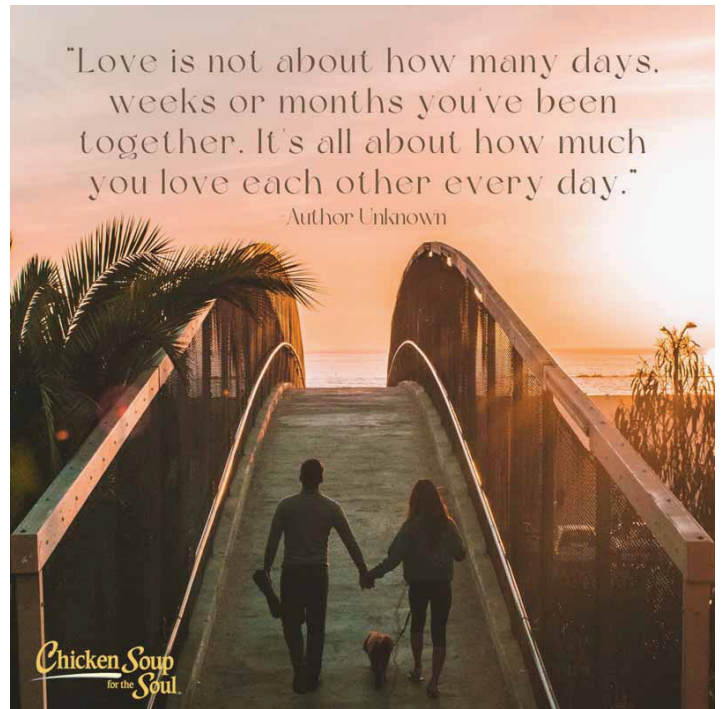


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## Groton Community Calendar

### 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)

### Saturday, Nov. 19

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court,

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

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

10 a.m.

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

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

State A Volleyball Tourney in Sioux Falls

Groton Legion Turkey Party, 6:30 p.m.

### Sunday, Nov. 20

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion (League Pie Auction following worship), 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

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

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

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

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## Rogers' Double-Double Lifts Wolves Past Dragons

Aberdeen, S.D. – With an all-around performance from Laurie Rogers the Northern State women's basketball team earned a hard-fought victory over MSU Moorhead by a score of 59-58. In a game that came right down to the wire the Wolves and Dragons remained close throughout the entirety of the game, as neither team was able to build a double-digit lead and was separated by no more than six points in the second half.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 59, MSUM 58

Records: NSU 2-1 (1-0 NSIC), MSUM 1-2 (0-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 1,594

### HOW IT HAPPENED

After MSU Moorhead used a 12-2 run to go up by six in the closing minutes of the opening period, Northern State was able to respond with 14 unanswered to gain a 20-12 advantage with 4:17 remaining in the first half

The Dragons were held scoreless for over six minutes of play from the 2:08 mark of the first quarter to the 4:00 minute mark of the second quarter; the Wolves defense held MSUM to just 4-14 shooting for 28.57 percent in the second period

Northern was able to ice the game away at the free throw line in the fourth quarter, shooting 13-14 in the final ten minutes of play; NSU shot 19-21 for 90.5 percent from the free throw line in the game

Laurie Rogers was able to grab her seventh career double-double in the win, and recorded her 16th game of three or more blocked shots in her career

Led by Jordyn Hilgemann who tied her career high in scoring for the second consecutive game with 12 points, the Northern State bench accounted for 22 points in the game

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Laurie Rogers: 18 points, 13 rebounds, 4 blocks

Jordyn Hilgemann: 12 points, 2-3 3-pointers

Kailee Oliverson: 10 points, 2 blocks

### UP NEXT

Northern State will remain in Aberdeen to host in-state foe South Dakota Mines on Sunday afternoon. The Wolves and Hardrockers are set for a 2 p.m. tip-off in Wachs Arena.

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## Football Awards



### Northeastern Conference All-Conference

**Logan Ringgenberg, Teylor Diegel, Colby Dunker, Andrew Marzahn and Lane Tietz.**

(Photo courtesy Deb Gengerke)



### Team Awards

**Front row: Kellan Antonsen, Defense Scout Team; Caden McInerney, Offense Scout Team; Tate Larson, Most Improved Defense; Andrew Marzahn, Most Improved Offense; Caleb Hanten, Most Improved Lineman. Back row: Teylor Diegel, MVP Offense; Colby Dunker, MVP Defense; Holden Sippel, MVP Lineman.** (Photo courtesy Deb Gengerke)

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## Academic All-State Awards

Senior students who have a minimum gpa of 3.5 and have participated in football at least three years.

Front row(l-r): Brooke Gengerke and Kaleb Antonsen; Back row (l-r): Cole Bisbee, Andrew Marzahn, Tate Larson, Caleb Hanten. (Photo courtesy Deb Gengerke)



## Coaches Award

**Brooke Gengerke** was honored for her seven years of "service and dedication to the Groton Area Football Team" as the team's student manager. Brooke is pictured with head coach Shaun Warner. (Photo courtesy Deb Gengerke)



## Richard Duerre Memorial Scholarship Kaleb Antonsen

(Photo courtesy Deb Gengerke)

## The Life of Allen McKiver



Memorial services for Allen "Al" McKiver will be 11:00 a.m., Saturday, November 19th at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Pastor Jeremy Yeadon will officiate. Lunch will be provided at the Groton Community Center after the service. Private inurnment will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness.

Visitation will be held at the chapel on Saturday one hour prior to service. Services will be broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM and will also be broadcast on GDIRADIO at 89.3 FM, available within 1 mile of Groton.

Al passed away November 11, 2022 at Sanford Aberdeen Medical Center.

Al was born to Dale and Marjorie (Fritz) McKiver on August 4, 1943. Al lived his entire childhood on a farm outside of Groton. He attended his first 8 years of school at the Joan of Arc School in West Hanson Township. He graduated from Groton High School in 1962. Al always worked for his father and neighbors on their farms. In August of

1962, he married his high school sweetheart, Sherry Johnson, and they were blessed with two children, Cindy and Allen, Jr.

After Cindy was born, they moved to the Twin Cities where Al started work at Control Data. He then took a position at the Federal Arsenal as a tool and die supervisor. He couldn't shake the South Dakota dust off his boots so they returned back to Groton. Al worked three years driving a semi for Siefkes Trucking. Sherry grew tired of him always being away, so she got him an interview for a job working for the City of Groton. He stayed there for 35 years before he retired.

Al enjoyed fishing and spending weekends at their cabin on Pickerel Lake. He was a dedicated Green Bay Packers fan. Above all, he loved his children, grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren (soon to be 6!). He was known all around town for walking his best friend, Rudy. Sometimes he even got Rudy a roadie cup.

Al will be greatly missed by his wife of 60 years, Sherry; children: Cindy (Kyle) Hoops of Cedarburg, Wisconsin, Allen (Colleen) McKiver, Jr. of Aberdeen; his five grandchildren: Kayla (Aaron) Waller, Alex McKiver, Tyler (Gabriela) Hoops, Naomi McKiver, Jack McKiver; five great-grandchildren, and his siblings: Sharon (Larry) Sombke, Nancy (Merle) Walters, Bill McKiver, Gloria (Bernie) Huber, Carla Ronning, Gail (John) Zeck, sister-in-law, Deb McKiver, and many nieces and nephews.

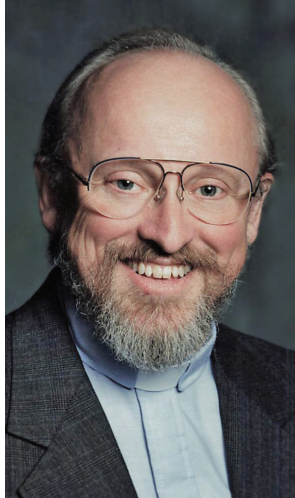
Preceding him in death were his parents, Dale and Marjorie, his grandmother, Minnie, infant brother, Kenneth, brother and sister-in-law, Jake (Renee) McKiver, and father-in-law, Bruce Johnson, and mother-in-law, Lucille Siefkes.

The family would also like to thank his extended family at Derian Living for all of their love, compassion and care shown to Al. You are all, and always will be, special to us.

Casual dress is requested at the service.

Memorials directed to Sherry (1714 Stewart Drive, Box F-6, Aberdeen, SD 57401-0203) will be donated to the Groton High School Robotics Club in Al's name.

## The Life of Rev. Keith Smith



Rev. Keith L. Smith, age 81, of Revillo, SD, passed away on Sunday, November 13, 2022, at Avantara – Milbank Nursing Home.

Funeral services will be held on Thursday, November 17, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. at Zoar Lutheran Church in Revillo. Visitation will be held on Wednesday, November 16, 2022, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Mundwiler Funeral Home in Milbank and will continue one hour prior to the service at the church on Thursday. Rev. Hans Sacrison will officiate the service and interment will take place at Groton Cemetery in Groton, SD.

The service will be livestreamed and recorded and will be viewable on Keith's obituary page at [www.mundwilerfuneralhome.net](http://www.mundwilerfuneralhome.net).

Keith LeRoy Smith was born on July 13, 1941, in Britton, SD, to Orval and Bernice (Melland) Smith. He grew up in Groton and attended school, graduating with the Class of 1958. He attended college at South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD, graduating with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science in 1962.

Following college, Keith held several temporary jobs before accepting a full-time position at a college library in Wisconsin. At that time, Keith strayed from his faith but found his way back. He spent a year at two different seminaries, volunteered at a Lutheran retreat in Washington State, worked at his parent's business in Watertown, SD, and spent a year working at a church in Canada. Keith lived many places and did many things in his life bringing him from the small town of Groton to Brookings, SD, to St. Paul, MN, to Kenosha, WI, to Dubuque, IA, to Lake Chelan, WA, to Kenora, Ontario, to Lubbock, TX, to Kadoka, SD, to Revillo, SD, and finally to Milbank, SD.

In his 40s, Keith attended University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Dubuque, IA and graduated with a Master of Divinity from Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, IA. He was a pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Revillo, SD, and Zoar Lutheran Church in rural Revillo, SD, for nearly 25 years.

Keith absolutely loved the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch and was very involved with donating his time and efforts in collecting monetary gifts: donating much, himself, and helping to organized times of worship for the children at the ranch. In his leisure time, he enjoyed mountain hiking, reading, studying theology, and exploring national and state parks.

Keith is survived by his brother, Curtis and "Cookie" Smith of Littleton, CO; sister, Cheryl Smith of Lubbock, TX; numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews; Doug and Carol Spany and family of Wauzeka, WI; along with many friends and parishioners.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Orval and Bernice Smith; sister, Diane Sallee; and brother, John Luther Smith.

Mundwiler Funeral Home of Milbank is in charge of the arrangements. To leave a condolence, please visit [www.mundwilerfuneralhome.net](http://www.mundwilerfuneralhome.net).

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Groton Post No. 39 American Legion



## Annual



# Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 19, 2022

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

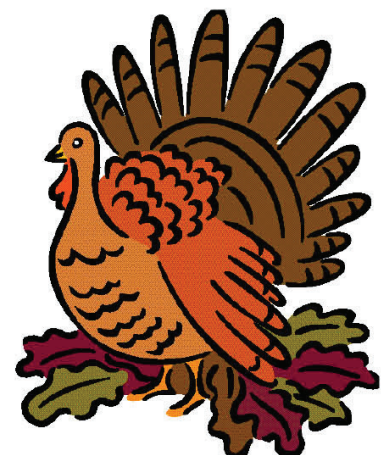
Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon  
to be given away

**FREE ADMISSION**

**DOOR  
PRIZE!**

Lunch served  
by Auxiliary







## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Commission tasked with regulating EV charging rates says 'best left to free market'

The PUC decided that utility providers can regulate electric vehicle charging rates themselves until concerns arise.

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 16, 2022 4:30 PM

The \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package passed by Congress last year included a host of clean energy incentives. It also included a requirement that state public utility regulators conduct a hearing to discuss ways to encourage electric vehicle adoption within a year.

On Nov. 8, just a few days shy of the deadline, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission held a hearing to discuss whether peak charging time-related rate adjustments are necessary for the state.

Instead of setting rates, however, the Commission decided that utility providers can regulate themselves until concerns regarding the grid arise. The Commission says the industry is best left to the free market for the time being.

"I believe the less that government interferes with private enterprise, on any subject, the better. Especially on build-outs of electric transportation," Commissioner Gary Hanson said.

**'TIS THE  
SEASON TO  
SHOP LOCAL**

**GROTON**  
Chamber Of Commerce



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## South Dakota PUC rate-setting authority

Part of the PUC's role in South Dakota is to ensure utility companies provide safe and reliable service at fair and reasonable rates.

The decision will affect a few South Dakotans initially, but electric vehicles (EVs) are becoming more common in the state.

South Dakotans own 1,429 electric vehicles, according to the Department of Transportation – a fraction of the state's total vehicles. But the state department expects the number to grow by 10,000-22,000 over the next 4 years.

Rapid growth is expected nationwide. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, signed by President Biden one year ago on Tuesday, is both a response to and an encouragement of a shift to electric transportation.

The rate-setting guidance that spurred the PUC's discussion on Nov. 8 says that each state "shall consider measures" to promote electric vehicles, including the establishment of charging rates that are affordable and accelerate consumer demand.

Specifically, the PUC was expected to discuss the setting of rates that would:

Promote affordable and equitable electric vehicle charging options for residential, commercial and public electric vehicle charging infrastructure;

Improve the customer experience associated with electric vehicle charging, including by reducing charging times for light-, medium- and heavy-duty vehicles; and

Accelerate third-party investment in electric vehicle charging for light-, medium- and heavy-duty vehicles; and

Appropriately recover the marginal costs of delivering electricity to electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

The federal law ordered utility regulators to discuss potential EV-related rate policies within one year of the date of enactment, Nov. 15, 2021.

## PUC: utilities have electric vehicles handled

Most electric vehicle charging happens at home. The PUC wants to ensure that charging those 1,000-pound electric batteries won't strain the electric grid. But electric utility providers understand that, according to Commissioner Chris Nelson.

"The overriding theme that I hear from utilities is that if this electrification of transportation is to have any chance of success, the time of charging is going to be crucial," Nelson said. "We can't be charging all these vehicles at five o'clock in the afternoon, and regulating when they can be charged is going to, I think, largely be determined by rate structures."

It's not as simple as setting a time-of-use rate across all of South Dakota, however. There are many different bodies that set rates and sell electricity in the state. Among them are six private companies, dozens of municipalities and dozens of member-owned providers

The PUC regulates the rates of the six private companies, or "investor-owned utilities," but not the rates of member-owned co-ops or municipalities (which are regulated by the members and city, respectively). The private companies are Montana Dakota, Ottertail, Xcel Energy, MidAmerican, Black Hills Power, and Northwestern Power Service.

For those companies, the PUC decided to take a hands-off approach when it comes to regulating rates for charging electric vehicles – for now.

"Each utility is going to best understand the needs of their customers and are in the best position to respond to those needs," Nelson said.

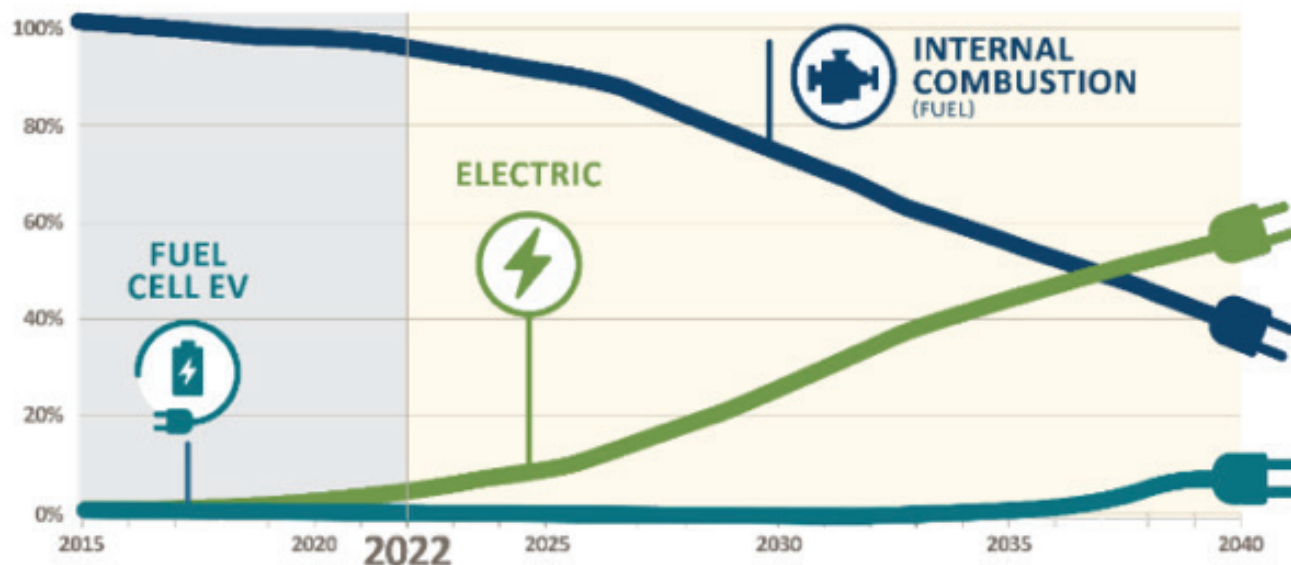
Commissioner Hanson echoed the sentiment. He said the best thing the PUC can do is stay out of the way of private industry.

"Utilities need to be regulated. I understand that. However, they need to be regulated properly," Hanson said.

If anything, Hanson said, he is concerned that the government has gotten too involved in the electrification of the transportation sector.

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Projected growth of the electric vehicle market (SD Department of Transportation).

"I'm a little bit between myself," Hanson said, "I'm concerned that government entities, probably nearly at every level of government, are getting involved in a private enterprise, the electrification of transportation."

But the three-person Commission agreed there may come a time when it will have to get involved. The PUC ought to monitor peak loads from utilities to decide when that might be, Nelson said.

"If we begin seeing that peak load grow in a fashion faster than it would normally be growing, and it's determined that that is being caused by the electrification of vehicles and that rate incentives are not being put in place to help shave that peak," Nelson said, "That may be a time when we need to step in."

And that's something Commissioner Kristie Fiegen said she's already keeping a close eye on.

"I am in weekly meetings with [Southwest Power Pool] on resource adequacy, and we continue to look at that and how we can make sure our grid stays reliable," Fiegen.

After the discussion on Nov. 8, Fiegen, Hanson and Nelson unanimously voted to deem the Commission's electric vehicle-related obligations under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act complete.

## Utilities already adjusting for EVs

Private utility providers are already making investments in the electrification of transportation because they want to electrify the transportation sector, the PUC members said, since demand created by electric vehicles provides a new avenue for shareholder growth.

The Commission discussed during the meeting how Black Hills Energy has had a rebate program since 2020 and has spent about \$62,000 "shareholder dollars" toward charging infrastructure – everything from \$500 for a home charger up to \$35,000 for a super fast charger. And Otter Tail Power Company offers a \$400 rebate to "ensure that customers would not be adding those extra kilowatt hours onto peak time."

There are a number of different ideas as to how providers might incentivize electric vehicle drivers to charge during "non-peak hours." Everything from a rate that is cheaper at night, to a separate meter that attaches to the charger with rates that adjust depending on electric grid demand at the time have been talked about.

## Preventing price gouging

Not everyone agrees that the PUC being hands-off is the right approach.

South Dakota Renewable Energy Association Analyst Steve Wegman said that without regulation, com-

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panies can price electric vehicle charging rates higher than is fair.

Wegman said without the PUC or another authority defining what a "fair rate" is, nothing stands in the way of companies charging consumers with an EV charger far more per unit of electricity than it costs the provider.

"I agree that a free market approach is part of it," Wegman said. "But on the other part, there is no real consumer protection in South Dakota regarding electric vehicles, and that needs to be taking place. You need to have rules and standards as to, 'How do you charge? What's involved?' And in regards to public charging stations, 'What is fair and equitable?'"

## Cities and co-ops

Municipalities and member-owned providers have different approaches to the issue.

The PUC regulates the rates of the six private companies, or "investor-owned utilities," but not the rates of member-owned or municipality providers, which are regulated by the members or municipalities.

Conceptually, cities and co-ops don't need PUC oversight because the institutions are owned by the city residents and the co-op members. That removes the profit incentive that might lead to unfair prices in a monopolized market.

Member owned provider, Sioux Valley Energy, is already offering a \$500 rebate to members who buy an electric vehicle, according to Ben Pierson, manager of beneficial electrification. It's also incentivizing members to plug in at night by charging 5.84 cents per kilowatt hour of charge (which comes to about \$.42 gallon gasoline), versus the average 10.26 kilowatt hour rate.

Many of the municipalities that sell electricity in South Dakota get it from Heartland Energy.

"Heartland is currently working on our own suite of incentives for our customers that want EVs as part of the future load growth," Heartland Energy CEO Russ Olson said. "Each utility will be different whether they offer a time of use or incentive off-peak charging. It will depend on their situation."



## 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.

## Lawmakers look to restrict expansion of medical cannabis conditions

Summer study group also scrutinizes 'pop-up' marijuana card clinics

BY: JOHN HULT - 3:50 PM

Lawmakers want to make it more difficult to expand the list of conditions that might qualify a citizen for a medical marijuana card.

South Dakota's voter-backed medical marijuana statute includes a clause that allows patients to petition the state Department of Health (DOH) to add "debilitating" medical conditions to the list of ailments treatable by cannabis.

To add a condition, patients need to define the condition, cite peer-reviewed research showing that the condition is better treated by cannabis than by traditional medicine, and submit two letters of support from medical practitioners. The DOH then has 180 days to make a determination.

A legislative summer study committee, however, decided that the petitioning clause was too heavy a lift for the DOH.

"The Department of Health does not have a health care provider that is able to take these petitions from the general public and determine how to add these into the law," said Rep. Erin Tobin, who led the interim marijuana study group and presented its findings to the Legislature's executive board on Tuesday.

Patients who want relief for conditions not explicitly listed in the law ought to ask their elected lawmaker to add the condition for them during the legislative session.

The frequency of petitions for new conditions is unclear and was not presented during the Tuesday meeting in Pierre. The DOH did not immediately respond to a request for the number of petitions filed.

The proposed language of the bill that would remove petition rights also adds several additional qualifying conditions: AIDS, Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, multiple sclerosis, cancer or its treatment (if treatment causes chronic pain, nausea, vomiting, cachexia or severe wasting), Crohn's disease, epilepsy, glaucoma and post-traumatic stress disorder.

### 'Pop-up shops' could be scrutinized

Tobin also told the board that the members of her summer study group are concerned about the mobile "pop-up" clinics that offer consultations for medical marijuana cards across the state.

In contrast to the petitioning issue, the group did not craft legislation to address mobile practitioners.

Even so, Tobin told the board that the doctors are skirting the spirit of the law. The statute is meant to allow the practitioners willing to prescribe cannabis — 177 as of last month — to do so as part of a normal course of treatment. Doctors who see patients once at a "card clinic" before signing off on a cannabis card don't have the existing doctor-patient relationship the medical cannabis statute envisioned, she said.

"Basically, there has to be a referral from a practitioner that's treating a debilitating medical condition to a card clinic per se, to be able to take over that task," Tobin said. "And I don't know that that is happening."

There were 14 such pop-up shops identified so far, Tobin told the committee. As of last month, there were 4,852 card holders in South Dakota.

Tobin encouraged lawmakers to consider legal language to curtail the shops in the next session, although there was some debate over whether the shops flout the law's intent or serve legitimate patient needs. The rapid rise in card holders over the summer coincided with the proliferation of pop-up shops.

Melissa Mentele, a medical cannabis patient, told the summer study last month that people use the pop-up shops because the state's major health systems won't help patients obtain cards.

"I know it leaves the door wide open. But that wide-open door is the only way a lot of patients are getting access. And it's unfortunate," Mentele said. "We have a program that is very good, but is being tossed out the door because health care systems are not following it."

### Health systems: Pot decisions up to doctors, patients

The health systems' official positions do not prohibit cannabis prescriptions. Avera Health practitioners are free to offer it as an option, according to spokesperson Cale Feller.

"Avera believes in the practitioner-patient relationship, and supports each physician or advanced practice

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provider in using their clinical judgment to decide what is best for each individual patient. Avera stands behind each practitioner's decision to certify or not certify," Feller said in a written statement.

