

# Groton Daily Independent

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Chicken Soup  
for the Soul

"When you are grateful,  
fear disappears and  
abundance appears."

*Anthony Robbins*



## 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.

## Groton Community Calendar

### Saturday, Nov. 19

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 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.

## 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.

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## Basketball

Red=GBB • Blue=BBB • Black=DH

Mon., Dec. 5 at Sisseton  
Fri., Dec. 9 at Hamlin  
Thurs., Dec. 15 Sisseton  
Sat., Dec. 17 Enderlin, 1:15 p.m. @ Jamestown College  
Sat., Dec. 17 Kenmare, 2:40 p.m. @ Jamestown College  
Tues., Dec. 20 Roncalli  
Thurs., Dec. 22 at Roncalli  
Fri., Dec. 30 Waverly/South Shore  
Tues., Jan. 3 Warner  
Thurs., Jan. 5 Clark/Willow Lake  
Fri., Jan. 6 at Clark/Willow Lake  
Sat., Jan. 7 Sioux Falls Lutheran  
Tues., Jan. 10 at Aberdeen Christian (Civic Center)  
Thurs., Jan. 12 at Tiospa Zina  
Mon., Jan. 16 at Langford  
Thurs., Jan. 19 at Milbank  
Sat., Jan. 21 at Great Plains Lutheran  
Mon., Jan. 23 Northwestern  
Thurs., Jan. 26 at Webster  
Fri., Jan. 27 Webster  
Sat., Jan. 28 at Madison Classic  
Mon., Jan. 30 vs Florence/Henry at Florence  
Tues., Jan. 31 at Langford  
Thurs., Feb. 2 Deuel  
Sat., Feb. 4 at Madison Classic  
Tues., Feb. 7 North Central  
Thurs., Feb. 9 at Redfield  
Fri., Feb. 10 Redfield  
Sat., Feb. 11 at Mobridge-Pollock  
Fri., Feb. 17 at Britton-Hecla  
Sat., Feb. 18 Florence/Henry  
Tues., Feb. 21 Region 1A at high seed  
Thurs., Feb. 23 Region 1A at high seed  
Fri., Feb. 24 Aberdeen Christian  
Tues., Feb. 28 Region 1A at high seed  
Thurs., Mar. 2 SoDak 16  
Fri., Mar. 3 Region 1A at high seed  
Tues., Mar. 7 SoDak 16  
March 9-11 State at Watertown  
March 16-18 State at Denny Sanford Premier (SF)

**Updated Schedules**  
The Activity Calendar link at  
[397news.com](http://397news.com)  
has also been updated.

## Wrestling

Sat., Dec. 3 at Clark/Willow Lake  
Sat., Dec. 10 at LaMoure  
Thurs., Dec. 15 NEC at Webster  
Sat., Dec. 17 at Sioux Valley  
Thurs., Dec. 22 Groton & Webster in Redfield  
Sat., Dec. 31 at Webster Invitational  
Sat., Jan. 7 at Garretson Invitational  
Sat., Jan. 14 at Gettysburg  
Tues., Jan. 17 Groton & Hamlin in Willow Lake  
Fri., Jan. 20 Deuel at Groton  
Sat., Jan. 21 at Arlington Invite  
Sat., Jan. 28 Groton Invite  
Fri., Feb. 3 Lyman/Bennett Co. at Presho  
Sat., Feb. 4 at Stanley County  
Sat., Feb. 18 Regions at Sioux Valley  
Feb. 23-25 at The Monument in Rapid City

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## Junior High Girls split with Milbank

The Groton Area junior high girls basketball teams split a pair of games with Milbank on Friday in games played in Groton.

Milbank won the seventh grade game, 23-18. Chesney Weber led the Tigers with eight points while Sydney Locke had six and McKenna Krause and Taryn Thompson each had two points.

The Groton Area eighth grade girls won their game, 37-16. Taryn Traphagen led the Tigers with 13 points which included a three-pointer, McKenna Tietz and Kella Tracy each had nine points and Ashlynn Warrington Brenna Imrie and Avery Crank each had two points.

Belle Pauli led Milbank with eight points in the second half.

## Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #3 Results

Team Standings: Chipmunks – 10, Cheetahs – 6, Foxes – 6, Jackelopes – 5, Shihtzus – 5, Coyotes – 4

Men's High Games: Ron Belden – 185, Brad Waage – 183, Mike Siegler – 179

Women's High Games: Michelle Johnson – 179, Karen Spanier – 178, Vicki Walter – 171

Men's High Series: Mike Siegler – 519, Brad Waage – 499, Brad Larson – 466

Women's High Series: Karen Spanier – 465, Vicki Walter – 453, Lori Wiley – 432

## Governor Noem Accepting Applications for Spring Interns

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem is now accepting applications for the Governor's Office spring 2023 internship program.

Student interns will work with staff on various projects depending on interests and strengths. Additional duties may include aiding the governor's general counsel, constituent services, and communications team; conducting policy research; preparing policy briefings; and staffing events. Internships provide students with first-hand knowledge of the state government and the functions of a governor's office.

College students who would like to be considered for an internship should submit a resume, cover letter, and letter of recommendation to [morgan.wiegel@state.sd.us](mailto:morgan.wiegel@state.sd.us). Applications should be submitted by Wednesday, November 23, 2022.

## Ferris State Stifles Northern State in Champions Classic Action

Aberdeen, S.D. – The (RV) Northern State University men’s basketball team fell to (RV) Ferris State in their opening game of the Small College Basketball Champions Classic. Northern trailed by 17 at the half and was unable to rally past Ferris in the second.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 69, FSU 89

Records: NSU 1-2, FSU 1-2

Attendance: 3434

### HOW IT HAPPENED

- The Wolves scored 27 points in the first and 42 in the second, shooting 43.8% from the floor in the game
- The Bulldogs out-shot the Wolves from all three categories, shooting 57.1% from the floor, 64.7% from the 3-point line, and 77.8% from the foul line
- Northern shot just 36.7% from beyond the arc and 69.6% from the free throw line
- Defensively, NSU struggled to keep FSU at bay, giving up 51 points off the bench and 36 points in the paint
- The Wolves tallied just 16 points in the paint, 11 points off turnovers, and ten points off the bench in the loss
- Both teams recorded 11 made 3-pointers in the match-up, while Ferris State out-rebounded Northern State 36-20
- Three Wolves scored in double figures led by Sam Masten with 22

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Sam Masten: 22 points, 53.8 FG%, 4 rebounds, 4 assists
- Jacksen Moni: 16 points (season high), 50.0 FG%, 3 rebounds, 3 assists
- Augustin Reede: 13 points, 4-of-7 from 3-point
- Kobe Busch: 7 points, 2 rebounds, 2 steals

### UP NEXT

Northern returns to action today at 6 p.m. versus (RV) Point Loma Nazarene. The Sea Lions fell to No. 7 Minnesota Duluth in overtime this evening. For full information on the SCB Champions Classic [CLICK HERE](#).

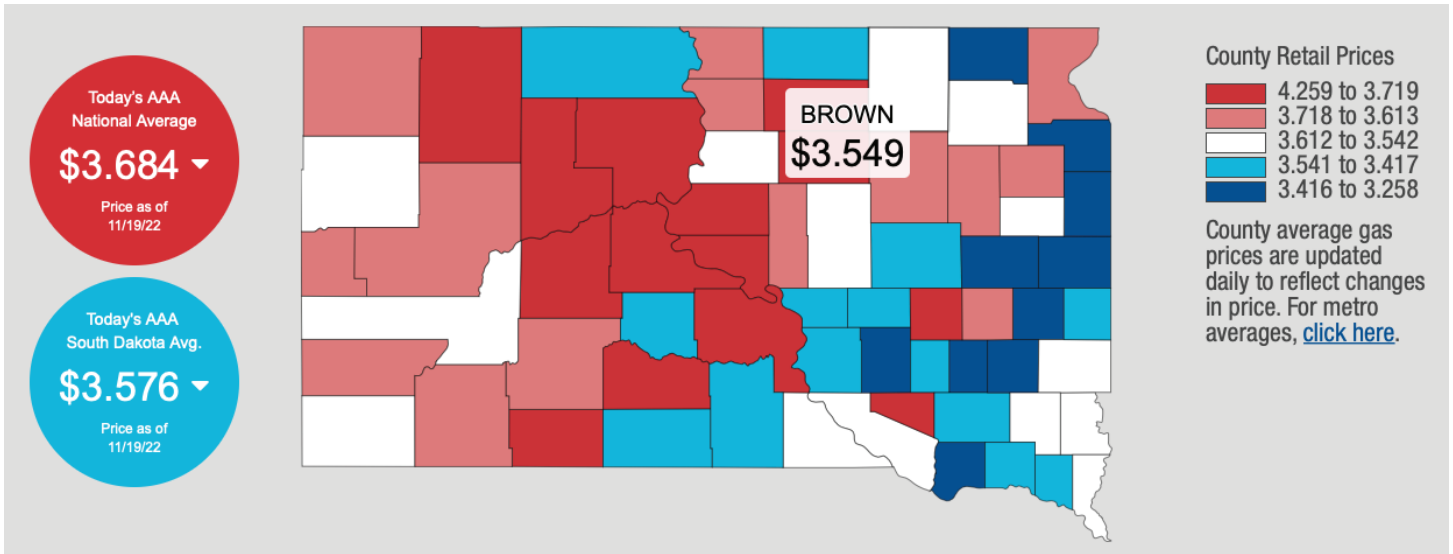
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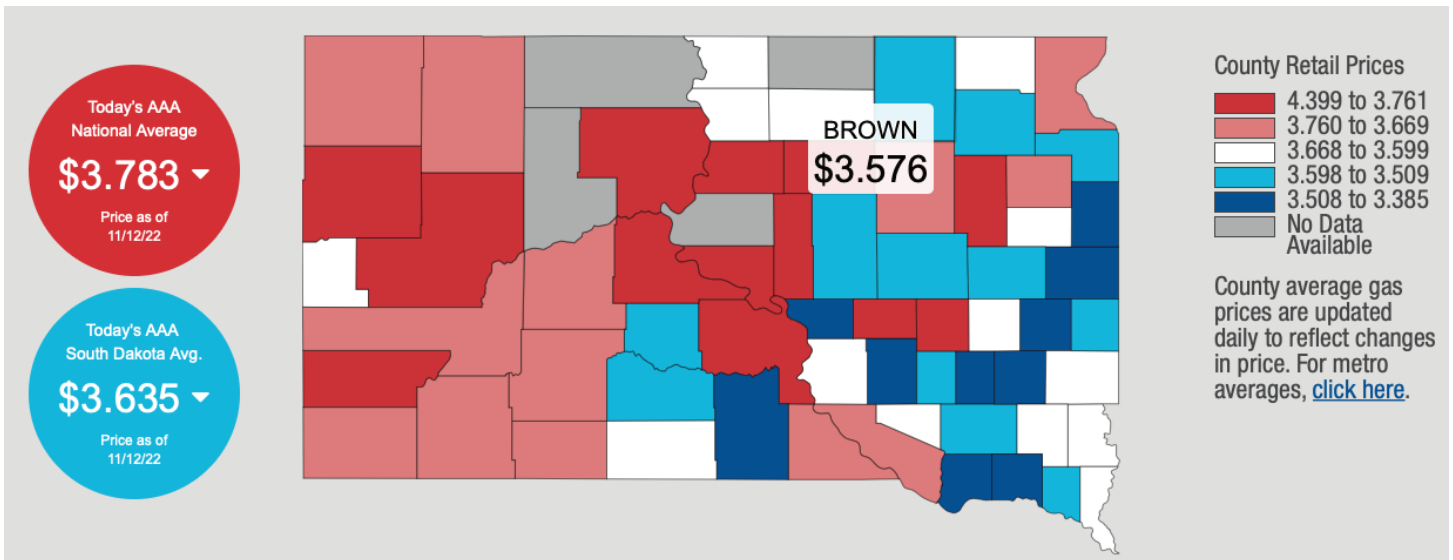
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.576	\$3.735	\$4.220	\$5.096
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.591	\$3.759	\$4.242	\$5.111
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.635	\$3.826	\$4.314	\$5.138
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.775	\$3.929	\$4.407	\$5.109
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.308	\$3.405	\$3.756	\$3.529

### This Week



### Last Week



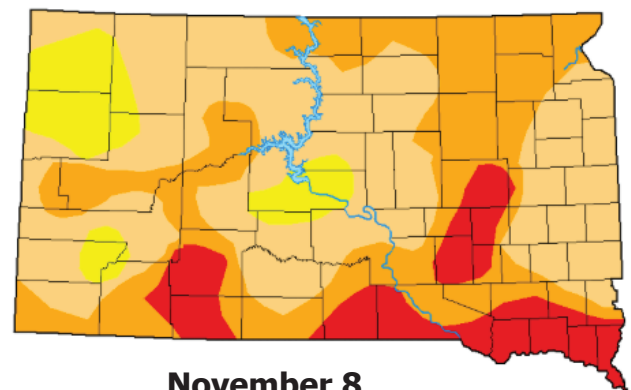
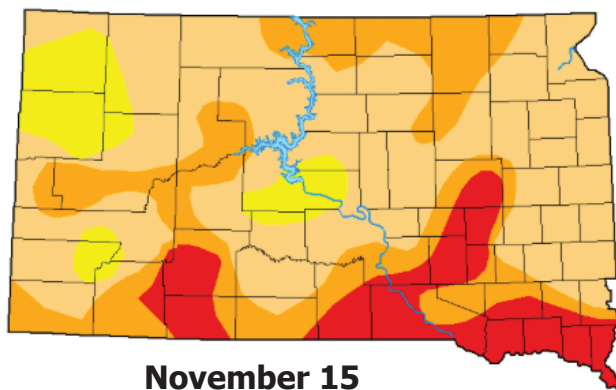
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## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



An early-season winter storm produced significant, wind-driven snow and freezing rain across parts of the Dakotas. Officially, 17.0 inches of snow—with a liquid equivalency of 1.23 inches—blanketed Bismarck, North Dakota, on November 10, accompanied by wind gusts as high as 37 mph. Elsewhere in North Dakota, wind gusts at the height of the storm reached or exceeded 40 mph in Garrison, Jamestown, and Minot. Bitterly cold weather trailed the storm. The northern Plains' moisture, while highly beneficial for winter wheat, had a limited immediate effect on the drought situation, leading to only small improvements in the depiction. Farther south, drought continued to gradually worsen in other parts of the region. On November 13, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported topsoil moisture rated very short to short ranging from 65% in North Dakota to 87% in South Dakota. On the same date, winter wheat across the region remained in dismal condition, with more than one-third of the crop rated very poor to poor in Colorado (45%), Kansas (40%), Nebraska (38%), and South Dakota (37%).



## Group hits snag in effort to let voters decide on grocery tax

Stu Whitney

South Dakota News Watch

If Gov. Kristi Noem doesn't fulfill her campaign pledge to repeal the South Dakota sales tax on food during the 2023 legislative session, voters may get a chance to decide the issue on the 2024 ballot.

But there's already controversy about the wording of a proposed ballot measure and its potential impact on tax revenues.

Dakotans for Health, a grassroots organization that pushes for policy change through citizen initiatives, submitted proposals in July 2022 for both an initiated measure and a constitutional amendment that would prevent the state from taxing "anything sold for eating or drinking by humans, except alcoholic beverages, tobacco or prepared food."

