their time in the White House. Still, he adds, “we parted amicably when our service to the nation drew to a close. In the months that followed, we spoke from time to time, but when the president returned to the rhetoric that he was using before that tragic day and began to publicly criticize those of us who defended the Constitution, I decided it would be best to go our separate ways.”

The book, published by Simon & Schuster, comes as Pence appears increasingly likely to run for president in 2024, a move that would put him in direct conflict with Trump, who is expected to formally launch his own reelection campaign in Florida on Tuesday night.

Pence, who in the book never directly states that Democrat Joe Biden won fairly, writes that when Trump first suggested holding a rally in Washington on Jan. 6, the day Pence was set to preside over the election’s certification, he thought it was a good idea. “My first thought was that a rally that day might be useful as a way to call even more attention to the proceedings on the floor of the House and Senate,” he writes.

Instead, Pence describes sitting in the Senate chamber and presiding over the certification when the Senate parliamentarian leaned over to inform him that rioters had breached the building and a member of his Secret Service detail rushing over to insist they leave. Pence refused to vacate the building and was instead ushered to a Senate loading dock, where he spent hours, surrounded by staff and family members, making calls to military and congressional leaders to coordinate the government’s response, as the president — who never bothered to check in on Pence’s safety — sat cloistered, watching TV.

“All around was a blur of motion and chaos: security and police officers directing people to safety, staffers shouting and running for shelter. I could see the intensity in the eyes of the Secret Service detail; it was audible, too, in the voices of the Capitol Police. I could hear the fall of footsteps and angry chanting,” Pence writes. Still, Pence insists he was “not afraid,” only angry at what was unfolding.

At 2:24 p.m., as Pence remained in hiding, Trump fired off that infamous tweet saying Pence “didn’t have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution.”

“I just shook my head,” Pence said he responded. “The truth was, as reckless as the president’s tweet was, I really didn’t have time for it. Rioters were ransacking the Capitol. ... The president had decided to be part of the problem. I was determined to be part of the solution. I ignored the tweet and got back to work.”

Pence also describes Trump’s campaign to pressure him to reject the results of the election by rejecting Electoral College votes or sending them back to the states, even though the Constitution makes clear that the vice president’s role is purely ceremonial.

During one lunch on Nov. 16, 2020, Pence said he told Trump that “if the legal challenges came up short and if he was unwilling to concede, he could simply accept the results of the elections, move forward with the transition, and start a political comeback, winning the Senate runoffs in Georgia, the governor’s race

in Virginia in 2021, and the House and Senate in 2022.”

“That accomplished, I said, he could run for president in 2024 and win,” Pence writes. “He seemed unmoved, even weary, at the prospect.”

“I don’t know, 2024 is so far off,” Pence writes that Trump told him “before returning to the status of election challenges in various states.”

At another lunch, Pence said he encouraged Trump “not to look at the election ‘as a loss — just an intermission’” and said if he “still came up short” after exhausting every legal option, Trump should “take a bow” and later run again.

“He nodded, pointed at me as if to say, ‘That’s worth considering,’ and walked into the back hallway,” Pence writes. “I will always wish he had.”

But as the lawsuits Trump’s legal team was pushing continued to fail, Pence writes that Trump’s mood darkened and he became increasingly irate. Pence says Trump berated him, telling him, “You’re too honest,” and predicting that “hundreds of thousands are gonna hate your guts” and “people are gonna think you’re stupid.”

“As the days wore on, it was becoming clear that there would be a real cost to me politically when I presided over the certification of the 2020 election,” Pence writes. “I always knew that I did not possess the authority to overturn the election. I knew it would be hurtful to my friend for me to participate in the certification. But my duty was clear.”

After the Capitol was cleared of the rioters, Congress reconvened and Pence presided over the certification of his and Trump’s loss. For several days the two men did not speak. But when they finally met, five days later, Pence said they spent more than 90 minutes together, alone.

“I told him that I had prayed for him for the past four and a half years, and I encouraged him to pray,” Pence said he told Trump. “‘Jesus can help you through this,’ I said. ‘Call on Him.’ He didn’t say anything.”

“With genuine sadness in his voice, the president then mused, ‘What if we hadn’t had the rally? What if they hadn’t gone to the Capitol?’ Then he said, ‘It’s too terrible to end like this.’”

Life sentence sought for teen in Michigan school shooting

By ED WHITE and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Prosecutors said they’ll seek a life sentence with no chance for parole for a 16-year-old boy who killed four fellow students at a Michigan school and pleaded guilty to murder and terrorism.

They disclosed their plans in a court filing Monday, three weeks after Ethan Crumbley, 16, withdrew a possible insanity defense and acknowledged the shooting at Oxford High School in November 2021.

A first-degree murder conviction typically brings an automatic no-parole sentence in Michigan. But teenagers are entitled to a hearing where their lawyer can raise immaturity, mental condition, family life and other issues while arguing for a shorter term.

Crumbley pleaded guilty to all 24 charges. The sentencing process is scheduled to start in February.

“A sentence of imprisonment for life without the possibility of parole is appropriate in this case,” Oakland County assistant prosecutor Marc Keast wrote.

Separately, the prosecutor’s office said Tuesday that Crumbley was “offered and promised nothing” for his guilty plea.

Judge Kwame Rowe will have flexibility. Under state law, possible prison terms for teens include parole eligibility after a minimum sentence of 25 years.

Defense attorney Paulette Michel Loftin said she’s disappointed but not surprised by the request for a life term. She believes Crumbley could be rehabilitated in prison.