Feller declined to say whether any of the 177 cannabis-prescribing providers noted on the DOH website work for Avera, or whether any of the 4,852 cards originated with Avera.

Monument Health, the major health care provider for Rapid City and the surrounding area, also leaves decisions in the hands of its practitioners, according to spokesperson Stephany Chalbert. Like Avera, Monument does not disclose whether its providers are authorized by the state to prescribe cannabis. Dr. Jeremy Cauwels, chief physician at Sanford Health, had a similar response, saying only that the system does not endorse or oppose medical cannabis use.

## **Tobin: Health systems should work with state**

Differing approaches from the three major medical systems was a discussion topic for the summer study group, as well, Tobin said this week, although she did not elaborate on those approaches in her presentation to the executive board.

"Some systems are better than others in the way they've approached this, but I think we also need to ask health care systems to provide more education to practitioners," Tobin said. "We worked with them very well in the last two sessions so that we could develop legislation that was easy for providers. Now we need them to work with us so that we can treat patients to the best of our ability as providers, and serve the public as legislators."

The cannabis recommendations from the medical marijuana study group weren't all related to tighter restrictions or provider clarity, however. The group's official report recommends that lawmakers work to ease access to medical cannabis for veterans.

"The (VA) health care system does not allow for a process directly from the health care system to the Department of Health (for medical cannabis)," Tobin said. "And there's really no clear cut way forward."



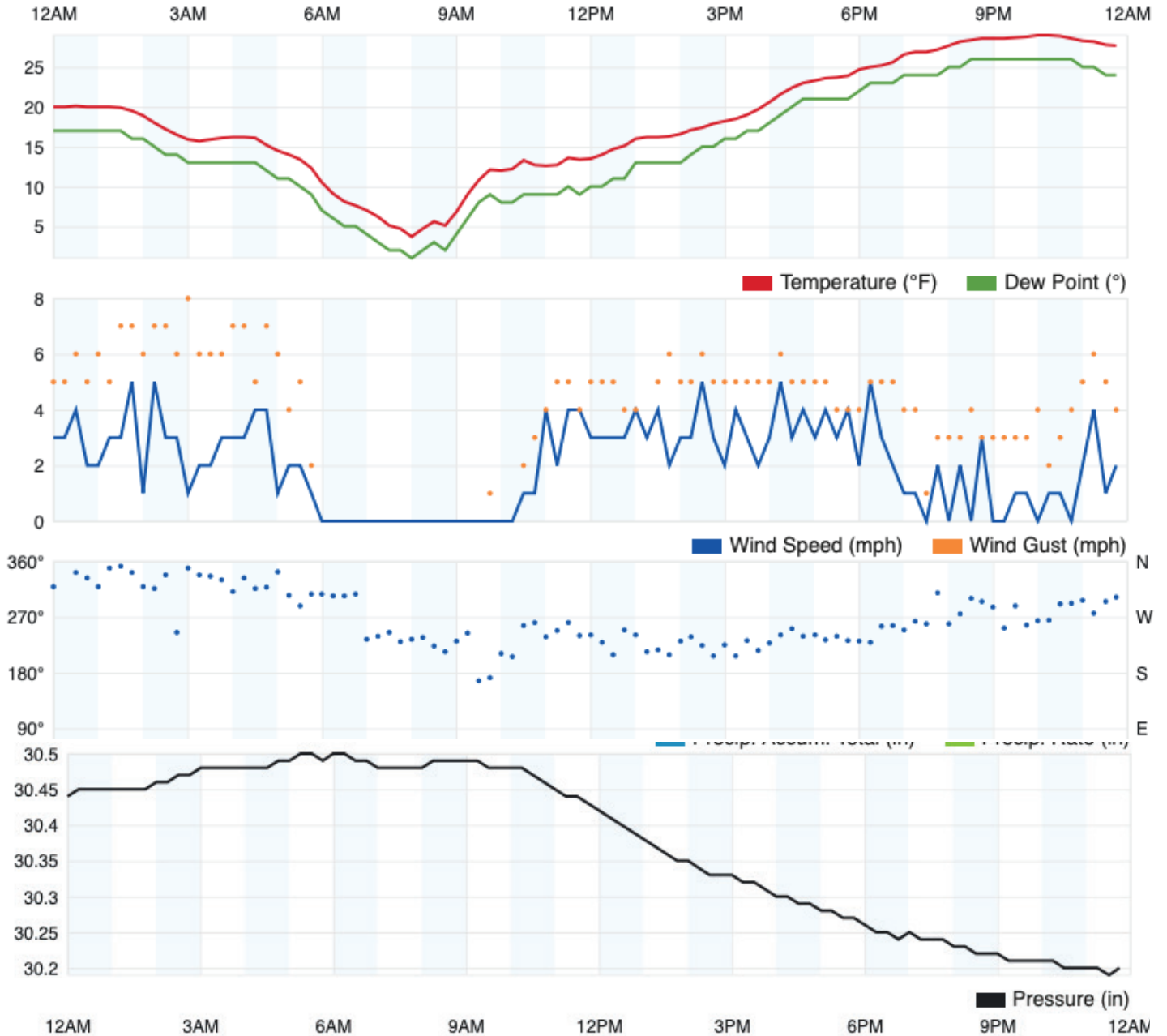
**JOHN HULT**  

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

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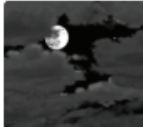



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs




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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
 20%	 10%					
Slight Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery then Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 21 °F	Low: 2 °F	High: 17 °F	Low: 6 °F	High: 17 °F	Low: 5 °F	High: 31 °F

## Today's Arctic Blast



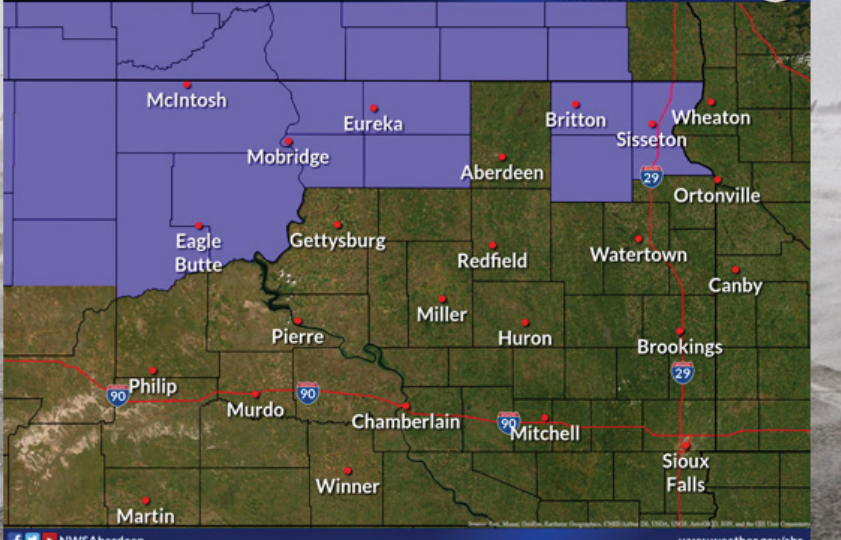
**Light Snow**

**Northwest Wind Gusts of 35 to 50 mph**

**Falling Temperatures**

### Winter Weather Advisory

Weather Forecast Office  
Aberdeen, SD  
Issued Nov 17, 2022 3:20 AM CST



[NWSAberdeen](#) [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)

**NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE**  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

A winter weather advisory will remain in effect through portions of this evening. Isolated/scattered snow showers along with the pre-existing snow on the ground combined with strong winds will result in areas of reduced visibility due to blowing snow. Additionally, areas that still have ice on power lines and trees could experience additional power interruptions and storm damage with these strong winds.





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## Today in Weather History

November 17, 1971: Snow fell off and on from the 16th through the 18th from west central Minnesota to north central Minnesota. A series of weak low-pressure waves moving northeast generally along a Sioux City to Rochester line caused heavy snow of more than 4 inches in a narrow band from Morris to Alexandria; then the snow band widened to 100 miles from Park Rapids northeast into Canada. Milbank, South Dakota received 3 inches of snow, while Wheaton, Minnesota went from no snow on the 15th to reporting eight inches on the morning of the 17th.

November 17, 1986: Three to six inches of snow fell across eastern South Dakota on the 17th and 18th with the heaviest amount reported in Sisseton. Numerous accidents occurred in the southeast part of the state. The slick roads were a factor in the vehicle death of a woman on Interstate 29, near Beresford in Lincoln County. Browns Valley reported four inches of snow, and Milbank received 7 inches.

1869 - Southwest winds of hurricane force swept the Berkshire and Green Mountains of New England causing extensive forest and structural damage. (David Ludlum)

1927 - A tornado cut a seventeen mile path across Alexandria and southeastern Washington, DC, injuring 31 persons. The tornado struck the Naval Air Station where a wind gust of 93 mph was recorded. A waterspout was seen over the Potomac River ninety minutes later. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1953 - The temperature at Minneapolis, MN, reached 71 degrees, their warmest reading of record for so late in the autumn. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm in the Rockies produced 21 inches of snow at the Monarch ski resort in Colorado, with 14 inches reported at Steamboat Springs CO. Early morning thunderstorms in the southeastern U.S. drenched Mary Esther FL with 4.43 inches of rain. Gale force winds over the Great Lakes Region gusted to 49 mph at Johnstown PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Another in a series of storms brought heavy snow to the mountains of the western U.S. Totals ranged up to 17 inches at Bob Scott Summit in Nevada. Winds around Reno NV gusted to 80 mph. The Alta and Sundance ski resorts in Utah received 14 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Freezing temperatures overspread the southeastern U.S. in the wake of the severe weather outbreak of the previous two days. Eight cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Gilbert AR with a reading of 8 degrees. A fast moving storm blanketed the Great Lakes Region and Upper Ohio Valley with snow during the night. Totals ranged up to 12 inches at Pellston MI and Little Valley NY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2013: An unusually powerful storm system spun up five dozen tornadoes from the Great Lakes to the Tennessee Valley. Two EF4 twisters struck Illinois, hitting the communities of Washington and New Minden.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### GIVE THANKS!

Josh felt that things were not going the way he wanted them to go in his relationship with Janie. So, he decided to take her a beautiful bouquet of flowers and a large box of candy. When Janie saw the lovely gifts, she was so excited that she threw her arms around Josh and gave him a warm hug and kiss.

Suddenly, he turned and began running down the steps of her porch. "Where are you going, Josh? Have I embarrassed you? Have I offended you?"

"Oh no," came the reply. "I'm going for some more flowers and candy!"

God gives us one good gift after another. They come whether we expect them or not - even though we do not always deserve them!

Psalm 106 begins with a shout: PRAISE THE LORD! And following the shout, the Psalmist gives us a reason for us to shout: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever!"

His everlasting love and goodness are like rivers that flow through our lives, bringing us His blessings that we do not deserve nor could ever earn. His river never dries up in the summer or turns into ice in the winter. It flows freely bringing us God's best every day of our lives!

Surely, it is good to give God thanks. But it is even better to show Him our thanks for doing His work in His world. Now that Jesus has gone to be with His Father in Heaven, we are left here to do what He started. We are obligated to reach out to the lost and hurting with His love, mercy, and grace.

Prayer: Sometimes we become so complacent in our faith. Trouble our hearts, Heavenly Father, and give us no rest until we willingly do the things Your Son did. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Psalm 106:1



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

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## 2022-23 Community Events

- 07/21/2022: Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/22/2022: Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start  
07/24/2022: Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20  
07/27/2022: Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm  
08/05/2022: Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm  
08/12/2022: GHS Basketball Golf Tournament  
No Date Set: Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot  
09/10/2022: Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
09/11/2022: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm  
09/11/2022: Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10 a.m.  
09/02-04: Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/01/2022: Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/07/2022: Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
10/31/2022: Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2022: United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/13/2022: Snow Queen Contest  
11/19/2022: Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course  
12/10/2022: Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm  
01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center  
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)  
04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)  
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
07/04/2023 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)  
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
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 Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

09-13-14-32-34

(nine, thirteen, fourteen, thirty-two, thirty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$173,000

Lotto America

03-19-26-43-50, Star Ball: 2, ASB: 3

(three, nineteen, twenty-six, forty-three, fifty; Star Ball: two; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$30,390,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 238,000,000

Powerball

28-34-51-53-56, Powerball: 11, Power Play: 2

(twenty-eight, thirty-four, fifty-one, fifty-three, fifty-six; Powerball: eleven; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$93,000,000

### Russia launches new Ukraine barrage as grain deal extended

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian airstrikes inflicted more damage on Ukraine on Thursday, with the latest barrage smashing into energy infrastructure, apartment buildings and an industrial site.

At least four people were killed and more than a dozen others wounded in drone and missile strikes around the country, authorities said.

Separately, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres announced an extension of a four-month-old deal to ensure the safe delivery of export of grain, foodstuffs and fertilizers from Ukraine through the Black Sea just days before it was set to expire.

Guterres said in a statement the United Nations is also “fully committed” to removing obstacles that have impeded the export of food and fertilizer from Russia, which is one of two agreements struck between the two countries and Turkey in July. The deals signed in Istanbul are aimed to help bring down prices of food and fertilizer and avoid a global food crisis.

There was no immediate confirmation of the agreement from Russia.

Air raid sirens sounded all across Ukraine early Thursday amid fears that Moscow was unleashing its latest large-scale missile attack as the war approaches its nine-month milestone.

In Kyiv, the city’s military administration said air defenses shot down at least two cruise missiles and five Iranian-made exploding drones.

With the Kremlin’s forces on the ground being pushed back, Russia has increasingly resorted in recent weeks to aerial onslaughts aimed at energy infrastructure and other civilian targets in parts of Ukraine it doesn’t hold.

Ukrainian air defenses this week appear to have had far higher rates of successful shoot-downs than during previous barrages last month, analysts say. The improvement results in part from Western-supplied air defense systems.

But some missiles and drones still get through.

The Russian strikes hit Dnipro and Ukraine’s southern Odesa region for the first time in weeks. Valentyn Reznichenko, governor of the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, said a large fire erupted in Dnipro after the strikes on the city hit an industrial target.

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The attack wounded at least 14 people, among them a teenage girl, and all were being treated in city hospitals, Reznichenko said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy posted on Telegram a video that he said was one of the blasts in Dnipro. The video from a vehicle dashcam shows a fiery blast engulfing a rainy road.

"This is another confirmation from Dnipro of how terrorists want peace," Zelenskyy wrote, referring to the Kremlin's forces. "The peaceful city and people's wish to live their accustomed lives. Going to work, to their affairs. A rocket attack!"

Elsewhere, a Russian strike that hit a residential building killed at least four people overnight in Vilnia in the Zaporizhzhia region. Rescuers were combing the rubble for any other victims, according to Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a senior official in the Ukrainian presidential office.

Critical infrastructure was also hit in the northeast Kharkiv region, in the area of Izyum, wounding three workers, the regional administration said.

Dnipro mayor Borys Filatov said in a Facebook post that one of his staff was among the wounded and showed a photo of what he said was her coat pierced by a piece of shrapnel.

An infrastructure target was hit on the Odesa region, Gov. Maksym Marchenko said on Telegram, warning about the threat of a "massive missile barrage on the entire territory of Ukraine."

Officials in the Poltava, Kharkiv, Khmelnytskyi and Rivne regions urged residents to stay in bomb shelters. Thursday's blasts followed the huge barrage of Russian strikes on Tuesday. That was the biggest attack to date on Ukraine's energy infrastructure that also resulted in a missile hitting Poland.

Russia has increasingly targeted Ukraine's power grid as winter approaches. The most recent barrage 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 head of Ukraine's presidential office, Andriy Yermak, called the strikes on energy targets "naive tactics of cowardly losers" in a Telegram post on Thursday.

"Ukraine has already withstood extremely difficult strikes by the enemy, which did not lead to results the Russian cowards hoped for," Yermak wrote, urging Ukrainians not to ignore air raid sirens.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the extension of the grain deal a "key decision in the global fight against the food crisis."

## Analysis: Have China and India shifted stance on Russia war?

By FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

NUSA DUA, Indonesia (AP) — China and India, after months of refusing to condemn Russia's war in Ukraine, did not stand in the way of the release this week of a statement by the world's leading economies that strongly criticizes Moscow.

Could this, at last, signal a bold new policy change by Beijing and New Delhi to align themselves with what the United States and its allies believe is the best way to end a war that has brought death and misery to Ukraine and disrupted millions of lives as food and energy prices soar and economies crack?

There's certainly an eagerness by a world weary of war to see it as the beginning of a shift by the burgeoning global powers.

Look close enough, however, and there's enough subtlety, not to mention spots of vagueness, in both the official statement released at the end of the Group of 20 summit in Bali, Indonesia, and in actions from China and India themselves, to raise questions about whether a real change is underway.

Their positions will become clearer in coming weeks, but for now both nations, which have significant trade ties with Russia and have so far stopped short of outright criticism of the war, may simply be looking out for their own interests and keeping future options open.

Figuring out what exactly happened in Bali matters because there's growing worry that without political and diplomatic pressure by China and India, Russia will be far less likely to end its war.

The conflict in Ukraine loomed large over the two-day summit on Bali, which was attended by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. News early Wednesday of an explosion that rocked eastern Poland

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prompted U.S. President Joe Biden to hastily arrange an emergency meeting with Group of Seven and NATO members at the summit.

The backroom wrangling at the G-20 over how to address Russia's invasion in its statement was "very, very tough," summit host Indonesian President Joko Widodo said.

"Most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine and stressed it is causing immense human suffering and exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy," the statement said.

The less-than-universal language — "most members" — signals the presence of dissent, as does an acknowledgement that "there were other views and different assessments" and that the G-20 is "not the forum to resolve security issues."

The final product, however, was seen by some as a strong rebuke of a war that has killed thousands, heightened global security tensions and disrupted the world economy.

The public statement used language from a March U.N. resolution that deplored "in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine" and demanded "its complete and unconditional withdrawal" from Ukrainian territory.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the G-20 summit's "surprisingly clear words" on Ukraine "wouldn't have been possible if important countries hadn't helped us to come together this way — that includes India and it also includes, for example, South Africa."

"This is something which shows that there are many in the world who don't think this war is right, who condemn it, even if they abstained in the votes at the United Nations for various reasons," Scholz said. "And I am sure that this is one of the results of this summit: the Russian president stands almost alone in the world with his policy."

John Kirton, director of the G-20 Research Group, called it a "big breakthrough" and an "active shift" by China and India in which they joined the "democratic side of the great immediate geopolitical divide."

Privately, however, some diplomats were wary about declaring that China has shifted its stance on Russia.

Chinese President Xi Jinping may have simply made a decision to not be seen as a spoiler or outlier during face-to-face meetings with other leaders in Bali. The statement also allows China to avoid going all-in with a Russia that is looking more and more isolated as it increases attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

What Beijing hasn't done is change — or even publicly question — its fundamental relations with Russia.

China has closely aligned its foreign policy with Russia in recent years, as pipeline projects and natural gas sales have brought them closer economically.

It has refused to publicly criticize Russia's aggression or even refer to it as an invasion, while criticizing sanctions and accusing the United States and NATO of provoking Putin, although it has warned against allowing the conflict to go nuclear.

Just weeks before Moscow's invasion, the Russian and Chinese leaders met in Beijing, where they signed a joint statement affirming that their bilateral relationship had "no" limits.

It was unclear whether China pushed for the softening language in the G-20 statement acknowledging "other views and different assessments" and that the G-20 is "not the forum to resolve security issues," but Shi Yinhong, professor of international relations at Beijing's Renmin University, said it has pushed for such phrases on other occasions.

For India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also avoided criticism of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Modi, however, indicated for the first time in public India's discomfort with the attack when he met Putin in September.

"I know that today's era is not of war," Modi told Putin.

That message "resonated very deeply across all the delegations and helped to bridge the gap across different parties and contributed to the successful outcome of the document" in Bali, Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra told reporters.

Navdeep Suri, a retired Indian diplomat, said he sees a subtle shift in India's position in dealing with Russia. China, however, may be "in a far more awkward position than India because China is the one that



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promised unlimited support to Russia a few days before the invasion," Suri said. "China has (now) gone along with such tough language, including the unconditional and complete withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine."

Dilip Sinha, another retired Indian diplomat, noted that India continues to buy oil, to trade with Russia and to abstain from U.N. resolutions critical of Russia.

"There is a feeling of bravado in India that it has its way. I don't see any change at all in India's policy on Russia on the war in Ukraine," Sinha said.

## Council scores 19, leads No. 9 Arkansas past South Dakota St

By ERIC W. BOLIN Associated Press

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. (AP) — Ricky Council scored 19 points in No. 9 Arkansas' 71-56 victory over South Dakota State on Wednesday night.

Arkansas (3-0) used a 10-2 run over the last two minutes of the first half to build a double-digit halftime lead, an 11-0 run early in the second to build it to 22 and another 10-0 run midway through the second half to cement its control of the game.

The Jackrabbits (2-2), after defeating St. Bonaventure on Tuesday, could not slow down the Razorbacks. Arkansas held South Dakota State to 32% shooting from the field and 19% from 3-point range. A game after scoring 30 points off 30 Fordham turnovers, Arkansas scored 23 off 20 South Dakota State giveaways.

"Really happy with how we've defended," Arkansas coach Eric Musselman said. "I think when we do drills in practice, they do a really good job surprisingly. I thought maybe this would have to evolve. But the buy-in and paying attention in drills, really high-level, maybe as much as any team that we've had."

Devo Davis scored 13 points for the Razorbacks and Jordan Walsh added 10 more in his 15 minutes. Trevon Brazile had a double-double off the bench, registering 13 points and 10 rebounds.

"Thank goodness for Ricky and (Brazile)," Musselman said. "Those guys are both playing phenomenal. To think you can bring a guy off the bench and he can have the impact that he has. He's a starter."

Luke Appel and Zeke Mayo each had nine points to lead South Dakota State.

STILL OUT

Arkansas has won all three of its games so far without five-star recruit and likely lottery pick Nick Smith Jr. Musselman said earlier in the week that Smith has not practiced and was considered day-to-day.

FIVE HUNDRED TIMES

Arkansas celebrated its 500th game inside Bud Walton Arena during the game. Musselman sported a custom pair of shoes on the sideline to mark the occasion, complete with the number in bold, black font. The Razorbacks are 409-91 all-time inside the arena following the win.

WOUNDED WALSH

Walsh, a freshman, left the game with 15:10 left in the second half after suffering a leg injury and did not return. He was one of three five-star recruits the Razorbacks signed in the offseason. The other players are Smith and guard Anthony Black.

"For his productivity in those 15 minutes, that's what we need from him," Musselman said. "We need Jordan to get healthy for sure. We can't afford anybody else."

BIG PICTURE

Arkansas' athleticism has proven too much for its three non-power-conference opponents this year, even if the Razorbacks' 20 turnovers frustrated coach Eric Musselman on the sideline.

UP NEXT

South Dakota State: Hosts Stephen F. Austin on Saturday.

Arkansas: Off until Monday when it plays Louisville in its opening game of the Maui Invitational.

## MH17 judgment day: Verdicts due against 4 suspects at trial

By MIKE CORDER and RAF CASERT Associated Press

SCHIPHOL, Netherlands (AP) — Relatives of those killed when Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot

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down over eastern Ukraine in 2014 gathered at a Dutch courtroom Thursday before the verdicts in the trial of three Russians and a Ukrainian charged in the aviation disaster.

The verdict comes more than eight years after the Boeing 777 flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was blown out of the sky on July 17, 2014, killing all 298 passengers and crew, amid a conflict between pro-Russia rebels and Ukrainian forces, scattering wreckage and bodies over farmland and fields of sunflowers.

"The truth on the table — that is the most important thing," said Anton Kotte, who lost his son, daughter-in-law and his 6-year-old grandson when MH17 was shot down. He said the hearing was a "D-Day" for relatives.

Robbert van Heijningen, who lost his brother, sister-in-law and nephew, called the downing "an act of barbarism" that he could never put behind him, regardless of the verdict.

"I call it a stone in my heart, and stones ... don't disappear," he said.

None of the suspects appeared for the trial that began in March 2020 and if they are convicted, it's unlikely they will serve any sentence anytime soon. Prosecutors have sought life sentences for all four. Prosecutors and the suspects have two weeks to file an appeal.

The Hague District Court, sitting at a high-security courtroom at Schiphol Airport, is passing judgment against a backdrop of global geopolitical upheaval caused by Russia's full-blown invasion of Ukraine in February and the nearly nine-month war it triggered.