If either the initiative or constitutional amendment gets enough signatures to make the ballot and is ultimately approved by voters, it would eliminate the 4.5% state grocery tax that has been a target of legislative reform for decades, mostly by Democrats.

According to the nonpartisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, South Dakota is one of only three states that fully taxes food without offering credits or rebates for the poor, which repeal supporters say has a disproportionate impact on low-income families and individuals.

The food tax proposal continues a trend of using ballot measures to push for progressive priorities such as reproductive rights and Medicaid expansion at the ballot box in South Dakota rather than relying on the state legislature, where Republicans maintain a 94-11 advantage over Democrats heading into the 2023 session, which begins Jan. 10.

Bills aimed at repealing or reducing the food tax during the 2022 legislative session fell short, as they have in past years. Noem held a press conference Sept. 28 in Rapid City – six weeks before her re-election – trumpeting a proposal to eliminate the food tax. Her proposal comes at a time of rising inflation but also increased state revenue. She balked at calling a special legislative session to address the issue, and some legislators expressed concern over how the state will replace more than \$100 million in lost revenue that would result.



**Rick Weiland**

"Someone needs to hold their feet to the fire," said Dakotans for Health founder Rick Weiland of Sioux Falls, whose group also plans to put a constitutional amendment on the 2024 ballot to legalize but regulate access to abortion.

Yet as the food tax removal measure has taken shape, Weiland said the measure is being hamstrung by Attorney General Mark Vargo, who was appointed by Noem after Jason Ravensborg was impeached and removed from office in June 2022.

The Legislative Research Council, which provides statutory and legal guidance for proposed ballot initiatives, submitted a fiscal note in October 2022 estimating that the state could lose \$119.1 million in annual revenue by eliminating the state grocery tax if the measure passed. The LRC further stated that "municipalities could continue to tax anything sold for eating or drinking."

That language differs from the official ballot explanation later released by Vargo on Nov. 9, which states, in part, that the measure "prohibits the state, or municipalities, from collecting sales or use tax on anything sold for eating or drinking

by humans."

Adding municipalities to the amendment would make it illegal for cities such as Sioux Falls and Rapid City to collect their own tax on groceries, which has not been proposed by Dakotans for Health or the governor.

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## DIFFERING VERSIONS OF FOOD TAX BALLOT MEASURE

Here is the wording for the fiscal note and ballot explanation for a ballot measure to eliminate South Dakota's state food tax proposed by Dakotans for Health:

### FISCAL NOTE (LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COUNCIL)

Beginning July 1, 2025, the State could see a reduction in sales tax revenues of \$119.1 million annually from no longer taxing the sale of anything sold for eating or drinking by humans except alcoholic beverages and prepared food. Municipalities could continue to tax anything sold for eating or drinking.

### BALLOT EXPLANATION (ATTORNEY GENERAL)

Currently, the state collects tax on the sale of or use of certain foods or drinks. Many municipalities also collect tax on the sale or use of foods or drinks.

This (ballot measure) prohibits the state, or municipalities, from collecting sales or use tax on anything sold for eating or drinking by humans. The measure eliminates these sources of revenue.

The measure does not prohibit the collection of sales or use tax on alcoholic beverages or prepared food. Prepared food is defined by law to include food that is sold heated or with utensils.

Judicial or legislative clarification of the measure may be necessary.

Most municipalities collect 2% on groceries on top of the state tax rate.

Sioux Falls City Attorney Stacy Kooistra wrote to Vargo's office during the public comment period, asserting that such a ban would "significantly impact both our general fund and capital fund, which will likely result in the reduction of services and capital investments."

Weiland, a former Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate who lost to Mike Rounds in 2014, said his group's ballot effort is in a holding pattern because they can't collect signatures for a petition that has conflicting statements from the LRC and Vargo's office.

"Basically, the left hand didn't know what the right hand was doing in the state capital," said Weiland. "We've got a ballot explanation that says one thing and a fiscal note that says another. They've created a real problem for us and for the people we're trying to help. It doesn't make any sense to circulate (the petition) when the explanation says it affects municipalities and the fiscal note that says it doesn't. Even if we get a favorable result, they're in conflict. It will be confusing. People aren't going to sign it."

Jim Leach, a Rapid City attorney who represents Dakotans for Health, said the group has two options. They can sue the state over the wording of the attorney general's explanation or re-submit their ballot proposal and explicitly state that preventing the ability of municipalities to tax is not part of the measure. Both are lengthy processes that could endanger the group's ability to meet the deadline for submitting signatures to get it on the 2024 ballot.

"I reached out to the Attorney General's Office and have not received a response," Leach told News Watch on Nov. 11. "I don't understand what their reasoning is, but I do know that getting slowed down at this point is a big problem. The goal of this obviously is to allow the people of South Dakota to decide whether to maintain a state sales tax on food. Why not let the people decide?"

Asked if he thought the goal of the contradicting documents out of Pierre was to delay the petition-gathering process for political reasons, Leach said no.

"I've known Mark Vargo for more than 25 years and I have the highest regard for his integrity," he said. "I'm certain that this is not something meant to gum up the works. I'm certain that this is a genuinely honest dispute, but I don't have a clue what his thinking is."

LRC Director Reed Hollweger, in a written statement to News Watch, noted that "only the state was specified" in Dakotans for Health's final submission (after the LRC had asked for clarification) and that municipalities are not legally defined as agencies of the state. "Therefore, LRC concludes the proposed (ballot measures) would not prevent municipalities from imposing a sales tax on food," Hollweger wrote.

Vargo declined an interview request for this story. Stewart Huntington, a spokesman for the office, told



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News Watch that Vargo, "has issued his ballot explanation and that serves as his statement at this juncture on the topic." Vargo will remain as attorney general until Jan. 2, 2023, when Marty Jackley, who ran unopposed in 2022, officially takes office.

## Battles over access to ballot

The passage of Amendment D in South Dakota's Nov. 8, 2022 election, with 56% of voters opting to expand the state's Medicaid program after years of legislative inaction, shed new light on the use of constitutional amendments to establish policy or principles through "direct democracy."

Proponents cite the state's Republican super majority and say the initiative process bolsters the constitutional right of citizens to petition the government regarding matters that merit consideration according to a prescribed percentage of the population. The process dates back more than a century in South Dakota and was extended to include constitutional amendments in 1972.

The number of verified signatures needed to qualify for the ballot is 5% of the total vote for governor in the last gubernatorial election (17,508 based on the 2022 turnout of 350,166), while constitutional amendments require 10% (35,016).

Opponents decry the out-of-state partisan influence that sometimes follows ballot measure petition drives, including paid circulators and advertising funds. They also question the use of constitutional amendments to pursue statutory changes to taxation or budgetary policy.

Initiated measures can be repealed by the state legislature or referred to the statewide ballot for reconsideration, while constitutional amendments are entrenched in the state constitution and can only be addressed through court challenges or a superseding amendment on a subsequent ballot.

Former Republican Speaker of the House Mark Mickelson, an outspoken critic of what he characterizes as misuse of the petition process by partisan or out-of-state interests, criticized the decision to pursue Medicaid expansion with an amendment rather than initiated measure.

"I'm vehemently opposed to putting stuff like that in the constitution. It's bad practice, and it's selfish," said Mickelson, a Sioux Falls lawyer and accountant whose legislative stint ended in 2018. "Constitutional amendments are more to express general principles, not prescribe statutes. You can put in the constitution, 'Those who cannot afford to pay for their own health care will be provided for by the government,' and then that is fulfilled by statute, because you need to be able to adjust copay requirements and other elements. Things change, and you need some flexibility."

Oregon voters narrowly passed a 2022 ballot measure changing the state constitution to explicitly declare affordable health care a fundamental right, the first state in the nation to do so. South Dakota Amendment D was aimed specifically at providing health care coverage to more than 40,000 additional low-income residents by broadening Medicaid insurance criteria as established by the Affordable Care Act, with the federal government covering 90 percent of the cost.

Mickelson believes Amendment D could be challenged in court for violation of the "single subject" rule, a legal principle he helped get on the ballot in 2018 that was approved by voters. He was partly responding to Initiated Measure 22, a multi-layered campaign finance and ethics reform package approved by voters in 2016 that was later repealed by lawmakers with an emergency clause that ensured it could not



**Mia DePaolo, 6, helps her mother, Denise DePaolo, submit her ballot on Nov. 8, 2022, at the Career and Technical Education Academy in Sioux Falls. The 2022 ballot included a proposed initiated measure and constitutional amendment.** Photo: Courtesy Sioux Falls Argus Leader

be referred back to the ballot.

The single subject principle also provided legal grounds for a challenge of Amendment A in 2020, the constitutional amendment that legalized both medical and recreational marijuana with 54% of the vote. A separate measure on medicinal marijuana also passed the same year. Noem initiated a legal fight against Amendment A that ended with a South Dakota Supreme Court ruling in 2021 that declared the amendment unconstitutional because it involved three subjects – recreational marijuana, medical marijuana, and hemp. Recreational marijuana was brought back to the ballot in 2022 and was defeated with 53% of voters against it.

“When they packaged recreational marijuana with medical marijuana, it passed,” Mickelson said. “That got thrown out because they combined (recreational pot) with two other subjects and stuck it in the constitution. When they ran it alone, it lost. That’s why you can’t take two good ideas and one bad one and throw it on there. We need to limit these questions to something that’s straightforward and addresses one topic.”

### Out-of-state money draws scrutiny



**South Dakota votes have seen a steady stream of recent elections with statewide ballot measures to decide on. Cory Jones of Sioux Falls dropped his ballot in the deposit box after voting on Nov. 8, 2022, at Morningside Community Center.** Photo: Courtesy Argus Leader

Open Primaries.

Americans for Prosperity, the Koch brothers-funded conservative group, helped support the opposition to both those measures.

In 2018, with support from Daugaard, Mickelson led a petition push to get Initiated Measure 24 on the ballot, aiming to ban out-of-state financial contributions to ballot committees. The measure passed with 56% of the vote but was overturned in court, with a judge ruling that it violated political free speech and interfered with the transfer of money from one state to another.

“They did it because they were tired of ballot initiatives,” said Leach, who represented Dakota Free Press liberal blogger Cory Heidelberger in the lawsuit. “There isn’t much progressive money in South Dakota, so the theory was that by banning out-of-state money, they could shut down ballot initiative measures favoring progressive causes.”

The battle was far from over. The state legislature in 2019 passed House Bill 1094, creating a state registry of petition circulators and required them to submit personal information and wear ID badges. Leach

Mickelson and others, including former GOP governor Dennis Daugaard, have railed against out-of-state money being used to fund petition drives and promotional campaigns for ballot measures. Marsy’s Law, a victims’ rights measure that voters approved in 2016 after a prominent ad blitz, was bankrolled by California billionaire Henry Nicholas, whose national network has passed similar laws in 13 states. The South Dakota law was amended in 2018 to address unintended consequences involving law enforcement operations and transparency.

When Weiland spearheaded a 2016 effort to promote Initiated Measure 22, the campaign finance and ethics reform package, much of the funding came from Represent. Us, a Massachusetts-based group focused on political transparency. Weiland also touted Amendment V that year, an effort to institute non-partisan primaries in South Dakota for all elections except presidential contests, boosted by \$200,000 from New York-based

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and Heidelberger sued again, saying the law violated circulators' First Amendment rights based on their political viewpoint, and the law was struck down.

Then came Senate Bill 190, passed in 2021 with a similar objective as HB 1094 but focused solely on paid circulators, citing the state's need to protect the integrity of its elections. U.S. District Judge Larry Piersol issued a preliminary injunction in response to a lawsuit from Leach and Dakotans for Health, and on Nov. 1, 2022, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals – three judges appointed by Donald Trump – upheld the injunction, calling the law's pre-circulation disclosure requirements "intrusive and burdensome...as such, they are a severe burden on speech."

Heidelberger's group, SD Voice, also won a court victory to shift the deadline to submit IM petitions to six months prior to an election, as opposed to a year before the election in the case of constitutional amendments. Because that case is under appeal, though, Leach said they can't count on the submission deadline being any earlier than Nov. 5, 2023, for the 2024 election.

The number of votes required to approve a measure is the same for initiated measures and constitutional amendments, but only because voters rejected Amendment C, which was placed on the 2022 primary ballot and would have required a 60% vote for ballot measures that raise taxes or spend \$10 million in general funds in their first five years. With signatures already being collected for the amendment to enshrine the right to abortion in a Republican-controlled state, Weiland anticipates more challenges on the way.

"I do know that there are legislators out there who simply don't believe in the initiative process," said Weiland, who worked as a senior advisor to former Democratic Sen. Tom Daschle. "I think that they will continue to try to cripple it."

## All eyes on state legislative session

In 2004, the South Dakota Democratic Party gathered enough signatures to put a state food tax repeal on the ballot after legislative attempts to eliminate the tax fell short.

Opponents of the effort, including then-Gov. Mike Rounds, warned that passing the repeal would likely reduce state aid to education and children's health programs. "You don't just rip \$43 million out of the budget without having to make substantial cuts in programs," Jerry Apa, a Republican from Lead who chaired the Senate Appropriations Committee, said at the time.

Voters responded to that message and rejected the measure by a margin of 68% to 32%, followed by years of failed attempts by state legislators to lower the tax on food or exempt groceries from the general sales tax rate.

The fact that Noem threw her political weight behind dropping the food tax could change the dynamic in Pierre, but it's unclear if the proposed ballot question influenced her decision to make it a campaign issue. The governor's office did not respond to News Watch questions about the food tax ballot measure, but she has stated that she believes the state has the resources to offset the loss of revenue.

"I know that she knew [the ballot measure] was in the hopper, but I'm clueless as to what impacts her thinking," Weiland said. "One thing I do know is that we agree with her stance on this, even though she was late to the dance. By saying that she doesn't even have any fiscal concerns that we can cover this, she's already taken one of the big arguments off the table."

One thing is certain: If the state legislature finds the votes to repeal the state's tax on food during the 2022 session and Noem signs it, Weiland's ballot measure – and the current controversy over the proposal's wording – becomes a moot point.

"I would love to have the legislature step up and do this," Weiland said. "This whole process from submitting language to getting a petition on the streets is a 3- to 4-month timeline, and then you've got to collect thousands of signatures. It's not a very easy thing to do, and unfortunately the legislature keeps trying to make it more difficult."

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at [SDNewsWatch.org](http://SDNewsWatch.org).

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Groton Post No. 39 American Legion



## Annual



# Turkey Party

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Starting at 6:30 p.m.

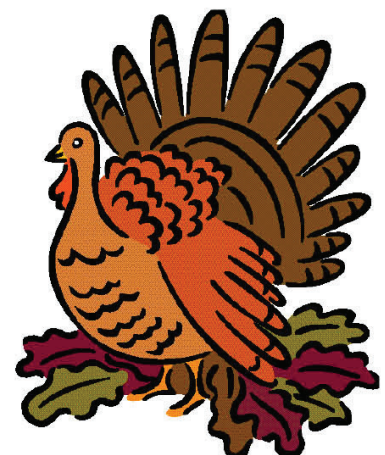
Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon  
to be given away

**FREE ADMISSION**

**DOOR  
PRIZE!**

Lunch served  
by Auxiliary



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## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### 'We want to look past just inviting visitors to come here'

BY NICOLE SCHLABACH - NOVEMBER 18, 2022

Growing tourism in a way that "improves or maintains the wellbeing of residents" was the topic of conversation at a Monday workshop in Rapid City.