The hearing “will give the court, as well as the public, a good inside look into the difficult home life of Mr. Crumbley and what challenges he was facing,” Loftin told The Associated Press.

The boy was 15 at the time of the shooting at Oxford High, roughly 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of Detroit. Four students were killed, and six more students and a teacher were injured.

His parents, James and Jennifer Crumbley, are jailed on charges of involuntary manslaughter. They’re

accused of making the gun accessible to their son and ignoring his need for mental health treatment.

When he pleaded guilty, Ethan Crumbley said his father bought the gun for him with the teen's own money just a few days before the shooting. The boy said the gun was not locked in a container or safe at home.

Ethan Crumbley had brought the 9mm Sig Sauer handgun and 50 rounds of ammunition to school in his backpack. Earlier that day, a teacher had discovered a drawing with a gun pointing at the words: "The thoughts won't stop. Help me." There was an image of a bullet with the message: "Blood everywhere."

The Crumbleys declined to take their son home but were told to get him into counseling within 48 hours, according to investigators. Ethan Crumbley later went into a school bathroom, pulled out the weapon and began shooting.

In their criminal case, the parents are asking a judge to give them access to experts' reports about their son's mental state. They believe the information could be favorable to their defense.

"The Crumbleys maintain that they did not have any reason to believe that the shooter had mental health concerns" that would require treatment, defense attorneys said in a court filing Monday. "They admit that their son was experiencing sadness over the loss of his dog, his grandmother and a friend who had recently moved away."

G-20 to condemn Russia's Ukraine invasion, urge an end

By SEUNG MIN KIM, ZEKE MILLER and ELAINE KURTENBACH Associated Press

NUSA DUA, Indonesia (AP) — Leaders of most of the world's economic powers are nearing approval of a declaration strongly denouncing Russia's invasion that has devastated Ukraine and roiled the global economy. Even China, which has mostly declined to censure Russia until now, and India, which buys weapons from Russia, are providing encouraging words.

On Tuesday, U.S. President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pressed fellow leaders for a robust condemnation of Russia's nuclear threats and food embargoes.

More discussion and a possible vote come Wednesday at the summit, which has proved unusually eventful, even including a COVID-19 scare when Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen tested positive and flew home. No other leaders were reported positive.

A draft declaration by leaders of the Group of 20 echoes the United Nations' condemnation of Russia's war on Ukraine, though acknowledging differing views among members.

The careful wording of the statement reflects tensions prevailing at the gathering, which includes leaders from Russia and China, and the challenge facing the U.S. and its allies to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin's government. Some nations want badly to avoid becoming entangled in antagonisms between the biggest powers.

Still, if adopted in its current form, the declaration would be a strong rebuke of the war that has killed thousands, heightened global security tensions and disrupted the world economy. That would be an especially significant step since China and India abstained from condemning Russia's aggression in the March U.N. resolution.

The draft statement seen Tuesday by The Associated Press "deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation" and "demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine." The G-20 statement does note that there are different views on the situation and on sanctions against Russia, saying that the G-20 is not the forum for resolving security issues.

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan decried Russia's latest strikes in Ukraine.

"It is not lost on us that, as world leaders meet at the G-20 in Bali to discuss the issues of significant importance to the lives and livelihoods of people around the world, Russia again threatens those lives and destroys Ukraine's critical infrastructure," he said in a statement.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who led the Russian delegation to Indonesia in place of Putin, denounced the Biden administration push to condemn Moscow.

"All problems are on the Ukrainian side that categorically refuses to hold any talks and comes up with conditions obviously unrealistic and inadequate to this situation," Lavrov said.

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Another big problem for the global economy the past two years has been the COVID-19 pandemic. Though no cases were reported at the summit other than the Cambodian prime minister, many of the leaders had attended meetings with him just days earlier during a separate summit in Cambodia of the Association of Southeast Asian nations.

Biden skipped an evening gala Tuesday hosted by Indonesian President Joko Widodo, to attend to unspecified matters. Biden sent his regrets to Widodo and said he would attend a planned tree planting with fellow G-20 leaders on Wednesday, according to a White House official. The official, who was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity, noted it had been a "full day" for the president but insisted that Biden's absence was not related to COVID-19.

Back at the G-20's main business, Zelenskyy delivered a video address trying to persuade the group to further isolate Russia diplomatically and economically, despite the financial worries that have tested many nations' resolve.

Inflation and slowing economies already are weighing on countries that have imposed penalties on Russia for starting the war. Higher costs for energy and food have hurt business activity around the world, as much of Europe prepares to brave the winter without imports of Russian natural gas.

Indonesia's Widodo said ominously, "If the war does not end, it will be difficult for the world to move forward."

Zelenskyy reiterated 10 conditions for ending the conflict that began in February, among them a complete withdrawal of Russian troops and full restoration of Ukrainian control of its territory. He spoke days after Ukraine retook the strategic city of Kherson from Russian forces, in his country's latest counteroffensive that has forced Moscow to withdraw some forces from occupied areas.

"Ukraine should not be offered to conclude compromises with its conscience, sovereignty, territory and independence," he said. "Ukraine has always been a leader in peacekeeping efforts, and the world has witnessed it. And if Russia says that it supposedly wants to end this war, let it prove it with actions."

At the summit, Biden met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who played a pivotal role this summer in brokering a deal to open up Ukrainian grain exports to ease global food shortages. Biden also met briefly with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose cooperation is needed to secure a U.S.-sought price cap on Russian oil to limit the profits Moscow uses to invest in its defense base.