Hundreds of family members of people killed traveled to the court to hear the verdict, bringing them back to the airport their loved ones left on the fateful day MH17 was shot down.

Dutch prosecutors say the missile launcher came from the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade, a unit of the Russian armed forces based in the Russian city of Kursk and was driven back there after MH17 was shot down.

The suspects aren't accused of firing the missile but of working together to get it to the field where it was fired. They are accused of bringing down the plane and the murder of all those on board.

The most senior defendant is Igor Girkin, a 51-year-old former colonel in Russia's Federal Security Service, or FSB. At the time of the downing, he was defense minister and commander of the armed forces of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic — the region where the plane was shot down. Girkin reportedly is currently involved in Russia's war on Ukraine.

Also on trial are Girkin's subordinates, Sergey Dubinskiy, Oleg Pulatov, and Leonid Kharchenko, a Ukrainian who prosecutors say was commander of a pro-Russia rebel combat unit and took orders directly from Dubinskiy.

Pulatov is the only one of the suspects who was represented by defense lawyers at the trial. They accused prosecutors of "tunnel vision" in basing their case on the findings of an international investigation into the downing while ignoring other possible causes.

Pulatov's defense team also sought to discredit evidence and argued he didn't get a fair trial.

In a video recording played in court, Pulatov insisted he was innocent and told judges: "What matters to me is that the truth is revealed. It's important for me that my country is not blamed for this tragedy."

## UK increases windfall tax on profits of oil, gas companies

By DANICA KIRKA, JILL LAWLESS and SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The British government was increasing the windfall tax on the profits of oil and natural gas companies in an emergency budget announced Thursday that was aimed at restoring the nation's economic credibility and patching up its battered finances.

Saying the U.K. faces "unprecedented global headwinds," Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt is unveiling tax increases and spending cuts in a speech to the House of Commons in a bid to tame double-digit inflation and rein in a growing deficit.

He says the budget will "tackle the cost-of-living crisis and rebuild our economy." One way is through the windfall tax, which will rise from 25% to 35% from January 2024 to March 2028. Electricity generators also will have to pay a new temporary levy of 45%.

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Hunt said the taxes combined would raise 14 billion pounds next year. Energy companies such as London-based BP and Shell have reported huge profits in recent months as Russia's war in Ukraine pushes up energy prices worldwide.

Britain's government has faced pressure to increase taxes on oil and gas companies to help fund support for millions of Britons struggling to cope with soaring energy prices.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, a former Treasury chief, introduced a 25% energy profits levy earlier this year but that was limited to profits made from extracting U.K. oil and gas.

Just three weeks after taking office, Sunak's government faces the challenge of balancing the nation's budget while helping millions of people slammed by a cost-of-living crisis as Russia's war in Ukraine pushes up energy prices and slows economic growth.

"Today's statement will help deliver the long-term stability this country needs," Sunak promised in a promotional video released ahead of the statement.

The emergency budget statement aims to restore the government's financial and political credibility after former Prime Minister Liz Truss announced 45 billion pounds (\$53 billion) in unfunded tax cuts that torpedoed investor confidence, sent the pound to record lows against the U.S. dollar and sparked emergency central bank intervention. Truss was forced to resign six weeks after taking office.

The government will struggle to meet all of the competing demands, said Torsten Bell, chief executive of the Resolution Foundation, a think tank that seeks to improve the living standards of low- and middle-income people.

"The uncomfortable reality is that unless global energy price rises reverse, we will remain poorer as a country than we'd hoped to be," Bell wrote this week. "The world is as it is, not as we would like it to be, but the question is how well we wrestle with that reality."

That means grappling with the demands of nurses, police officers, border guards and civil servants who are all clamoring for pay increases after inflation accelerated to a 41-year high of 11.1% in October. Welfare recipients and pensioners also are looking for higher payments, and low-income families are calling for an expansion of the free school lunch program.

But resources are limited, with Sunak facing a budget shortfall of at least 40 billion pounds (\$47 billion).

Among those who need help the most are Magdalena Prosenic, a single mom who described her struggles feeding her two young children as she waited in line Wednesday at a community food pantry in south London.

"I really hope there is a cap for the rising costs," she said. "It's too much. I mean the money is staying the same, but the costs are way higher."

The budget comes against a grim backdrop, with the war in Ukraine, aftershocks from the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic strains of Britain's exit from the European Union all weighing on the U.K. economy.

Economic output shrank by 0.2% in the third quarter, and the Bank of England predicted a recession that could last as long as two years. The government also is paying the price for the unfunded tax cuts announced by Truss, which damaged Britain's reputation for financial discipline and boosted government borrowing costs.

Hunt and Sunak, who replaced Truss as Conservative Party leader and prime minister last month, have reversed most of Truss' policies, while pledging that the government will pay its bills and start reducing debts built up over the past 15 years.

U.K. public debt ballooned to almost 83% of economic output in 2017 from less than 36% in 2007 as the government bailed out banks and struggled to bolster the economy. A decade of budget tightening had started to reduce the burden when the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine pushed debt to 98% of gross domestic product. That is the highest since 1963, when Britain was still recovering from World War II.

But some economists caution against moving too fast to reduce government debt at a time when rising food, energy and housing costs are set to wipe out the savings of a fifth of British households.

Now that most of Truss' policies have been reversed, the government should be able to close the remaining budget shortfall with "relatively small" policy adjustments that won't jeopardize investment needed

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to spur economic growth, according to a report from the independent National Institute for Social and Economic Research.

"The bigger danger now is that we decide collectively to demonstrate fiscal credibility by adopting an excessively restrictive fiscal policy and limit support for poor households or rein in critically important elements of public investment," institute Director Jagjit Chadha said in the report.

Prosenic, the single mom, knows the pain of this first hand. She stood in line at the food pantry that offers discounted essentials to dozens of families, hoping to do what she could for her baby and 3-year-old.

For 5 pounds, people can buy 20 items of fresh fruit, vegetables and essential items like tinned beans and pasta. But items like eggs, which have shot up in price, are in high demand, and there's only enough for those who come early.

"We are on benefits, but it's hard to provide for two children without help," Prosenic said. "The kids need fruit, they need nappies and formula."

Anna Sjovorr-Packham, who runs the pantry, said the numbers of families buying food from them is creeping up "slowly but steadily." And the cold winter months are coming, when families need to spend more on heating.

"I think there was once an idea that people who access food pantries may need the service as a last-case scenario — there may be a stigma about the type of person," she said. "But now the pantries are definitely utilized by everybody."

## **GOP wins slim House majority, complicating ambitious agenda**

By WILL WEISSERT, SARA BURNETT and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans won control of the U.S. House on Wednesday, returning the party to power in Washington and giving conservatives leverage to blunt President Joe Biden's agenda and spur a flurry of investigations. But a threadbare majority will pose immediate challenges for GOP leaders and complicate the party's ability to govern.

More than a week after Election Day, Republicans secured the 218th seat needed to flip the House from Democratic control. The full scope of the party's majority may not be clear for several more days — or weeks — as votes in competitive races are still being counted.

But they are on track to cobble together what could be the party's narrowest majority of the 21st century, rivaling 2001, when Republicans had just a nine-seat majority, 221-212 with two independents. That's far short of the sweeping victory the GOP predicted going into this year's midterm elections, when the party hoped to reset the agenda on Capitol Hill by capitalizing on economic challenges and Biden's lagging popularity.

Instead, Democrats showed surprising resilience, holding on to moderate, suburban districts from Virginia to Minnesota and Kansas. The results could complicate House GOP leader Kevin McCarthy's plans to become speaker as some conservative members have questioned whether to back him or have imposed conditions for their support.

McCarthy, R-Calif., celebrated his party having "officially flipped" the House on Twitter on Wednesday night, writing, "Americans are ready for a new direction, and House Republicans are ready to deliver."

Current House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., released a statement Wednesday night saying, "In the next Congress, House Democrats will continue to play a leading role in supporting President Biden's agenda — with strong leverage over a scant Republican majority."

Biden congratulated McCarthy, saying he is "ready to work with House Republicans to deliver results for working families."

"Last week's elections demonstrated the strength and resilience of American democracy. There was a strong rejection of election deniers, political violence, and intimidation," Biden said in a statement. "There was an emphatic statement that, in America, the will of the people prevails."

He added, that "the future is too promising to be trapped in political warfare."

The narrow margins have upended Republican politics and prompted finger-pointing about what went

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wrong. Some in the GOP have blamed Donald Trump for the worse-than-expected outcome. The former president, who announced his third White House bid Tuesday, lifted candidates during this year's Republican primaries who often questioned the results of the 2020 election or downplayed the mob attack on the U.S. Capitol last year. Many of those struggled to win during the general election.

Despite the GOP's underwhelming showing, the party will still have notable power. Republicans will take control of key committees, giving them the ability to shape legislation and launch probes of Biden, his family and his administration. There's particular interest in investigating the overseas business dealings of the president's son Hunter Biden. Some of the most conservative lawmakers have raised the prospect of impeaching Biden, though that will be much harder for the party to accomplish with a tight majority.

Any legislation that emerges from the House could face steep odds in the Senate, where Democrats won the barest of majorities Saturday. Both parties are looking to a Dec. 6 Senate runoff in Georgia as a last chance to pad their ranks.

With such a potentially slim House majority, there's also potential for legislative chaos. The dynamic essentially gives an individual member enormous sway over shaping what happens in the chamber. That could lead to particularly tricky circumstances for GOP leaders as they try to win support for must-pass measures that keep the government funded or raise the debt ceiling.

The GOP's failure to notch more wins — they needed a net gain of five seats to take the majority — was especially surprising because the party went into the election benefiting from congressional maps that were redrawn by Republican legislatures. History was also on Republicans' side: The party that holds the White House had lost congressional seats during virtually every new president's first midterm of the modern era.

The new majority will usher in a new group of leaders in Washington. If elected to succeed Pelosi in the top post, McCarthy would lead what will likely be a rowdy conference of House Republicans, most of whom are aligned with Trump's bare-knuckle brand of politics. Many Republicans in the incoming Congress rejected the results of the 2020 presidential election, even though claims of widespread fraud were refuted by courts, elections officials and Trump's own attorney general.

McCarthy won the nomination for House speaker on Tuesday, with a formal vote to come when the new Congress convenes in January.

"I'm proud to announce the era of one-party Democrat rule in Washington is over," McCarthy said after winning the nomination.

Republican candidates pledged on the campaign trail to cut taxes and tighten border security. GOP lawmakers also could withhold aid to Ukraine as it fights a war with Russia or use the threat of defaulting on the nation's debt as leverage to extract cuts from social spending and entitlements — though all such pursuits will be tougher given how small the GOP majority may end up being.

As a senator and then vice president, Biden spent a career crafting legislative compromises with Republicans. But as president, he was clear about what he viewed as the threats posed by the current Republican Party.

Biden said the midterms show voters want Democrats and Republicans to find ways to cooperate and govern in a bipartisan manner, but also noted that Republicans didn't achieve the electoral surge they'd been betting on and vowed, "I'm not going to change anything in any fundamental way."

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

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

Democrats also likely benefited from anger over the Supreme Court overturning the landmark Roe v. Wade decision cementing a woman's constitutional right to an abortion. Voters in Michigan voted to amend their state constitution to protect abortion rights while far more reliably Republican Kentucky rejected a

constitutional amendment declaring no right to an abortion.

Overall, 7 in 10 voters said the high court's ruling overturning the 1973 decision enshrining abortion rights was an important factor in their midterm decisions. VoteCast also showed the reversal was broadly unpopular. About 6 in 10 say they are angry or dissatisfied by it. And roughly 6 in 10 say they favor a law guaranteeing access to legal abortion nationwide.

## **Obama to announce expansion of young leaders program to US**

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An Obama Foundation program that has trained hundreds of young leaders across Africa, the Asia-Pacific and Europe is being expanded to include the United States.

Former President Barack Obama is expected to announce the new program on Thursday during a two-day democracy forum the foundation is co-sponsoring in New York City.

The Obama Foundation Leaders United States program is a six-month leadership development program for emerging leaders between the ages of 24 and 45. The program will serve more than 100 leaders from the U.S. in its first year. Participants will be chosen through a competitive application process.

In remarks prepared for delivery on Thursday at the forum, Obama cites "consistently high interest" in the foundation's programs as a reason for the expansion.

"The creativity, determination and passion of these leaders are already making an impact — in lives saved, environments restored, children educated," he says. "They're creating new models for clean energy generation and poverty alleviation. It's remarkable and inspiring — and a little humbling, since I sure wasn't making such an impact at their age.

"And the good news is, we're just scratching the surface of what this next generation is capable of," Obama says.

The Obama Foundation Leaders program has worked with more than 700 people in Africa, the Asia-Pacific and Europe since it was launched in 2018 after Obama, a Democrat, left the White House following two terms as president, according to the foundation.

Valerie Jarrett, a longtime Obama adviser, said the U.S. extension of the leaders program is a "continuation of our efforts to pay it forward by helping the next generation."

The foundation, in partnership with Columbia University and the University of Chicago, is holding its first democracy forum in New York on Thursday and Friday. Democracy thinkers, leaders and activists from across the globe will discuss how to advance and strengthen democracy in the United States and abroad.

Obama is scheduled to close the first day of the forum with a speech and a conversation with a group of foundation leaders.

## **World Cup draws attention to equal rights, including attire**

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Sports Writer

Official-looking flyers have circulated on social media describing cultural expectations for fans attending the World Cup in Qatar. Some include rules for women's attire: Shoulders and knees must be covered.

Problem is, it's bogus.

While the local organizing committee suggests that fans "respect the culture," no one will be detained or barred from games in Qatar because of clothing choices. But persistent rumors swirling around appropriate garb and modesty at soccer's biggest tournament have also drawn attention to the country's record on equality.

Rothna Begum, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch, has studied Qatar's male guardianship rules and women's rights in the conservative country.

"There isn't anyone is going to go around arresting you for this because there isn't an official dress code," Begum said. "There isn't a compulsory dress code and you can't get sanctioned for it. It's just a social restriction, a social tradition."

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The local organizing committee includes a section on cultural awareness in its fan guide.

"People can generally wear their clothing of choice. Shoulders and knees should be covered when visiting public places like museums and other government buildings," it said.

The phrase "public places" is up to interpretation.

The American Outlaws, the U.S. national team's supporters' group, produced its own fan guide.

"Fans can wear shorts and short sleeve shirts, and women are not required to cover their heads or faces. However, there are many buildings that require both men and women to cover their shoulders and knees before entering, including museums, shopping centers, and some restaurants," the guide says. "We recommend that fans carry some pants and/or a top with sleeves if they plan on entering any buildings, as they may be asked to put them on.

"In the stadiums, men and women will be required to wear tops. People will not be permitted to go shirtless during matches or in public settings."

The first World Cup in the Middle East comes at a time when there is international attention on the treatment of women in Iran. The nation, which sits across the Persian Gulf from Qatar, has been rocked by anti-hijab protests following the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who died while being held by morality police for allegedly violating the country's compulsory dress code for women. Activists have called for Iran to be expelled from the World Cup.

With Islam encouraging female modesty, most Qatari women wear headscarves and a loose cloak known as the abaya.

Begum, who wrote about Qatar and its treatment of women in a 2021 report for Human Rights Watch, said that while women have made progress in Qatar, they still face discrimination in almost every facet of their lives. Women must get permission from male guardians to marry, pursue higher education and work at certain jobs. Guardians can bar women under 25 from traveling abroad.

It's a conservative culture that has little tolerance for dissent among its own citizens, she said.

"There are no independent women's rights organizations and that's partly because the authorities have laws that make it difficult for you to set up associations that are in any way deemed political. You are not allowed," Begum said. "Women find it difficult to express or demand their rights offline or even online."

That's one of the reasons critics are questioning FIFA for awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. Observers certainly noticed when retired American soccer star Carli Lloyd wore a long, high-collared dress with long sleeves for the World Cup draw earlier this year.

A letter recently circulated among teams from FIFA president Gianni Infantino and secretary general Fatma Samoura asked nations not to bring political or ideological issues into the tournament.

"Please," they wrote, "let's now focus on the football."

## Lines in the sand need redrawing to reach climate deal

By SETH BORENSTEIN, KELVIN CHAN and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — As international climate talks in the Egyptian desert go into their final days, negotiators are trying to move key countries' lines in the sand on multiple issues, including compensation for climate disasters, phasing down all fossil fuel use and additional financial help for poor nations.

The final document from the annual U.N. climate gathering, known as COP27, is required to be unanimous. There are at least half a dozen instances where nations are "taking negotiations hostage" by taking hardline, seemingly inflexible stances, said Alden Meyer, a long-time negotiations observer at the think tank E3G.

And poor nations are about to complain publicly about the Egyptian presidency of the gathering and its "inaction" in a press conference early Thursday afternoon.

Spoilers have emerged on multiple fronts, including the U.S., Saudi Arabia and China, resisting reforms called for by developed and developing nations.

On the all-consuming question of providing money to countries hit by climate-related catastrophes — referred to as "loss and damage" in negotiators' parlance — the United States is resisting any suggestion that this should be labeled as compensation, let alone reparations, for decades of greenhouse gas emis-

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sions by industrialized nations.

Yet small island nations are talking about killing any deal if they don't get cash for the climate disasters they argue were brought on on by rich polluters.

Another big point of contention is who pays. European countries have backed calls by island nations for a "mosaic" of financial arrangements drawing on public and private sources of money. But there are big differences among negotiators over whether all big emitters should pay; heavy polluters China and India are arguing they should not have to contribute because they are still officially considered developing nations.

The issue of loss and damage is one of three financial aid pots discussed. Rich nations agreed in past conferences to spend \$100 billion a year to help poorer countries for developing cleaner energy systems and adapting to prevent future disasters — though they have lagged in giving the funds.

Loss and damage is about paying the cost of climate impacts that are already inevitable, such as extreme weather events and rising sea levels. The 2015 Paris accord stated that the issue "does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation," but that option remains open under the broader U.N. climate framework that the annual negotiations take place in.

Some insiders say they are worried about not getting any kind of consensus on the issue, but aren't ready to give up hope.

Meanwhile, a "Lula lovefest" continued in Sharm el-Sheikh, as Brazilian President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who in his past term made great strides in fighting deforestation, grabbed more attention during a session about youth activism and participation in government.

On Wednesday, crowds cheered him on, criticizing rich nations and calling for the climate summit to come to the Amazon. His predecessor is often criticized for lack of action on climate change.

## Some return to war-battered hub of Palestinian life in Syria

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's largest Palestinian camp was once bustling with activity: It was crowded with mini-buses and packed with shops hawking falafel, shawarma and knafeh nabulsieh — a sweet concoction of cheese and phyllo dough.

Kids played soccer and brandished plastic guns until men with real guns came in when Syria descended into civil war. Over the past decade, fighting devastated communities across the country, including the Yarmouk camp, on the outskirts of the capital of Damascus.

Today, Yarmouk's streets are still piled with rubble. Scattered Palestinian flags fly from mostly abandoned houses, the only reminder that this was once a major political and cultural center of the Palestinian refugee diaspora.

Two years ago, Syrian authorities began allowing former Yarmouk residents who could prove home ownership and pass a security check to come back.

But so far, few have returned. Many others have been deterred by fear they could be arrested or conscripted by force. Others no longer have houses to come back to. Still, with the fighting having subsided in much of Syria, some want to see what's left of their homes.

Earlier this month, the government opened up Yarmouk for a rare visit by journalists to highlight its push for returnees. The occasion: the launch of a new community center, built by a non-government organization.

One of those who have returned is Mohamed Youssef Jamil. Originally from the Palestinian village of Lubya, west of the city of Tiberias in present-day Israel, he had lived in Yarmouk since 1960. He raised three sons in the camp, before Syria's war broke out.

The 80-year-old came back a year and a half ago, with government approval to repair his damaged house. Of the 30 or 40 families who used to live on his street, there are now four. Many buildings that were not leveled by bombs were looted, stripped of windows, electric wiring — even faucets.

"I'm staying here to guard it from thieves," he said of his home.

Nearby, the right half of Mohamed Taher's house has collapsed, while he is repairing the still-standing left half. "There is no electricity," the 55-year-old said, though in some parts of the camp there is water



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and the sewer system works.

Yarmouk was built in 1957 as a Palestinian refugee camp but grew into a vibrant suburb that also attracted working-class Syrians. Before the 2011 uprising turned civil war, some 1.2 million people lived in Yarmouk, including 160,000 Palestinians, according to the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA.

As of June, some 4,000 people returned to Yarmouk, UNRWA said, while another 8,000 families received permission to return over the summer.

The returnees struggle with a "lack of basic services, limited transportation, and largely destroyed public infrastructure," UNRWA said. Some live in houses without doors or windows.

The U.N. agency said returns to Yarmouk increased, in part, because the camp offered free housing. At a recent press conference, UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said an increasing number of Palestinian refugees in Syria are "basically going back into rubble just because they cannot afford anymore to live where they were."

In the past, Palestinian factions in Syria sometimes had a complicated relationship with Syrian authorities. Former Syrian President Hafez Assad and Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat were bitter adversaries.

However, Palestinian refugees lived in relative comfort in Syria, with greater socioeconomic and civil rights than those in neighboring Lebanon.

Yarmouk's Palestinian factions tried to remain neutral as Syria's civil war broke out, but by late 2012, the camp was pulled into the conflict and different factions took opposing sides in the war.

The militant group Hamas backed the Syrian the opposition while others, like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, fought on the Syrian government's side.

In 2013, Yarmouk became the target of a devastating siege by government forces. In 2015, it was taken over by the extremist Islamic State group. A government offensive retook the camp in 2018, emptying it of remaining inhabitants.

Sari Hanafi, a professor of sociology at the American University of Beirut who grew up in Yarmouk, said those returning are doing so because of "absolute necessity."

"The others who don't return — it's because it's an unlivable place," he said.

A young man from Yarmouk living in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon agrees. With Syrian President Bashar Assad's government still firmly in place, he said that if he went back, he "would always be living in anxiety and without security."

"Someone who returns to the camp, or to Syria in general, is no longer thinking, 'How much freedom will I have?' He is thinking, 'I just want a house to live in,'" he said, speaking on condition of anonymity, fearing for the safety of his relatives back in Syria.

At the community center's opening, the governor of Damascus, Mohamed Tarek Kreishati, promised to clear the rubble and restore utilities and public transportation.

But there's a long way to go to convince people to go back, said Mahmoud Zaghmout from the London-based Action Group for Palestinians of Syria, aligned with the Syrian opposition.

Yarmouk lacks "hospitals, bakeries, gas distribution centers and basic consumer and food items," Zaghmout said.

There are those who hope Yarmouk will be restored to its past glory, like Suheil Natour, a Lebanon-based researcher and member of the leftist Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

He pointed to Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camp Ein el-Hilweh, which was razed by Israeli forces in 1982 and later rebuilt. Yarmouk can also be "one day a very flourishing symbol of revival of the Palestinian refugees," he said.

Others are skeptical. Samih Mahmoud, 24, who grew up in Yarmouk but now lives in Lebanon, said not much remains of the place he remembered.

He said he's not attached to the buildings and streets of Yarmouk. "I'm attached to the people, to the food, to the atmosphere of the camp," he said. "And all of that is gone."

## Analysis: Have China and India shifted stance on Russia war?

By FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

NUSA DUA, Indonesia (AP) — China and India, after months of refusing to condemn Russia's war in Ukraine, did not stand in the way of the release this week of a statement by the world's leading economies that strongly criticizes Moscow.

Could this, at last, signal a bold new policy change by Beijing and New Delhi to align themselves with what the United States and its allies believe is the best way to end a war that has brought death and misery to Ukraine and disrupted millions of lives as food and energy prices soar and economies crack?

There's certainly an eagerness by a world weary of war to see it as the beginning of a shift by the burgeoning global powers.

Look close enough, however, and there's enough subtlety, not to mention spots of vagueness, in both the official statement released at the end of the Group of 20 summit in Bali, Indonesia, and in actions from China and India themselves, to raise questions about whether a real change is underway.

Their positions will become clearer in coming weeks, but for now both nations, which have significant trade ties with Russia and have so far stopped short of outright criticism of the war, may simply be looking out for their own interests and keeping future options open.

Figuring out what exactly happened in Bali matters because there's growing worry that without political and diplomatic pressure by China and India, Russia will be far less likely to end its war.