Workshop organizer Visit Rapid City wants to identify shared community goals to incorporate into a "destination stewardship plan" — or a tourism plan that has a positive impact on the social, environmental and economic aspects of the community.

Visitor spending in South Dakota broke records in 2021 when visitors spent \$4.4 billion in the state, according to an economic impact report from a company called Tourism Economics. As tourism grows, workshop-goers were told, Visit Rapid City hopes to attract visitors while taking care of the community for future generations.

Over 20 participants attended the workshop, including representatives from Prairie Edge Trading Co & Galleries, Department of Public Works, Black Hills Adventure Tours, Reptile Gardens, Black Hills Center for Equality Inc., City Council, South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance and more.

During large group and breakout group discussions, community members said they'd like to see tourism evolve in Rapid City.

'TIS THE  
SEASON TO  
SHOP LOCAL

**GROTON**  
Chamber Of Commerce



# Broton Daily Independent

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## Care for natural areas prioritized

The need to educate tourists and residents about leave no trace principles was mentioned repeatedly. Finding ways to “direct people to the trails that are maintained,” was suggested by one participant.

Early community conversations are important to ensure natural beauty is preserved as tourism in Rapid City continues to grow, said Carrie Gerlach, owner of Black Hills Adventure Tours.

“We’ve seen so many different areas around the country – Lake Tahoe and Colorado — some of those places that have the natural beauty we do. But they’re on a larger scale. They have more room to grow. We don’t necessarily have that room to grow when it comes to our natural resources,” Gerlach said.



**Brook Kaufman, president and CEO of Visit Rapid City, speaks to community members at a “shared goals” workshop in the Monument on Nov. 14, 2022.** (Nicole Schlabach for South Dakota Searchlight).

## Social priorities discussed

“I would like to see more diversity here ... there should be more native perspectives, I mean this is a huge native population,” said Dew Bad Warrior-Ganje, owner of Zuya Sica Consulting, LLC, who is also vice president of Black Hills Powwow and project manager at South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance.

There’s a need to invest in education to create an “understanding between the cultures,” a different participant said while reporting takeaways from her breakout group. That could involve educating residents and tourists on indigenous cultural history, cultural etiquette and land preservation, she said.

“Making sure that we put our residents above profit, value them and help support their values,” was mentioned by Bad Warrior-Ganje while reporting takeaways from her discussion group.

At the same time, other conversations in her discussion group revolved around getting buy-in from residents and businesses about the value of tourism so that the stakeholders will promote the city online and through word of mouth.

It’s important for residents to understand the value of tourism because “there are things we have to put up with ... but we know it pays the bills,” said Jason Salamun, a city councilman for Rapid City.

## Opportunities for growth considered

Participants also brainstormed ways to capture more tourism dollars for Rapid City, including promoting cultural tourism during the shoulder seasons, attracting more hunters and anglers and engaging those who visit Rapid City to tour South Dakota Mines.

The tourism industry shouldn’t overlook established events when deciding where to invest dollars and time, said Dan Tribby, general manager at Prairie Edge. Investing a little more in existing events like the Black Hills Powwow could release impactful results, he said.

“If you plant a garden, you’ve gotta throw some fertilizer on it every once in a while,” Tribby said.

Rapid City needs more lodging for tourists, as well. Some people visiting Rapid City for the Black Hills Powwow stayed in Wall because of a lack of lodging in Rapid City and nearby communities, Bad Warrior-Ganje said.

Participants also talked about how to grow the tourism workforce.

“Conveying that tourism is a good career path for youth because a lot of us work in tourism for summer jobs, but we don’t think about it as a career path,” was mentioned by a participant while reporting

takeaways from her discussion group.

## Far-reaching goals explored

Visit Rapid City hired an agency called Clarity of Place to analyze community input from the workshop and other channels. The aim is to identify measurable goals spanning environmental, social, supplier support and destination management aspects of tourism.

"We want to look past just inviting visitors to come here, but how Visit Rapid City can leverage that energy and leverage those activities to meet some of the community's needs," said Tina Valdecanas, president and COO of Clarity of Place.

Among the partners for the Clarity of Place work is Alexis Kereluk, the manager of North America for the Global Destination Sustainability Movement and partner at ConnectSeven Group. Kereluk's goal is to guide Rapid City toward a regenerative tourism model, which Kereluk said "is about preservation of culture, quality of life, land, natural resources and businesses.

"It's more a circular way of thinking — how can we use tourism to help solve challenges and problems," she said.

The tourism industry should avoid targeting too many problems, though, according to one participant. Salamun said he hopes Visit Rapid City stays focused on tourism and doesn't "get mission drift by trying to solve every problem in the entire world."

"There's a gazillion things that we're trying to solve, and I'd rather us laser focus on a single mission of making this a great place to visit as well as a great place to live and hand off to the next generation," he said.

In response, Kereluk said the destination stewardship plan will focus on "how programs can support each other without reinventing the wheel."

"I completely agree that it's not up to Visit Rapid City to solve all of these problems. They have to be involved in these problems because these problems are eventually going to decrease tourism if they aren't solved," Kereluk said.

Salamun also said he hopes any climate-related aspects of the plan don't diminish the impact the automobile, flights and buses have on tourism in Rapid City.

Kereluk said she doesn't want to stop people from traveling. "We're not going to ask cars to stop driving here," Kereluk said. "Whatever happens in the vehicle market, sustainability wise, will sort itself out."

## Community input to continue

Several participants said they hope Visit Rapid City will continue to involve the community in the creation of the destination stewardship plan.

"We've seen in the last two years, during COVID and after COVID, the rush of people visiting here and moving here," said Michelle Pawelski, the general manager of Firehouse Wine Cellars. "So I think having a guideline and a vision of how we want to move forward is a great next step for us."

The need for community collaboration was the biggest takeaway from the event for Brook Kaufman, the president and CEO of Visit Rapid City.

"This plan and how we do this in this community has to be a collaborative effort ... having that shared vision where we all take a part is going to be critical," said Kaufman.

The workshop was part of a larger assessment phase in the destination stewardship plan that has also involved one-on-one interviews and email surveys. A second workshop took place on Tuesday with different community members.

Visit Rapid City and the consultants will continue collecting community feedback before outlining goals for the destination stewardship plan next year.



## NICOLE SCHLABACH

Nicole is a freelance science, health and outdoor writer based in Rapid City. She served as the managing editor of an independent student newspaper in Athens, Georgia while in school. In recent years, she's worked in editing, growth operations and heritage interpretation — all while maintaining a soft spot for journalism.

## 'Life-threatening' E. coli infection leads to lawsuit against Hy-Vee, spinach producer

Federal case tied to November 2021 outbreak in 10 states

BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 18, 2022 9:43 AM

A Sioux Falls woman who contracted "life-threatening" E. coli bacterial infection has sued a California spinach producer and Hy-Vee for more than \$75,000 in damages.

The lawsuit, filed this week in U.S. District Court in South Dakota, alleges that the company behind a 2021 E.coli outbreak in several states, Braga Foods, was negligent in its adherence to food safety regulations.

It also claims that Iowa-based Hy-Vee Foods, the parent company of the Sioux Falls grocery store where the woman and her partner purchased the tainted spinach last year, was negligent for failing to warn shoppers of the risk of E. coli contamination from lettuce products sold as "ready to eat."

Karen Ahlschlager of Sioux Falls bought bags of Josie's Organic spinach from a now-shuttered Hy-Vee store at 10th Street at Kiwanis Avenue on Oct. 17 and Oct. 23, 2021, a few weeks before the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported illnesses tied to batches of the product.

The outbreak of E. coli disease tied to Josie's Organic spinach in November of 2021 sickened at least 10 people in seven states, according to an article published in Food Safety News.

The lawsuit says that by January 2022, 15 people from 10 states reported being sickened as a result of the tainted spinach.

Ahlschlager contracted an E. coli infection in late October 2021 that put her among the three people afflicted with a rare condition called Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome, which can cause kidney failure. Karen Ahlschlager's illness resulted in "long-term physical impairment" after a 12-day hospital stay that included treatment for kidney damage and a blood transfusion as her condition deteriorated.

At one point, the lawsuit says, "Ms. Ahlschlager's adult children prepared to visit her at her bedside, as the nightmare that their mother may not survive was becoming a possible reality."

She was released after the blood transfusion on Nov. 8, but continued to experience a host of health issues well into follow-up appointments in the spring of 2022.

In the civil complaint, Ahlschlager and her husband argue that the spinach "was dangerous to an extent beyond that which is contemplated by the ordinary consumer who purchases it," and that Braga Foods failed to properly follow food safety guidelines.

Among other claims against the Iowa-based grocer that sold the spinach, the lawsuit says Hy-Vee should have posted warnings about unwashed spinach in its stores, and failed to "properly select and screen produce suppliers."

Representatives from Hy-Vee did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the case.



A Hy-Vee grocery store in Sioux Falls (John Hult/SD Searchlight).



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.



## NorthWestern customers to see bump in monthly refunds from overpriced pollution clean-up

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 18, 2022 4:47 PM

More than 48,000 NorthWestern Energy customers in South Dakota will see higher refunds in their utility bills over the next year.

The Public Utilities Commission approved a plan by the company on Friday that will bump up the refunds it has used to pay back customers since 2016 for a cleanup project that came in under budget.

The change will amount to an extra \$.62 per bill for a total refund of \$2.98 per month for the average customer, NorthWestern Energy Regulatory Specialist Jeff J. Decker said in a statement to the Commission.

The origin of the relatively meager monthly payback is decades old, tied to land owned by NorthWestern Energy that was once a town gas site for Aberdeen.

The site used a natural gas alternative derived from coal. That process would create a byproduct called coal tar, which would be poured into large holes in the ground. The railroad industry would use the pools of coal tar to treat railroad ties – creating a creosote layer of protection.

Most town gas sites around the U.S. closed in the mid-1900s. But those pools of coal tar – often now covered – continued to seep into the soils, and eventually into public waters.

Reported coal tar pollution of public waters tied to the NorthWestern Energy property in Aberdeen prompted the company to conduct a containment project that began in 2011.

NorthWestern built an underground barrier around the site to contain the coal tar seepage at an estimated cost of \$5 million. To raise the funds, NorthWestern told the PUC at the time, it needed to raise rates on customers. The PUC granted the request for a rate hike.

The actual cost was less than the estimate, however.

The company has been refunding customers now for six years, at an average, \$2.37 a month. NorthWestern still has an over-recovered balance of \$586,411. Friday's approval of the refund hike by the PUC clears the way for refunds to rise to an average of \$2.98 through most of 2023.



Natural gas tanks (Getty Images)



**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.

## Compost piles containing dead chickens near wellfield in Nebraska town to be removed

Mayor and nearby residents raised concerns about odor, lack of regulation

BY: PAUL HAMMEL - NOVEMBER 18, 2022 7:12 AM

DAVID CITY, NEBRASKA — Piles of compost containing dead chicken parts are expected to be removed soon after the mayor of David City and nearby residents complained that the compost was within the wellhead protection area for the town's water supply.

But while state officials said the composting operation followed applicable rules, the incident has opened old sores about the abundance of huge chicken barns built around David City in recent years to supply broilers for Costco and the affiliated Lincoln Premium Poultry processing plant in Fremont.

At least 94 barns holding more than 47,000 chickens

each are located within a few miles west of David City, the county seat of Butler County. All but 10 are owned by a North Carolina-based investment group, Gallus Capital.



Rows of compost, with chicken bones visible, sat just west of David City on Sept. 30. (Paul Hammel/Nebraska Examiner)

### No county zoning

Butler County is notable because it is one of two Nebraska counties that do not have county zoning regulations, thus removing a hurdle in building the complexes of 12-16 barns each.

That lack of regulation has led to the influx of chicken barns in this rural area, about a 50-minute drive northwest of Lincoln, as well as to Platte County, which also has no zoning ordinances.

Greg Lanc, a fourth-generation farmer who lives within a mile of three complexes of 16 chicken barns each, said he doesn't think his neighbors near David City were prepared for so many barns, or for the odors created when the barns are cleaned or when dead birds are removed.

"It's hard to comprehend how concentrated they are out here," he said. "This is industrial livestock ... this is not farming."

Lanc said he was disgusted to find the compost piles with visible chicken parts near his home. Dead chickens, he said ought to be buried rather than left out in the open.

### Within rules

Christen Kamm, a spokeswoman for the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, said that state statues allow the composting of dead livestock, including chickens, on the farm site, or for the animals to be picked up by a rendering company.

Such composting can be done off-site with written permission of the state veterinarian, which Kamm

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confirmed this week was the case at the compost site near David City.

"The material was composted on-site and after the composting to eliminate any concern of disease was completed, the compost was permitted to be spread off-site," she said.

## Not barred in wellhead areas

State regulations do not restrict where composting can take place, Kamm said, if there is no runoff.

One of the farmers who bought the mixture of composted chickens and manure, Jesse Hough of H-KO Farms, said he followed all state and federal rules in obtaining the chicken compost and then mixing it with other compost.

During an inspection of Hough's compost piles by the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy on Oct. 14, a state inspector expressed concern that chicken bones were visible in long piles of compost. He requested that an additional cover of soil be applied, which is what the USDA advises for such compost piles.

An NDEE spokeswoman, Amanda Woita, said that Hough and fellow farmer Jack Klosterman assured the state that the composting will be completed by Sunday Nov. 20. State records indicate that the farmers obtained the composted chickens from a broker and intended to eventually apply the compost on farmland as fertilizer when harvest season was over.

Woita confirmed that the compost piles were within the wellhead protection area of David City but that the city enforces rules in such areas. City ordinances do not list composting livestock as prohibited.

## Mayor raised concerns

David City Mayor Zavodny said he had reached out to state officials when he first heard about the composting operation and was told it was all within the rules and regulations.

Zavodny said he'd rather not see such operations near the city's drinking water wells.

"You hope your regulatory agencies are on top of it," he said. (But) it's awful hard to say who's in charge and who has jurisdiction."

Lanc and a neighbor, Sam Barlean, also raised concerns about the composting at a Sept. 29 public hearing held by NDEE in Lincoln concerning reauthorization of state rules concerning concentrated animal feeding operations, such as large cattle feedlots, hog confinement operations and chicken barns.

The testimony led NDEE to inspect the site on Oct. 14.

Lanc, as well as Barlean, lamented about the lack of zoning ordinances in Butler County, ordinances that could control how many chicken barns are placed in an area and could better regulate dust, odors and spreading of manure.

They said that they're not as concerned about locally owned chicken barns because local families care more about keeping odors and dust in control and being good neighbors. They questioned whether investors in faraway states, who don't live near the chicken barns, care as much.

Barlean, whose farm has 24 barns within a half mile, said he moved into David City recently to get away from the "unbearable" smell.

"It was just the smell of death," he said, when the dead chickens were removed.

Both farmers testified in September in favor of stronger oversight of such operations by the state.

"If the policies and the regulations that are put in place are not enforced, it's like having a sheriff who isn't going to do anything about speeding," Lanc said.