Modi, whose country will assume the G-20 presidency after Indonesia, reiterated his call for "the path of ceasefire and diplomacy" in the war in Ukraine and spoke about efforts by world leaders in World War II to pursue a "path of peace."

Separately, U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres held a lengthy meeting Tuesday with Lavrov to discuss the Black Sea Grain Initiative, said U.N. spokesperson Florencia Soto Niño. The deal, which allowed major grain exporter Ukraine to resume exports from ports that had been blocked due to the war, is up for renewal on Saturday.

The U.S. and its allies have responded to Russia's invasion with their own export controls and other sanctions, making it harder for Russia's military to access key technologies and resupply with drones, artillery and other weapons.

Chinese officials have largely refrained from public criticism of Russia's war, although Beijing has avoided direct support of the Russians, such as supplying arms. Biden said that during his meeting Monday with Chinese President Xi Jinping they discussed the war and "reaffirmed our shared belief" that the use or even the threat of nuclear weapons was "totally unacceptable" — a reference to Moscow's thinly veiled threats to use atomic weapons as its invasion of Ukraine has faltered.

Xi told G-20 leaders the global economy should not be weaponized.

"We must resolutely oppose the attempt to politicize food and energy issues or use them as tools and weapons," he said in translated remarks.

After meeting with Xi, French President Emmanuel Macron said they had called for "respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine."

In a tweet, Macron said France and China were determined to "put an end to the escalation of the war in Ukraine and deal with its consequences."

The summit is the first for two critical new partners in Biden's effort: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

and Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni.

Sunak, who took office last month, has promised to continue his conservative predecessors' steadfast support for Ukraine. He and Biden were set to strategize during their Wednesday meeting on new ways to bolster Ukraine's defenses for the long haul.

Meloni has pledged to continue to provide arms and aid for Ukraine, but questions remain over her far-right coalition's commitment to stand up to Russia. She and Biden met on the sidelines of the summit on Tuesday and discussed China, the climate crisis, the impact of Russia's invasion on the global energy market, and their commitment to providing Ukraine support, according to a White House statement.

Unvaccinated Djokovic set for visa to play Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — A year after Novak Djokovic's high-profile deportation from Australia because he is not vaccinated against COVID-19, the 21-time Grand Slam champion is set to be granted a visa to enter the country so he can compete at the Australian Open in January.

The Australian Broadcasting Corp. said Tuesday it had confirmed newspaper reports that the immigration minister would put aside a potential three-year ban from entry that Djokovic, a 35-year-old from Serbia, had faced as a foreign citizen whose visa was revoked.

The Australian Border Force previously explained that exclusion period could be waived in certain circumstances — and that each case would be assessed on its merits.

Immigration Minister Andrew Giles' office declined to comment on privacy grounds.

Djokovic's representatives did not immediately respond Tuesday to a request for comment. He currently is participating in the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin, Italy, where he won his opening match Monday against Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 7-6 (4) and is next scheduled to play — and speak to the media — on Wednesday against Andrey Rublev.

After Monday's victory, Djokovic indicated that his lawyers were in touch with the Australian government with an eye to him being able to contest the Australian Open, which runs from Jan. 16-29.

The nine-time Australian Open champion was not allowed to seek a 10th title at Melbourne Park after a tumultuous 10-day legal saga early this year over his COVID-19 vaccination status that culminated with his visa being taken away on the eve of the tournament.

Djokovic arrived at Melbourne Airport with a visa he had obtained online via what he believed to be a valid medical exemption from the country's strict laws governing unvaccinated visitors. His application had been endorsed by Tennis Australia and the government of Victoria state, which hosts the tournament.

Confusion reigned, generating global headlines. As it turned out, that apparent medical exemption allowed him to enter the tournament — which, in theory, required all players, fans and officials to be vaccinated against the coronavirus — but not necessarily to enter the country, and it was rejected by the Australian Border Force.

Alex Hawke, Australia's immigration minister at the time, used discretionary powers to cancel Djokovic's visa on character grounds, stating he was a "talismán of a community of anti-vaccine sentiment."

Australia has had a change of government since and changed its border rules this year. Since July, incoming travelers no longer have to provide proof of receiving shots against COVID-19. That removed the major barrier to entry for Djokovic, who says he has not been — and will not be — vaccinated against the coronavirus, even if it means he misses important tennis tournaments.

Indeed, he sat out the U.S. Open in September, and other events in the United States, because he could not fly into the country as an unvaccinated foreign citizen. He was allowed to play in the French Open, where he lost in the quarterfinals, and at Wimbledon, which he won.

"I don't have any regrets. I mean, I do feel sad that I wasn't able to play (at the U.S. Open), but that was a decision that I made and I knew what the consequences would be," Djokovic said in September at the Laver Cup in London. "So I accepted them and that's it."

Djokovic has spent more weeks at No. 1 in the ATP rankings than anyone else, breaking Roger Federer's record, and is No. 8 at the moment, in part because of a lack of activity and in part because there were

no ranking points awarded to anyone at Wimbledon this year.

Australia's changes allowed Djokovic to apply to Giles to reconsider his visa status. In Djokovic's favor were two other factors: He left Australia quickly after his visa was revoked 10 months ago, and he has not publicly criticized Australian authorities.

As the Department of Home Affairs website explains, applicants in Djokovic's circumstances must explain in writing why the exclusion period should be put aside, saying, "You must show us that there are compassionate or compelling circumstances to put aside your re-entry ban and grant you the visa."