The conflict in Ukraine loomed large over the two-day summit on Bali, which was attended by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. News early Wednesday of an explosion that rocked eastern Poland prompted U.S. President Joe Biden to hastily arrange an emergency meeting with Group of Seven and NATO members at the summit.

The backroom wrangling at the G-20 over how to address Russia's invasion in its statement was "very, very tough," summit host Indonesian President Joko Widodo said.

"Most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine and stressed it is causing immense human suffering and exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy," the statement said.

The less-than-universal language — "most members" — signals the presence of dissent, as does an acknowledgement that "there were other views and different assessments" and that the G-20 is "not the forum to resolve security issues."

The final product, however, was seen by some as a strong rebuke of a war that has killed thousands, heightened global security tensions and disrupted the world economy.

The public statement used language from a March U.N. resolution that deplored "in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine" and demanded "its complete and unconditional withdrawal" from Ukrainian territory.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the G-20 summit's "surprisingly clear words" on Ukraine "wouldn't have been possible if important countries hadn't helped us to come together this way — that includes India and it also includes, for example, South Africa."

"This is something which shows that there are many in the world who don't think this war is right, who condemn it, even if they abstained in the votes at the United Nations for various reasons," Scholz said. "And I am sure that this is one of the results of this summit: the Russian president stands almost alone in the world with his policy."

John Kirton, director of the G-20 Research Group, called it a "big breakthrough" and an "active shift" by China and India in which they joined the "democratic side of the great immediate geopolitical divide."

Privately, however, some diplomats were wary about declaring that China has shifted its stance on Russia. Chinese President Xi Jinping may have simply made a decision to not be seen as a spoiler or outlier during face-to-face meetings with other leaders in Bali. The statement also allows China to avoid going all-in with a Russia that is looking more and more isolated as it increases attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

What Beijing hasn't done is change — or even publicly question — its fundamental relations with Russia.

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China has closely aligned its foreign policy with Russia in recent years, as pipeline projects and natural gas sales have brought them closer economically.

It has refused to publicly criticize Russia's aggression or even refer to it as an invasion, while criticizing sanctions and accusing the United States and NATO of provoking Putin, although it has warned against allowing the conflict to go nuclear.

Just weeks before Moscow's invasion, the Russian and Chinese leaders met in Beijing, where they signed a joint statement affirming that their bilateral relationship had "no" limits.

It was unclear whether China pushed for the softening language in the G-20 statement acknowledging "other views and different assessments" and that the G-20 is "not the forum to resolve security issues," but Shi Yinhong, professor of international relations at Beijing's Renmin University, said it has pushed for such phrases on other occasions.

For India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also avoided criticism of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Modi, however, indicated for the first time in public India's discomfort with the attack when he met Putin in September.

"I know that today's era is not of war," Modi told Putin.

That message "resonated very deeply across all the delegations and helped to bridge the gap across different parties and contributed to the successful outcome of the document" in Bali, Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra told reporters.

Navdeep Suri, a retired Indian diplomat, said he sees a subtle shift in India's position in dealing with Russia.

China, however, may be "in a far more awkward position than India because China is the one that promised unlimited support to Russia a few days before the invasion," Suri said. "China has (now) gone along with such tough language, including the unconditional and complete withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine."

Dilip Sinha, another retired Indian diplomat, noted that India continues to buy oil, to trade with Russia and to abstain from U.N. resolutions critical of Russia.

"There is a feeling of bravado in India that it has its way. I don't see any change at all in India's policy on Russia on the war in Ukraine," Sinha said.

## A 'barbed wire curtain' rises in Europe amid war in Ukraine

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — The long border between Finland and Russia runs through thick forests and is marked only by wooden posts with low fences meant to stop stray cattle. Soon, a stronger, higher fence will be erected on parts of the frontier.

Earlier this month, Polish soldiers began laying coils of razor wire on the border with Kaliningrad, a Russian exclave wedged between Poland and Lithuania. Cameras and an electronic monitoring system also will be installed on the area that once was guarded only by occasional patrols of border guards.

The fall of the Berlin Wall more than 30 years ago symbolized hope for cooperation with Moscow. Now, Russia's war in Ukraine has ushered in a new era of confrontation in Europe — and the rise of new barriers of steel, concrete and barbed wire. These, however, are being built by the West.

"The Iron Curtain is gone, but the 'barbed wire curtain' is now unfortunately becoming the reality for much of Europe," said Klaus Dodds, a professor of geopolitics at Royal Holloway, University of London. "The optimism that we had in Europe after 1989 is very much now gone."

Fear and division have replaced the euphoria when Germans danced atop the Berlin Wall and broke off chunks of the barrier erected in 1961 by Communist leaders. It stretched for 155 kilometers (nearly 100 miles), encircling West Berlin until 1989, when East German authorities opened crossings following mass protests. Within a year, East and West Germany were reunited.

Some countries in the European Union began building border fences as a response to more than 1 million refugees and other migrants entering southern Europe from the Middle East and Africa in 2015 alone. In 2015 and 2016, Russia ushered thousands of asylum-seekers, also mostly from the Middle East, to border

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checkpoints in northern Finland.

When relations with Belarus deteriorated after its authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko was declared the winner of an election widely seen as fraudulent, the government in Minsk sent thousands of migrants across the EU's frontiers in what Dodds called "hybrid warfare." In response, Poland and Lithuania erected walls along their borders with Belarus.

Michal Baranowski, head of the Warsaw office of the German Marshall Fund think tank, said most security analysts believe Belarus coordinated its effort with Moscow, "in effect destabilizing our borders ahead of war in Ukraine."

Fearing another migration crisis as a response to sanctions against Moscow because of the nearly nine-month war in Ukraine, European leaders have begun hardening their borders.

Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin announced plans to fortify parts of her country's 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) border — the longest with any EU member. Moscow has threatened "serious military-political consequences" against Finland and Sweden for seeking to join NATO, and Marin said the fortifications would help defend the nation against the "hybrid threat" of possible large-scale and irregular migration orchestrated by the Kremlin.

The new barriers offer little protection from missiles or tanks. Governments instead expect the walls, fences and electronic surveillance to provide better control of their borders and to stop large migrant surges.

Dodds says Russia has been weaponizing migration for several years as it engages in a "civilization conflict with its European neighbors."

Russia bombed and harassed Syria's population in 2015 "in a deliberate attempt to create a humanitarian crisis," he said.

"I think one of the difficulties we sometimes have outside of Russia is in actually appreciating quite how cynical, quite how calculating, quite how deliberate some of this work is," said Dodds, author of "The New Border Wars: The Conflicts that Will Define Our Future."

Russia's use of migrants to create social discord in places like Poland, Lithuania and Latvia has led to those governments not offering them the chance to apply for asylum and refusing them entry in many cases — as has happened in other European countries like Greece and Hungary.

Those pushed back to Belarus have been subjected to abuse by Belarusian guards who initially helped them cross the borders, according to human rights groups.

Human rights activists in Poland have protested the the 5½-meter (18-foot) steel wall erected along 186 kilometers (115 miles) of its border with Belarus, arguing that it keeps out the weakest people but not the most determined.

Anna Alboth of the Minority Rights Group has spent months at that border and said she has seen people use ladders to scale the fence or tunnel under it.

Since the wall was finished last summer, about 1,800 migrants who made it inside Poland and found themselves in forests desperate for food, water or medicine have called Grupa Granica, an umbrella organization Alboth co-founded.

"It's very difficult territory, the east of Poland," she said. "There are a lot of animals. I had a situation where I went to one group and I stepped on people who were half-conscious. I am sure there were many people like this."

She said she recently encountered groups of women from Sudan who appeared to be human trafficking victims, as well as medical students from Africa who were in their fifth year of studies in Russia.

"They said 'Russia is falling apart and we want to live in a normal country,'" Alboth said.

A Polish government security official, Stanislaw Zaryn, acknowledged the border wall doesn't stop everyone seeking to cross illegally, but added: "It does allow our forces to act rapidly and more efficiently, without the need to deploy as much manpower as before."

Both that wall and the fence with Kaliningrad "convey a strong message to Minsk and Moscow that Poland takes the security and integrity of its borders extremely seriously," Zaryn said. "I believe that Belarus and Russia will think twice before pursuing again the weaponization of migration."

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Dodds said he understands the impulse to build walls but warns that they rarely work as intended, often pushing migrants onto more hazardous journeys.

While militarized borders might be popular, they also tend to dehumanize desperate migrants, who often are willing to risk the danger of border crossings for a better life.

Building such walls and fences “sucks empathy and compassion from our societies,” Dodds said.

## Scientists try to bolster Great Barrier Reef in warmer world

By SAM McNEIL Associated Press

KONOMIE ISLAND, Australia (AP) — Below the turquoise waters off the coast of Australia is one of the world’s natural wonders, an underwater rainbow jungle teeming with life that scientists say is showing some of the clearest signs yet of climate change.

The Great Barrier Reef, battered but not broken by climate change impacts, is inspiring hope and worry alike as researchers race to understand how it can survive a warming world. Authorities are trying to buy the reef time by combining ancient knowledge with new technology. They are studying coral reproduction in hopes to accelerate regrowth and adapt it to handle hotter and rougher seas.

Underwater heat waves and cyclones driven in part by runaway greenhouse gas emissions have devastated some of the 3,000 coral reefs making up the Great Barrier Reef. Pollution fouls its waters, and outbreaks of crown of thorns starfish have ravaged its corals.

Researchers say climate change is already challenging the vibrant marine superstructure and all that depend upon it — and that more destruction is to come.

“This is a clear climate change signal. It’s going to happen again and again,” said Anne Hoggett, director of the Lizard Island Research Station, on the continuing damage to the reef from stronger storms and marine heat waves. “It’s going to be a rollercoaster.”

Billions of microscopic animals called polyps have built this breathtaking 1,400-mile long colossus that is visible from space and perhaps a million years old. It is home to thousands of known plant and animal species and boasts a \$6.4 billion annual tourism industry.

“The corals are the engineers. They build shelter and food for countless animals,” said Mike Emslie, head of the Long-Term Monitoring Program of the reef at the Australian Institute for Marine Science.

Emslie’s team have seen disasters get bigger, and hit more and more frequently over 37 years of underwater surveys.

Heat waves in recent years drove corals to expel countless tiny organisms that power the reefs through photosynthesis, causing branches to lose their color or “bleach.” Without these algae, corals don’t grow, can become brittle, and provide less for the nearly 9,000 reef-dependent species. Cyclones in the past dozen years smashed acres of corals. Each of these were historic catastrophes in their own right, but without time to recover between events, the reef couldn’t regrow.

In the last heat wave however, Emslie’s team at AIMS noticed new corals sprouting up faster than expected.

“The reef is not dead,” he said. “It is an amazing, beautiful, complex, and remarkable system that has the ability to recover if it gets a chance — and the best way we can give it a chance is by cutting carbon emissions.”

The first step in the government’s reef restoration plan is to understand better the enigmatic life cycle of the coral itself.

For that, dozens of Australian researchers take to the seas across the reef when conditions are ripe for reproduction in a spawning event that is the only time each year when coral polyps naturally reproduce as winter warms into spring.

But scientists say that is too slow if corals are to survive global warming. So they don scuba gear to gather coral eggs and sperm during the spawning. Back in labs, they test ways to speed up corals’ reproductive cycle and boost genes that survive higher temperatures.

One such lab, a ferry retrofitted into a “sci-barge”, floats off the coast of Konomie Island, also known as

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North Keppel Island, a two-hour boat ride from the mainland in Queensland state.

One recent blustery afternoon, Carly Randall, who heads the AIMS coral restoration program, stood amidst buckets filled with coral specimens and experimental coral-planting technologies. She said the long-term plan is to grow "tens to hundreds of millions" of baby corals every year and plant them across the reef.

Randall compared it to tree-planting with drones but underwater.

Her colleagues at AIMS have successfully bred corals in a lab off-season, a crucial first step in being able to at scale introduce genetic adaptations like heat-resistance.

Engineers are designing robots to fit in a mothership that would deploy underwater drones. Those drones would attach genetically-selected corals to the reef with boomerang-shaped clips. Corals in specific targets will enhance the reef's "natural recovery processes" which would eventually "overtake the work that we've been doing to keep it going through climate change," she said.

Australia has recently been slammed by historic wildfires, floods, and cyclones exacerbated by climate instability.

That has driven a political shift in the country as voters have grown more concerned with climate change, helping sweep in new national leadership in this year's federal elections, said Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics.

The nation's previous prime minister, Scott Morrison, was a conservative who was chided for minimizing the need to address climate change.

The new center-left government of Anthony Albanese passed legislation to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and includes 43% green house gas reductions by 2030. Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of coal and liquefied natural gas, and lags behind major industrial countries' emission targets.

The new government has blocked a coal plant from being opened near the Great Barrier Reef, yet recently allowed other coal plants new permits.

It is also continuing investment to boost the reef's natural ability to adapt to rapidly warming climate.

The Italy-sized reef is managed like a national park by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

GBRMPA chief scientist David Wachenfeld said that "despite recent impacts from climate change, the Great Barrier Reef is still a vast, diverse, beautiful and resilient ecosystem."

However, that is today, in a world warmed about 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit).

"As we approach two degrees (Celsius) and certainly as we pass it, we will lose the world's coral reefs and all the benefits that they give to humanity," Wachenfeld said. He added that as home to over 30% of marine biodiversity, coral reefs are essential for the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people all over the tropics.

The reef is "part of the national identity of Australians and of enormous spiritual and cultural significance for our First Nations people," Wachenfeld said.

After long mistreatment and neglect by the federal government, Indigenous groups now have a growing role in management of the reef. The government seeks their permission for projects there and hires from the communities to study and repair it.

Multiple members of the Yirrganydji and Gunggandji communities work as guides, sea rangers and researchers on reef protection and restoration projects.

After scuba diving through turquoise waters teeming with fish and vibrant corals, Tarquin Singleton said his people hold memories more than 60,000 years old of this "sea country" — including previous climatic changes.

"That connection is ingrained in our DNA," said Singleton, who is from the Yirrganydji people native to the area around Cairns. He now works as a cultural officer with Reef Cooperative, a joint venture of tourism agencies, the government and Indigenous groups.

"Utilizing that today can actually preserve what we have for future generations."

The Woppaburra people native to Konomie and Woppa islands barely survived Australian colonization. Now they're forging a new kind of unity "in a way that wouldn't happen normally" by sharing ancient oral histories and working on research vessels, said Bob Muir, an Indigenous elder working as a community liaison with AIMS.

For now, reef-wide farming and planting corals is plausible science fiction. It's too expensive now to scale up to levels needed to "buy the reef time" as humanity cuts emissions, Randall said.

But she said that within 10 to 15 years the drones could be in the water.

But Randall warns that robots, coral farms and skilled divers "will absolutely not work if we don't get emissions under control."

"This is one of many tools in the toolkit being developed," she said. "But unless we can get emissions under control, we don't have much hope for the reef ecosystem."

## Some return to war-battered hub of Palestinian life in Syria

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's largest Palestinian camp was once bustling with activity: It was crowded with mini-buses and packed with shops hawking falafel, shawarma and knafeh nabulsieh — a sweet concoction of cheese and phyllo dough.

Kids played soccer and brandished plastic guns until men with real guns came in when Syria descended into civil war. Over the past decade, fighting devastated communities across the country, including the Yarmouk camp, on the outskirts of the capital of Damascus.

Today, Yarmouk's streets are still piled with rubble. Scattered Palestinian flags fly from mostly abandoned houses, the only reminder that this was once a major political and cultural center of the Palestinian refugee diaspora.

Two years ago, Syrian authorities began allowing former Yarmouk residents who could prove home ownership and pass a security check to come back.

But so far, few have returned. Many others have been deterred by fear they could be arrested or conscripted by force. Others no longer have houses to come back to. Still, with the fighting having subsided in much of Syria, some want to see what's left of their homes.

Earlier this month, the government opened up Yarmouk for a rare visit by journalists to highlight its push for returnees. The occasion: the launch of a new community center, built by a non-government organization.

One of those who have returned is Mohamed Youssef Jamil. Originally from the Palestinian village of Luby, west of the city of Tiberias in present-day Israel, he had lived in Yarmouk since 1960. He raised three sons in the camp, before Syria's war broke out.

The 80-year-old came back a year and a half ago, with government approval to repair his damaged house. Of the 30 or 40 families who used to live on his street, there are now four. Many buildings that were not leveled by bombs were looted, stripped of windows, electric wiring — even faucets.

"I'm staying here to guard it from thieves," he said of his home.

Nearby, the right half of Mohamed Taher's house has collapsed, while he is repairing the still-standing left half. "There is no electricity," the 55-year-old said, though in some parts of the camp there is water and the sewer system works.

Yarmouk was built in 1957 as a Palestinian refugee camp but grew into a vibrant suburb that also attracted working-class Syrians. Before the 2011 uprising turned civil war, some 1.2 million people lived in Yarmouk, including 160,000 Palestinians, according to the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA.

As of June, some 4,000 people returned to Yarmouk, UNRWA said, while another 8,000 families received permission to return over the summer.

The returnees struggle with a "lack of basic services, limited transportation, and largely destroyed public infrastructure," UNRWA said. Some live in houses without doors or windows.

The U.N. agency said returns to Yarmouk increased, in part, because the camp offered free housing. At a recent press conference, UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said an increasing number of Palestinian refugees in Syria are "basically going back into rubble just because they cannot afford anymore to live where they were."

In the past, Palestinian factions in Syria sometimes had a complicated relationship with Syrian authorities. Former Syrian President Hafez Assad and Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat

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were bitter adversaries.

However, Palestinian refugees lived in relative comfort in Syria, with greater socioeconomic and civil rights than those in neighboring Lebanon.

Yarmouk's Palestinian factions tried to remain neutral as Syria's civil war broke out, but by late 2012, the camp was pulled into the conflict and different factions took opposing sides in the war.

The militant group Hamas backed the Syrian the opposition while others, like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, fought on the Syrian government's side.

In 2013, Yarmouk became the target of a devastating siege by government forces. In 2015, it was taken over by the extremist Islamic State group. A government offensive retook the camp in 2018, emptying it of remaining inhabitants.

Sari Hanafi, a professor of sociology at the American University of Beirut who grew up in Yarmouk, said those returning are doing so because of "absolute necessity."

"The others who don't return — it's because it's an unlivable place," he said.

A young man from Yarmouk living in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon agrees. With Syrian President Bashar Assad's government still firmly in place, he said that if he went back, he "would always be living in anxiety and without security."

"Someone who returns to the camp, or to Syria in general, is no longer thinking, 'How much freedom will I have?' He is thinking, 'I just want a house to live in,'" he said, speaking on condition of anonymity, fearing for the safety of his relatives back in Syria.

At the community center's opening, the governor of Damascus, Mohamed Tarek Kreishati, promised to clear the rubble and restore utilities and public transportation.

But there's a long way to go to convince people to go back, said Mahmoud Zaghmout from the London-based Action Group for Palestinians of Syria, aligned with the Syrian opposition.

Yarmouk lacks "hospitals, bakeries, gas distribution centers and basic consumer and food items," Zaghmout said.

There are those who hope Yarmouk will be restored to its past glory, like Suheil Natour, a Lebanon-based researcher and member of the leftist Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

He pointed to Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camp Ein el-Hilweh, which was razed by Israeli forces in 1982 and later rebuilt. Yarmouk can also be "one day a very flourishing symbol of revival of the Palestinian refugees," he said.

Others are skeptical. Samih Mahmoud, 24, who grew up in Yarmouk but now lives in Lebanon, said not much remains of the place he remembered.

He said he's not attached to the buildings and streets of Yarmouk. "I'm attached to the people, to the food, to the atmosphere of the camp," he said. "And all of that is gone."

## Culture clash? Conservative Qatar preps for World Cup party

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

On the Instagram accounts of fashion models and superstars last month, the sheikhdom of Qatar looked like one glittering party.

High-heeled designers descended on exhibition openings and fashion shows in downtown Doha. Celebrities, including a prominent gay rights campaigner, snapped selfies on a pulsing dance floor.

"As-salaam `alykum Doha!" Dutch model Marpessa Hennink proclaimed on Instagram, using the traditional Muslim salutation.

The backlash was swift. Qataris went online to vent their anger about what they called a dangerous and depraved revelry, saying it threatened Qatar's traditional values ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The Arabic hashtag, Stop the Destruction of Our Values, trended for days.

The episode underscores the tensions tearing at Qatar, a conservative Muslim emirate that restricts alcohol, bans drugs and suppresses free speech, as it prepares to welcome possibly rowdy crowds for the first World Cup in the Middle East.



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"Our religion and customs prohibit indecent clothing and behavior," Moheba Al Kheer, a Qatari citizen, said of the avant-garde artists and flamboyant models who mingled with Qatari socialites in late October. "It's normal for us to worry when we see these kinds of people."

World Cup organizers say everyone is welcome during the tournament. Already, foreigners outnumber citizens 10 to one in Qatar. Some Qataris are liberal and open to mixing with foreigners. Many are thrilled about the tournament. But human rights groups have raised concerns over how police will deal with foreign fans' violations of the Islamic laws criminalizing public drunkenness, sex outside of marriage and homosexuality.

Qatar, a tiny Persian Gulf country that once was a dust-blown pearling port, transformed at almost warp-speed into an ultra-modern hub following its 1990s natural gas boom. Expats, including Western consultants and engineers and low-paid South Asian construction workers and cleaners, poured into the country.

Glass-and-steel skyscrapers, luxury hotels and massive malls soon sprung up in the desert. In an effort to diversify away from a carbon-based economy, Qatar's ruling family bought up stakes in things ranging from global finance and technology to the French soccer club Paris Saint-Germain and London real estate.

The ruling emir's sister, Sheikha Al Mayassa Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, became one of the world's most important art buyers. His mother, Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Missned, became a global style icon and bought several luxury brands, including Valentino.

But even as Qatar, among the world's wealthiest countries per capita, looked to the West for inspiration, it faced pressure from within to stay true to its Islamic heritage and Bedouin roots. Qatar's most powerful clan originates from the Arabian Peninsula's landlocked interior, where the ultraconservative form of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism was born.

Qatari rulers treaded the tightrope between placating its conservative citizens and tribes and shoring up soft power as a major global player.

"Doha's religious discourse to its citizens is very different from its liberal discourse to the West," said 38-year-old Qatari Mohammed al-Kuwari. "It cannot always succeed at both."

The glaring spotlight of the World Cup — which requires Qatar to relax access to alcohol, create fun outlets for fans and comply with FIFA rules promoting tolerance and inclusion — raises the stakes.

In years past, the World Cup has turned host countries into the world's biggest party, with joyous crowds drinking heavily and celebrating together. When emotions run high, fans can be euphoric — or rude and violent.

This will shake up quiet Qatar, where such behavior is deeply taboo and virtually unheard of. Doha is not known for its nightlife. Despite its rapid development over the years, its entertainment offerings remain slim and its public spaces limited.

Some foreign fans fret about how Qatar will handle hordes of drunken hooligans in the streets, given the nation's public decency laws and strict limits on the purchase and consumption of alcohol.

Swearing and making offensive gestures, dressing immodestly and kissing in public may normally lead to prosecution in Qatar. Anti-gay sentiment runs deep in society, like elsewhere in the Arab world. A senior security official has warned rainbow flags may be confiscated to protect fans from being attacked for promoting gay rights.

Fan anxiety is apparent in recent Reddit message boards: "How would the government know if someone is gay?" "How bad is it to wear short pants (Can I get arrested)?" "Is it true that people who say negative things about Qatar on social media get arrested?"

At the same time, conservative Qataris fret about how much their society can bend to accommodate World Cup guests. Doha plans to throw giant electronic music festivals. Authorities say they'll turn a blind eye to offenses like public intoxication, intervening only in response to destruction of property and threats to public safety.

"I hope that the World Cup will not strip society of its religion, morals and customs," said a 28-year-old Qatari man who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

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He said he found comfort in a promise from the country's advisory Shura Council last month that authorities will "ensure the building of a strong society that adheres to its religion" and reject "any excessive behavior" that breaks local taboos.

But because the tournament fulfills the vision of the country's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, to develop the country, experts say the tiny population of Qataris have little choice but to accept whatever comes.

The emirate brooks no dissent. Qatar's oil and gas wealth has generated a social contract where citizens benefit from a cradle-to-grave welfare state and political rights come after state paternalism.

"If Qatar wants to be on the world map they have to adhere by global standards and values," said Andreas Krieg, an assistant professor of security studies at King's College London. "The government will stand its ground on certain issues, and the population will fall in line."