## PAUL HAMMEL

Paul Hammel is the senior reporter for the Nebraska Examiner. He has covered the Nebraska Legislature and Nebraska state government for decades. He started his career reporting for the Omaha Sun and was named editor of the Papillion Times in 1982. He later worked as a sports enterprise reporter at the Lincoln Journal-Star. He joined the Omaha World-Herald in 1990, working as a legislative reporter, then roving state reporter and finally Lincoln bureau chief. Paul has won awards from organizations including Great Plains Journalism, the Associated Press and Suburban Newspapers of America. A native of Ralston, Nebraska, he is vice president of the John G. Neihardt Foundation and secretary of the Nebraska Hop Growers.

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## 'So many things not right' with proposed social studies standards

**CHRISTOPHER G BORDEAUX**

**NOVEMBER 18, 2022 4:55 PM**

I am an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and a retired educator with 30 years experience as a teacher and administrator, most of which was spent guiding gifted and talented (G/T) students. I have served on numerous education boards locally, regionally and nationally. I have been through many state curriculum standards reviews, including this year, when I was a part of the committee to review the art standards.

I am more than aware of the processes set to make such reviews equitable for all people of South Dakota.

There are so many things not right with the proposed social studies standards as presented to the people of South Dakota, which includes Indigenous people. The processes for equity set by the State of South Dakota, specifically the South Dakota Department of Education, were not followed in this case. On the federal law side, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act states that the tribes be consulted on curriculum changes that address the tribes in South Dakota. This did not take place.

As an example of the impact of this, we see that under the proposed standards, high school students are expected to name one – yes, just one – tribe in the state. But third grade students are required to memorize – yes, memorize – the preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

Treaties, sovereignty and tribal constitutions are not addressed, and Indigenous people are missing in large spans of time. When they are mentioned, it is as warlike people, with negative connotations. Also re-occurring is our decimation by smallpox. None of the federal laws on Indigenous rights are addressed, though there are vague references made to the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards.

Geography is very hard to find within the standards. When it does appear at the lower grade levels, it is almost exclusively used for identification on maps. The six elements of geography are not introduced until high school.

The frequently asked questions on the proposed social studies standards say they were developed by 15 individuals. Those individuals were supposed to be vetted before placement on the committee, but the 15 were hand-picked by the governor. The standards were not developed by these 15 South Dakotans, but were instead handed to them ready to go, as developed by Hillsdale College in Michigan. This assumes that our educators are not qualified nor educated enough or worthy enough to set age-appropriate standards for our children.

The governor has set aside \$800,000 from her history and civics initiative, but it is far from adequate to fund these changes. The topics of history and civics are meant to be free of political agendas, yet the proposed standards include religious instruction and indoctrination, which is in conflict with the separation of church and state. As a teacher, I would feel very uneasy teaching religion and politics, especially in the lower level.

So far, two tribes have written resolutions in opposition to the standards and submitted them. These resolutions address many of these issues. Both were passed unanimously and signed in October. They resolve that until the standards of the original 44-member work-group are reinstated and a more accurate accounting of the Native American experience in South Dakota is included, they will be opposed.

These standards claim to set a higher bar at the highest level for students, but in truth, they are divisive and an embarrassment for South Dakota.



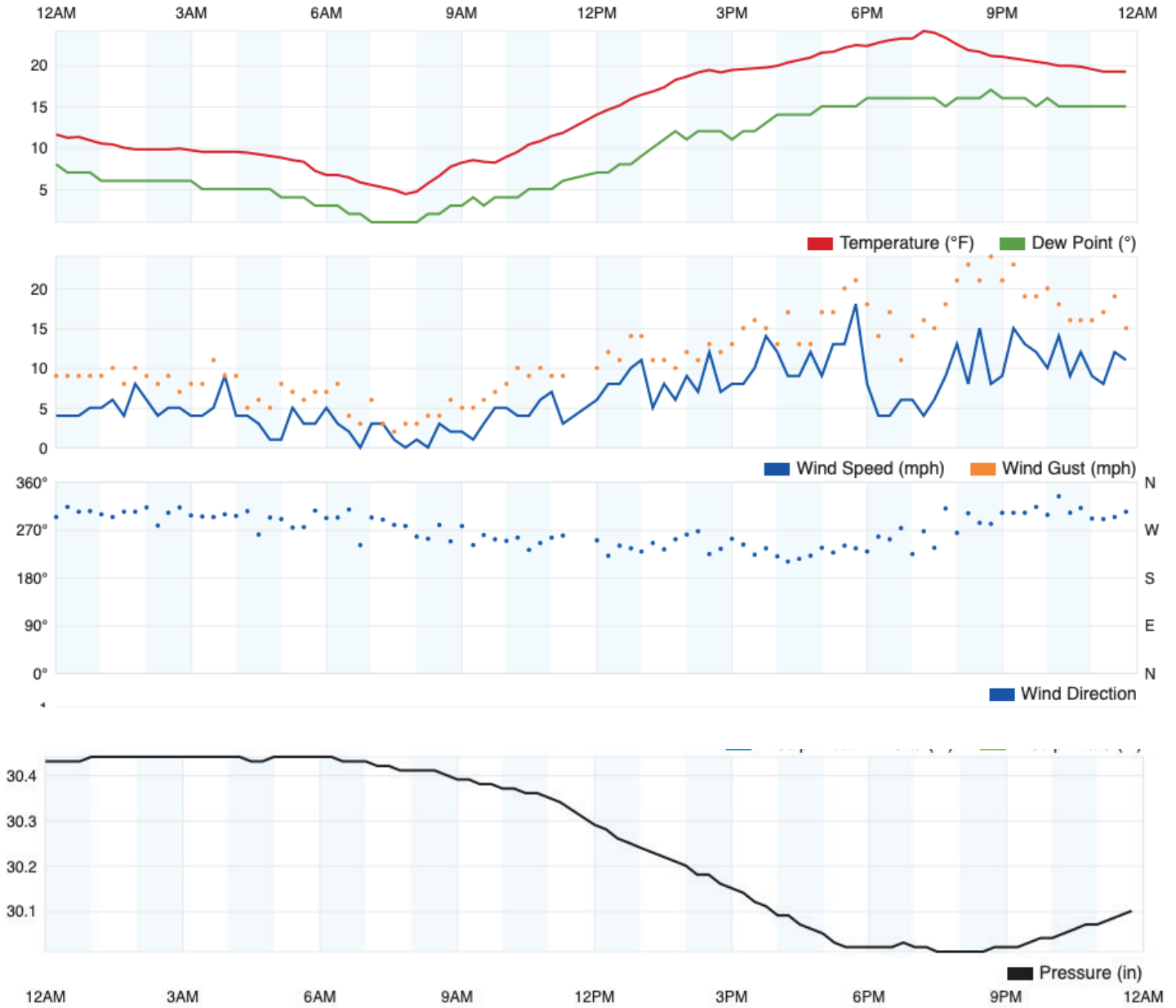
### **CHRISTOPHER G BORDEAUX**

Christopher G Bordeaux is the executive director of the Oceti Sakowin Education Commission and an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. He lives in Pine Ridge.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Chance Flurries	Decreasing Clouds	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 19 °F	Low: 6 °F	High: 30 °F	Low: 11 °F	High: 26 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 32 °F



**Today** 14 to 27°

Morning flurries.  
Breezy winds diminishing in the afternoon.



**Tonight** 7 to 14°

Partly cloudy and cold.



**Sunday** 27 to 42°

Above freezing west of the James Valley.  
Breezy in the afternoon.

## A Look Ahead...

Warmer air moves in through Friday with highs in the 30s-40s. Dry conditions are expected into Wednesday.

Visit [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr) for a detailed local forecast

Updated: 11/19/2022 4:25 AM CT

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Flurries and isolated snow showers will exit this morning as high pressure builds in. A warming trend will begin on Sunday and continue through the week.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 24 °F at 7:17 PM

Low Temp: 4 °F at 7:41 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 8:41 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 24 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 75 in 1908

Record Low: -11 in 1914

Average High: 41°F

Average Low: 18°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.51

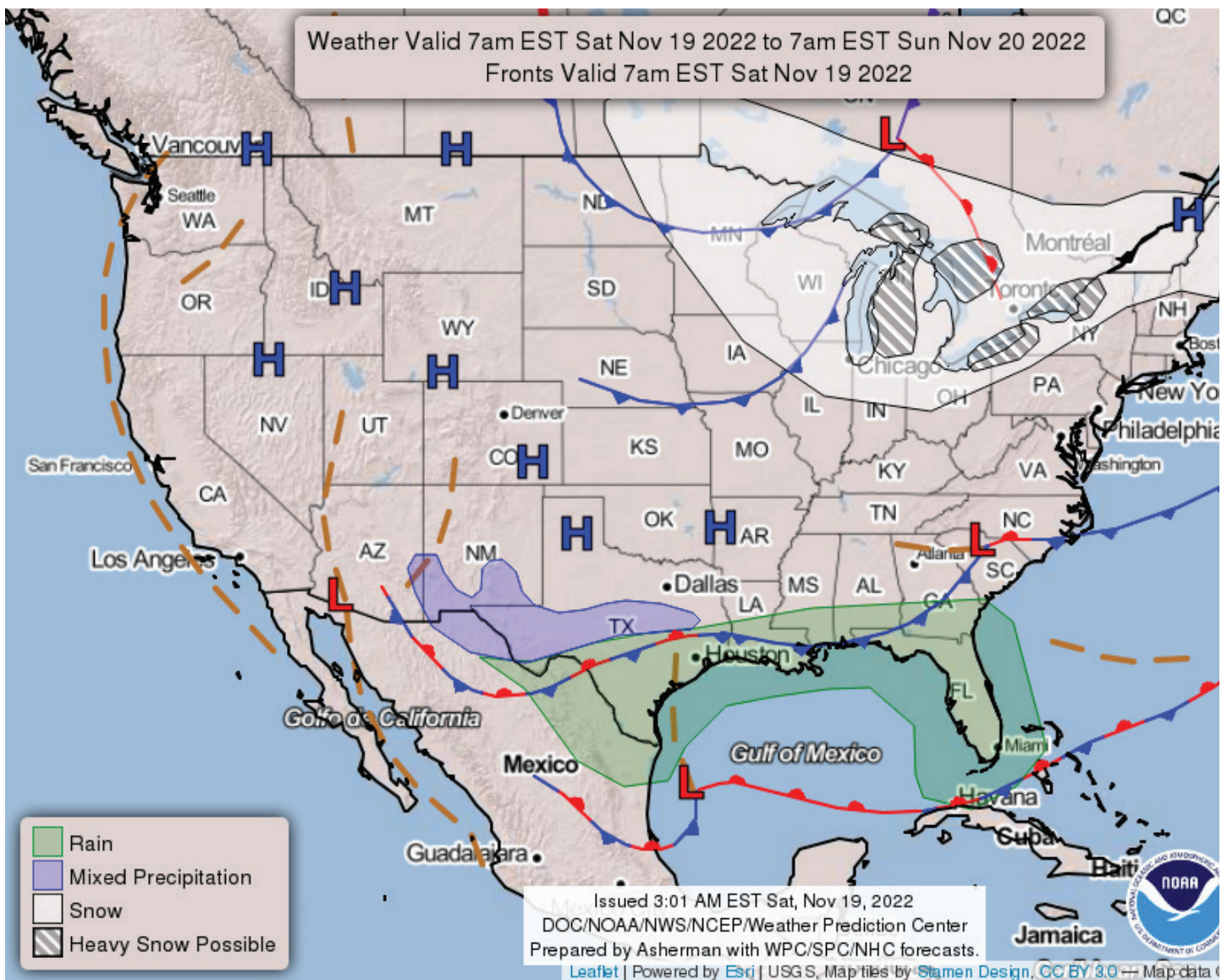
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.98

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 5:00:14 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:36:45 AM



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## Today in Weather History

November 19, 1981: A storm system moved from southeast Nebraska through Iowa on the 18th and spread rain and sleet as well as a few thunderstorms into southern Minnesota. Rain and sleet began changing over to snow during the afternoon on the 18th and continued through the 19th. The most substantial snowfall was in the Minneapolis area. The 10.4 inches of snow reported from the National Weather Service office in the Twin Cities was the heaviest snowfall recorded at the office since March 22nd, to the 23rd, 1965 when 13.6 inches fell. The storm knocked out power and phones to many in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Damage was also done to the Humber H. Humphrey Metrodome, where the weight of the heavy snow caused the newly inflated, fabric dome collapsed and ripped.

November 19, 1996: Widespread freezing rain spread a layer of ice across a large area before changing over to snow during November 19-20. Snowfall amounts were 1 to 3 inches in central South Dakota, 3 to 7 inches across north central South Dakota, 5 to 6 inches in west central Minnesota, and 4 to 12 inches across northeast South Dakota. Travel was difficult, and several schools were closed or delayed. Mail delivery was also slowed or postponed for a day or two. Several, mainly minor accidents, resulting in several minor injuries, occurred as a result of the ice and snow covered roads. Two Milbank buses slid into ditches. Strong north winds led to near-blizzard conditions across northeast South Dakota on the 20th. Some snowfall totals included; 12.0 inches in Clear Lake and near Milbank; 10.1 inches near Mellette; 9.0 inches in Browns Valley; 8.3 inches near Big Stone City; 8.0 inches in Faulkton; and 7.0 inches in Britton and Conde.

1921: The Columbia Gorge ice storm finally came to an end. In Oregon, 54 inches of snow, sleet, and glaze blocked the Columbia River Highway at The Dalles. Apart from traffic on the river itself, all transportation between Walla Walla WA and Portland, OR came to a halt. Nine trains were stopped as railroads were blocked for several days.

1930: A rare, estimated F4 tornado struck the town of Bethany, Oklahoma. Between 9:30 am and 9:58 am CST, it moved north-northeast from 3 miles west of the Oklahoma City limits, and hit the eastern part of Bethany. About 110 homes and 700 other buildings, or about a fourth of the town, were damaged or destroyed. Near the end of the damage path, 3.5 miles northeast of Wiley Post Airfield, the tornado hit the Camel Creek School. Buildings blew apart just as the students were falling to the floor and looking for shelter, and five students and a teacher were killed. A total of 23 people were killed and another 150 injured, with 77 being seriously injured. Damage estimates were listed at \$500,000.

1957 - Nineteen inches of snow covered the ground at Cresco, IA, a record November snow depth for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1981 - An unusually early snowstorm struck the Twin Cities of Minnesota, with as much as a foot of snow reported. The weight of the heavy snow caused the newly inflated fabric dome of the Hubert Humphrey Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis to collapse and rip. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A sharp cold front pushed across the Great Lakes Region and the Mississippi Valley. Northwest winds gusting to 50 mph in Iowa caused some property damage around Ottumwa, and wind chill readings reached 16 degrees below zero at Hibbing MN. Showers and thunderstorms over Florida produced 5.80 inches of rain in six hours at Cocoa Beach. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Strong thunderstorms developed during the mid morning hours and produced severe weather across eastern Texas and the Lower Mississippi Valley into the wee hours of the night. Thunderstorms spawned twenty-one tornadoes, including thirteen in Mississippi. One tornado killed two persons and injured eleven others at Nettleton MS, and another tornado injured eight persons at Tuscaloosa AL. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail in east Texas and northern Louisiana, and Summit MS was deluged with six inches of rain in four hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Gale force winds continued to produce squalls in the Lower Great Lakes Region early in the day. Snowfall totals in western New York State reached 24 inches in southern Lewis County, with 21 inches reported at Highmarket. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed across the Northern and Central Plains Region. Eight cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Denver CO with a reading of 79 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2003 - Flooding affected the central Appalachians and Eastern Seaboard, with some isolated 8-inch rainfall totals across mountainous areas. There were 11 deaths caused by flooding in the region (Associated Press).