Walmart offers to pay \$3.1 billion to settle opioid lawsuits

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Walmart proposed a \$3.1 billion legal settlement on Tuesday over the toll of powerful prescription opioids sold at its pharmacies, becoming the latest major drug industry player to promise major support to state, local and tribal governments still grappling with a crisis in overdose deaths.

The retail giant's announcement follows similar proposals on Nov. 2 from the two largest U.S. pharmacy chains, CVS Health and Walgreen Co., which each said they would pay about \$5 billion.

Most of the drugmakers that produced the most opioids and the biggest drug distribution companies have already reached settlements. With the largest pharmacies now settling, it represents a shift in the opioid litigation saga. For years, the question was whether companies would be held accountable for an overdose crisis that a flood of prescription drugs helped spark.

With the crisis still raging, the focus now is on how the settlement dollars — now totaling more than \$50 billion — will be used and whether they will help curtail record numbers of overdose deaths, even as prescription drugs have become a relatively small portion of the epidemic.

Bentonville, Arkansas-based Walmart said in a statement that it "strongly disputes" allegations in lawsuits from state and local governments that its pharmacies improperly filled prescriptions for the powerful prescription painkillers. The company does not admit liability with the settlement, which would represent about 2% of its quarterly revenue.

"Walmart believes the settlement framework is in the best interest of all parties and will provide significant aid to communities across the country in the fight against the opioid crisis, with aid reaching state and local governments faster than any other nationwide opioid settlement to date," the company said in a statement.

Lawyers representing local governments said the company would pay most of the settlement over the next year if it is finalized.

New York Attorney General Letitia James said in a release that the company would have to comply with oversight measures, prevent fraudulent prescriptions and flag suspicious ones.

Some government lawyers suggested Walmart has acted more responsibly than other pharmacies when it came to opioids.

"Although Walmart filled significantly fewer prescriptions for opioids than CVS or Walgreens, since 2018 Walmart has been the most proactive in trying to monitor and control prescription opioid diversion attempted through its pharmacies," Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson said in a statement.

The deals are the product of negotiations with a group of state attorneys general, but they are not final. The CVS and Walgreens deals would have to be accepted first by a critical mass of state and local governments before they are completed.

Walmart's plan would have to be approved by 43 states by Dec. 15, and local governments could sign on by March 31, 2023. Each state's allocation depends partly on how many local governments agree.

"Companies like Walmart need to step up and help by ensuring Pennsylvanians get the treatment and recovery resources they need," Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro, who last week was elected governor of his state, said in a statement. "This deal with Walmart adds to the important progress we've already achieved through our settlements with the opioid manufacturers and distributors — and we're not done yet."

The share of Walmart's proposed settlement going to Native American tribes is \$78 million, to be divided among all the federally recognized tribes, said Robins Kaplan, a law firm representing tribes.

After governments used funds from tobacco settlements in the 1990s for purposes unrelated to public health, the opioid settlements have been crafted to ensure most of the money goes to fighting the crisis. State and local governments are devising spending plans now.

Opioids of all kinds have been linked to more than 500,000 deaths in the U.S. over the past two decades. In the 2000s, most fatal opioid overdoses involved prescription drugs such as OxyContin and generic oxycodone. After governments, doctors and companies took steps to make them harder to obtain, people addicted to the drugs increasingly turned to heroin, which proved more deadly.

In recent years, opioid deaths have soared to record levels, around 80,000 a year. Most of those deaths involve illicitly produced version of the powerful lab-made drug fentanyl, which is appearing throughout the U.S. supply of illegal drugs.

World Population hits 8 billion, creating many challenges

By DAN IKPOYI and CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — The world's population will likely hit an estimated 8 billion people on Tuesday, according to a United Nations projection, with much of the growth coming from developing nations in Africa.

Among them is Nigeria, where resources are already stretched to the limit. More than 15 million people in Lagos compete for everything from electricity to light their homes to spots on crowded buses, often for two-hour commutes each way in this sprawling megacity. Some Nigerian children set off for school as early as 5 a.m.

And over the next three decades, the West African nation's population is expected to soar even more: from 216 million this year to 375 million, the U.N. says. That will put Nigeria in a tie for third place with the United States after India and China.

"We are already overstressing what we have — the housing, roads, the hospitals, schools. Everything is overstressed," said Gyang Dalyop, an urban planning and development consultant in Nigeria.

The U.N.'s Day of 8 Billion milestone Tuesday is more symbolic than precise, officials are careful to note in a wide-ranging report released over the summer that makes some staggering projections.

The upward trend threatens to leave even more people in developing countries further behind, as governments struggle to provide enough classrooms and jobs for a rapidly growing number of youth, and food insecurity becomes an even more urgent problem.

Nigeria is among eight countries the U.N. says will account for more than half the world's population growth between now and 2050 — along with fellow African nations Congo, Ethiopia and Tanzania.

"The population in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to double between 2022 and 2050, putting additional pressure on already strained resources and challenging policies aimed to reduce poverty and inequalities," the U.N. report said.

It projected the world's population will reach around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion in 2100.

Other countries rounding out the list with the fastest growing populations are Egypt, Pakistan, the Philippines and India, which is set to overtake China as the world's most populous nation next year.

In Congo's capital, Kinshasa, where more than 12 million people live, many families struggle to find affordable housing and pay school fees. While elementary pupils attend for free, older children's chances depend on their parents' incomes.

"My children took turns" going to school, said Luc Kyungu, a Kinshasa truck driver who has six children. "Two studied while others waited because of money. If I didn't have so many children, they would have finished their studies on time."

Rapid population growth also means more people vying for scarce water resources and leaves more families facing hunger as climate change increasingly impacts crop production in many parts of the world.