Al-Kuwari, the citizen, was blunter.

"There is fear," he said. "If a citizen thinks to criticize, a (prison) sentence awaits him."

## Women lead climate talks' toughest topic: reparations

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Men usually outnumber and outrank women negotiators in climate talks, except when it comes to global warming's thorniest diplomatic issue this year — reparations for climate disasters.

The issue of polluting nations paying vulnerable countries is handed over to women, who got the issue on the agenda after 30 years. Whether this year's United Nations climate talks in Egypt succeed or fail mostly will come down to the issue called loss and damage in international negotiations, officials and experts say. It's an issue that intertwines equity and economics, balancing the needs of those hurt and those who would pay.

Nearly all of the key players are women and they and others say better gender representation could yield better results.

"I think what we need at this crucial time is empathy ... We need to think about our world in the sense of taking care of our world," said Chilean Environment Minister Maisa Rojas. "Maybe culturally, historically, they are seen as feminine values."

Rojas, a climate scientist, and Germany special climate envoy Jennifer Morgan engineered a last-minute deal that got the issue of loss and damage on the agenda for the first time in 27 climate summits.

Now that it's on the agenda, the top people trying to get something meaningful done are women. And that provides hope, a top United Nations official said.

"At times, at least in negotiations, women are able to find a pathway forward where maybe high testosterone does not yield itself well to that," United Nations Environment Programme Director Inger Andersen said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Milagros De Camps, vice minister of international cooperation for the Dominican Republic, said women simply get better results.

"There are better results because women tend to be better in conflict resolution," De Camps said. "They tend to be better in terms of reaching agreements, better in developing stricter policies that tend to be more sustainable."

Overall, in the climate talks, men still dominate, both in their total numbers and in holding top positions. The summit's president, the United Nations' climate chief, the U.N. secretary-general and the top climate envoys for the United States, China and India are men, as are the overwhelming majority of heads of government who took the stage in the first week.

Christiana Figueres, who was a driving force behind the 2015 Paris agreement as the United Nations' climate chief, said that, while every generality has exceptions, women tend to be more long-term thinkers, more inclusive, and more concerned with justice than men are.

"We have a deeper sense of human justice and this is very much a justice issue," Figueres said in a

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Zoom interview Wednesday. "So I'm not surprised that it is women who are taking the lead on both the political negotiations as well as the thought leadership on loss and damages."

"Women are on the cutting edge of the climate crisis," said German special climate envoy Morgan, a veteran of negotiations as an environmental advocate and former head of Greenpeace. "We understand how we need to work together with others to find a solution. Especially the most vulnerable."

For women "it's not about egos, it is about finding the solution," said Preeti Bhandari, a senior adviser on climate finance at the World Resources Institute.

It's not just behind the scenes. The public faces of climate reparations are often female.

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, who is promoting her Bridgetown Initiative that expands the idea with reform of multinational development banks, and Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon "have been fearless" in pushing for some kind of compensation system, said Bhandari.

Many of the youth advocates who push negotiators further with their criticism of inaction — including Vanessa Nakate and Greta Thunberg — are female.

"(Legislatures) around the world that have more women, have stronger climate action," said Katharine Hayhoe, The Nature Conservancy's chief scientist. "They did a study on it."

But it's not enough.

A United Nations report said that women made up 37% of countries' delegations, and 26% of leaders of delegations, in last year's summit in Glasgow. But among those younger than 26, 64% were female. In the group of those aged 26 to 35, it was nearly half women.

Maldives Environment Aminauth Shauna said she noticed that, when all the heads of state gathered at the beginning for pictures, called the family photo, they were nearly all male. But when it came to the people doing the work, that was more women and young people, like most of her delegation, she said.

"I hope all of us women here can make a difference here this time," Shauna said.

## North Korea fires missile after threatening 'fiercer' step

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea launched a short-range ballistic missile toward its eastern waters Thursday, hours after the North threatened to launch "fiercer" military responses to the U.S. bolstering its security commitment to its allies South Korea and Japan.

The missile fired from the North's eastern coastal Wonsan area at 10:48 a.m. landed in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, according to its neighbors. After detecting the launch, South Korean, U.S. and Japanese militaries quickly condemned the launch that they say threatens stability in the region.

It was North Korea's first ballistic missile firing in eight days and the latest in its barrage of tests in recent months. North Korea previously said some of the tests were simulations of nuclear attacks on South Korean and U.S. targets. Many experts say North Korea would eventually want to enhance its nuclear capability to wrest bigger concessions from its rivals.

Earlier Thursday, North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui warned that a recent U.S.-South Korea-Japan summit accord on the North would leave tensions on the Korean Peninsula "more unpredictable."

Choe's statement was North Korea's first official response to U.S. President Joe Biden's trilateral summit with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts on the sidelines of a regional gathering Sunday in Cambodia. In their joint statement, the three leaders strongly condemned North Korea's recent missile tests and agreed to work together to strengthen deterrence. Biden reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to defend South Korea and Japan with a full range of capabilities, including its nuclear arms.

"The keener the U.S. is on the 'bolstered offer of extended deterrence' to its allies and the more they intensify provocative and bluffing military activities on the Korean Peninsula and in the region, the fiercer (North Korea's) military counteraction will be, in direct proportion to it," Choe said. "It will pose a more serious, realistic and inevitable threat to the U.S. and its vassal forces."

Choe didn't say what steps North Korea could take but said that "the U.S. will be well aware that it is gambling, for which it will certainly regret."

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South Korea's Defense Ministry responded later Thursday that the purpose of the trilateral summit was to coordinate a joint response to curb and deter advancing nuclear and missile threats by North Korea. Spokesperson Moon Hong Sik told reporters that security cooperation among Seoul, Washington and Tokyo was contributing to solidifying a U.S. extended deterrence to its allies.

The North Korean missile launched Thursday flew about about 240 kilometers (150 miles) at the maximum altitude of 47 kilometers (29 miles), said South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff. It called the launch "a grave provocation" that undermines peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

Japan's Defense Ministry said that repeated missile launches by North Korea threaten the peace and safety of Japan, the region and the international society. The U.S.-Pacific Command said Thursday's launch "highlights the destabilizing impact of (North Korea's) unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs."

After the launch, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the South Korean and U.S. militaries staged missile defense drills earlier Thursday to review a combined readiness to North Korean provocations. But South Korean military officials refused to provide further details of the exercises, including whether they were already scheduled or were arranged after detecting signs of an imminent North Korean missile launch.

North Korea has steadfastly maintained its recent weapons testing activities are legitimate military counteractions to U.S.-South Korean military drills, which it views as a practice to launch attacks on the North. Washington and Seoul have said their exercises are defensive in nature.

In the past several years, annual military training between Seoul and Washington had been scaled back or canceled to support now-dormant diplomacy with North Korea and guard against the COVID-19 pandemic. But in recent months, South Korean and U.S. troops have expanded their regular exercises and resumed trilateral training with Japan in response to North Korea's push to enlarge its nuclear and missile arsenals.

In her statement Thursday, Choe said "the U.S. and its followers staged large-scale war drills for aggression one after another, but they failed to contain North Korea's overwhelming counteraction."

There have been concerns that North Korea might conduct its first nuclear test in five years as its next major step toward bolstering its military capability against the United States and its allies.

U.S. and South Korean officials say North Korea has finished preparations to conduct a nuclear test explosion in its remote testing facility in the northeast. Some experts say the test, if made, would be meant to develop nuclear warheads to be placed on short-range missiles capable of hitting key targets in South Korea, such as U.S. military bases.

Thursday's launch came a day after members the Group of 20 leading economies ended their summit in Indonesia. The summit was largely overshadowed with other issues like Russia's war on Ukraine, but Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol used their bilateral meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping to raise the issue of North Korea. The two had a trilateral summit with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and discussed North Korea before traveling to Indonesia for the G-20 summit.

In their respective bilateral talks with Xi, Biden noted all members of the international community have an interest in encouraging North Korea to act responsibly, while Yoon called for China to play a more active, constructive role in addressing the North Korean nuclear threats.

China, the North's last major ally and biggest source of aid, is suspected of avoiding fully enforcing United Nations sanctions on North Korea and shipping clandestine assistance to the North to help its impoverished neighbor stay afloat and continue to serve as a bulwark against U.S. influences on the Korean Peninsula.

## Universities focus on athletes' mental health after crises

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Police awoke Indiana State athletic director Sherard Clinksdale early on Aug. 21 with tragic news. Two of the university's football players, and another student, had died in a car accident.

Clinksdale immediately began devising a plan to console and support the teammates and friends of the deceased teenagers.

"There is no playbook for something like this," Clinksdale said.

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But those who have experienced the unexpected death of a college athlete under their supervision say the increased emphasis on mental health care in athletic departments and universities at large — spurred in part by the pandemic and lessons learned from other tragedies — helps when responding to a crisis.

Grief struck the University of Virginia earlier this week. Three members of the football team were shot and killed on a bus returning to the Charlottesville campus from Washington. Two other students, one of them also a football player, were wounded.

The suspect in police custody, Christopher Darnell Jones Jr., 22, is a Virginia student and former walk-on member of the football team.

Classes, academic activities and the university's Saturday home game against Coastal Carolina were canceled, and the school made counselors and therapy dogs available. Temporary memorials with flowers and stuffed animals have sprung up on campus throughout the week, including at Scott Stadium, where the Cavaliers football team plays. Classes resumed Wednesday though the university said undergraduate students won't have to complete any graded assignments or take exams before the Thanksgiving break.

Virginia athletic director Carla Williams said Tuesday the department has three psychologists available for grieving teammates.

"In our first meeting with the student athletes, we had a lot of counselors on hand that were there and available to work with the student athletes," Williams said. "And not only our football student athletes — with all of our student athletes."

Clinksdale said after he was informed that Christian Eubanks, 18, and Caleb VanHooser, 19, had been killed in a single-vehicle wreck just outside of Indiana State's Terre Haute campus, he went to the home of head coach Curt Mallory to break the sad news to him.

Mallory took on the difficult task of informing the players' families that their sons had been killed.

The players and staff were gathered just a few hours later, with a familiar face there to provide help: Dr. Ken Chew, director of Indiana State's Student Counseling Center.

"He's been in front of our team before," Mallory said. "This wasn't a first-time introduction."

While university leaders have pointed to increased focus on student mental health services, athletes appear less convinced. A 2019 survey of college and university presidents published by Higher Education Today found 80% indicating that mental health was being prioritized on campus more than it was three years ago. About 7 in 10 college and university leaders said they were putting more funds toward addressing mental health issues among students.

But only half of the 9,808 NCAA athletes who took a survey in late 2021 said they believe mental health is a priority to their athletics department — even after universities worked to shore up services during the pandemic as isolation to prevent the spread of coronavirus kept students from accessing resources. Among the athletes surveyed by the NCAA, 53% said they believe their coaches are taking mental health concerns seriously.

The NCAA does not have the power to mandate how schools invest and address mental health within their athletic departments, but its Sport Science Institute offers resources such as mental health best practices, workshop templates and planning tools.

In the last five years at Washington State, Cougars quarterback Tyler Hilinski killed himself on Jan. 16, 2018, and a little more than a year later, defensive back Bryce Beekman died of an accidental overdose. Dr. Sunday Henry, head team physician, was part of the response to both tragedies.

"Your primary care medical team and your mental health team immediately activate and assess the situation and how to respond," Henry said. "What just happened? What do we need to do? For us it was get everyone together. Tell them the news. And here's the resources available."

Henry said she believes coaches generally have become better at encouraging athletes, who at times can conflate vulnerability for weakness, to be more willing to seek help if they are struggling with mental health.

Communication and interaction with the students is vital. Henry said athletic trainers, who spend so much time around the athletes, can play an integral role in trying to determine which students might need extra help.

At Virginia's news conference on Tuesday, coach Tony Elliot talked about "having eyes" on the players.

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"Nothing can prepare you for this situation, and we just want to be there to support the guys," Elliott said. Toledo athletic director Bryan Blair was a deputy athletic director at Washington State. He was hired shortly after Hilinski's death and was part of the staff when Beekman died. He said all members of the department who came into regular contact with athletes were required to take a Mental Health First Aid course.

"All of us have a certain amount of responsibility to be able to be a resource to the student athletes," Blair said.

Mallory, whose late father Bill was a longtime Division I college football coach, has been coaching since the early 1990s. He said even before the tragedy at Indiana State, he spent one-on-one time on Mondays with players away from the field. Over the years he's set more and more time aside for those meetings.

"Even if I felt like they were doing OK, I still wanted to get them in front. You just don't know," he said.

At San Jose State, freshman running back Camdan McWright was killed last month when he was hit by a bus while riding a scooter near campus.

Athletic director Jeff Konya said head coach Brent Brennan delivered the news to McWright's family and it was Brennan and assistant coaches closest to the player who talked with his relatives throughout the week as a memorial was planned.

"And so that was an additional burden, and rightly so that was placed on our coaches, who had the best relationship with the family through the recruitment of Camdan," Konya said.

The team's game against New Mexico State was postponed and, instead, the players and coaches spent time together watching football. The next week, before the Spartans' homecoming game, McWright was honored in a ceremony with his loved ones in attendance. San Jose State beat Nevada 35-28 in a cathartic victory.

Konya, who has been a college athletics administrator for 36 years, said he has seen mental health care become more of a priority on campus and in athletic departments.

"We're in a better position now," Konya said. "But it's not foolproof and events like what happened here and what unfortunately happened at Virginia, those kinds of extreme cases are going to require really particular attention."

## Walker, Republicans look for party unity in Georgia runoff

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Republicans insist they're working together to help Herschel Walker unseat Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock in a Georgia runoff that offers the GOP a chance to finish a disappointing midterm election season with a victory.

But to win a 50th Senate seat on Dec. 6 and limit Democrats' continued majority, Republicans must overcome doubts about Walker's appeal in a battleground state, navigate open squabbles among party powerbrokers in Washington and endure the specter of former President Donald Trump as he launches his third White House bid after losing Georgia in 2020.

It adds up to the same challenges that limited GOP victories nationally despite an underwater approval rating for President Joe Biden and widespread frustrations with the nation's direction.

"Everybody realizes that regardless of any disagreements that do or don't exist, everybody needs to focus on one thing: helping Herschel get across the finish line," said Walker campaign manager Scott Paradise.

But they must do it without the Senate majority on the line, as it was in a pair of Georgia runoffs in January 2021. Democrats have already secured 50 seats with narrow incumbent victories in Nevada and Arizona combined with flipping a GOP-held Pennsylvania seat, and Vice President Kamala's Harris tiebreaking vote assures them a majority.

So, Walker, who spent the fall trying to nationalize his race by mocking Warnock as a yes-man for Biden, must fashion a runoff coalition knowing that nothing voters do here will depose New York's Chuck Schumer as Senate majority leader.

"There are still national implications," Paradise said, arguing that Republicans around the country are "fired up" for a second chance after an underwhelming midterm performance. "We're very comfortable

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framing this as the last fight of '22."

Like many losing GOP nominees this year, Walker has struggled among moderates and independents, with many questioning his qualifications, according to AP VoteCast surveys of voters. Walker trailed Warnock by about 35,000 votes out of almost 4 million. Perhaps more tellingly, the same electorate gave Republican Gov. Brian Kemp 200,000 more votes than Walker — enough for a comfortable reelection victory.

Walker, a former college and professional football star and a close friend of Trump's, was urged by the former president to run. That cements Walker's bond with core GOP supporters but presents a challenge in Republican-leaning metro areas that helped Biden top Trump here two years ago.

"Trump probably does more to juice Democratic turnout than have an effect on our guy," said Josh Holmes, a prominent Republican fundraiser and strategist aligned with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who has icy relations with the former president. But Holmes added, "We don't know what the impact will be."

It's clear Republicans hope Kemp's popularity extends to Walker, even if it wasn't enough in the first round. Kemp avoided Walker throughout the fall, pointedly not saying the Senate candidate's name when asked about Walker's difficulties, which include exaggerated claims about his business, philanthropic and academic record; accusations of violence against his first wife; and claims by two former girlfriends that Walker paid for their abortions despite his public opposition to abortion rights.

Kemp typically would say only that he backed "the entire Republican ticket." Since Election Day, though, Kemp has turned over his voter turnout operation to the Washington-based super PAC aligned with McConnell. And Kemp plans to campaign with Walker for the first time Saturday.

"Herschel requested all the help we could get from the governor. The governor said I'm there for you," Paradise said.

Yet the deal between Kemp and the Senate Leadership Fund highlights GOP fissures, some tracing back to Trump, others to a running feud between McConnell and Florida Sen. Rick Scott, who leads the Senate GOP's campaign arm.

Kemp built out his independent turnout operation after the 2020 presidential election, when Trump blasted Kemp for certifying Biden's slate of presidential electors from Georgia and state Republican Party leaders sided mostly with Trump.

SLF, which usually spends most of its money on television advertising, said the runoff would be the first time the political action committee has engaged in a full-scale voter turnout effort.

But, as with Kemp's reelection campaign, that comes at odds with the traditional coordinated party campaign run through the Republican National Committee, the state party and Scott's National Republican Senatorial Committee. Separately, Scott challenged McConnell for Senate GOP leader; McConnell prevailed Wednesday.

Campaigning for Walker this week on the outskirts of Augusta, Scott sought to present a united GOP front. "What we ought to be doing now is focusing all of our time on Herschel," he said.

But he noted that federal election law prevents coordination between the party committees and the SLF-Kemp operation. That means that there's no legal way for each camp to keep tabs on the other's activities, raising the prospect of duplicative efforts or conflicting messages to voters.

Meanwhile, Scott's and McConnell's advisers spilled their tiff into public view. Curt Anderson, a Scott ally, noted on Twitter that he'd seen Schumer's Democratic super PAC airing ads on Warnock's behalf during a "Monday Night Football" broadcast. "McConnell's superpac running zero ads attacking Warnock. Have they given up?" he asked.

SLF President Steven Law retorted that the NRSC's Georgia television buys have been subpar. "But don't worry little buddy — we're used to covering you," he wrote. SLF has since announced its own \$14.2 million advertising plan, on top of the \$2 million-plus it had previously announced for its turnout operation.

Amid such intraparty complications, perhaps the best outcome for Walker is a relatively low-turnout runoff election that allows his core supporters to become a victorious majority. Indeed, having the Senate majority already settled could dampen Democrats' enthusiasm, and Walker has drawn large, enthusiastic

crowds in the opening days of the runoff campaign.

Yet Republicans, including the candidate himself, acknowledge at least tacitly that Walker may need supporters the nominee hasn't won over yet.

For Walker, that means a retooled campaign speech that remains heavy on staunch conservative rhetoric but expands his attacks on Warnock to include an admonishment for not working closely enough with Kemp.

"What he been doing is rowing the boat this way as our governor is trying to row this way," Walker said of Warnock in Augusta. "What I'm going to do is I'm going to row the boat with the governor."

For Scott, it means bringing the complexities of Senate rules to the campaign trail, telling voters that a 50-50 Senate means evenly split committee rosters, while a 51-49 makeup means clear Democratic majorities. "It takes 51-plus to get things done," he said.

And for rank-and-file Georgia Republicans like Debbie McCord, it means cajoling would-be Walker voters to look beyond individual candidates and see a national referendum.

"There are people who just think 'so-and-so would have been a better candidate.' I say there are a lot of good candidates, but this is who won the primary," said McCord, chairwoman of the Columbia County Republican committee. "You need to get over it, put your big boy pants on and go vote."

## US home births increased in pandemic but are still uncommon

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

U.S. home births increased slightly in the pandemic's second year, rising to the highest level in decades, according to a government report published Thursday.

Among almost 4 million births in 2021, nearly 52,000 occurred at home, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report showed. That's up about 12% from 2020, following a 22% rise from 2019 to 2020.

Increases were seen across races and ethnicities, although home births were much less common among Hispanic women than others.

Elizabeth Gregory, the report's lead author, said reasons for the increases are unknown, but they occurred when COVID-19 rates were high and vaccinations were either unavailable or not widely used. Other reports have shown that many people avoided hospital and doctor visits early in the pandemic.

Other possible reasons: Women lacked health insurance or lived far from a hospital and couldn't make it there in time. Previous research suggests that about 1 in 4 home births are unplanned.

Jade Godbolt, of Dallas, had her second child at a birthing center in 2021, partly to avoid hospital risks of COVID-19 and to experience a more natural environment. The experience went so well that she and her husband chose a home birth for their third, a son born last month. They'd been working with a midwife but labor went so fast that the baby came before she arrived.

Godbolt, a 31-year-old beauty and lifestyle online content creator, says there were no complications and she and her son are doing well.

"I believed that my body could do what it was made to do and I wanted to be in the comfort of my home to do that," she said.

Home births and other out-of-hospital births have been rising since around 2004, when they numbered close to 36,000, other data show. The increase coincided with a rise in non-hospital birthing centers.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists notes that while home births typically involve fewer medical procedures than hospital births, they're riskier. It advises against home births for certain situations including multiple births and among women who previously delivered via cesarean section.

"Hospitals and accredited birth centers are the safest places to give birth, because although serious complications associated with labor and delivery are rare, they can be catastrophic," said Dr. Jeffrey Ecker, a former chair of the group's committee on obstetric practice and chief of obstetrics and gynecology at Massachusetts General Hospital.

## The AP Interview: Pence says voters want new leadership

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press



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NEW YORK (AP) — Former Vice President Mike Pence said Wednesday that voters are “looking for new leadership” following the disappointing midterm elections for Republicans, who are now openly debating whether his onetime boss, Donald Trump, should maintain a leading role in the party.

In an interview with The Associated Press just hours after Trump announced another White House run, Pence declined to say whether he thinks the former president is fit to return to his old job. But he implicitly positioned himself as a potential alternative for Republicans seeking conservative leadership without the chaos of the Trump era.

“I think we will have better choices in 2024,” Pence said. “I’m very confident that Republican primary voters will choose wisely.” He said that he and his family will gather over the holidays “and we’ll give prayerful consideration to what our role might be in the days ahead.”

Asked whether he blamed Trump for this week’s Republican losses, he said, “Certainly the president’s continued efforts to relitigate the last election played a role, but ... each individual candidate is responsible for their own campaign.”

Pence, while considering a presidential campaign of his own, has been raising his profile as he promotes his new memoir, “So Help Me God,” which was released on the same day that Trump made official his long-teased White House bid. If Pence moves forward, he would be in direct competition with Trump, a particularly awkward collision for the former vice president, who spent his four years in office defending Trump, refusing to criticize him publicly until after Jan. 6, 2021.

That’s when a mob of Trump’s supporters — driven by Trump’s lie that Pence could somehow reject the election results — stormed the Capitol building while Pence was presiding over the certification of Democrat Joe Biden’s victory. The vice president was steered to safety with his staff and family as some in the mob chanted, “Hang Mike Pence!”

Still, Pence on Wednesday remained largely reticent to criticize Trump beyond the insurrection. That hesitance reflects the reality that the former president remains enormously popular with the GOP base that Pence would need to win over to be competitive in primary contests.

“It wasn’t exactly the style of presidency that I would have advanced had I been the first name on the ballot,” Pence said of his unlikely partnership with Trump. “But it was his presidency and I was there to support him and help him. And until that fateful day in January 2021, I sought to do just that.”

Pence said he hadn’t watched Trump’s full announcement speech on Tuesday, but made the case that voters are looking for a new, less contentious direction.

“You know, the president has every right to stand for election again,” he said. But after traveling the country campaigning with midterm candidates, “I have a genuine sense that the American people are looking for new leadership that could unite our country around our highest ideals and that would reflect the respect and civility the American people show to one another every day, while still advancing the policies that we advanced during those years of service,” he said.

Trump’s campaign launch comes as Republicans grapple with fallout from elections in which they failed to wrest control of the Senate and are on track to win only the narrowest majority in the House. Those results came despite voters’ deep concerns over inflation and the direction of the country under Democrat Biden.

Trump endorsed a long list of candidates in competitive states including Pennsylvania and Arizona who then lost their general election races. While Pence said he was pleased Republicans were taking the House, he acknowledged the election “wasn’t quite the red wave that we all had hoped for.”

“My conclusion,” he said, “is the candidates that were focused on the future, focused on the challenges the American people are facing today and solutions to those challenges did quite well.” But those still questioning the 2020 results — as Trump demanded — “did not do as well.”

In his new book, Pence writes in detail about his experience on Jan. 6, and he expounded on that Wednesday.