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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### DO RIGHT!

"Blessed are they..." said the Psalmist, "who constantly do what is right." Jesus, too, emphasized the importance of righteousness when He began His public ministry. "Blessed," said Jesus, "are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Doing what is right and hungering and thirsting for righteousness is not a priority in the lives of many who call themselves "Christian." It sounds like a lifestyle that is more suitable for monks who live in a monastery and spend their time reading the Bible and praying than for people who work for a living. Monks can avoid the "real things" of life and "be righteous."

Perhaps when we think of being "righteous" and "doing what is right," we shudder because it sounds so "limiting" on the one hand, and "impossible" on the other. "What fun is there in being righteous?" we ask. Or "If I 'do right,' I'll live a life of gloom and doom with no room for happiness and joy." What a grim prospect.

But the exact opposite is true. God has a specific plan for each of our lives and will enable us to fulfill it. Ultimately, we will become like His Son. If we seek and follow the plan and purpose He has for our lives, we will walk in paths of "righteousness for His name's sake." If we want to know the "path of righteousness" He has for our lives, we must study His Word. And, the more we study His Word, the more we will become like Him. If we desire to "do right" and become "righteous," we will need to spend time with Him, get to know Him, and love Him. If we "do right," we will "become right."

Prayer: Lord, we all want to "do right." But we cannot "do right" unless we are willing to spend time with You. Teach us to be You-like. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right. Psalm 106:3



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

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## 2022-23 Community Events

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

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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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 Friday:

Mega Millions

02-14-16-38-66, Mega Ball: 9, Megaplier: 4

(two, fourteen, sixteen, thirty-eight, sixty-six; Mega Ball: nine; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$259,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 93,000,000

### Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

SDHSAA Playoff=

Class AA=

Consolation Semifinal=

Pierre def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-20, 25-21, 19-25, 22-25, 15-9

Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Huron, 25-23, 14-25, 25-22, 19-25, 15-11

Semifinal=

Harrisburg def. Sioux Falls O'Gorman, 21-25, 25-21, 25-23, 25-23

Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Sioux Falls Washington, 25-23, 12-25, 25-22, 20-25, 15-7

Class A=

Consolation Semifinal=

Dakota Valley def. Wagner, 25-17, 25-11, 25-17

Platte-Geddes def. Belle Fourche, 25-22, 25-22, 25-20

Semifinal=

Miller def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 25-22, 25-9, 25-21

Sioux Falls Christian def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 25-17, 25-7, 25-15

Class B=

Consolation Semifinal=

Castlewood def. Colman-Egan, 25-18, 25-25, 27-25, 25-18

Northwestern def. Freeman, 25-17, 25-12, 25-15

Semifinal=

Chester def. Burke, 24-26, 25-19, 27-25, 25-22

Warner def. Wolsey-Wessington, 25-20, 25-15, 25-11

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

### Battle 4 Atlantis part of bigger spotlight for women's hoops

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

PARADISE ISLAND, Bahamas (AP) — Texas guard Sonya Morris had long noticed the number of big matchups in early season tournaments to stir men's college basketball and the buzz that came with them.

She's eager to be part of a similar bump for the women's side, too.

"When I was in high school, I would always see men's tournaments like this, from college and even high school teams being able to travel," said Morris, a graduate transfer from DePaul. "The fact that women's

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basketball can now do it and be on the same platform — get more views, more awareness, more eyes on us, I think it's great."

Morris' third-ranked Longhorns are part of the second-ever Battle 4 Atlantis, which opens play here Saturday with No. 6 Louisville, No. 11 Tennessee, UCLA, South Dakota State, Rutgers, Marquette and Gonzaga. It's the headliner on a growing number of events offering a bigger early spotlight on women's basketball alongside the men, from brand-name programs to wide TV distribution in some cases.

"I think a lot of (people) are saying, 'Oh wow, there's actually value in women's basketball, we should get involved, too,'" said Lea Miller-Tooley, the founder and director of the Atlantis tournaments.

"I think there are some events starting this year that are understanding that. ... There's no denying the power, strength and publicity that women's basketball has been getting has never been higher, and we're proud to be right in there with one of the strongest events in women's basketball promoting the sport."

That rise in prominence has come less than two years after the glaring inequity issues that emerged in how the bubbled men's and women's NCAA Tournaments were handled in 2021, including the allocation of resources to athletes and even the quality of the swag boxes of gifts. But that also included criticism of how the NCAA withheld "March Madness" branding from the women's tournament and whether there was more TV money being left on the table in current media deals.

That's why Richard Lapchick, director of The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) at Central Florida, is encouraged to see more events coming with the backing of broadcast partners and corporate sponsors.

"They're not investing because they are necessarily supporting women's rights," said Lapchick, whose group issues annual report cards on diversity hiring practices for college and professional sports. "They know there's a larger interest in the public and can make money and grow the game."

There have long been established and successful neutral-site women's tournaments and events: the Cancun Challenge in Mexico, the Paradise Jam in the U.S. Virgin Islands, even elsewhere in the Bahamas in Bimini with Goombay Splash that includes No. 9 Notre Dame next week.

But Atlantis' debut last year represented a marquee brand tied for years to the high-level men's tournament held at a sprawling resort, down to having a 1-vs-2 title matchup between eventual NCAA champion South Carolina and national runner-up Connecticut. And it came as another basketball event involving men's and women's teams took shape at Nassau's nearby Baha Mar resort in this nation of about 700 islands.

"We've had some (events) for years, but not the number that we have now," Tennessee coach Kellie Harper said. "I think that number has grown as women's basketball has grown. I think there's so much parity also in women's basketball right now. There are a lot of really good teams, so more tournaments can pop up and have really good competition at their tournament."

More events are ahead to carry that momentum. There are two brackets for both men and women for the tournaments honoring Nike co-founder Phil Knight in Oregon through the Thanksgiving holidays, featuring No. 4 Iowa, No. 5 Connecticut and No. 7 Iowa State.

And in December, there's the launch of the Jumpman Invitational in Charlotte, North Carolina — a three-year event featuring the men's and women's teams of the first four Jordan Brand schools in North Carolina, Oklahoma, Michigan and Florida.

That makes two new events this year for the 13th-ranked Tar Heels, who also play in next week's Phil Knight Invitational.

"This is another entity saying, 'We want you.' That's a big deal," UNC coach Courtney Banghart said. "So for the Jordan Brand to say they want Michigan and Oklahoma and Florida and Carolina women in this thing for a three-year gig, that's different than us calling Oklahoma and saying, 'Let's play.'"

"They're going to see that there's a market for that."

Enough so that many of these events are going to get widespread TV exposure.

The first two days of the Battle 4 Atlantis women's tournament will stream on FloHoops, though Monday's championship will air on ESPN while the third-place game will go on ESPNU. The Phil Knight Legacy and Invitational bracket games will appear on the ESPN family of networks as well as one on ABC, while the Jumpman Invitational women's games will appear on ESPN2.

And that, as UCLA coach Cori Close said Friday, is how “these tournaments keep the conversation going.” “I think it’s great for women’s basketball because you see it a lot on the men’s side,” Louisville guard Hailey Van Lith said. “Like, right out of the gate, all the top teams square off. and it gets fans excited and it gets attention around the game. I think it’s great the women’s side is start to follow suit a little bit.”

## **Rapid City police officer shoots, kills knife-wielding man**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City police officer shot and killed a man who charged at the officer while holding a large, butcher-type knife, authorities said Friday.

Police said the incident happened in a building about 5:30 a.m. Friday after an officer responded to a disturbance call. Rapid City Police Chief Don Hedrick said the initial investigation shows the man was attempting to hurt the officer and called the struggle “active combat.”

“Within seconds, the man was in very close proximity to the officer, to the point where the officer wasn’t sure if he’d been stabbed or not,” he said.

After being charged, Hedrick said the officer fired his weapon at the suspect, who then collapsed. The officer attempted life-saving procedures but the man later died at the hospital, the Rapid City Journal reported.

“This was a very dynamic situation in terms of (how) it unfolded very quickly,” Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom said. “We’ve had the opportunity to watch the body camera footage, and it’s frankly kind of chilling.”

The officer was not injured.

South Dakota’s Division of Criminal Investigation will handle the case with the Pennington County Sheriff’s Office assisting.

## **Maldives minister: negotiators reach deal on climate fund**

SETH BORENSTEIN, SAMY MAGDY and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Negotiators say they have struck a potential breakthrough deal on the thorniest issue of United Nations climate talks, creation of a fund for compensating poor nations that are victims of extreme weather worsened by rich nations’ carbon pollution.

“There is an agreement on loss and damage,” which is what negotiators call the concept, Maldives Environment Minister Aminath Shauna told The Associated Press Saturday. It still needs to be approved unanimously in a vote later today. “That means for countries like our we will have the mosaic of solutions that we have been advocating for.”

Saturday afternoon’s draft proposal came from the Egyptian presidency. A second overarching document from the climate talks leadership ignores India’s call to phase down oil and natural gas, in addition to last year’s agreement to wean the world from “unabated” coal.

According to the draft of the compensation proposal — the issue is called “loss and damage” in negotiations parlance — developed countries would be “urged” to contribute to the fund, which would also draw on other private and public sources of money such as international financial institutions. At the talks, the world’s poorest nations, which contributed little to historic emissions of heat-trapping gases, have been unified in insisting on such a fund.

“We managed to make progress on an important outcome,” said Wael Aboulmagd, who heads Egyptian delegation. “I think we’re getting there.”

However, the proposal does not suggest that major emerging economies such as China have to contribute to the fund, which was a key ask of the European Union and the United States.

It also does not tie the creation of the new fund to any increase in efforts to cut emissions, or restrict the recipients of funding to those countries that are most vulnerable, which had been an earlier proposal from the Europeans.

Two drafts released by the Egyptian presidency, on efforts to step up emissions cuts and the overarching decision of this year’s talks, barely build on what was agreed in Glasgow last year.

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The texts leave in place a reference to the Paris accords less ambitious goal of limiting global warming to "well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit)" which scientists say is far too risky.

They also don't suggest any new short-term targets for either developing or developed countries, which experts say are needed to achieve the more ambitious 1.5C (2.7F) goal that would prevent some of the more extreme effects of climate change.

Loss and damage has been the all-consuming issue at the two weeks of talks.

The EU made a surprise proposal days earlier tying a fund for climate disasters to emissions cuts that go beyond what the 2015 Paris climate agreement calls for. That landmark deal aims to limit global temperature increases to an ambitious 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit), and no change this year could be interpreted as not strengthening efforts.

The meeting known as COP27 opened two weeks ago and had been scheduled to wrap up on Friday but looks set to drag on through the weekend.

Earlier on Saturday government delegations and the meeting's Egyptian hosts pointed fingers at each other.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said responsibility for the fate of the talks "now lies in the hands of the Egyptian COP presidency."

She said the European Union had made clear overnight that "we will not sign a paper here that diverges significantly from the 1.5 Celsius path, that would bury the goal of 1.5 degrees."

"If these climate conferences set us back then we wouldn't have needed to travel here in the first place," she said.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, speaking as the summit's chair, deflected blame.

"The issue now rests with the will of the parties," Shoukry said at a press conference. "It is the parties who must rise to the occasion and take upon themselves the responsibility of finding the areas of convergence and moving forward."

He added that "all must show the necessary flexibility" in reaching a consensus, and that Egypt was merely "facilitating this process."

In another setback, top U.S. climate envoy John Kerry tested positive for COVID-19 though he only has mild symptoms and is working by phone with his negotiating team and foreign counterparts, his spokesperson said late Friday.

Throughout the climate summit, the American, Chinese, Indian and Saudi Arabian delegations have kept a low public profile, while European, African, Pakistan and small island nations have been more vocal.

A key sticking point remains over the issue called loss and damage. The world's poorest nations are insisting that western carbon polluting nations establish a fund to compensate nations hurt by climate extremes, such as Pakistan and its devastating flooding, as the developing world put little of the heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere.

"These negotiations won't work if it's pitching one country against the other, one block against the other," said Irish Environment Minister Eamon Ryan, one of the lead negotiators on loss and damage. "The only way it will work is if we sit down in collaboration and recognize we have common cause because we are in common peril and the only solution can be a good solution."

Climate advocacy group Power Shift Africa's Mohamed Adow blamed the United States and the European Union, saying "they're the two groups of parties that are currently blocking and delaying the delivery of our solidarity outcome out of Sharm el-Sheikh."

"We're now, I must say, very close to getting a loss and damage fund," Adow said. "And because of that we're seeing one of the biggest historic polluters threatening to walk out."

The United States may have moved a bit on its stance and seems more willing to accept the establishment of a loss and damage fund, but the division now is on where and how that fund is administered and who puts money into it, Waskow said.

Many of the more than 40,000 attendees have left town, and workers started packing up the vast pavilions in the sprawling conference zone.

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COP meetings have evolved over the years to resemble trade fairs, with many countries and industry groups setting up booths and displays for meetings and panel discussions.

At many stands, chairs were stacked neatly ready for removal, and monitors had been taken away, leaving cables dangling from walls. Pamphlets and booklets were strewn across tables and floors. Snack bars, which the Egyptian organizers said would remain open through the weekend, were emptied out.

At the youth pavilion, a gathering spot for young activists, a pile of handwritten postcards from children to negotiators was left on a table, in what was perhaps an apt metaphor for the state of play as the talks bogged down.

"Dear COP27 negotiators," read one card. "Keep fighting for a good planet."

An occasional gust of wind from the open doors nearby blew some of the cards onto the floor.

## In Pelosi, women admire a leader with calm, cool confidence

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — As they watched House Speaker Nancy Pelosi step forward to wrangle an unruly Congress over the years or stare down a bombastic president, many women across the country saw a version of the calm, confident leader they hoped to be themselves.

Pelosi, in rooms full of powerful men, was tenacious, tactical, tough. All while being a devoted mother and grandmother at home. And rarely finding the need to raise her voice.

"The image of her coming out in the red coat was just always amusing to me because it just kind of personified how badass she is," said Gina Lind, 61, of Phoenix, a marketing director for an airline. "It completely represented a woman in quiet control."

After her announcement this week that she would step down from Democratic leadership after two decades, many people reposted that meme of Pelosi confidently striding out of the Trump White House in sunglasses and a long red coat following a tense meeting. The moment was a reminder of how Pelosi, the first woman to become House speaker, redefined outdated expectations about the role of women in the highest levels of government.

Fans of Pelosi, a California Democrat, have taped the image to their refrigerator, downloaded it as a screensaver or emblazoned it on coffee mugs. They likewise savor the photos of her confronting then-President Donald Trump in the White House Cabinet Room or ripping up his final State of the Union speech.

"When I look at that (Cabinet Room) picture, I think, 'Okay, stand up and say what you have to say,'" said Kelly Haggerty, 49, an engineer for the city of Syracuse, New York, who works on construction projects and often finds herself, like Pelosi, squaring off in a room full of men.

"I mean, these guys across the table from me are not the president of the United States, but it's not fun to always be the only woman in the room," said Haggerty, who called the photo inspiring. "I did put it on my refrigerator because I have two teenage girls, and I want them to be the same way. I don't want them to ever stand down," she said.