"There is also a greater pressure on the environment, increasing the challenges to food security that is

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also compounded by climate change," said Dr. Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India. "Reducing inequality while focusing on adapting and mitigating climate change should be where our policy makers' focus should be."

Still, experts say the bigger threat to the environment is consumption, which is highest in developed countries not undergoing big population increases.

"Global evidence shows that a small portion of the world's people use most of the Earth's resources and produce most of its greenhouse gas emissions," said Poonam Muttreja, executive director of the Population Foundation of India. "Over the past 25 years, the richest 10% of the global population has been responsible for more than half of all carbon emissions."

According to the U.N., the population in sub-Saharan Africa is growing at 2.5% per year — more than three times the global average. Some of that can be attributed to people living longer, but family size remains the driving factor. Women in sub-Saharan Africa on average have 4.6 births, twice the current global average of 2.3.

Families become larger when women start having children early, and 4 out of 10 girls in Africa marry before they turn 18, according to U.N. figures. The rate of teen pregnancy on the continent is the highest in the world — about half of the children born last year to mothers under 20 worldwide were in sub-Saharan Africa.

Still, any effort to reduce family size now would come too late to significantly slow the 2050 growth projections, the U.N. said. About two-thirds of it "will be driven by the momentum of past growth."

"Such growth would occur even if childbearing in today's high-fertility countries were to fall immediately to around two births per woman," the report found.

There are also important cultural reasons for large families. In sub-Saharan Africa, children are seen as a blessing and as a source of support for their elders — the more sons and daughters, the greater comfort in retirement.

Still, some large families "may not have what it takes to actually feed them," says Eunice Azimi, an insurance broker in Lagos and mother of three.

"In Nigeria, we believe that it is God that gives children," she said. "They see it as the more children you have, the more benefits. And you are actually overtaking your peers who cannot have as many children. It looks like a competition in villages."

Politics also have played a role in Tanzania, where former President John Magufuli, who ruled the East African country from 2015 until his death in 2021, discouraged birth control, saying that a large population was good for the economy.

He opposed family planning programs promoted by outside groups, and in a 2019 speech urged women not to "block ovaries." He even described users of contraceptives as "lazy" in a country he said was awash with cheap food. Under Magufuli, pregnant schoolgirls were even banned from returning to classrooms.

But his successor, Samia Suluhu Hassan, appeared to reverse government policy in comments last month when she said birth control was necessary in order not to overwhelm the country's public infrastructure.

Even as populations soar in some countries, the U.N. says rates are expected to drop by 1% or more in 61 nations.

The U.N. report put the current U.S. population at 337 million, reaching 375 million in 2050. The population growth rate in 2021 was just 0.1%, the lowest since the country was founded.

"Going forward, we're going to have slower growth — the question is, how slow?" said William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution. "The real wild card for the U.S. and many other developed countries is immigration."

Charles Kenny, a senior fellow at the Center for Global Development in Washington, says environmental concerns surrounding the 8 billion mark should focus on consumption, particularly in developed countries.

"Population is not the problem, the way we consume is the problem — let's change our consumption patterns," he said.

Shops in Iran, including Grand Bazaar, close over protests

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranian shops in Tehran's historic Grand Bazaar and elsewhere across the country closed their doors Tuesday amid protests gripping the nation, as two prominent soccer stars also announced they would not be attending the upcoming World Cup over the demonstrations.

The shop closures came amid calls for a three-day national strike to mark earlier protests in 2019 against Iran's theocracy that ended in a violent crackdown by authorities. However, this round of demonstrations after the September death of a 22-year-old woman earlier detained by the country's morality police have continued despite activists recording at least 344 deaths and 15,820 arrests so far.

The protests have seen prominent former players Ali Daei and Javad Nekounam both say they've declined a FIFA invitation to attend the World Cup in Qatar, where Iran will play.

Shuttered storefronts could be seen across Tehran, Iran's capital, on Tuesday. Several shops did remain open, however, as a heavy security presence could be seen on the streets.

In the Grand Bazaar, the beating heart of Tehran for hundreds of years that long has served as a political bellwether for Persian dynasties, store fronts were closed as a lone woman and a man pushing a cart walked among its narrow alleyways. A stray cat nibbled at trash down one of its silent warrens.

Videos taken earlier Tuesday showed crowds gathered outside of the closed shops, some shouting: "This year is a year of blood; Seyyed Ali will be toppled!" The chant, heard in other protests, refuses to use the title ayatollah to refer to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. An ayatollah is a high-ranking Shiite cleric and such calls targeting Khamenei can bring a death sentence in Iran's closed-door Revolutionary Courts.

Other online videos purported to show shops closed elsewhere in the country as well, with some scattered demonstrations taking place.

Like the other protests after the Sept. 16 death of Mahsa Amini, the demonstrations appeared largely leaderless. A call on social media had gone out demanding a national strike not to buy or sell anything to mark the 2019 protests in Iran that followed a hike in government-subsidized gasoline prices that activists say saw at least 321 people killed in a subsequent crackdown.

Strikes may increasingly put pressure on the Iranian government, which so far has dismissed the demonstrators' demands as a foreign plot by its enemies as opposed to an outpouring of public frustration.

Already, U.S. officials have said they received information from Saudi Arabia saying an attack by Iran on the kingdom may happen. The U.S. Navy said Tuesday it intercepted 70 tons of a missile fuel component on a ship heading from Iran to Yemen, where the country's Houthi rebels have repeatedly targeted Saudi Arabia with ballistic missile fire.