“I’ll never forget the simmering indignation that I felt that day, seeing those sights on the cellphones as we gathered in the loading dock below the Senate chamber. I couldn’t help but think not this, not here, not in America,” he said.

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In the interview, he recalled his reaction to Trump's tweets "that criticize me directly at a time that a riot was raging in the Capitol hallways."

"The president's words were reckless, and they endangered my family and everyone at the Capitol building," he said. "The president had decided to be a part of the problem. I was determined to be a part of the solution."

Asked what consequences Trump should face for his actions, however, Pence punted.

"That's up to the American people," he said he believes. "I truly do. And look, I'll always be proud of the record of the Trump administration for four-and-a-half years. President Trump was not just my president. He was my friend. And we worked closely together to advance the policies that we'd been elected to serve."

"It didn't end well," he acknowledged, in an understatement. "And that tragic day in January will always be a day of great sadness for me, a sadness about what had happened to our relationship, to the bad advice the president was accepting from a group of lawyers that, as I write in my book, should never have been allowed on the White House grounds, let alone in the Oval Office. "

Pence and Trump were always an odd couple — a pugilistic, crude New York celebrity and a staid Midwestern evangelical who once wrote an essay on the evils of negative campaigning and who, as a rule, says he will not dine alone with a woman who is not his wife. Asked why he so rarely spoke up when Trump launched deeply personal insults against figures such as the late Sen. John McCain, Pence said, in effect, that that was what he had had signed up for.

"As his vice president, I believed it was my role to be loyal to the president," he said. "And so every step of the way, the way I squared it was I believe that I had been elected vice president to support the presidency that Donald Trump had been elected to advance."

Indeed, Pence in the book writes that even after Jan. 6, the two men "parted amicably when our service to the nation drew to a close."

"And in the weeks that followed, from time to time, he would call me and to speak and check in," Pence said in the interview. "But when he returned to criticizing me and others who had upheld the Constitution that day, I just decided I'd be best to go our separate ways. And we have."

Asked why he would part "amicably" with Trump given the president's actions — including his decision not to call Pence to check in on his safety while the riot was underway — Pence said he believed the president had been genuinely regretful when they met for the first time after the 6th.

"For the balance of about 90 minutes, we sat, we talked. I was very direct with the president. I made it clear to him that I believe that I did my duty that day, and I sensed genuine remorse on his part," Pence recalled. "The president and I had forged not only a good working relationship, but a friendship over four-and-a-half years. We worked together literally every day. But he was different in that time. I encouraged him to take the matter to prayer."

As for his plans for the future, as everyone asks whether he plans to run, he and his family will gather over the holidays "and we'll give prayerful consideration to what our role might be in the days ahead."

## Man who killed 6 in Christmas parade gets life, no release

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

A judge sentenced a man who killed six people and injured many others when he drove his SUV through a Christmas parade in suburban Milwaukee to life in prison with no chance of release Wednesday, rejecting arguments from him and his family that mental illness drove him to do it.

Waukesha County Circuit Judge Jennifer Dorow sentenced 40-year-old Darrell Brooks Jr. on 76 charges, including six counts of first-degree intentional homicide and 61 counts of reckless endangerment.

Each homicide count carried a mandatory life sentence, and the only uncertainty Wednesday was whether Dorow would allow Brooks to serve any portion of those sentences on extended supervision in the community, the state's current version of parole. She did not. Wisconsin doesn't have the death penalty.

The gallery applauded as Dorow announced the life sentences. Moments later she sentenced him to 762 years in prison on the endangerment counts.

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"Frankly, Mr. Brooks, no one is safe from you," Dorow said. "This community can only be safe if you are behind bars for the rest of your life. ... You left a path of destruction, chaos, death, injury and panic as you drove seven or so blocks through the Christmas parade."

Dorow had bailiffs move Brooks to another courtroom where he could participate via video after he became disruptive during her pre-sentencing remarks. He stood motionless in his jail garb and handcuffs as the judge announced the sentences.

Brooks' victims demanded during a hearing Tuesday that Dorow give him the toughest sentence possible. Chris Owens, whose mother was among those killed, told Brooks: "All I ask is you rot, and you rot slow."

Brooks drove his red Ford Escape through the parade in downtown Waukesha on Nov. 21, 2021, after getting into a fight with his ex-girlfriend. Six people were killed, including 8-year-old Jackson Sparks, who was marching with his baseball team, and three members of a group known as the Dancing Grannies. Scores of others were injured.

On Wednesday, before the judge handed down her sentence, Brooks told the court that he suffered from mental illness since he was young and didn't plan to drive into the parade route. He also offered his first apology to the dozens of people who were hurt or lost loved ones during the incident.

Brooks, who represented himself at trial, told Dorow in remarks that rambled past two hours that he grew up fatherless, poor and hungry in apartment buildings infested with rats and bugs. Brooks said he has dealt with mental health issues for as long as he can remember and that he was physically abused, though he didn't say by whom specifically. At times he took medication and did short stints in mental health facilities and life was better then, he said.

"People are going to, like I said, believe what they want, and that's OK. This needs to be said: What happened on Nov. 21, 2021, was not, not, not an attack. It was not planned, plotted," Brooks said, adding later: "This was not an intentional act. No matter how many times you say it over and over, it was not."

Brooks also offered his first apology to the victims and their families.

"I want you to know that not only am I sorry for what happened, I'm sorry that you could not see what's truly in my heart," he said. "That you cannot see the remorse that I have."

But Brooks didn't explain his motive or offer any other insights into what he was thinking as he turned the SUV into the parade. When Dorow asked him what sentence he thought he should get, he didn't answer directly but said: "I just want to be helped."

Brooks' mother and grandmother tried to persuade Dorow to place Brooks in a mental institution rather than prison. His grandmother, Mary Edwards, said Brooks has been bipolar since he was 12 and that disorder caused him to drive into the parade. His mother, Dawn Woods, pushed Dorow to ensure that Brooks receives treatment in prison.

"If they have to stay for the rest of their lives away from society at least they're getting the help they need to become mentally well," Woods said.

Brooks appeared to weep as his mother spoke.

Dorow said before she handed down the sentences that she doesn't believe Brooks is mentally ill, pointing out that four psychologists who evaluated him earlier this year found that he suffers from an anti-social personality disorder but not a mental illness.

"It is my opinion that mental health issues did not cause him to do what he did on Nov. 21, 2021, and frankly didn't play a role," the judge said Wednesday. "It is very clear to me that he understands the difference between right and wrong and he simply chooses to ignore his conscience. He is fueled by anger and rage."

Dorow spent most of Tuesday listening to dozens of victims demand Brooks get the maximum possible sentence. One by one they described frantically searching for their children in the immediate aftermath, the pain their children have endured as they still struggle to recover from their injuries and the emptiness they feel as they cope with the loss of their dead loved ones.

District Attorney Susan Opper asked Dorow on Tuesday to make the sentences consecutive so they stack up "just as he stacked victims up as he drove down the road," with no chance of release on extended

supervision.

Brooks chose to represent himself during his monthlong trial, which was punctuated by his erratic outbursts. He refused to answer to his own name, frequently interrupted Dorow and often refused to stop talking. Multiple times the judge had bailiffs move Brooks to another courtroom where he could participate via video but she could mute his microphone when he became disruptive, just as she did Wednesday.

## Poland, NATO say missile strike wasn't a Russian attack

By VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

PRZEWODOW, Poland (AP) — NATO member Poland and the head of the military alliance both said Wednesday that a missile strike in Polish farmland that killed two people appeared to be unintentional and was probably launched by air defenses in neighboring Ukraine. Russia had been bombarding Ukraine at the time in an attack 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 30-nation military alliance in Brussels, echoed the preliminary Polish findings. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, however, disputed them and asked for further investigation.

The assessments of Tuesday's deadly missile landing appeared to dial back the likelihood of the strike triggering another major escalation in the nearly 9-month-old Russian invasion of Ukraine. If Russia had targeted Poland, that could have risked drawing NATO into the conflict.

Still, Stoltenberg and others laid overall but not specific blame on Russian President Vladimir Putin's war. "This is not Ukraine's fault. Russia bears ultimate responsibility," Stoltenberg said.

Zelenskyy told reporters he had "no doubts" about a report he received from his top commanders "that it wasn't our missile or our missile strike." Ukrainian officials should have access to the site and take part in the investigation, he added.

"Let's say openly, if, God forbid, some remnant (of Ukraine's air-defenses) killed a person, these people, then we need to apologize," he said. "But first there needs to be a probe, access — we want to get the data you have."

On Tuesday, he called the strike "a very significant escalation."

Before the Polish and NATO assessments, U.S. President Joe Biden had said it was "unlikely" that Russia fired the missile but added: "I'm going to make sure we find out exactly what happened."

A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman in Moscow said no Russian strike Tuesday was closer than 35 kilometers (22 miles) from the Ukraine-Poland border. The Kremlin denounced Poland's and other countries' initial response and, in rare praise for a U.S. leader, hailed Biden's "restrained, much more professional reaction."

"We have witnessed another hysterical, frenzied, Russo-phobic reaction that was not based on any real data," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Later Wednesday, Russia's Foreign Ministry summoned the Polish ambassador in Moscow; the discussion reportedly lasted about 20 minutes.

The Polish president said the missile was probably a Russian-made S-300 dating from the Soviet era. Ukraine, once part of the Soviet Union, fields Soviet- and Russian-made weaponry and has also seized many more Russian weapons while beating back the Kremlin's invasion forces.

Russia's assault on power generation and transmission facilities Tuesday included Ukraine's western region bordering Poland. Ukraine's military said 77 of the more than 90 missiles fired were brought down by air defenses, along with 11 drones.

The countrywide bombardment by cruise missiles and exploding drones clouded the initial picture of what happened in Poland.

"It was a huge blast, the sound was terrifying," said Ewa Byra, the primary school director in the eastern

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village of Przewodow, where the missile struck. She said she knew both men who were killed — one was the husband of a school employee, the other the father of a former pupil.

Another resident, 24-year-old Kinga Kancir, said the men worked at a grain-drying facility.

"It is very hard to accept," she said. "Nothing was going on and, all of a sudden, there is a world sensation."

In Europe, NATO members called for a thorough investigation and criticized Moscow.

"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," said German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Swaths of Ukraine were without power after the aerial assault. Zelenskyy said about 10 million people lost electricity, but tweeted overnight that 8 million were subsequently reconnected. Previous strikes had already destroyed an estimated 40% of the country's energy infrastructure.

Ukraine said the bombardment was the largest on its power grid so far.

A Washington-based think tank, the Institute for the Study of War, said Ukraine's downing of so many Russian missiles Tuesday "illustrates the improvement in Ukrainian air defenses in the last month," which are being bolstered with Western-supplied systems. Sweden said Wednesday that an air defense system with ammunition would form part of its latest and largest package of military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, worth \$360 million.

The U.S. has been Ukraine's largest supporter, providing \$18.6 billion in weapons and equipment. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the flow of weapons and assistance would continue "throughout the winter so that Ukraine can continue to consolidate gains and seize the initiative on the battlefield."

Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he tried to speak to his Russian counterpart Wednesday, but those efforts were not successful. Milley didn't elaborate on the efforts, but the lack of a conversation, at a time when there were questions about whether Russia had struck a NATO ally, raises concerns about high-level U.S.-Russian communications in a crisis.

At the United Nations, the organization's political chief said the missile strike in Poland was "a frightening reminder" of the need to prevent any more escalation of the war.

As long as the fighting continues, Rosemary DiCarlo warned the U.N. Security Council, "the risks of potentially catastrophic spillover remain all too real."

The Russian attacks 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 as winter approaches.

Russian attacks in the previous 24 hours killed at least six civilians and wounded another 17, a senior official, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, said Wednesday.

Lviv Gov. Maksym Kozytskyy said two of three Russian missiles hit critical energy infrastructure in the western province. Power was restored to about 95% of the province, he said, but only 30% of consumers can use electricity at the same time.

Power shortages caused extensive train delays extending into Wednesday, but there were no cancellations because diesel locomotives were pressed into service, rail officials said.

Kyiv resident Margina Daria said Tuesday's strikes knocked out cellphone service in her area.

"We have already adapted to life without light, because we have scheduled outages every day, but without communication it was quite disturbing," she said. "There was no way to even tell our families that we were OK."

## US Catholic bishops worry about abortion views in the pews

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Even as they signaled a continued hardline stance on opposing abortion and same-sex marriage, the nation's Catholic bishops acknowledged Wednesday that they're struggling to reach a key audience: their own flock.

The members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops rounded out their leadership bench during the

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last day of public sessions of their fall annual meeting in Baltimore, which concludes with private meetings Thursday.

They also set in motion a plan to recirculate their long-standing election document in 2024 — a 15-year-old statement that prioritizes opposition to abortion — while acknowledging it's outdated and adding a cover statement addressing such things as the teachings of Pope Francis and the Supreme Court's Dobbs ruling in June that overturned the nationwide right to abortion.

The bishops elected Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul Coakley as secretary in a 130-104 vote over Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, who had been named a cardinal by Pope Francis. It's the second time in five years that the bishops have passed over a Francis-appointed cardinal for a key leadership post.

Earlier this year, Coakley had applauded the decision by San Francisco's archbishop to deny Communion to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Catholic Democrat from that city who supports abortion rights. So had the bishops' new point man on opposition to abortion -- Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, elected Wednesday as chairman of its Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The votes came a day after the bishops elected as their new president Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services. Broglio is also seen as more of a culture warrior than Pope Francis, though Broglio has dismissed the idea of any "dissonance" between the two.

At the same time, Coakley cited the importance of Francis' priorities in a news conference Wednesday. Coakley is leading the bishops' review of, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," a document they have used in election years with only minor revisions since 2007.

While a full revision will take years, bishops approved Coakley's recommendation to begin drafting a new introduction to issue with the document in time for 2024's election. It would incorporate recent events such as the Ukraine war and the Dobbs decision.

The plan also includes using parish bulletins and social media to share main ideas from the lengthy document.

Coakley said the new introduction needs to reflect Pope Francis' priorities, such as promoting civil discourse and protecting the environment.

"It's a rich pontificate that offers us plenty to lay out for people ... to embrace the vision that Pope Francis has articulated," Coakley said.

Bishops from both the progressive and conservative flanks of the church echoed concern that Catholics aren't reading the document.

Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky, a Francis appointee, said that bishops need a statement that's relevant amid the shaken confidence in democracy following the U.S. Capitol riot and in the wake of Dobbs and defeats for abortion opponents in votes on five state ballot measures. "It's irresponsible to issue an old teaching and suggest the church has nothing new to say when so much of this context has changed," he said.

Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, one of the most outspoken conservative bishops, lamented the recent state ballot measures. Polls show Catholics to be mixed on legal abortion.

"I think it's a solid document," Strickland said, but "I think we have to acknowledge people aren't listening."

The gap between Francis and the U.S. bishops reflects in part the conference's continued emphasis on culture-war battles over abortion and same-sex marriage.

Francis, while also opposing both in keeping with church teaching, has used his papacy to emphasize a wider agenda of bringing mercy to those at the margins, such as migrants and other poor. The Vatican said in 2021 the church cannot bless gay unions because God "cannot bless sin," but Francis has made outreach to the church's LGBTQ members a hallmark of his papacy. As recently as last Friday, Francis met with the Rev. James Martin, an American Jesuit priest whom the pontiff has supported in his calls for dialogue with LGBTQ Catholics.

Both Pelosi and President Joe Biden, another Catholic who favors legalized abortion, have received Communion since 2021 in churches in Rome, the pope's own diocese.

The bishops also heard an impassioned talk Wednesday by Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian

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Archeparchy of Philadelphia on behalf of war-torn Ukraine.

Gudziak thanked U.S. Catholics for providing millions in relief for displaced Ukrainians and urged continued American support for Ukraine's self-defense, saying Russian assaults have left many vulnerable in the coming winter.

At the same time, he said that on a conference call with staff at a Catholic university in Lviv, he heard only joy and resolve even amid losses of electrical power in Russia's missile barrage Tuesday. One staff member told him, "Better without electricity and with Kherson," he said, alluding to the recently liberated city.

Gudziak accused Russia of a "genocide" through such attacks and through its denial of Ukrainians' identity as a separate people.

Also Wednesday, a small group of survivors of sexual abuse and their supporters held a sidewalk news conference outside Baltimore Marriott Waterfront, where the bishops are meeting. While this year marks the 20th anniversary of the bishops' landmark policy barring all abusers from ministry, advocates are seeking more transparency.

They called for bishops in every diocese to post detailed lists of credibly accused abusers and to stop lobbying against state legislation that would extend statutes of limitations for abuse lawsuits.

David Lorenz, Maryland director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, cited Archbishop Broglio's archdiocese as one of the few that still does not publish even a minimal list of abusers. Broglio declined to comment.

"I don't need another apology because it doesn't do anything to protect kids," Lorenz added. "I want action to help kids. I want them (bishops) to be totally, absolutely transparent."

Also Wednesday, the bishops voted to advance efforts to have three American women declared saints. They include Michelle Duppong of North Dakota, a campus missionary who died of cancer in 2014 and is credited with showing faithfulness in suffering.

They also include two 20th century women: Cora Evans, a Catholic convert from Utah who reported mystical experiences from an early age; and Mother Margaret Mary Healy Murphy of Texas, founder of a religious order, who provided education and other ministry to African Americans.

## Same-sex marriage legislation clears key Senate hurdle

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Legislation to protect same-sex and interracial marriages crossed a major Senate hurdle Wednesday, putting Congress on track to take the historic step of ensuring that such unions are enshrined in federal law.

Twelve Republicans voted with all Democrats to move forward on the legislation, meaning a final vote could come as soon as this week, or later this month. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said the bill ensuring the unions are legally recognized under the law is chance for the Senate to "live up to its highest ideals" and protect marriage equality for all people.

"It will make our country a better, fairer place to live," Schumer said, noting that his own daughter and her wife are expecting a baby next year.

Senate Democrats are quickly moving to pass the bill while the party still controls the House. Republicans won the House majority Wednesday and are unlikely to take up the issue next year.

In a statement after the vote, President Joe Biden said that he sign the bill once it is passed.

"Love is love, and Americans should have the right to marry the person they love," Biden said.

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.

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,

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ethnicity, or national origin.”

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, many Republicans in Congress have been reluctant to support the legislation, with many saying it was unnecessary while the marriages are still protected by the courts. Democrats delayed consideration until after the midterm elections, hoping that would relieve political pressure on some GOP senators who might be wavering.

A proposed amendment to the bill, negotiated by supporters to bring more Republicans on board, would clarify that it does not affect rights of private individuals or businesses 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.

Three Republicans said early on that they would support the legislation and have lobbied their GOP colleagues to support it: Maine Sen. Susan Collins, North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis and Ohio Sen. Rob Portman. They argued that there was still value in enshrining the rights for such marriages even if the courts don’t invalidate them.

“Current federal law doesn’t reflect the will or beliefs of the American people,” Portman said ahead of the vote. “It’s time for the Senate to settle the issue.”

In the end, nine of their GOP colleagues joined them in voting for it, bringing the total to twelve and providing enough votes needed to overcome a filibuster in the 50-50 Senate. The other Republicans who voted for the legislation were Sens. Richard Burr of North Carolina, Todd Young of Indiana, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Mitt Romney of Utah, Joni Ernst of Iowa, Roy Blunt of Missouri, Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming and Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan of Alaska.

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 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, said 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 said 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.”

## Prosecutor: Witness told police UVA suspect targeted victims

By DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP) — A witness who saw a University of Virginia student open fire onboard a bus returning from a field trip told police the gunman targeted specific victims — many of them football players — shooting one as he slept, a prosecutor said in court Wednesday.

The details emerged during the suspect’s first court appearance, the same day students returned to classes and the university announced it was canceling its Saturday football game in the wake of the deadly



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shooting.

A witness who was shown a photo of the shooting suspect, Christopher Darnell Jones Jr., identified him as the gunman, the prosecutor said. The violence Sunday night left three football players dead and one player and another student wounded.

Jones, a former football player, appeared by video link from a local jail for the court hearing Wednesday. He did not enter a plea to the numerous charges he faces and said he plans to hire an attorney. A judge ordered him held without bond and appointed a public defender to represent him until he secures private counsel.

University officials and police have said Jones, who turns 23 on Thursday, joined a group of about two dozen others on a field trip Sunday from the Charlottesville campus to see a play in the nation's capital, about 120 miles (195 kilometers) away. When their bus arrived back on campus, authorities have said Jones opened fire, killing Lavel Davis Jr., D'Sean Perry and Devin Chandler.

Police have said Jones was able to flee the shooting scene, setting off a manhunt and 12-hour campus lockdown that left many students petrified. He faces three counts of second-degree murder, two counts of malicious wounding and additional gun-related charges.

The violence at the state's flagship public university has set off days of mourning among students and faculty, the broader Charlottesville community and other supporters. Classes resumed Wednesday, as the school announced it was canceling its final home game of the season scheduled for the weekend against Coastal Carolina. No decision has been made yet about its final game of the season Nov. 26 against Virginia Tech in Blacksburg.

Students described a range of emotions as they returned to classes.

"It's a pretty surreal experience, to be honest," said Carter Paulen, a fourth-year student majoring in systems engineering and economics. "It's good to see friendly faces, but I think everyone is trying to feel normal again in the face of all the adversity."

Caden Kennedy, a second-year student, said many students returned to classes, "but there are some people who are home and need to be home."

"I think the university itself is very aware of the fact that not everyone is ready to return," Kennedy said. "Teachers are definitely trying to work with everyone where everyone is at."

The university will not be requiring undergraduate students to complete any graded assignments or take exams before the Thanksgiving break. University President Jim Ryan has opened his on-campus home to students during the afternoons this week, and a memorial service for the victims is in the works.

During Wednesday's court hearing, Albemarle County Commonwealth's Attorney James Hingeley gave a brief accounting of what police say happened Sunday night after officers responded to a report of shots fired near a parking garage.

One witness told police the suspect pointed the gun at Chandler, shot him as he was sleeping, and Chandler slid to the floor, Hingeley said.

The witness said Jones was "aiming at certain people" and not shooting randomly, according to Hingeley.

Ryan said Monday that authorities did not have a "full understanding" of the motive behind the shooting. Court documents have offered no additional insight, and Hingeley did not address a possible motive Wednesday.

The public defender appointed to represent Jones did not address the substance of the charges Wednesday. She also declined comment outside of court.

Jones, who has been in custody since he was arrested in suburban Richmond late Monday morning, appeared somber. He did not speak during the hearing except to respond to questions from the judge, including about his employment and ability to pay for an attorney.

Jones, a walk-on member of the football team during the 2018 season, had worked part-time for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Virginia since September, Kate Lambert, the group's CEO, confirmed in an emailed statement.

Hingeley also reviewed Jones' past criminal record in court Wednesday. In February 2021, Jones was charged in Chesterfield County with possession of a concealed handgun without a permit and later given

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a 12-month suspended sentence, Hingeley said.

At the time of that arrest, Jones had two outstanding warrants in connection with a hit-and-run accident with property damage and reckless driving from Petersburg. He was convicted of both charges and also given 12-month suspended sentences on both, Hingeley said.

The university has said Jones' failure to report the misdemeanor concealed weapon conviction was a consideration in an ongoing review of Jones by its threat-assessment team. The university initially said its student affairs office had escalated Jones' case in late October to the University Judiciary Committee, a student-run body that could have enacted disciplinary action. But late Tuesday night, spokesperson Brian Coy confirmed the university had not actually escalated the report. It finally did so Tuesday night, Coy said.

The university's governing board — the Board of Visitors — held an emergency meeting Wednesday to receive briefings from law enforcement, emergency management officials, staff members and legal counsel on the shooting and the investigation, according to a public agenda. The board held its meeting in executive session. The public was not allowed to be present, and a university spokesperson said board members would have no comment.

Of the two students who were hospitalized, one was discharged from the UVA Medical Center on Tuesday, according to Eric Swensen, a health system spokesperson.

A family spokesperson for Mike Hollins, a running back on the team who was shot in the back, said he was showing signs of improvement Tuesday after a second surgery. He was removed from a ventilator and was able to visit with family and friends in his hospital room, said Joe Gipson, the chief operating officer of a law firm in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where Hollins' mother, Brenda Hollins, works. Gipson later issued a statement reiterating that Hollins was going to approach his long recovery with the same tenacity he used on the field and in the classroom.