Like many other women of her generation, Pelosi did not formally start her career until she was in her late 40s and her five children were mostly grown. But her father had been in politics, serving first as the mayor of Baltimore and then in Congress. And Pelosi, in her leadership farewell speech from the House floor on Thursday, recalled being awed by the sight of the Capitol building at the age of 6.

"Make no mistake, though, she's been in politics since she was born, whether she was running for office or not," said Rep. Karen Bass, a fellow California Democrat who is now the incoming mayor of Los Angeles.

In her view, Pelosi embraces her power without being "heavy-handed about it." She credits Pelosi with standing firm during the tumultuous Trump years.

"Women do lead differently, and have to leverage their power in a way that is just different, and I think she has perfected that," she said. "(But) if anybody has to go up against her, good luck."

And that female strength and tenacity are what angers people about Pelosi, Hillary Clinton and other female leaders, some women believe.

"People expect us to be nice all the time. If and when we don't behave in that particular 'box,' people



can get pretty emotional and angry about that," said Maryland state Sen. Sarah Elfreth, 34, a Democrat. "I think she took an undue amount of criticism for doing the job the same way and often times better than men had done that job," Elfreth said. "And in doing so she paves the way for other women in elected office to be just as tough and just as resilient."

If the country has yet to see a female president, the younger generations have at least seen Pelosi and a growing number of other women in Congress working beside her. When Pelosi first came to Congress in 1987, she had only two dozen female colleagues among the 535 lawmakers. This year, there are 147 women in the House and Senate — and a growing number of female governors.

"I think we take for granted how that (Pelosi's leadership) has transformed what it means to be a woman in power, maybe what it means to be a woman executive, and I think that in years to come we'll be especially grateful to her for breaking that glass ceiling," said Cecilia Ritacco, a 22-year-old graduate student in government studies at Georgetown University.

## The Latest | UN Climate Summit

By The Associated Press undefined

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — Two separate drafts released by the Egyptian presidency, on efforts to step up emissions cuts and the overarching decision of this year's talks, barely build on what was agreed in Glasgow last year.

The texts leave in place a reference to the Paris accords goal of limiting global warming to "well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit)" which scientists say is far too risky.

They also don't suggest any new short-term targets for either developing or developed countries, which experts say are needed to achieve the more ambitious 1.5 C (2.7 F) goal that would prevent some of the more extreme effects of climate change.

A new proposal on the issue of loss and damage that calls for the creation of a new fund to help developing countries hit by climate disasters said developed countries would be "urged" to contribute to the fund, which would also draw on other private and public sources of money such as international financial institutions.

However, the proposal does not suggest that major emerging economies such as China have to contribute to the fund, which was a key ask of the European Union and the United States.

It also does not tie the creation of the new fund to any increase in efforts to cut emissions, or restrict the recipients of funding to those countries that are most vulnerable.

### KEY DEVELOPMENTS:

- UN climate talks drag into extra time with scant progress
- Despair, lack of progress at climate talks, yet hope blooms

Alok Sharma, the British official who chaired last year's climate talks in Glasgow, declined to comment on criticism of the Egyptian presidency, but made clear that an ambitious outcome to combat climate change was crucial.

"Every presidency runs things in their own way," he said. "The key issue for me and for the UK is that what we have here at the end of the day is a balanced and ambitious text across all the key pillars," he said.

"For us it's also vitally important to not just preserve what we agreed in Glasgow but that we build on that as well," said Sharma, referring to the recommitment made last year to limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) and a pledge to increase efforts to slash emissions cuts.

Spain's environment minister said they are willing to walk out if they can't reach a fair deal at the U.N. climate talks.

"We could be exiting of course," said Teresa Ribera. "We won't be part of a result that we find unfair and not effective to address the problem that we are handling, which is climate change and the need to

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reduce emissions.”

Ribera said she is “concerned” that a draft of the final document may not include a mention of the 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warming limit target set in Paris in 2015.

She added she didn’t want to see a result “that may backtrack what we already did in Glasgow,” referring to the renewed commitment to the 1.5 C goal at the climate summit last year.

“That’s something that we’d like to see, that there is a strong commitment to the 1.5 target,” said Teresa Ribera.

On the role of the presidency, Ribera said that the process has been “very confusing.”

“It is not clear ... and we are running out of time,” she said.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said parties must now “rise to the occasion” in a news conference Saturday morning.

“The issue now rests with the will of the parties,” Shoukry said at a press conference. “It is the parties who must rise to the occasion and take upon themselves the responsibility of finding the areas of convergence and moving forward.”

On a new draft text for the overarching decision at the conference, which was being worked on overnight, Shoukry said that “a vast majority of the parties indicated to me that they considered the text as balanced and that they constitute a potential breakthrough that can lead to consensus.”

He added that “all must show the necessary flexibility” in reaching a consensus, and that Egypt was merely “facilitating this process.”

New Zealand’s climate minister has said a draft of the final document circulated by the presidency “has been received quite poorly by pretty much everybody,” adding that delegations are going into another round of talks.

Speaking to The Associated Press, James Shaw called the draft “entirely unsatisfactory.”

He added that the proposal “abandons really any hope of achieving 1.5 (degrees Celsius, 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit),” referring to the warming limit agreed at the Paris agreement back in 2015.

He said parties will continue to work on the issue as well as look to reach consensus on a loss and damage fund for developing nations who are suffering from the impacts of climate change.

“Everybody wants an outcome on loss and damage and everybody wants to keep 1.5 alive. So that’s what we’re going to keep doing,” he said.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock says that responsibility for the fate of the U.N. climate talks “now lies in the hands of the Egyptian COP presidency.”

She said the European Union had made clear overnight that “we will not sign a paper here that diverges significantly from the 1.5 C path, that would bury the goal of 1.5 degrees.”

“If these climate conferences set us back then we wouldn’t have needed to travel here in the first place,” she said.

## North Korea’s Kim boasts new ICBM as US flies bombers

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un boasted that a recently tested intercontinental ballistic missile is another “reliable and maximum-capacity” weapon to contain U.S. military threats, state media reported Saturday. The United States responded to the North’s weapons launch by flying supersonic bombers in a show of force.

The North’s Korean Central News Agency said Kim oversaw the launch of the Hwasong-17 missile, a day after its neighbors said they had detected the launch of an ICBM that showed a potential to reach anywhere in the United States.

KCNA said Kim observed the launch with his wife Ri Sol Ju and their “beloved daughter” as well as se-

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nior officials. State media photos showed Kim walking hand-in-hand with his daughter, who was clad in a white coat, together watching a huge missile loaded on a launch truck. It's the first time for North Korea to publish the photo of Kim's daughter. Observers say Kim observing a weapons launch with his family suggests that he is emboldened by his advancing nuclear program.

Friday's launch was part of the North's ongoing barrage of missile tests that are seen as an attempt to expand its arsenal and boost its leverage in future diplomacy. Some foreign experts said the Hwasong-17 missile is still under development but is the North's longest-range ballistic weapon designed to carry multiple nuclear warheads to defeat U.S. missile defense systems.

KCNA said the missile fired from Pyongyang International Airport traveled up to a maximum altitude of about 6,040 kilometers (3,750 miles) and flew a distance of about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) before it landed on the preset area in international waters off the country's east coast.

"The test-fire clearly proved the reliability of the new major strategic weapon system to be representative of (North Korea's) strategic forces and its powerful combat performance as the strongest strategic weapon in the world," KCNA said.

"Kim Jong Un solemnly declared that if the enemies continue to pose threats to (North Korea), frequently introducing nuclear strike means, our party and government will resolutely react to nukes with nuclear weapons and to total confrontation with all-out confrontation," KCNA said.

Kim's statement suggests North Korea will continue its testing activities as the United States is pushing to bolster its security commitment to its allies South Korea and Japan. There are concerns that North Korea could soon conduct its first nuclear test in five years.

U.S. B-1B bombers took part in separate joint exercises Saturday with South Korean and Japanese warplanes in response to the North Korean ICBM launch. South Korean and Japanese officials said their respective drills with the U.S. bombers reaffirmed their combined defense postures.

North Korea is sensitive to the deployment of U.S. B-1B bombers because they're capable of carrying a huge payload of conventional weapons. Earlier this month, the U.S. sent B-1B bombers streaking over South Korea as part of exercises, in the bombers' first such flyover in five years.

On Friday, the U.S. military held separate aerial drills with South Korean and Japanese forces. South Korea's military said it also staged its own exercises Friday simulating aerial strikes on North Korean mobile missile launchers.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting for Monday morning on North Korea's latest ballistic missile launch at Japan's request. But it's unclear if it can slap fresh sanctions on North Korea because China and Russia, two of the council's veto-wielding members, opposed the United States and allies' moves to toughen sanctions on the North over its banned tests of ballistic missiles earlier this year.

U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson condemned Friday's launch and said the United States will take "all necessary measures" to guarantee the safety of its territory and South Korea and Japan. Vice President Kamala Harris separately met with the leaders of those countries and of Australia, Canada and New Zealand who were attending a regional forum in Bangkok to discuss a joint response to North Korea.

Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada said Friday that depending on the weight of a potential warhead, the missile had a range exceeding 15,000 kilometers (9,320 miles), "in which case it could cover the entire mainland United States."

The North's nuclear and missile arsenals are shrouded in secrecy. Some experts say North Korea is still years away from possessing a functioning nuclear missile, saying it has yet to prove technologies to ensure that warheads survive the harsh conditions of atmospheric reentry. But others say North Korea has likely already acquired such capacities given the number of years spent on its nuclear program.

In recent months, North Korea has performed dozens of shorter-range missile tests that it called simulations of nuclear attacks on South Korean and U.S. targets. North Korea said its tests were aimed at issuing a warning to the United States and South Korea over their military training that the North views as an invasion rehearsal. Seoul and Washington have said their regular exercises are defensive in nature.

North Korea halted weapons launches for about a week before it fired a short-range ballistic missile on

Thursday. Before that launch, North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui threatened to launch “fiercer” military responses to steps by the U.S. to bolster its security commitment to South Korea and Japan.

U.S. President Joe Biden met with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts Nov. 13 on the sidelines of a regional gathering in Cambodia, issuing a joint statement that 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 nuclear weapons.

## **Infantino says double standard behind World Cup critics**

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Gianni Infantino said he feels gay. That he feels like a woman. That he feels like a migrant worker. He lectured Europeans for criticizing Qatar’s human rights record and defended the host country’s last-minute decision to ban beer from World Cup stadiums.

The FIFA president delivered a one-hour tirade on the eve of the World Cup’s opening match, and then spent about 45 minutes answering questions from media about the Qatari government’s actions and a wide-range of other topics.

“Today I feel Qatari,” Infantino said Saturday at the start of his first news conference of the World Cup. “Today I feel Arab. Today I feel African. Today I feel gay. Today I feel disabled. Today I feel a migrant worker.”

Infantino later shot back at one reporter who noticed he left women out of his unusual declaration.

“I feel like a woman,” the FIFA president responded.

Qatar has faced a litany of criticism since 2010, when it was chosen by FIFA to host the biggest soccer tournament in the world.

Migrant laborers who built Qatar’s World Cup stadiums often worked long hours under harsh conditions and were subjected to discrimination, wage theft and other abuses as their employers evaded accountability, London-based rights group Equidem said in a 75-page report released this month.

Infantino defended the country’s immigration policy, and praised the government for bringing in migrants to work.

“We in Europe, we close our borders and we don’t allow practically any worker from those countries, who earn obviously very low income, to work legally in our countries,” Infantino said. “If Europe would really care about the destiny of these people, these young people, then Europe could also do as Qatar did.

“But give them some work. Give them some future. Give them some hope. But this moral-lesson giving, one-sided, it is just hypocrisy.”

Qatar is governed by a hereditary emir who has absolute say over all governmental decisions and follows an ultraconservative form of Islam known as Wahhabism. In recent years, Qatar has been transformed following a natural gas boom in the 1990s, but it has faced pressure from within to stay true to its Islamic heritage and Bedouin roots.

Under heavy international scrutiny, Qatar has enacted a number of labor reforms in recent years that have been praised by Equidem and other rights groups. But advocates say abuses are still widespread and that workers have few avenues for redress.

Infantino, however, continued to hit the Qatari government’s talking points of turning criticism back onto the West.

“What we Europeans have been doing for the past 3,000 years we should be apologizing for the next 3,000 years before we start giving moral lessons to people,” Infantino said to hundreds of international media.

## **FIFA head says fans should be able to abstain at World Cup**

By JENNA FRYER AP National Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — FIFA president Gianni Infantino downplayed Qatar’s last minute ban on the sale of

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beer at World Cup stadiums as nothing more than a brief inconvenience to spectators.

"If this is the biggest problem we have, I'll sign that (agreement)," Infantino said Saturday, a day after the conservative Muslim emirate did an about-face on the deal it had made to secure the soccer tournament.

Infantino blamed "crowd flows" in Doha for the decision, though it appeared to be a ruling by Qatar's autocratic government to placate its conservative Wahhabi citizens who already have been angered by some events around the tournament they view as Western excesses.

Infantino said the beer ban at stadiums was made jointly by Qatar officials and FIFA.

"We tried until the end to see whether it was possible," Infantino said of allowing alcohol sales. "If for 3 hours a day you cannot drink a beer, you will survive. Maybe there is a reason why in France, in Spain, in Scotland, alcohol is banned in stadiums. Maybe they are more intelligent us, having thought maybe we should be doing that."

Spectators can drink alcoholic beer in the evenings in "the FIFA Fan Festival," a designated party area that also offers live music and activities. Qatar puts strict limits on the purchase and consumption of alcohol, though its sale has been permitted in hotel bars for years outside of the tournament-run areas.

The World Cup begins Sunday with an opening match between host country Qatar and Ecuador, and when Qatar made its pitch to host the tournament, the country agreed to FIFA's requirements of selling alcohol in stadiums. The alcohol plans were only released 11 weeks before kickoff and then changed on Friday.

FIFA says non-alcoholic beer will still be sold at the eight stadiums, while champagne, wine, whiskey and other alcohol will be served in the luxury hospitality areas of the arenas.

Previous World Cup hosts have been asked to make concessions. For the 2014 tournament, Brazil was forced to change a law to allow alcohol sales in stadiums — but the same cultural issues were not at play.

AB InBev's deal with FIFA was renewed in 2011, after Qatar was picked as host. However, the Belgium-based brewer has faced uncertainty in recent months on the exact details of where it can serve and sell beer in Qatar.

Infantino denied that the ban of beer sales has harmed FIFA's relationship with Budweiser, its official beer sponsor.

"We are partners for some decades, and we look forward to partner for the future," he said. "This particular situation has brought us even closer together."

## Asia-Pacific leaders condemn war, renew calls for open trade

By KRUTIKA PATHI, CHISATO TANAKA AND CHALIDA EKVITTHAYAVECHNUKUL Associated Press BANGKOK (AP) — Leaders from around the Asia-Pacific called for an end to Russia's war on Ukraine and pledged to steer the region's economies toward sustainable growth as they wrapped up summit meetings Saturday.

Host Thailand garnered a diplomatic coup in managing to bridge divisions among the 21 members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum by saying that most members had condemned the war. Russia is an APEC member, as is China, which generally has refrained from criticizing Moscow.

The declaration issued by APEC leaders acknowledged differing views on the war and said the forum, which is devoted largely to promoting trade and closer economic ties, was not a venue for resolving such conflicts.