Widening the demonstrations into strikes and boycotts could further raise pressure on Iran's government, which already has seen its economy suffer under international sanctions after the collapse of its nuclear deal with world powers. So far though, it has yet to affect production in its crucial oil and natural gas industry.

The U.N. human rights office separately called on Iran's government to immediately release thousands of people who have been detained for participating in peaceful protests.

Iran's theocracy has been trying to solidify its support amid the demonstrations, holding rallies to mark the Nov. 4, 1979, takeover and subsequent hostage crisis at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

It's also focused on Iran's upcoming appearance at the World Cup in Qatar. A prominent billboard in Tehran's Vali Asr Square typically used by hard-liners shows Iran's team heading into a match, apparently supported by warriors of its Persian past.

But two prominent former stars have said they won't go to the matches in Qatar. Ali Daei, a top international goal scorer and Iranian team captain, said he declined to go when his country was "grief-stricken."

"I want to be with my compatriots and express sympathy with all those who have lost loved ones," the former center-forward said.

Javad Nekounam, another star, similarly has declined to go to the World Cup, Iran's semiofficial ISNA news agency reported.

US wholesale inflation eases to 8%, 4th straight slowdown

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Prices at the wholesale level rose 8% in October from a year ago, the fourth straight decline and the latest sign that inflation pressures in the United States are easing from painfully high levels.

The annual figure is down from 8.4% in September. On a monthly basis, the government said Tuesday that its producer price index, which measures costs before they reach consumers, rose 0.2% in October from September. That was same as in the previous month, which was revised down from an initial reading of 0.4%.

The figures came in lower than economists expected and make it more likely that the Federal Reserve will increase its benchmark interest rate in smaller increments. It has hiked its short-term rate by three-quarters of a point for four meetings in a row, but economists now increasingly foresee an increase of a half-point at its December meeting.

“The improvement in the October inflation data, if it persists, supports the Fed’s expectation of a step down in the pace of increases going forward,” said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, a forecasting firm.

Most of the monthly increase reflected higher gas prices at the wholesale level, which rose 5.7% just in October. The cost of new cars fell 1.5%, last month, which could lead to lower prices at the retail level as well.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core producer prices were unchanged in October from September, the lowest reading in nearly two years. Core prices increased 6.7% last month from a year ago, down from a 7.1% annual rate in September.

The cost of services, such as hotels, air travel, and health care, slipped 0.1% in October from September, the first drop since November 2020.

The report follows last week’s better-known consumer price index, which showed that year-over-year inflation cooled to a slower-than-expected 7.7% in October, down from 8.2% in September. And excluding volatile food and energy costs, that report also said that core prices rose just 0.3% in October from the previous month, half the increase of the previous two months.

Those consumer inflation figures sent stock markets soaring because they suggested that the devastating price spikes of the past 18 months might finally be moderating. The cost of used cars, clothing, and furniture fell, a sign that goods prices are reversing their big price leaps of last year, when supply chain blockages sent inflation soaring.

In recent months, delays at major ports have been cleared, the price of ocean shipping has tumbled and more stores are building larger stockpiles. All those trends suggest that goods prices could continue to decline.

Virginia students were prepared for shooting, not aftermath

BY SARAH RANKIN and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP) — Students huddled inside laboratory closets and darkened dorm rooms across the University of Virginia while others moved far away from library windows and barricaded the doors of its stately academic buildings after an ominous warning flashed on their screens: “RUN. HIDE. FIGHT.”

Responding to the immediate threat of an on-campus shooting was a moment they had prepared for since their first years of elementary school. But dealing with the emotional trauma of an attack that killed three members of the school’s football team late Sunday left students shaken and grasping to understand.

“This will probably affect our campus for a very, very long time,” said Shannon Lake, a third-year student from Crozet, Virginia.

For 12 hours, she hid with friends and other students, much of that time in a storage closet, while authorities searched into Monday morning for the suspect before he was taken into custody.

When Lake and the others heard someone might be right outside the business school building, they all

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decided to go into the closet, turn off the lights and barricade the door.

"That was probably the most terrifying moment because it became more real to us, and reminded us of those practice school lockdowns as children. And it was just kind of a surreal moment where, you know, I don't think any of us were really processing what was going on," she said.

Police charged 22-year-old student Christopher Darnell Jones Jr. with three counts of second-degree murder, saying the three victims were killed just after 10:15 p.m. as a charter bus full of students returned from seeing a play in Washington. Two other students were wounded.

University President Jim Ryan said authorities did not have a "full understanding" of the motive or circumstances surrounding the shooting.

Police conducted a building-by-building search of the campus while students sheltered in place before the lockdown order was lifted late Monday morning.

Charlotte Goeb, a student who lives in an apartment about a half-mile (800 meters) away from the shooting scene, immediately checked her doors and shut off the lights after getting an alert from the school.

"I'm having a hard time coming to terms that this was happening," she said. "Even though you spend all of your upbringing knowing this can happen."

Ellie Wilkie, a fourth-year student, was about to leave her room on the university's prestigious, historic Lawn at the center of campus when her group texts with friends began exploding with word of the shooting. But she didn't barricade herself in right away.

"I think our generation has been so habituated to these being drills and this being commonplace that I didn't even think it was all that serious until I got an email that said, 'Run. Hide. Fight,' all caps," she said.

Wilkie moved a large trunk she uses for storage in front of the door and put her mattress on top of that. She turned off the lights, unplugged anything that might make noise, put her phone on do-not-disturb mode, got under the covers of her top bunk and texted her mom, who called back, terrified.