## **NASA capsule on way to moon after launch by giant new rocket**

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A space capsule hurtled toward the moon Wednesday for the first time in 50 years, following a thunderous launch of NASA's mightiest rocket in a dress rehearsal for astronaut flights.

No one was on board this debut flight, just three test dummies. The capsule is headed for a wide orbit around the moon and then a return to Earth with a Pacific splashdown in about three weeks.

After years of delays and billions in cost overruns, the Space Launch System rocket roared 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.

The rocket rode a huge trail of flames toward space, with a half-moon glowing brightly and buildings shaking.

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.

"For the Artemis generation, this is for you," launch director Charlie Blackwell-Thompson called out,

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referring to all those born after Apollo. She later told her team: "You have earned your place in history."

The 322-foot (98-meter) SLS is the most powerful rocket 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 spot during Tuesday night's fueling, but an emergency team tightened 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 the leak. "My heart was pumping. My nerves were going."

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 test dummies — NASA calls them moonikins — 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 cropped up early in the flight, although preliminary indications were the boosters and engines performed well.

"I personally am not going to rest well until we get safely to splashdown and recovery," said mission manager Mike Sarafin.

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.

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 before the launch.

After a nearly yearlong International 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."

## Poland, NATO say missile strike wasn't a Russian attack

By VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

PRZEWODOW, Poland (AP) — NATO member Poland and the head of the military alliance both said

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Wednesday that a missile strike in Polish farmland that killed two people appeared to be unintentional and was probably launched by air defenses in neighboring Ukraine. Russia had been bombarding Ukraine at the time in an attack 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 30-nation military alliance in Brussels, echoed the preliminary Polish findings. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, however, disputed them and asked for further investigation.

The assessments of Tuesday's deadly missile landing appeared to dial back the likelihood of the strike triggering another major escalation in the nearly 9-month-old Russian invasion of Ukraine. If Russia had targeted Poland, that could have risked drawing NATO into the conflict.

Still, Stoltenberg and others laid overall but not specific blame on Russian President Vladimir Putin's war. "This is not Ukraine's fault. Russia bears ultimate responsibility," Stoltenberg said.

Zelenskyy told reporters he had "no doubts" about a report he received from his top commanders "that it wasn't our missile or our missile strike." Ukrainian officials should have access to the site and take part in the investigation, he added.

"Let's say openly, if, God forbid, some remnant (of Ukraine's air-defenses) killed a person, these people, then we need to apologize," he said. "But first there needs to be a probe, access — we want to get the data you have."

On Tuesday, he called the strike "a very significant escalation."

Before the Polish and NATO assessments, U.S. President Joe Biden had said it was "unlikely" that Russia fired the missile but added: "I'm going to make sure we find out exactly what happened."

A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman in Moscow said no Russian strike Tuesday was closer than 35 kilometers (22 miles) from the Ukraine-Poland border. The Kremlin denounced Poland's and other countries' initial response and, in rare praise for a U.S. leader, hailed Biden's "restrained, much more professional reaction."

"We have witnessed another hysterical, frenzied, Russo-phobic reaction that was not based on any real data," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Later Wednesday, Russia's Foreign Ministry summoned the Polish ambassador in Moscow; the discussion reportedly lasted about 20 minutes.

The Polish president said the missile was probably a Russian-made S-300 dating from the Soviet era. Ukraine, once part of the Soviet Union, fields Soviet- and Russian-made weaponry and has also seized many more Russian weapons while beating back the Kremlin's invasion forces.

Russia's assault on power generation and transmission facilities Tuesday included Ukraine's western region bordering Poland. Ukraine's military said 77 of the more than 90 missiles fired were brought down by air defenses, along with 11 drones.

The countrywide bombardment by cruise missiles and exploding drones clouded the initial picture of what happened in Poland.

"It was a huge blast, the sound was terrifying," said Ewa Byra, the primary school director in the eastern village of Przewodow, where the missile struck. She said she knew both men who were killed — one was the husband of a school employee, the other the father of a former pupil.

Another resident, 24-year-old Kinga Kancir, said the men worked at a grain-drying facility.

"It is very hard to accept," she said. "Nothing was going on and, all of a sudden, there is a world sensation."

In Europe, NATO members called for a thorough investigation and criticized Moscow.

"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," said German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Swaths of Ukraine were without power after the aerial assault. Zelenskyy said about 10 million people

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lost electricity, but tweeted overnight that 8 million were subsequently reconnected. Previous strikes had already destroyed an estimated 40% of the country's energy infrastructure.

Ukraine said the bombardment was the largest on its power grid so far.

A Washington-based think tank, the Institute for the Study of War, said Ukraine's downing of so many Russian missiles Tuesday "illustrates the improvement in Ukrainian air defenses in the last month," which are being bolstered with Western-supplied systems. Sweden said Wednesday that an air defense system with ammunition would form part of its latest and largest package of military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, worth \$360 million.

The U.S. has been Ukraine's largest supporter, providing \$18.6 billion in weapons and equipment. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the flow of weapons and assistance would continue "throughout the winter so that Ukraine can continue to consolidate gains and seize the initiative on the battlefield."

Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he tried to speak to his Russian counterpart Wednesday, but those efforts were not successful. Milley didn't elaborate on the efforts, but the lack of a conversation, at a time when there were questions about whether Russia had struck a NATO ally, raises concerns about high-level U.S.-Russian communications in a crisis.

At the United Nations, the organization's political chief said the missile strike in Poland was "a frightening reminder" of the need to prevent any more escalation of the war.

As long as the fighting continues, Rosemary DiCarlo warned the U.N. Security Council, "the risks of potentially catastrophic spillover remain all too real."

The Russian attacks 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 as winter approaches.

Russian attacks in the previous 24 hours killed at least six civilians and wounded another 17, a senior official, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, said Wednesday.

Lviv Gov. Maksym Kozytskyy said two of three Russian missiles hit critical energy infrastructure in the western province. Power was restored to about 95% of the province, he said, but only 30% of consumers can use electricity at the same time.

Power shortages caused extensive train delays extending into Wednesday, but there were no cancellations because diesel locomotives were pressed into service, rail officials said.

Kyiv resident Margina Daria said Tuesday's strikes knocked out cellphone service in her area.

"We have already adapted to life without light, because we have scheduled outages every day, but without communication it was quite disturbing," she said. "There was no way to even tell our families that we were OK."

## At climate summit, Brazil's Lula promises new day for Amazon

By PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

SHARM el-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Six weeks before taking power, Brazilian President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on Wednesday told cheering crowds at the U.N. climate conference that he would crack down on illegal deforestation in the Amazon, revive relationships with countries that finance forest protection efforts and push to host an upcoming world climate summit in the rainforest.

In two appearances, da Silva laid out a vision for management of the world's largest rainforest, critical to fighting climate change, that was in stark contrast to that of President Jair Bolsonaro, whose administration witnessed some of the most rapid cutting of forests in decades.

"There will be no climate security if the Amazon isn't protected," said da Silva, adding that all crimes in the forest, from illegal logging to mining, would be cracked down on "without respite."

Brazilian presidents have a wide range of powers when it comes to monitoring and regulating the Amazon. The Ministry of Environment oversees the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources, known as Ibama, which patrols the forests. Federal police work across Brazil, including in states

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with large forest areas, and the armed forces can also be deployed.

Bolsonaro, who pushed development both in his pro-business rhetoric and policies, made several moves that weakened protections. For example, he appointed forest managers from the agribusiness sector, which opposes the creation of protected areas such as Indigenous territories and pushes for the legalization of land robbing.

Many Brazil experts have argued those changes opened the door to widespread criminality: the deforested area in Brazil's Amazon reached a 15-year high from August 2020 to July 2021, according to official figures. Satellite monitoring shows the trend this year is on track to surpass last year.

The Amazon rainforest, which covers parts of several nations in South America, combats climate change by absorbing large amounts of carbon dioxide. It's also home to some of the planet's most unique animals and plants, along with tribes that have lived in the forest for thousands of years.

The appearance at COP27 of da Silva, who made an extraordinary political comeback after being convicted of corruption and jailed a few years ago, lent both symbolic and practical weight to discussions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help developing nations confront the impacts of climate change. That's because da Silva oversaw large reductions in deforestation as president between 2003 and 2010.

"Lula! Lula! Lula!" chanted the crowd before his first appearance in the morning, using the name Brazilians universally use for the former president.

In that meeting, da Silva met with several Brazilian governors, including from important rainforest states like Amazonia and Para. He also argued that the U.N. climate summit in 2025 should be based in the Amazon, so "people who defend the Amazon and defend the climate get to know the region close up." He said he would pitch the idea to U.N. leadership this week.

During both speeches, da Silva took several swipes at Bolsonaro. Da Silva beat Bolsonaro in October's elections and will assume power Jan. 1.

"Brazil can't remain isolated like it was these last four years. (Officials from Brazil) didn't travel to any other countries, and no other countries traveled to Brazil," said da Silva.

Da Silva also had some strong words for world leaders. He mentioned a pledge by rich countries, made during the climate conference in 2009, to contribute \$100 billion a year to help developing nations adapt to the impacts of climate change. That effort has never been fully funded.

"I don't know how many representatives of rich countries are here," said da Silva, pausing to smile and look out at the crowd. "I want to say that my return here is also to collect on what was promised."

Without giving details, da Silva said his administration would work with the Congo and Indonesia, along with Brazil home to the largest tropical forests in the world. Given the moniker "OPEC of the Forests," in reference to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and the way they regulate oil production, Brazilian news reports have said the general idea would be for these three countries to coordinate their negotiating positions and practices on forest management and biodiversity protection. The proposal was initially floated during last year's climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, according to the reports.

Despite da Silva's lofty promises, the task for the incoming administration is huge. While many people, particularly environmentalists and officials at a climate conference like this one celebrate promises to protect the Amazon, Brazilian leaders have traditionally faced huge development pressures. Those pressures come from sectors like agriculture and mining, along with many people who live in the Amazon and feel that it's for them to decide how the vast area is managed.

There is also the reality that da Silva's environmental record as president was mixed. Deforestation dropped dramatically during the decade after da Silva took power, with Marina Silva, former childhood rubber-tapper who worked closely with murdered environmentalist Chico Mendes, as environmental minister. But in his second term, da Silva began catering to agribusiness interests, and in 2008 Marina Silva resigned. Marina Silva is also attending COP27 and is a contender for the top environmental job again.

Sassan Saatchi, a NASA scientist and forest expert, said successfully stemming deforestation would require several things, from stronger governance to economic initiatives that gave opportunities to people living in the Amazon.

"There is no one silver bullet," said Saatchi, attending the climate conference. "The question is how to put those things together."

Da Silva has several meetings planned with ministers from various countries over the next days.

On Tuesday night, da Silva met with U.S. Climate Envoy John Kerry. On Wednesday, Kerry said he was pleased that da Silva "talked about for once and for all getting it right, pulling people together in order to preserve the Amazon."

Simone Karipuna, an activist from the Amazon, traveled with several other Indigenous women to Egypt to participate in the summit. Between chants with several other women ahead of one of da Silva's appearances, Karipuna said she believed challenges could be overcome because Indigenous communities living in the forest could work with da Silva.

"We had no dialogue at all with the current administration," she said.

## **Browns QB Watson practices for 1st time during suspension**

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

BEREA, Ohio (AP) — Deshaun Watson whipped a short pass, pulled down on the face mask of his helmet and ducked his head before running across the field while trailing starter Jacoby Brissett and Cleveland's other quarterbacks.

He is catching up.

Still suspended, Watson is back on the field.

More than two months after he began serving an 11-game NFL suspension for sexual misconduct allegations, Watson practiced Wednesday in what he and the Browns hope is the next step in him taking over as their franchise QB.

It was Watson's first on-field team workout since Aug. 30, 12 days after the three-time Pro Bowler reached a settlement with the league following accusation by more than two dozen women of sexually inappropriate behavior during massage therapy sessions in Texas.

Watson, who was acquired in a trade from Houston in March, agreed to the ban, to pay a \$5 million fine and to undergo treatment and counseling after the league ruled he had violated its personal conduct policy.

Despite temperatures hovering around freezing, Watson wore an orange, short-sleeved No. 4 jersey with matching socks during the 25-minute portion of practice open to reporters. He tucked his hands into a warmer wrapped around his waist in between firing passes to Cleveland's wide receiver.

Watson did not speak to the media. He was cordial while getting ready in the locker room before practice and chuckled about the "chilly" weather that welcomed him back.

As long as he continues to meet the provisions of his settlement, Watson will play his first regular-season game in 700 days on Dec. 4 when the Browns visit Houston. The Texans drafted him in 2017 before he demanded a trade and was eventually dealt to Cleveland for a slew of draft picks, including three first-rounders.

The Browns then signed Watson to a five-year, fully guaranteed \$230 million contract, the richest in league history.

Coach Kevin Stefanski would not reveal any specifics about plans to get Watson ready to play in two weeks while also preparing Brissett for this Sunday's game at Buffalo.

"This is the next step for him, and it's good to have him back out on the field," Stefanski said. "What's important is that we do everything we can to find a way to get a win versus Buffalo. That is where the players' focus is."

Watson took the majority of snaps with Cleveland's starting offense in training camp and started the Browns' exhibition opener at Jacksonville before his suspension kicked in. He was banned from the team's facility until mid-October, when he was allowed to attend meetings and work out.

Brissett will start two more games before handing Cleveland's offense over to Watson.

Although the transition will be unusual, especially because Brissett has played better than expectations and become a respected leader in the locker room, Stefanski isn't worried about any awkwardness.

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"You guys know the two parties at hand here," Stefanski said. "These are professionals. These are good people. They're friends. I think that is probably the most important thing."

Brissett quickly dismissed a question about getting his share of snaps.

"That's not my job to balance it," he said. "It's coach's job to balance how he splits things up. I just have to go out there and prepare like I always prepare. Do my job and then control what I can control."

Like Stefanski, running back Nick Chubb believes the impending QB changeover will be seamless.

"Jacob's our quarterback. He has been since the beginning of the season. So it won't be awkward at all," he said. "But we're also excited to see Deshaun come out and get some reps and see how he's doing."

The 27-year-old Watson tried to keep his skills sharp by working with a private quarterback coach during the first month of his suspension. Until this week, Cleveland's coaches had not been allowed to instruct him.

There's going to be rust, and Brissett joked that he would assess Watson's game accordingly.

"We'll see," Brissett said when asked if it was good to have Watson back. "If it's bad, we'll tell him to stay in for the rest of the year."

Before his suspension, Watson reached financial settlements with 23 of 24 civil lawsuits filed against him. Another lawsuit was dropped by the plaintiff after she was ordered by a judge to amend her name.

Two grand juries declined to indict Watson on criminal charges. During the summer, former federal judge Sue L. Robinson, jointly appointed by the league and players' union to arbitrate Watson's case, called Watson's behavior "egregious" and "predatory" before suspending him.

NOTES: With a blizzard in the forecast, the Browns have discussed other travel options to Buffalo. They're currently scheduled to fly on Saturday. ... LB Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah (knee) practiced after missing his second straight game. RG Wyatt Teller (calf) also returned. He left in the first quarter at Miami. ... TE David Njoku (ankle) worked on the side. He's missed the past two games.

## Shake it off? Parents come up short for Taylor Swift tickets

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — They were supposed to be birthday presents. They were supposed to be Christmas presents. They were supposed to be the most special of special treats for young fans of Taylor Swift.

Instead, for many parents, the hours-long Ticketmaster debacle they endured Tuesday trying to score concert seats left them empty-handed and frustrated — and their kids disappointed.

"I was trying to buy tickets so my best friend and I could take our pre-teens to their first concert and waited literally all day to finally get in to buy tickets and not one ticket was left," Micah Woods, who lives near Little Rock, Arkansas, said Wednesday.

Others who did battle on computers eventually scored, some after being kicked out of the online queue numerous times or struggling with error messages.

"I was pretty worn out afterwards. Just the stress of it," said Natasha Mitchner in Dayton, Ohio. "But it's worth it. She puts on a good show."

After nearly six hours in the queue, Mitchner madly scooped up tickets for herself and her two daughters, ages 17 and 20. She sprung for a bonus fourth ticket to be used by her husband or a friend of the kids. It will be the fourth time the Swiftie family has seen her live.

"My 20-year-old said even if you don't get them, I still love you," Mitchner said, laughing. "It's kind of our thing to do together. I would have been upset. I just tried to be calm."

Emails to Ticketmaster spokeswoman were not immediately returned Wednesday. In a tweet Tuesday, the company called demand "historically unprecedented" with millions of people trying to buy.

Fresh off one of the biggest album launches of her career, Swift announced earlier this month she was going on a new U.S. stadium tour starting next year, with international dates to follow. Fans who received a special code after registering had exclusive access to buy tickets Wednesday, ahead of Friday sales for the rest of the public.

The 52-date Eras Tour kicks off March 17 in Glendale, Arizona, and wraps up with five shows in Los Angeles ending Aug. 9. It's Swift's first tour since 2018.



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"It was sad. It was so sad," said Vivica Williams in Clarksville, Maryland.

She lost out trying for her 14-year-old daughter and a friend. The girls were in gym class when tickets went on sale so mom was tasked with the job. The Philadelphia show was going to be a birthday present.

"They were so excited. I tried to get on and I tried to get on it. It crashes and it crashes and it crashes and it crashes. And so finally, eventually I get in the queue, and I'm like yay! Then, oh, there are 2,000 plus people ahead of you in line," Williams said.

She was kicked off the queue four or five times, having logged on about 9:30 a.m., which was 30 minutes ahead of the sale.

"I never got past 2,000 plus people in line. So finally around 2:30 I gave up. I'm like, forget this, I'm an adult person. I can't sit here all day with Taylor Swift on my phone," Williams said. "I was complaining to my daughter the whole time. Like, this is for the birds."

With another chance at tickets Friday, she has already informed the young ones: "It's on you now, girls."

And with tickets for the pre-sale up for grabs in the middle of a school day, Williams wasn't the only parent left with the job.

Jonathan Hickman in Knoxville, Tennessee, managed to snag a pair of tickets for his 15-year-old daughter after performing, as his wife Katie Allison described, "some crazy crashing Ticketmaster" magic all day long.

The tickets, for a Nashville show, were supposed to be a Christmas present — and their daughter's first concert without parents — but they went ahead and told her now.

"If you've ever wondered what the teenage girls screaming with unbelievable excitement for the Beatles sounded like, I can now describe the sound to you in what I'm sure is a pretty accurate way," Allison wrote on Facebook. "We still aren't sure how Jon did this. We're kind of in shock. But boy is it fun seeing your daughter THAT excited about music."

## Amazon begins mass layoffs among its corporate workforce

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Amazon has begun mass layoffs in its corporate ranks, becoming the latest tech company to trim its workforce amid rising fears about the wider economic environment.

On Tuesday, the company notified regional authorities in California that it would lay off about 260 workers at various facilities that employ data scientists, software engineers and other corporate workers. Those job cuts would be effective beginning on Jan. 17.

Amazon would not specify how many more layoffs may be in the works beyond the ones confirmed through California's Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, also known as WARN, which requires companies to provide 60 days' notice if they have 75 or more full-time or part-time workers. Amazon employs more than 1.5 million workers globally, primarily made up of hourly workers.

The online retail giant, like other tech and social media giants, saw sizable profits during the COVID-19 pandemic, as homebound shoppers purchased more items online. But revenue growth slowed as the worst of the pandemic eased and consumers relied less on ecommerce.

The Seattle-based company reported two consecutive losses this year, driven mainly by write-downs of the value of its stock investment in electric vehicle start-up Rivian Automotive. The company returned to profitability during the third quarter, but investors were gloomy about its weaker-than-expected revenue and lackluster projections for the current quarter, which is typically good for retailers due to the holiday shopping season.

In an effort to cut back on costs, Amazon has already been axing some of its projects — including subsidiary fabric.com, Amazon Care, and the cooler-size home delivery robot Scout. It's also been scaling back its physical footprint by delaying — or canceling — plans to occupy some new warehouses across the country. And Amazon Chief Financial Officer Brian Olsavsky has said the company was preparing for what could be a slower growth period and would be careful about hiring in the near future.

Mass layoffs are rare at Amazon, but the company has had rounds of job cuts in 2018 and in 2001 during the dot-com crash. On the warehouse side, the ecommerce giant typically trims its workforce through

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attrition.

Faced with high costs, the company announced earlier this month it would pause hiring among its corporate workforce, adding to the freeze it put a few weeks earlier on its retail division. But the layoffs weren't far off. Employees who work in different units, including voice assistant Alexa and cloud gaming platform Amazon Luna, said they were let go on Tuesday, according to LinkedIn posts. Some of them were based in Seattle, where the company has its headquarters.

"As part of our annual operating planning review process, we always look at each of our businesses and what we believe we should change," Amazon spokesperson Kelly Nantel said in a statement. "As we've gone through this, given the current macro-economic environment (as well as several years of rapid hiring), some teams are making adjustments, which in some cases means certain roles are no longer necessary."

In a note to the devices & services team that Amazon shared on its website, the team's senior vice president David Limp said the company was consolidating some teams and programs. He said those laid off in the process were notified on Tuesday and the company will work with them to "provide support," including assistance in finding new roles. If an employee cannot find a new role within the company, Limp said Amazon will provide a severance payment, external job placement support and what he called transitional benefits.

The retail behemoth follows other tech giants that have cut jobs in the past few weeks — a reversal from earlier this year, when tech workers were in high demand. Facebook parent Meta said last week it would lay off 11,000 people, about 13% of its workforce. And Elon Musk, the new Twitter CEO, slashed the company's workforce in half this month.

Going forward, Wedbush Securities analyst Daniel Ives said he believes Amazon will likely sustain its workforce and investments in profitable areas such as the cloud computing unit AWS, while trimming costs in non-strategic areas like Alexa and other moonshot projects.

"The clock has struck midnight in terms of hyper-growth for Big Tech," Ives said. "These companies hired at such an eye popping rate, it was not sustainable. Now there's some painful steps ahead."

## Sanctioned tycoon says Russia wants to engage on climate

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — A Russian billionaire under sanctions by the United States and Europe over his alleged ties to the Kremlin said Wednesday that he was not surprised by protests against his country at this year's U.N. climate talks, but insisted that Russia wants to remain engaged on the issue of global warming because it deeply affects the nation.

Andrey Melnichenko, who heads the climate policy panel of Russian business lobby group RSPP, told The Associated Press that "regardless of the very terrible moment which we all experience now, we will participate, we will observe" at the meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

Pro-Ukraine activists disrupted the start of an event hosted by the Russian delegation at the climate talks Tuesday before being escorted out by security staff.

"I wasn't surprised," said Melnichenko, who was speaking on the panel alongside Russian delegates. "What's so surprising? That there are people who are deeply concerned about what's happening in Ukraine and want to make their opinion known?"

"I completely 100% understand that," he said.

His comments, while not directly critical of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, indicate a more nuanced view of the bloody conflict than the official Kremlin line, which describes the war as a "special military operation."

Since late February the war has devastated Ukraine, with bombs and shelling decimating towns and cities and killing thousands.

The war has resulted in a raft of sanctions being imposed on Russian officials and prominent businesspeople linked to the Kremlin.

Melnichenko — who now lives in Dubai — criticized Western sanctions on Russia, which he said were applied without regard for possible consequences, such as the effect restrictions on fertilizer exports would have on global food prices and Russia's efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Russia is the world's

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largest exporter of fertilizers.

"Sanctions were put like a blanket on the Russian economy," said Melnichenko, who once ran the fertilizer producer Eurochem and SUEK, one of the world's largest coal companies. "It affects everything. Take for example food and fertilizer supply."

He claimed the sanctions had affected food supply for "hundreds of millions" of people worldwide.

"Of course, this decision affects Russia's possibility to move faster on the way of the decarbonization of its economy," added Melnichenko.

Russian participants at the climate talks in Egypt have kept a low public profile, with no top government officials attending. Although the Russian delegation is half the size of last year's, it is still larger than that of the United States, according to an analysis by Carbon Brief.

According to Melnichenko, Russia is particularly focused on efforts to reduce emissions and reliance on fossil fuels, along with rules for international carbon markets and carbon offsets — an issue where the Russian government sees great potential due to the country's huge forests.

Melnichenko said that Russia will continue to export fossil fuels to fulfill demand, and it should be left to markets to decide which forms of energy are the most competitive. Russia is a top exporter of oil and natural gas although it has faced sanctions from EU trading partners. Other countries, like India and China, continue to import Russian oil.