But it noted that the conflict and other security issues "can have significant consequences for the global economy."

The leaders' statement said most members had strongly condemned the war in Ukraine, stressing that it is causing immense human suffering and worsening inflation, supply chain troubles, food insecurity and financial risks.

Like a statement issued by the Group of 20 leading economies in Bali, Indonesia, earlier this week, it echoed the wording of a March 2 United Nations General Assembly resolution that "deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine."

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The meetings Saturday wrapped up a flurry of events in Southeast Asian countries this week that gave leaders opportunities for face-to-face talks that have been rare in the past two years of pandemic precautions.

Much of the activity at such summits occurs on the sidelines and in the interludes before and after the formal meetings.

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris and Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke briefly on Saturday before the final APEC meeting began. Harris reiterated President Joe Biden's call, made in a meeting with Xi at the G-20, for both sides to keep lines of communication open.

Xi said he viewed his talks with Biden as a step toward a "next stage" in ties between the two largest economies, according to a Chinese government summary of the meeting.

Relations have deteriorated recently amid friction over trade and technology, Chinese claims on the separately governed island of Taiwan, human rights and other issues. But Harris told Xi the U.S. "does not seek confrontation or conflict with China."

She received a "handover" in the form of a symbolic "chalom" bamboo basket from the APEC host, Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha. The U.S. will host next year's APEC summit in San Francisco, with preliminary meetings to be held in other cities throughout the year.

Though summit meetings are often sidetracked by other more urgent concerns, APEC's long-term mission is promoting closer economic ties, and Prayuth opened Saturday's meeting by urging the leaders to push ahead with APEC's agenda of free trade in the Pacific region.

"We have to give priority to turning this plan into action," he said.

Security risks are not on the formal APEC agenda, but Prayuth said North Korea's numerous recent missile launches were discussed and "everybody shares concern on that issue."

On Friday, Harris and leaders of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea met separately to air concerns about the North's launch earlier in the day of an intercontinental ballistic missile that landed near Japan's northern island of Hokkaido.

Both at APEC in Thailand and at the G-20 meeting in Indonesia, officials appear to have chosen to agree to disagree about the war in Ukraine while voicing anguish over its deepening impact. In both Bangkok and Bali, countries that have refused to condemn the invasion refrained from blocking the release of statements harshly criticizing Moscow.

APEC members account for nearly four of every 10 people and almost half of world trade. Much of APEC's work is technical and incremental, carried out by senior officials and ministers, covering areas such as trade, forestry, health, food, security, small- and medium-size enterprises and women's empowerment.

The leaders' declaration released Saturday also called for promoting more use of clean energy and more secure, environmentally sustainable food systems, among an array of goals that also address illegal, unregulated and unauthorized fishing, illegal logging, marine waste, improvements to public health and better access to vaccinations.

Other APEC members include Brunei, Chile, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen was to represent the Association of Southeast Asian Nations but did not attend after getting COVID-19.

The summit venue, at Bangkok's main convention center near a vast parkland, was cordoned off with some streets closed to traffic. Riot police stood guard behind barricades at major intersections to keep protesters well away.

On Friday, police clashed in another area of Bangkok with demonstrators who took the opportunity of the APEC meeting to renew calls for democratic reforms in Thailand and accuse the government of promoting policies to APEC that favor big business over ordinary people. Several people were injured and a number of arrests made.

**Despair, lack of progress at climate talks, yet hope blooms**

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By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — It's a desert, where little grows. It's a climate conference, where water is scarce inside buildings and out, lines are long, tempers are short, meetings go late and above all progress comes in one-drop drips.

Yet hope springs forth in the strangest places.

Not in the naïve new face, but in the hearts and minds of veteran activists and officials, who have gone through this frustrating sleep-depriving exercise, not once or twice but numerous times.

And it blooms in a odd metal "tree" sculpture in a center square here at the United Nations climate summit in Egypt. People write their hopes on green paper leaves.

"Hope is the only meaning (sic) that makes us ALIVE!" Mohamed Ageez, an Egyptian youth activist wrote.

Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore looks at more than 30 years of climate change efforts and sees hope in progress and change. United Nations Environment Programme Director Inger Andersen and The Nature Conservancy Chief Scientist Katharine Hayhoe see it in all the people in the halls working hard.

And Christiana Figueres, the former U.N. climate secretary who helped forge the 2015 Paris agreement and then started a non-profit called Climate Optimism, sees hope not as a noun but an action verb.

"Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up," Figueres told The Associated Press, quoting poet David Orr. "I think of hope and optimism as being very active and in fact being precisely the reason why we roll up our sleeves."

Asked how he doesn't despair after seeing heat-trapping emissions rising year after, Gore told the AP: "Despair is a big word. You know, they used to say denial ain't just a river in Egypt. Here we are in Egypt and despair ain't just a tire in the trunk. It's a real factor. But we also have the basis for hope."

He pointed to several political wins this year.

"In August, the U.S. passed the biggest climate legislation in history," Gore said. "In September, the people of Australia made a historic change and agreed to become part of the leadership in the world toward renewable energy. And then in October, just days ago, the people of Brazil made a decision to stop destroying the Amazon and start fighting the climate crisis."

"When people feel vulnerable to climate despair, I urge them to look at the real progress that is being made."

Whenever United Nations environment chief Andersen feels down in these meetings she takes note of what's happening all around her in the pavilions and offices: "In these halls, you will see people huddling over solutions over networking, saying 'Here's what we did. Maybe you can do that.'"

Climate scientist Hayhoe finds hope in the same place.

"So when people say it was a complete failure and there's no hope, I say, just look around at every single face here," Hayhoe said. "There are tens of thousands of faces here, and every single one of them just about wants to change the world."

That tree of hope?

Gone.

It's been moved away from negotiations to the "green zone," far away from negotiators.

## China's COVID-19 restrictions hit historic Beijing theater

BEIJING (AP) — Performances have been suspended at one of Beijing's oldest and most renowned theaters as part of a new wave of shop and restaurant closures in response to a spike in COVID-19 cases in the Chinese capital.

The Jixiang Theater in the downtown Wangfujing shopping district was originally built in 1906 and recently moved to its present location on the 8th floor of a shopping mall that also houses shops and a fast food restaurant. It is famed for performances of Peking opera and other traditional art forms.

Performances were due to resume Nov. 27, but such dates for re-opening have frequently been extended.

China reported 24,263 new cases Saturday, 515 of them in Beijing. The vast majority were asymptomatic.

Despite that, lockdowns and other strict control measures have been put in place around the country,

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with many Beijing residents sent notices advising them not to leave home unless absolutely necessary.

Restaurants, malls and shops deemed non-essential have been closed and foot traffic in those still open was much reduced. Detection of a single case or even a close contact of an infected person can force the closure of an entire office building or apartment block.

Access to Beijing's elite Peking University was suspended Wednesday. People who visited a vegetable market in the city's southeast where a case was found were ordered into quarantine in a hotel at their own expense.

The southern metropolis of Guangzhou plans to build quarantine facilities for nearly 250,000 people. Guangzhou, a city of 13 million people, is the biggest of a series of hot spots across China with outbreaks since early October.

China's infection numbers are low compared with the United States and other major countries, but the ruling Communist Party is trying to isolate every case under its "zero-COVID" policy.

Repeated closures of neighborhoods, schools and businesses are fueling public frustration and clashes with health workers.

The policy is also inflicting major damage to the economy and global supply chains. Access to a Zhengzhou industrial zone that is home to the world's biggest iPhone factory was suspended this month following outbreaks. Apple Inc. said deliveries of its new iPhone 14 model would be delayed after workers fled. Local authorities have called for low-level party officials and even military recruits to fill their places, according to reports.

The harsh measures come even as the national government tries to reduce the impact of anti-disease controls that have confined millions of people to their homes, leading to mixed messages and adding to confusion and anger.

## 'We survived': Kherson comes alive after Russian withdrawal

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP) — A week since the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson was liberated, residents can't escape reminders of the terrifying eight months they spent under Russian occupation: missing people, mines everywhere, closed shops and restaurants, a scarcity of electricity and water -- and explosions day and night as Russian and Ukrainian forces battle just across the Dnieper River.

Despite these hardships, Kherson residents are expressing a mix of relief, optimism, and even joy — not least because of their regained freedom to express themselves at all.

"Even breathing became easier. Everything is different now," said Olena Smoliana, a pharmacist whose eyes shone with happiness as she recalled the day Ukrainian soldiers entered the city.

Kherson's population has dwindled to around 80,000 from its prewar level near 300,000, but the city is slowly coming alive. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy triumphantly walked the streets on Monday, hailing Russia's withdrawal — a humiliating defeat for Russian President Vladimir Putin — as the "beginning of the end of the war."

People are no longer afraid to leave home, or worried that contact with Russian soldiers might lead to a prison or torture cell. They are gathering in city squares — adorned with blue-and-yellow ribbons on their bags and jackets — to recharge phones, collect water, or talk with neighbors and relatives.

"If we survived the occupation, we will survive this without any problems," said Yulia Nenadyschuk, 53, who had been hunkered down at home with her husband, Oleksandr, since the Russian invasion began but now comes downtown every day.

The worst deprivation was the lack of freedom to be yourself, which was like being in a "cage," she said.

"You couldn't say anything out loud, you couldn't speak Ukrainian," said Oleksandr Nenadyschuk, 57. "We were constantly being watched, you couldn't even look around."

Residents of Kherson talk about the "silent terror" that defined their occupation, which was different than the devastating military siege that turned other Ukrainian cities — such as Mariupol, Sievierodonetsk, and Lysychansk — to rubble.



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Russian forces entered Kherson in the early days of the war from nearby Crimea, which it illegally annexed in 2014, and shortly after that, it was occupied.

People mostly communicate in Russian in Kherson. Early on in the war some residents there were tolerant of neighbors who sympathized with Russia, but over the past nine months there has been a palpable shift, said Smoliana, the pharmacist. "I'm even ashamed to speak Russian," she said. "They oppressed us emotionally and physically."

Many people fled the city, but some just disappeared.

Khrystyna Yuldasheva, 18, works in a shop across the street from a building the Russian police used as a detention center and where Ukrainian officials are investigating allegations of torture and abuse.

"There is no one here anymore," she told a woman who recently came by looking for her son.

Other people sought to leave, but couldn't. "We tried to leave three times, but they closed all possible exits from the city," said Tetiana, 37, who didn't want to be identified by her last name.

When Russian soldiers retreated on Nov. 11 from Kherson, the only regional capital Moscow captured since the invasion began on Feb. 24, they left a city devoid of basic infrastructure — water, electricity, transportation or communications.

Russian products can still be found in small shops that survived through occupation. And the city is still adorned with banners touting Russian propaganda like "Ukrainians and Russians are a single nation," or that encourage Ukrainians to get a Russian passport. (Some people curse out loud when walking past them.)

Many shops, restaurants and hotels are stills closed and many people are out of work. But residents have been drawn downtown this past week by truckloads of food from Ukrainian supermarket chains that have arrived and internet hotspots that have been set up.

While people were euphoric immediately after the Russian withdrawal, Kherson remains a city on hold.

A major obstacle to bringing residents back to Kherson, and to the rebuilding effort, will be clearing all of the mines that the Russians placed inside administrative offices and around critical infrastructure, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

"Demining is needed here to bring life back," said Mary Akopian, Ukraine's deputy minister of internal affairs. She says Kherson has a bigger problem with mines than any of the other cities Ukraine has liberated from the Russians because it had been under occupation for the longest period of time.

She estimated it would take years to completely clear mines from the city of Kherson and surrounding areas. Already, 25 people have died clearing mines and other explosives left behind in Kherson, and dozens of civilians who hastened to return home were killed by mines.

Before retreating, Russian soldiers looted from stores and businesses — and even museums. The Ukrainian government estimates that 15,000 artifacts have been stolen from museums in the Kherson region and taken to nearby Crimea.

"There is, in fact, nothing there," Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a senior official in Zelensky's office, wrote in his Telegram channel after a trip to the Kherson region. "The Russians killed and mined and robbed all cities and towns."

The humiliating Russian retreat did not bring an end to the sounds of war in Kherson. About 70% of the wider Kherson region is still in Russian hands. Explosions can regularly be heard in the city, although locals aren't always sure whether its part of the mine-removal effort, or the sound of Russian and Ukrainian artillery.

Despite the ongoing fighting nearby, people in Kherson feel confident enough about their safety to ignore air-raid warning sirens and gather in large numbers on the streets — to greet each other and to thank Ukrainian soldiers.

Like many residents, the Nenadyschuks do not wince when they hear the explosions in the distance, and they are loathe to complain about any other difficulty they face.

"We are holding on. We are waiting for victory. We won't whine," said Yulia Nenadyschuk. "All of Ukraine," her husband added, "is in this state now."

## Accused Albany bishop asks to be removed from priesthood

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The retired bishop of Albany, New York, who has admitted to covering up for predator priests and has himself been accused of sexual abuse, has asked Pope Francis to remove him from the priesthood.

Emeritus Bishop Howard Hubbard, 84, announced the decision in a statement Friday, the day the United Nations designated as the World Day for the Prevention of, and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence.

Hubbard said he wanted to be laicized, or returned to the lay state, because he could no longer function as a priest, given U.S. church policy that bars accused priests from ministry. If accepted, laicization would relieve Hubbard of his celibacy obligations.

Asking the pope for voluntary laicization is unusual, especially for a bishop and particularly for a cleric who denies abuse allegations against him. Usually priests ask to be laicized if evidence of abuse against them is overwhelming or if they want to leave the priesthood to get married. The Vatican can forcibly laicize priests, or defrock them, as a punishment for such crimes as clergy sexual abuse.

Hubbard has acknowledged covering up allegations of sexual abuse against children by priests in part to avoid scandal and protect the reputation of the diocese. He did so in a deposition for one of dozens of claims by hundreds of people who have sued the Albany diocese over sexual abuse they say they endured as children, sometimes decades ago.

But he has strongly denied accusations that he himself abused minors. In his statement Friday, Hubbard repeated that claim of innocence.

"I hope and pray I will live long enough to see my name cleared once and for all," he said.

Hubbard ran the diocese in New York's Capital District from 1977 to 2014.

Other U.S. bishops have asked Francis to resign over their mishandling of predator priests, but not be removed altogether from the priesthood. Francis in 2019 forcibly defrocked ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick after a church investigation determined he sexually abused adults and children.

Attorneys for abuse survivors hailed Hubbard's request to leave the priesthood entirely as the culmination of efforts by victims to hold the Catholic hierarchy accountable for abuse and cover-up. While the U.S. church has had a "one strike and you're out" policy in effect for two decades, it spared bishops from sanction.

Only in 2019 did the Vatican pass in-house norms to investigate accused bishops, but those cases have been shielded in secrecy with no full public accounting of who has been investigated or sanctioned and leaving it to individual dioceses or bishops conferences to release information.

"We feel Hubbard's removal is not only justified but necessary. This signals to survivors that their voices are being heard," said attorney Cynthia LaFave in a statement issued by the law offices of Jeffrey Anderson, who has represented hundreds of abuse survivors in the U.S.

## House GOP pushes Hunter Biden probe despite thin majority

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Even with their threadbare House majority, Republicans doubled down this week on using their new power next year to investigate the Biden administration and, in particular, the president's son.