She picked up but told her mom: "I have to get off the phone now. I can't be making noise in here."

University Police Chief Timothy Longo Sr. said the suspect had once been on the football team, but he had not been part of the team for at least a year. The UVA football website listed Jones as a team member during the 2018 season and said he did not play in any games.

It was not immediately clear whether Jones had an attorney or when he would make his first court appearance.

Hours after Jones was arrested, first-year head football coach Tony Elliott sat alone outside the athletic building used by the team, at times with his head in his hands. He said the victims "were all good kids."

Elizabeth Paul was working at a desktop computer in the Clemons library when she got a call from her mom about the shooting. She thought it was probably something minor until the computer she was using lit up with a warning about an active shooter.

She spent about 12 hours huddled with several others underneath windows in the library, hoping that if gunfire did erupt, they would be out of sight. She spent most of the night on the phone with her mom.

"Not even talking to her the whole time necessarily, but she wanted the line to be on so that if I needed something she was there," Paul said.

Em Gunter, a second-year anthropology student, heard three gunshots and then three more while she was studying genetics in her dorm room.

She told everyone on her floor to go in their rooms, shut their blinds and turn off the lights. Students know from active shooter drills how to respond, she said.

"But how do we deal with it afterwards?" she asked. "What's it going to be like in a week, in a month?"

Israeli liberals fear new government will undo gains

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's outgoing coalition has been the most diverse in the country's history, bringing a slew of progressive policies on the environment, LGBTQ issues and funding for the country's Arab minority.

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But now, even before it takes office, Israel's expected new coalition government — overwhelmingly male, religious and right-wing — is promising to roll back many of the achievements of its predecessor, prompting concern from activists and liberals over where their country is headed.

If its promises materialize, a tax on environmentally destructive single-use plastics could be abolished. New protections for gay Israelis could be reversed, and generous budgets for the long underserved Arab sector could be slashed.

The outgoing coalition lasted for just over a year and collapsed over disagreements on the Palestinians — although on that subject, its policies were largely unchanged from previous, hard-line governments.

But after Benjamin Netanyahu's 12-year reign, activists say it brought a positive energy to the Knesset, or parliament, and pressed ahead on issues they say were largely ignored during his lengthy rule. Now, with Netanyahu set to take office again as head of what's expected to be the country's most right-wing government, fears are rising that all that will be undone.

"In the last government ... the public discourse was one of rights and equality and ending discrimination," said Hila Peer, chairwoman at Aguda — The Association for LGBTQ Equality in Israel.

What they are hearing now, Peer said, "is a discourse of fear."

Israel's Nov. 1 elections opened the way for Netanyahu's return, bolstered by a stable majority with ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox allies, among them extremist lawmaker Itamar Ben-Gvir. Netanyahu is expected to complete negotiations on forming a new coalition in the coming weeks.

To mollify his partners, Netanyahu is expected to accede to many of their priorities, vastly different from those advanced by the outgoing government. Liberals' fears are compounded by the coalition's intention to weaken the Supreme Court — often the last recourse for minority groups.

Netanyahu has batted away the fears, saying they arise whenever he is elected and are disproved quickly. His supporters claim the concerns are a result of a scare campaign by his opponents.

"We will not permit anyone to be harmed, not their fundamental rights or personal freedoms," Miki Zohar, a senior Likud lawmaker and Netanyahu confidante, told The Associated Press.

The coalition that ousted Netanyahu last year was made up of eight ideologically diverse parties, from dovish parties that support Palestinian statehood to nationalist ones that don't, as well as centrist factions and for the first time a small Arab Islamist party.

The coalition agreed to sidestep divisive topics such as Palestinian independence, focusing instead on social issues, including the environment and public transportation. Policies toward the Palestinians showed little change. The military carried out daily raids in the occupied West Bank and a brief operation against militants in the Gaza Strip. Settlement construction in the West Bank raced ahead.

While the outgoing coalition's razor-thin majority prevented major policy changes, activists say the government moved forward in small but meaningful ways.

On the environment, it imposed taxes on single-use plastics, and advanced a climate law. On LGBTQ rights, it rescinded a ban on blood donations by gay men, moved to streamline access to gender reassignment surgery and took a clear stand against "conversion therapy," the scientifically discredited practice of using therapy to "convert" LGBTQ people to heterosexuality or traditional gender expectations.

The government imposed a tax on sugary drinks and approved billions of dollars in funding to the country's Palestinian minority, promising more cash than a previous budget passed several years ago under Netanyahu. It took steps to encourage religious pluralism, passing a reform in the country's Kosher certification process.

Beyond the inclusion of an Arab party, the coalition's Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz is openly gay and about half of the coalition's members and a third of ministers were women.

That image of inclusivity is about to change dramatically.

Only nine out of 64 members of Netanyahu's expected coalition are women. Ultra-Orthodox parties, which make up two out of the coalition's four parties, deny inclusion to women members entirely. The expected coalition includes no Arab members. It is set to have one openly gay member of parliament, but his record shows he doesn't focus on LGBTQ issues.

"Large parts of the nation will feel that they have no connection to or influence in the incoming govern-

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ment," said Assaf Shapira, of the Israel Democracy Institute think tank, noting that a lack of representation has a direct effect on the legislative agenda.

Incoming coalition members have already pinpointed policies they plan to undo.

Members of the far-right Religious Zionism party, some of whom are openly anti-LGBTQ, are expected to challenge certain rights. Incoming lawmaker Avi Maoz has said he wants the legality of Israel's raucous Pride parades to be "examined."

The threat — though the parades are likely to continue — has spooked many Israelis.