"I believe that Russia's fossil fuel production (is) very competitive globally in terms of the total cost, externalities included," he said. "That's why Russia will be able for a reasonably long period of time, a very long period of time, to maintain quite (a) big share of the fossil fuel market and ... benefit from it also."

Melnichenko, who according to Forbes is worth some \$23.5 billion, said the world community should pay more attention to the large share of greenhouse gas emissions that aren't caused by human activity, such as respiration, decomposition and even volcanoes. Scientists say the global warming measured in recent decades is mainly caused by the large-scale burning of fossil fuels since industrialization.

Asked what role concerns about climate change play in Russian civil society, he said that environmental issues such as air pollution had become more prominent in bigger cities over the past six to seven years.

Peaceful protests on the issue were possible, he insisted. "And the government really responds."

"That's one of the areas where you can have freedom of expression," he said. "And that's understandable because it's pretty safe in terms of the political environment."

## **AP Exclusive: Balich leads Olympics-style World Cup ceremony**

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

ROME (AP) — First World Cup in the Middle East. First World Cup kicking off in November. First modern edition based around a single city. First in an Arab country.

Now add "first World Cup with an Olympics-style opening ceremony" to the list of novelties for the tournament in Qatar beginning on Sunday.

Creative director Marco Balich, a veteran of multiple Olympic opening and closing ceremonies, told The Associated Press that he has been working for a year on a 30-minute show that will run ahead of the opening game between Qatar and Ecuador.

"The supreme committee wanted to create a real show, which FIFA is not accustomed to," Balich said in a phone interview from Doha, referring to Qatar's local organizing committee.

The extravagant ceremony was one of the reasons why in August the World Cup start was moved up a day in a late switch — to give the show a more prominent viewing slot.

"FIFA and the supreme committee — especially FIFA — realized how much effort was going into creating the ceremony and creating for the first time something that's not just someone singing before the opening game," Balich said.

One of the few details many fans remember from previous World Cup opening ceremonies was Diana Ross missing a penalty kick in 1994 during a song-and-dance act in Chicago.

Balich is promising much more substance in Qatar, indicating that concerns over the treatment of migrant

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workers, human rights and the conservative country's handling of gays and lesbians will be addressed during the ceremony.

"I can't spoil the surprise but there will definitely be attention given and responses to all of the issues being debated right now," Balich said. "It's not about pleasing the West but being the platform on which Asia and the Western world can comfortably meet. ... I think you'll have answers to all of the criticism and issues that have been raised."

Balich, who is Italian, began his Olympic experience at the 2002 Salt Lake City Games with the flag handover ceremony to Turin.

Unlike the full ceremonies that he created for the 2006, 2014, 2016 and 2020 Olympics in Turin, Sochi, Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo, respectively, Balich was given strict instructions for this event by Qatar's ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

"The message and content of this show were curated personally by the country's leadership," said Balich, who is working with co-artistic director Akhmed Al Baker. "They want to talk about multiculturalism, accepting diversity and being a platform for peace."

Sheikh Hamad has been an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member for two decades and sat through many of Balich's ceremonies. So it's not surprising that the emir wants an Olympic-style production.

The ceremony — and tournament in general — is also an audition for Doha's desire to host a Summer Olympics.

Doha has expressed interest in bidding for the Olympics three times but has so far been unable to get onto the candidate list.

Qatari officials were left blindsided last year when the IOC gave Brisbane exclusive bidding rights and then awarded the 2032 Games to the Australian city.

The next available Summer Games is 2036.

Doha has been awarded the 2030 Asian Games.

## BIG SPENDERS

While the ceremony budget doesn't come near that of an Olympic opener — mostly because of the difference in length, with Olympic ceremonies usually lasting hours with the parade of athletes and all sorts of protocols — Balich said Qatar "wasn't afraid to invest in artistic quality.

"We have a team of 900 people with best-in-the-world choreographers and lighting technicians," Balich added. "I think it's going to be a big step forward in terms of World Cup history, and the next edition in the United States, Mexico and Canada will inherit the challenge to create this big show which enriches the experience and identity of the entire tournament."

## NOT A SUPER BOWL

While Balich is still restricted from revealing details of the show's content, he did say that "famous actors and artists" will be involved.

"But it's not a Super Bowl halftime show," he added. "It's a real ceremony with content about Qatar and stresses the fact that this is a tournament of many firsts: the first time it's been played in the winter; the first time it's been played in an Arab country; and the first time that eight stadiums surround a single city."

Among the confirmed performers at the ceremony is K-pop star Jungkook.

The ceremony and opening game are slated for the tent-shaped Al Bayt Stadium, which has a capacity of 60,000.

## TIMING

The ceremony will start at 5:40 p.m. local time (1440 GMT, 9:40 a.m. EST) and end 30 minutes later. Then the Qatar and Ecuador teams will come out for pre-match warmups and the opening game will kick off at 7 p.m.

## CLOSING CEREMONY

Balich is also directing a closing ceremony before the World Cup final on Dec. 18 that he said will be "less important in terms of content.

"It will be more a celebration of the tournament with the realization that the focus for the final is nearly always on the two teams taking part," he added.

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## CORNICHE SHOWS

Lastly, Balich is creating a daily water show off Doha's corniche, the promenade alongside the city's bay. Featuring fountains, drones and fire, Balich said the corniche display will be three times as big as the fountain show at the Bellagio in Las Vegas.

## US-owned firms appear to help Venezuela avoid US sanctions

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A company with an office in Houston and another owned by two American citizens appear to be helping Venezuela bypass U.S. sanctions and quietly transport millions in petroleum products aboard an Iranian-built tanker, The Associated Press has learned.

The sanctions evasion effort is centered around an idled refinery and adjacent oil terminal on the Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao that until 2019 was a major shipping hub for Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PDVSA.

On Sept. 28, the Togo-flagged tanker Colon discharged 600,000 barrels of fuel oil at the Bullenbaai terminal, which is operated by Curacao's state-owned refining company in partnership with a fledgling company, Caribbean Petroleum Refinery, owned by two Venezuelan American dual nationals.

The state-owned company issued a news release celebrating the Colon's arrival as a "historic moment" — saying it was the first delivery for the reactivated terminal, which is capable of storing up to 7 million barrels of oil products.

Although the release made no mention of the fuel oil's origin, the Iranian-built tanker for the past year has shuttled exclusively among ports in Venezuela. Ship tracking data show that two days prior to its arrival in Curacao, the Colon loaded its giant black-and-red hull at the port of Amuay, home to Venezuela's largest refinery.

The little-noticed oil shipment would appear to violate the spirit — if not strictly the law — of U.S. sanctions on Venezuela that have been aimed unsuccessfully since 2019 at forcing President Nicolás Maduro from power.

With Maduro's socialist government shunned as a financial pariah in the west, PDVSA has had to resort to ever-more complex transactions to move oil produced from the OPEC nation's massive petroleum reserves — the world's largest.

But until now, many of those transactions involved deeply discounted payments in cryptocurrencies by Russian oligarchs, shell companies in such places as Hong Kong and "ghost tankers" that turn off their mandatory transponders to avoid detection by U.S. authorities.

In contrast, Curacao, whose foreign relations are handled by the Netherlands, a staunch U.S. ally, has strictly adhered to U.S. sanctions, once even confiscating PDVSA's unsold inventories after its lease of the refinery expired in 2019 to pay American oil companies stiffed by Venezuela over the years.

Authorities in Curacao may be betting on lax enforcement by the Biden administration, said Marshall Billingslea, a former senior Treasury Department official who helped craft the current sanctions policy. During former President Donald Trump's administration, the U.S. froze the assets of more than 140 Maduro insiders and threatened retaliation against even non-American companies caught dealing in Venezuela's crude.

In contrast, President Joe Biden hasn't imposed any additional sanctions on Venezuela since taking office and has promised to roll back existing restrictions if Maduro takes meaningful steps toward holding free and fair elections.

"They're flouting the sanctions because they know under this administration there are no consequences," said Billingslea.

The U.S. Treasury Department, which enforces sanctions, didn't respond to an e-mail requesting comment.

Under U.S. sanctions, Americans and U.S. entities are barred from doing business with Venezuela's state-owned oil company. That ban becomes harder to enforce, however, the more times an oil cargo changes hands and is blended with other shipments, obscuring PDVSA's role as the ultimate beneficiary of any international sale.

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Internal PDVSA documents show that the cargo transported by the Colon was sold in September by PDVSA to United Petroleo Corp. Little is known about United, which was registered in Panama last year. But it has emerged as PDVSA's second biggest client this year, with unpaid invoices for oil products sold on consignment of over \$400 million, according to the documents, which someone knowledgeable about the transaction shared with the AP on the condition that the person remain anonymous.

PDVSA didn't respond to an e-mail requesting comment.

The Colon's cargo was discharged in a storage facility owned by Curacao's state-owned refinery in partnership with Caribbean Petroleum Refinery.

Caribbean Petroleum Refinery was registered in Curacao only in June and lists among its directors a Venezuelan American businessman, Raul Herrera. A related holding company bearing a similar name lists as its director Luis Giusti, another dual national who was CEO of PDVSA when Maduro's predecessor, Hugo Chavez, was elected in 1998.

When asked whether the shipment originated in Venezuela, Patrick Newton, director of Curacao's state-owned refinery, said his company is in full compliance with U.S. sanctions and its contracts require that its clients adhere to the same laws.

Meanwhile Herrera said his company's involvement in the transaction was limited to providing storage to the cargo's owner, which he identified as Knob Trading SA, a Panama-registered company that lists an office in Houston on its website.

"We are not operating Venezuelan products," said Herrera, who is also the president of a South Florida loan consulting firm. "We are not the owners or sellers of this cargo."

Giusti didn't respond to text messages and an email seeking comment. Knob Trading didn't respond to repeated emails seeking comment and a person answering the phone number listed on its website hung up when contacted by the AP.

It's unknown where the crude went after it arrived in Curacao.

However, a month later, traders gingerly tried to offload the cargo, marketing it for re-export as 1 million barrels of "Bullenbaai Fuel Oil" — possibly a blend of different grades since Curacao doesn't produce oil. That's according to an Oct. 29 certificate of origin purportedly issued by Caribbean Petroleum Refinery. A copy of the certificate was provided to the AP by an oil trader who had been offered the cargo by a broker working with Knob. He spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of being identified with a transaction in violation of U.S. sanctions.

The certificate was purportedly prepared by Frank Verhoets, who is identified as managing director of Caribbean Petroleum Refinery. However, Herrera said nobody by that name works at the company and called the document, in which Knob's name is scratched off, a clear fraud.

"Unfortunately in the industry, there's a lot of falsifications and misleading information," he said.

## Happy hygge! Scrabble dictionary adds hundreds of words

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Here's the sitch, Scrabble stans. Your convos around the board are about to get more interesting with about 500 new words and variations added to the game's official dictionary: stan, sitch, convo, zedonk, dox and fauxhawk among them.

Out this month, the add-ons in the seventh edition of "The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary" join more than 100,000 words of two to eight letters. The book was last updated in 2018 through a longstanding partnership between Hasbro and Merriam-Webster.

The new words include some trademarks gone generic — dumpster for one — some shorthand joy like guac, and a delicious display of more verb variations: torrented, torrenting, adulted, adulting, atted, atting (as in don't at me, bro).

"We also turned verb into a verb so you can play verbed and verbing," said Merriam-Webster's editor at large, Peter Sokolowski, a smile on his face and a word-nerd glitter in his eye during an exclusive interview with The Associated Press.

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Fauxhawk, a haircut similar to a Mohawk, is potentially the highest scoring newbie, he said. Embiggen, a verb meaning to increase in size, is among the unexpected. (Sample sentence: "I really need to embiggen that Scrabble dictionary.")

Compound words are on the rise in the book with deadname, pageview, fintech, allyship, babymoon and subtweet. So are the "uns," such as unfollow, unsub and unmute. They may sound familiar, but they were never Scrabble official, at least when it comes to the sainted game's branded dictionary.

Tournament play is a whole other matter, with a broader range of agreed-upon words.

Sokolowski and a team of editors at Merriam-Webster have mined the oft-freshened online database at Merriam-Webster.com to expand the Scrabble book. While the official rules of game play have always allowed the use of any dictionary that players sanction, many look to the official version when sitting down for a spot of Scrabble. Some deluxe Scrabble sets include one of the books.

In the last year or two, the Scrabble lexicon has been scrubbed of 200-plus racial, ethnic and otherwise offensive words — despite their presence in some dictionaries. That has prompted furious debate among tournament players. Supporters of the cleanup called it long overdue. Others argued that the words, however heinous in definition, should remain playable so long as points are to be had.

Despite home play rules that never specifically banned offensive words, you won't find the notorious 200 in the Scrabble dictionary, with rare exceptions for those with other meanings.

The new Scrabble book includes at least one old-fashioned word that simply fell under the radar for years: yeehaw.

"Yeehaw is like so many of the older, informal terms. They were more spoken than written, and the gold standard for dictionary editing was always written evidence. So a term like yeehaw, which we all know from our childhood and in movies and TV, was something you heard. You didn't read it that often," Sokolowski said.

Yeehaw, meet bae, inspo, vibed and vibing, all new additions to the Scrabble dictionary. Ixnay, which was already in the book, has been promoted to a verb, so ixnayed, ixnaying and ixnays are now allowed.

Welp, thingie, roid, skeezy, slushee and hygge (the Danish obsession with getting cozy) also made the cut. So did kharif, the Indian subcontinent's fall harvest.

The Merriam-Webster wordsmiths have added a slew of food-related words: iftar, horchata, kabocha, mofongo, zuke, zoodle, wagyu, queso and marg, for margarita, among them. Many Scrabble players couldn't care less about definitions — only points — but informatively:

Iftar is a meal taken by Muslims at sundown to break the daily fast during Ramadan. Mofongo is a traditional Puerto Rican dish made of fried or boiled plantains. Horchata is a sweet drink and kabocha is a winter squash.

Zonkey joins zedonk among new words using a Z, one of the highest scorers in Scrabble along with Q (each has a face value of 10 points). The difference between those two wacky-sounding animals, you ask? A zonkey is sired from a male zebra and a female donkey. The parentage of a zedonk is the other way around. Zedonk even has a playable variation: zeedonk.

Zoomer, for a member of GenZ, is also new. Familiar with the Middle Eastern spice blend za'atar? A less common variant, zaatar, is now in the Scrabble dictionary. Words with apostrophes aren't allowed.

And there's more where all of that came from:

Oppo, jedi, adorbs, dox variant doxxed, eggcorn (a misheard slip of the ear), fintech, folx (inclusive alternative to folks), grawlix, hangry, matcha, onesie, spork, swole, unmalted, vaquita, vax and vaxxed were added.

Yes, jedi need not be capitalized. Wondering what grawlix means? It's this: \$%!(asterisk)#, a series of typographical symbols used to replace words one doesn't want to write, usually those that got you into trouble as a kid.

Among other new eight-letter words, the kind that help players clear their seven-tile racks for 50 extra points: hogsbane, more commonly known as giant hogweed. Another: pranayam, a breath technique in yoga.

Sokolowski wouldn't reveal all 500 of the new words, challenging players to hunt them down on their

own. Are your Scrabble senses scrambled, so to speak?

"All of these are words that have already been vetted and defined and added to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, and now we've determined they're playable in Scrabble," Sokolowski said. "You've got some fun new words."

So which new entry is the word master's favorite? It's the one that sounds like the way acorn is pronounced. "I like eggcorn," Sokolowski said, "because it's a word about words."

## Rising food costs take a bite out of Thanksgiving dinner

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

In early November, Hays Culbreth's mother sent a poll to a few family members. She said she could only afford to make two sides for their group of 15 this Thanksgiving and asked them each to vote for their favorites.

Culbreth guesses green beans and macaroni and cheese will make the cut, but his favorite — sweet potato casserole with a brown sugar crust — will not.

"Talk about Thanksgiving being ruined," joked Culbreth, 27, a financial planner from Knoxville, Tennessee.

Americans are bracing for a costly Thanksgiving this year, with double-digit percent increases in the price of turkey, potatoes, stuffing, canned pumpkin and other staples. The U.S. government estimates food prices will be up 9.5% to 10.5% this year; historically, they've risen only 2% annually.

Lower production and higher costs for labor, transportation and items are part of the reason; disease, rough weather and the war in Ukraine are also contributors.

"This really isn't a shortage thing. This is tighter supplies with some pretty good reasons for it," said David Anderson, a professor and agricultural economist at Texas A&M.

Wholesale turkey prices are at record highs after a difficult year for U.S. flocks. A particularly deadly strain of avian flu — first reported in February on an Indiana turkey farm — has wiped out 49 million turkeys and other poultry in 46 states this year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

As a result, U.S. turkey supplies per capita are at their lowest level since 1986, said Mark Jordan, the executive director of Jonesboro, Arkansas-based Leap Market Analytics. Jordan predicts the wholesale price of a frozen, 8-16 pound turkey hen — the type typically purchased for Thanksgiving — will hit \$1.77 per pound in November, up 28% from the same month last year.

Still, there will be plenty of whole birds for Thanksgiving tables, Jordan said. Companies have been shifting a higher percentage of birds into the whole turkey market for the last few years to take advantage of the consistent holiday demand.

And not every producer was equally affected. Butterball — which supplies around one-third of Thanksgiving turkeys — said avian flu impacted only about 1% of its production because of security measures it put in place after the last big bout of flu in 2015.

But it could be harder for shoppers to find turkey breasts or other cuts, Jordan said. And higher ham prices are giving cooks fewer cheap alternatives, he said.

Avian flu also pushed egg prices into record territory, Anderson said. In the second week of November, a dozen Grade A eggs were selling for an average of \$2.28, more than double the price from the prior year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Egg prices would have been higher even without the flu, Anderson said, because of the rising cost of the corn and soybean meal used for chicken feed. Ukraine is normally a major exporter of corn, and the loss of that supply has caused global prices to soar.

Add that to rising prices for canned pumpkin — a 30-ounce can is up 17% from last year, according to market researcher Datasembly — and it's clear Thanksgiving dessert will be costlier too. Nestle-owned Libby — which produces 85% of the world's canned pumpkin — said pumpkin harvests were in line with previous years, but it had to compensate for higher labor, transportation, fuel and energy costs.

Plan to fill up on sides? That will also cost you. A 16-ounce box of stuffing costs 14% more than last year, Datasembly said. And a 5-pound bag of Russet potatoes averaged \$3.26 the second week of November,



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or 45.5% higher than a year ago.

Craig Carlson, the CEO of Chicago-based Carlson Produce Consulting, said frost and a wet spring severely stunted potato growth this year. Growers also raised prices to compensate for the higher cost of seeds, fertilizer, diesel fuel and machinery. Production costs are up as much as 35% for some growers this year, an increase they can't always recoup, Carlson said.

Higher labor and food costs are also making it more expensive to order a prepared meal. Whole Foods is advertising a classic Thanksgiving feast for eight people for \$179.99. That's \$40 more than the advertised price last year.

The good news? Not every item on holiday shopping lists is significantly more expensive. Cranberries had a good harvest and prices were up less than 5% between the end of September and the beginning of November, said Paul Mitchell, an agricultural economist and professor at the University of Wisconsin. Green beans cost just 2 cents more per pound in the second week of November, according to the USDA.

And many grocers are discounting turkeys and other holiday staples in the hope that shoppers will spend more freely on other items. Walmart is promising turkeys for less than \$1 per pound and says ham, potatoes and stuffing will cost the same as they did last year. Kroger and Lidl have also cut prices, so shoppers can spend \$5 or less per person on a meal for 10. Aldi is rolling back prices to 2019 levels.

But Hays Culbreth isn't optimistic about his casserole. He's not much of a chef, so he plans to pick up a couple of pumpkin pies at the grocery on the way to his family's feast.

## Today in History: November 17, Suez Canal opens

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Nov. 17, the 321st day of 2022. There are 44 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 17, 1869, the Suez Canal opened in Egypt.

On this date:

In 1800, Congress held its first session in the partially completed U.S. Capitol building.

In 1917, French sculptor Auguste Rodin (roh-DAN') died at age 77.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman, in an address to a special session of Congress, called for emergency aid to Austria, Italy and France. (The aid was approved the following month.)

In 1969, the first round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the United States and the Soviet Union opened in Helsinki, Finland.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon told Associated Press managing editors in Orlando, Florida: "People have got to know whether or not their president is a crook. Well, I'm not a crook."

In 1979, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini (ah-yah-TOH'-lah hoh-MAY'-nee) ordered the release of 13 Black and/or female American hostages being held at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

In 1989, the Walt Disney animated feature "The Little Mermaid" opened in wide release.

In 1997, 62 people, most of them foreign tourists, were killed when militants opened fire at the Temple of Hatshepsut (haht-shehp-SOOT') in Luxor, Egypt; the attackers, who also hacked their victims, were killed by police.

In 2002, Abba Eban (AH'-bah EE'-ban), the statesman who helped persuade the world to approve creation of Israel and dominated Israeli diplomacy for decades, died near Tel Aviv; he was 87.

In 2003, Arnold Schwarzenegger was sworn in as the 38th governor of California.

In 2018, Argentina's navy announced that searchers had found a submarine that disappeared a year earlier with 44 crewmen aboard; the government said it would be unable to recover the vessel.

In 2020, President Donald Trump fired the nation's top election security official, Christopher Krebs, who had refuted Trump's unsubstantiated claims of electoral fraud and vouched for the integrity of the vote. Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller said the U.S. would reduce troop levels in Iraq and Afghanistan to about 2,500 in each country by mid-January, accelerating troop withdrawals during Trump's final days

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in office. Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California easily won reelection as House Republican leader.

Ten years ago: Israel destroyed the headquarters of Hamas' prime minister and blasted a sprawling network of smuggling tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip, broadening a blistering four-day-old offensive against the Islamic militant group. A speeding train crashed into a bus carrying Egyptian children to their kindergarten, killing 48 children and three adults.

Five years ago: Sen. Al Franken apologized to the woman who had accused him of forcibly kissing her and groping her during a 2006 USO tour; the Minnesota Democrat said he remembered the encounter differently. The Rev. Jesse Jackson disclosed that he had been receiving outpatient care for two years for Parkinson's disease.

One year ago: The House voted to censure Republican Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona for posting an animated video that depicted him killing Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez with a sword. Florida Republicans approved a sweeping bill to hobble coronavirus vaccine mandates in businesses. Jacob Chansley, the spear-carrying Jan. 6 rioter whose horned fur hat, bare chest and face paint made him one of the more recognizable figures in the assault on the Capitol, was sentenced to 41 months in prison. Rapper Young Dolph, widely admired in the hip-hop community for his authenticity and fierce independence, was shot and killed inside a cookie shop in his hometown of Memphis, Tennessee. (Two men have pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder.) The Wisconsin Supreme Court rejected a request by Steven Avery to review his conviction for a 2005 killing; the case was the focus of a popular Netflix series "Making a Murderer."

Today's Birthdays: Sen. James Inhofe (IHN'-hahf), R-Okla., is 88. Singer Gordon Lightfoot is 84. Singer-songwriter Bob Gaudio (GOW'-dee-oh) is 81. Movie director Martin Scorsese (skor-SEH'-see) is 80. Actor Lauren Hutton is 79. Actor-director Danny DeVito is 78. "Saturday Night Live" producer Lorne Michaels is 78. Movie director Roland Joffe is 77. Former Democratic National Chairman Howard Dean is 74. Former House Speaker John Boehner (BAY'-nur) is 73. Actor Stephen Root is 71. Rock musician Jim Babjak (The Smithereens) is 65. Actor Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio is 64. Actor William Moses is 63. Entertainer RuPaul is 62. Actor Dylan Walsh is 59. Former National Security Adviser Susan Rice is 58. Actor Sophie Marceau (mahr-SOH') is 56. Actor-model Daisy Fuentes is 56. Blues singer/musician Tab Benoit (behn-WAH') is 55. R&B singer Ronnie DeVoe (New Edition; Bell Biv DeVoe) is 55. Rock musician Ben Wilson (Blues Traveler) is 55. Actor David Ramsey is 51. Actor Leonard Roberts is 50. Actor Leslie Bibb is 49. Actor Brandon Call is 46. Country singer Aaron Lines is 45. Actor Rachel McAdams is 44. Rock musician Isaac Hanson (Hanson) is 42. Former MLB outfielder Ryan Braun is 39. Musician Reid Perry (The Band Perry) is 34. Actor Raquel Castro is 28.