The ultra-Orthodox parties oppose the single-use plastic tax. They see it as targeting their constituents whose large families tend to use disposable plastic plates and cutlery to avoid washing large piles of dishes. A tax on sugary drinks is also on the chopping block, worrying doctors' associations that say the tax promotes public health.

Netanyahu, who is secular and hails from a socially liberal background, is likely to stand as a bulwark against some of the more extremist elements of his coalition, according to Shapira.

But he is still expected to give in on many of their demands in exchange for legal reforms that could permanently freeze his corruption trial or make it disappear altogether.

Critics warn the next government's policy priorities — coupled with the very real chance that the Supreme Court will no longer be a beacon for challenging discriminatory laws — is a ticking bomb for Israel's democracy.

"Endemic corruption, human rights violations, curbs on minority rights, erosion of the LGBTQ community's hard-won achievements and a takeover of the state coffers by the ultra-Orthodox minority are all tangible threats," wrote commentator Ben Caspit in Al-Monitor, a regional news site.

"They are no longer gloomy scenarios but projects in the making," he added.

Today in History: November 16, Oklahoma wins statehood

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 16, the 320th day of 2022. There are 45 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 16, 1914, the newly created Federal Reserve Banks opened in 12 cities.

On this date:

In 1907, Oklahoma became the 46th state of the union.

In 1933, the United States and the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations.

In 1960, Academy Award-winning actor Clark Gable died in Los Angeles at age 59.

In 1961, House Speaker Samuel T. Rayburn died in Bonham, Texas, having served as speaker since 1940 except for two terms.

In 1982, an agreement was announced in the 57th day of a strike by National Football League players.

In 1989, six Jesuit priests, a housekeeper and her daughter were slain by army troops at the University of Central America Jose Simeon Canas in El Salvador.

In 1991, former Louisiana governor Edwin Edwards won a landslide victory in his bid to return to office, defeating State Rep. David Duke, a former Ku Klux Klan leader.

In 2001, investigators found a letter addressed to Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont containing anthrax; it was the second letter bearing the deadly germ known to have been sent to Capitol Hill.

In 2004, President George W. Bush picked National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice to be his new secretary of state, succeeding Colin Powell.

In 2006, Democrats embraced Nancy Pelosi as the first female House speaker in history, but then selected Steny Hoyer as majority leader against her wishes.

In 2018, a U.S. official said intelligence officials had concluded that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had ordered the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi (jah-MAHL' khahr-SHOHK'-jee).

In 2020, President-elect Joe Biden warned of dire consequences if President Donald Trump and his ad-

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ministration continued to refuse to coordinate with his transition team on the coronavirus pandemic and kept blocking briefings on national security policy issues and vaccine plans; Biden told reporters, "More people may die if we don't coordinate."

Ten years ago: Former CIA Director David Petraeus told Congress that classified intelligence showed the Sept. 11, 2012 attack in Benghazi, Libya, that killed U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans was a terrorist attack, but that the Obama administration withheld the suspected role of al-Qaida affiliates to avoid tipping them off.

Five years ago: Minnesota Democratic Sen. Al Franken became the first member of Congress to be caught up in a wave of allegations of sexual abuse and inappropriate behavior, after a Los Angeles radio anchor accused him of forcibly kissing her and groping her during a 2006 USO tour. (Franken would resign weeks later.) The federal bribery trial of Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey ended with the jury hopelessly deadlocked on all charges. (Federal prosecutors decided not to retry him.) Jose Altuve of the World Champion Houston Astros won the American League Most Valuable Player award; Giancarlo Stanton of the Marlins was the winner in the National League.

One year ago: Hospitals in Michigan and Minnesota reported a wave of COVID-19 patients not seen in months as beds were filled with unvaccinated people and health care leaders warned that staff were being worn down by yet another surge. American journalist Danny Fenster, who spent nearly six months in jail in military-ruled Myanmar, arrived back in the United States after former U.S. diplomat Bill Richardson helped negotiate his release. The U.S. Census Bureau announced that Hartville, Missouri, was now the closest town to the center of U.S. population distribution. Michelle Wu was sworn in as Boston's first woman and first person of color elected mayor in the city's long history.

Today's Birthdays: Journalist Elizabeth Drew is 87. Blues musician W.C. Clark is 83. Actor Joanna Pettet is 80. Actor Steve Railsback is 77. Actor David Leisure is 72. Actor Miguel Sandoval is 71. Actor Marg Helgenberger is 64. Rock musician Mani is 60. Former pro tennis player Zina Garrison is 59. Former MLB All-Star pitcher Dwight Gooden is 58. Jazz singer Diana Krall is 58. Actor Harry Lennix is 58. Rock musician Dave Kushner (Velvet Revolver) is 56. Actor Lisa Bonet (boh-NAY') is 55. Actor Tammy Lauren is 54. Actor Martha Plimpton is 52. Actor Michael Irby is 50. Actor Missi Pyle is 50. Rock musician Corey McCormick (Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real) is 46. Olympic gold medal figure skater Oksana Baiul (ahk-SAH'-nah by-OOL') is 45. Actor Maggie Gyllenhaal (JIHL'-ehn-hahl) is 45. Pop singer Trevor Penick is 43. Former NBA player Amare Stoudemire (ah-MAR'-ay STOW'-duh-my-ur) is 40. Actor Kimberly J. Brown is 38. Rock singer Siva Kaneswaran (The Wanted) is 34. Actor-comedian Pete Davidson is 29. Actor Casey Moss is 29. Actor Noah Gray-Cabey is 27.