But the midterm results have emboldened a White House that has long prepared for this moment. Republicans secured much smaller margins than anticipated, and aides to President Joe Biden and other Democrats believe voters punished the GOP for its reliance on conspiracy theories and Donald Trump-fueled lies over the 2020 election.

They see it as validation for the administration's playbook for the midterms and going forward to focus on legislative achievements and continue them, in contrast to Trump-aligned candidates whose complaints about the president's son played to their most loyal supporters and were too far in the weeds for the

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average American. The Democrats retained control of the Senate and the GOP's margin in the House is expected to the slimmest majority in two decades.

"If you look back, we picked up seats in New York, New Jersey, California," said Mike DuHaime, a Republican strategist and public affairs executive. "These were not voters coming to the polls because they wanted Hunter Biden investigated — far from it. They were coming to the polls because they were upset about inflation. They're upset about gas prices. They're upset about what's going on with the war in Ukraine."

But House Republicans used their first news conference after clinching the majority to discuss presidential son Hunter Biden and the Justice Department, renewing long-held grievances about what they claim is a politicized law enforcement agency and a bombshell corruption case overlooked by Democrats and the media.

"From their first press conference, these congressional Republicans made clear that they're going to do one thing in this new Congress, which is investigations, and they're doing this for political payback for Biden's efforts on an agenda that helps working people," said Kyle Herrig, the founder of the Congressional Integrity Project, a newly relaunched, multimillion-dollar effort by Democratic strategists to counter the onslaught of House GOP probes.

Inside the White House, the counsel's office added staff months ago and beefed up its communication efforts, and staff has been deep into researching and preparing for the attacks. They've worked to try to identify their own vulnerabilities and plan effective responses.

Rep. James Comer, incoming chairman of the House Oversight Committee, said there are "troubling questions" of the utmost importance about Hunter Biden's business dealings and one of the president's brothers, James Biden, that require deeper investigation.

"Rooting out waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government is the primary mission of the Oversight Committee," said Comer, R-Ky. "As such, this investigation is a top priority."

Republican legislators promised a trove of new information this past week, but what they have presented so far has been a condensed rehash of a few years' worth of complaints about Hunter Biden's business dealings, going back to conspiracy theories raised by Trump.

Hunter Biden joined the board of the Ukrainian gas company Burisma in 2014, around the time his father, then vice president, was helping conduct the Obama administration's foreign policy with Ukraine. Senate Republicans have said that the appointment may have posed a conflict of interest, but they did not present evidence that the hiring influenced U.S. policies, and they did not implicate Joe Biden in any wrongdoing.

Republican lawmakers and their staff for the past year have been analyzing messages and financial transactions found on a laptop that belonged to Hunter Biden. They long have discussed issuing congressional subpoenas to foreign entities that did business with him, and they recently brought on James Mandolfo, a former federal prosecutor, to assist with the investigation as general counsel for the Oversight Committee.

The difference now is that Republicans will have subpoena power to follow through, however small their majority may be.

"The Republicans are going to go ahead," said Tom Davis, a Republican lawyer who specializes in congressional investigations and legislative strategy. "I think their members are enthusiastic about going after this stuff. Look, the 40-year trend is parties under-investigate their own and over-investigate the other party. It didn't start here."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre dismissed the GOP focus on investigations as "on-brand" thinking.

"They said they were going to fight inflation, they said they were going to make that a priority, then they get the majority and their top priority is actually not focusing on the American family, but focusing on the president's family," she said.

Even some newly elected Republicans are pushing back against the idea.

"The top priority is to deal with inflation and the cost of living. ... What I don't want to see is what we saw in the Trump administration, where Democrats went after the president and the administration incessantly," Rep.-elect Mike Lawler of New York said on CNN.

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Hunter Biden's taxes and foreign business work are already under federal investigation, with a grand jury in Delaware hearing testimony in recent months.

While he never held a position on the presidential campaign or in the White House, his membership on the board of a Ukrainian energy company and his efforts to strike deals in China have long raised questions about whether he traded on his father's public service, including reported references in his emails to the "big guy."

Joe Biden has said he's never spoken to his son about his foreign business, and nothing the Republicans have put forth suggests otherwise. And there are no indications that the federal investigation involves the president.

Trump and his supporters, meanwhile, have advanced a widely discredited theory that Biden pushed for the firing of Ukraine's top prosecutor to protect his son and Burisma from investigation. Biden did indeed press for the prosecutor's firing, but that was a reflection of the official position of not only the Obama administration but many Western countries and because the prosecutor was perceived as soft on corruption.

House Republicans also have signaled upcoming investigations into immigration, government spending and parents' rights. White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, Attorney General Merrick Garland and FBI Director Chris Wray have been put on notice as potential witnesses.

Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, incoming Judiciary chairman, has long complained of what he says is a politicized Justice Department and the ongoing probes into Trump.

On Friday, Garland appointed a special counsel to oversee the Justice Department's investigation into the presence of classified documents at Trump's Florida estate as well as key aspects of a separate probe involving the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection and efforts to undo the 2020 election.

Trump, in a speech Friday night at his Mar-a-Lago estate, slammed the development as "the latest in a long series of witch hunts."

Of Joe and Hunter Biden, he asked, "Where's their special prosecutor?"

Matt Mackowiak, a Republican political strategist, said it's one thing if the investigations into Hunter Biden stick to corruption questions, but if it veers into the kind of mean-spirited messaging that has been floating around in far-right circles, "I don't know that the public will have much patience for that."

## North Korea unveils Kim's daughter at missile launch site

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea has unveiled the little-known daughter of its leader Kim Jong Un at a missile launch site, attracting keen attention on a fourth-generation member of the dynastic family that has ruled North Korea for more than seven decades.

The North's state media said Saturday that Kim had observed the launch of its new type of intercontinental ballistic missile with his wife Ri Sol Ju, their "beloved daughter" and other officials the previous day. Kim said the launch of the Hwasong-17 missile — the North's longest-range, nuclear-capable missile — proved he has a reliable weapon to contain U.S.-led military threats.

The main Rodong Sinmun newspaper also released a slew of photos of Kim watching a soaring missile from a distance with his daughter. Other photos showed her with her hair pulled back, wearing a white coat and a pair of red shoes as she walked in hand-in-hand with her father by a huge missile atop a launch truck.

It's the first time for North Korea's state media to mention the daughter or publicize her photos. KCNA didn't provide further details about her like her name and age.

Much of Kim's private life is still unknown. But South Korean media reported Kim married Ri, a former singer, in 2009, and that the couple have three children who were born in 2010, 2013 and 2017.

It wasn't known which child Kim took to the launch site. But in 2013, after a trip to Pyongyang, retired NBA star Dennis Rodman told the British newspaper the Guardian that he and Kim had a "relaxing time by the sea" with the leader's family and that he held Kim's baby daughter, named Ju Ae.

The identities of Kim's children are a source of strong outside interest as the 38-year-old ruler hasn't

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publicly anointed an heir apparent.

When he disappeared from public eye for an extended period in 2020 amid unconfirmed rumors about health conditions, global media frenzy flared over who was next in line to run an impoverished yet nuclear-armed country. Many observers said at the time that Kim's younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, would step in and run the country if her brother was incapacitated.

The Kim family has governed North Korea with a strong personality following built around key family members since Kim's grandfather, Kim Il Sung, founded the country in 1948. The family's so-called Paektu bloodline, named after the North's most sacred mountain, allows only direct family members to rule the country.

"It's much too soon to infer anything about succession within the Kim regime," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "However, publicly including his wife and daughter in what Kim claims as a historically successful missile test associates the family business of ruling North Korea with the nation's missile programs."

"This may be an attempt to compensate for how few economic accomplishments Kim has to support his domestic legitimacy," Easley said.

Analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea said if Kim continues to take this daughter to key public events, that could signal that she would become Kim's successor.

"Under North Korea's system, the children of Kim Jong Un would have the status of a prince or princess, like in a dynasty. As the Rodong Sinmun newspaper publicized the photo of the daughter, who took after Kim Jong Un and Ri Sol Ju so much ... she has no choice but to live special lives," Cheong said.

Other observers say Kim taking his family to a missile test site indicated he was confident in the weapon's successful launch, or that he might have tried to burnish an image as a normal leader including his family in his affairs.

The disclosure of the Kim family child has taken many North Korea watchers by surprise.

It was only in 2010 when Kim, then 26, was first publicly mentioned in state media as he took a spate of top posts before he inherited power upon his father Kim Jong Il's death the next year. Kim Jong Il was also 31 when he won a key post in the ruling Workers' Party in 1973 — an appointment seen as a key step in the path to succeeding his father Kim Il Sung. Kim Jong Il's position as successor was made public at the party congress in 1980.

But Cheong said Kim Jong Il privately told associates in 1992 that Kim Jong Un, his third and youngest son, would succeed him. Cheong said Kim's aunt and her husband, who had defected to the United States, told him that a song praising Kim Jong Un was played and that Kim Jong Il said Kim Jong Un was his successor on his son's 8th birthday.

"Kim Jong Un may have his daughter, who resembles him the most in his mind, as his successor," Cheong said.

## Alabama fails to complete lethal injection for 3rd time

By KIM CHANDLER and JAY REEVES Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama's string of troubled lethal injections, which worsened late Thursday as prison workers aborted another execution because of a problem with intravenous lines, is unprecedented nationally, a group that tracks capital punishment said Friday.

The uncompleted execution of Kenneth Eugene Smith was the state's second such instance of being unable to kill an inmate in the past two months and its third since 2018. The state completed an execution in July, but only after a three-hour delay caused at least partly by the same problem with starting an IV line.

A leader at the Death Penalty Information Center, an anti-death penalty group with a large database on executions, said no state other than Alabama has had to halt an execution in progress since 2017, when Ohio halted Alva Campbell's lethal injection because workers couldn't find a vein.

According to Ngozi Ndulue, deputy director of the Washington-based group, the only other lethal injection stopped before an inmate died also was in Ohio, in 2009.

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"So Alabama has more aborted lethal injections in the past few years than the rest of the country has overall," she said.

Something has obviously gone wrong with the state's execution procedure, Ndulue said.

"I think Alabama clearly has some explaining to do, but also some reflection to do about what is going wrong in its execution process," she said. "The question is whether Alabama is going to take that seriously."

The Alabama Department of Corrections disputed that the cancellation was a reflection of problems. In a statement, it blamed the late-running court action for the cancellation because prison officials "had a short timeframe to complete its protocol."

Prison officials said they called off Smith's execution for the night after they were unable to get the lethal injection underway within the 100-minute window between the courts clearing the way for it to begin and a midnight deadline when the death warrant expired for the day. The U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way for Smith's execution when at about 10:20 p.m. it lifted a stay issued earlier in the evening by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. But the state decided about an hour later that the lethal injection would not happen that evening.

"We have no concerns about the state's ability to carry out future lethal injection procedures," the Alabama Department of Corrections said in an emailed statement.

"The department will continue to review its processes, as it routinely does following each execution, to identify areas of improvement." Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey also blamed Smith's last-minute appeals as the reason "justice could not be carried out"

U.S. District Judge R. Austin Huffaker Jr. on Friday granted a request from Smith's lawyers to visit with Smith and take photographs of his body. He also ordered the state to preserve notes and other materials related to what happened in the failed execution. Smith's attorneys said they believe he may have been strapped to a gurney for four hours even though his final appeals were still underway.

"Mr. Smith no doubt has injuries from the attempted execution — and certainly physical and testimonial evidence that needs to be preserved — that can and should be photographed and/or filmed," lawyers for Smith wrote.

Smith, who was scheduled to be put to death for the murder-for-hire slaying of a preacher's wife in 1988, was returned to death row at Holman Prison after surviving the attempt, a prison official said. His lawyers declined to comment Friday morning.

Corrections Commissioner John Hamm said prison staff tried for about an hour to get the two required intravenous lines connected to Smith, 57. Hamm said they established one line but were unsuccessful with a second line, which is required under the state's protocol as a backup, after trying several locations on Smith's body.

Officials then tried a central line, which involves a catheter placed into a large vein. "We were not able to have time to complete that, so we called off the execution," Hamm said.

The initial postponement came after Smith's final appeals focused on problems with IV lines at Alabama's last two scheduled lethal injections. Because the death warrant expired at midnight, the state must go back to court to seek a new execution date.

Advocacy groups and defense lawyers said Alabama's continued problems show a need for a moratorium to investigate how the death penalty is carried out in the state.

"Once again, the state of Alabama has shown that it is not capable of carrying out the present execution protocol without torture," federal defender John Palombi, who has represented many death row inmates in the state, said via email

Prosecutors said Smith was one of two men who were each paid \$1,000 to kill Elizabeth Sennett on behalf of her husband, who was deeply in debt and wanted to collect the insurance. The slaying — and the revelations of who was behind it — rocked the small north Alabama community where it happened in Colbert County and inspired a song called "The Fireplace Poker," by the Southern rock group Drive-By Truckers.

John Forrest Parker, the other man convicted in the slaying, was executed in 2010.

Alabama has faced scrutiny over its problems at recent lethal injections. In ongoing litigation, lawyers for inmates are seeking information about the qualifications of the execution team members responsible for connecting the lines. In a Thursday hearing in Smith's case, a federal judge asked the state how long was too long to try to establish a line, noting at least one state gives an hour limit.

The execution of Joe Nathan James Jr. in July took several hours to get underway because of problems establishing an IV line, leading Reprieve US Forensic Justice Initiative, an anti-death penalty group, to claim the execution was botched.

In September the state called off the scheduled execution of Alan Miller because of difficulty accessing his veins. Miller said in a court filing that prison staff poked him with needles for more than an hour, and at one point left him hanging vertically on a gurney before announcing they were stopping. Prison officials have maintained the delays were the result of the state carefully following procedures.

Alabama in 2018 called off the execution of Doyle Hamm because of problems getting the intravenous line connected. Hamm had damaged veins because of lymphoma, hepatitis and past drug use, his lawyer said. Hamm later died in prison of natural causes.

## **Coroner: Idaho students were stabbed to death in their beds**

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Four University of Idaho students who were found dead in a rental house near campus were stabbed to death in their beds and likely were asleep when they were attacked, a county coroner told a cable news channel.

Latah County Coroner Cathy Mabbutt also told NewsNation on Thursday that each victim suffered multiple stab wounds from a "pretty large knife."

"It has to be somebody pretty angry in order to stab four people to death," Mabbutt told NewsNation. The victims were stabbed in the chest and upper body, the coroner said.

Efforts by The Associated Press to reach Mabbutt by telephone Friday were diverted to an Idaho State Police spokesperson, who did not immediately return messages.

In an evening statement, Moscow Police Department confirmed the coroner reported the victims were likely asleep and that some of the victims had defensive wounds. Police additionally said there were no signs of sexual assault.

Comments from Mabbutt and the police expanded on autopsy reports released Thursday, which concluded the four students were murdered by being stabbed to death.

Officers have not identified a suspect or found a weapon.

The killings have shaken Moscow, an Idaho Panhandle town of 25,000 residents that last saw a homicide about five years ago. The leafy college town is about 80 miles (130 kilometers) south of Spokane, Washington.

All four victims were members of fraternities and sororities: seniors Madison Mogen, 21, of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Kaylee Goncalves, 21, of Rathdrum, Idaho; junior Xana Kernodle, 20, of Post Falls, Idaho; and freshman Ethan Chapin, 20, of Mount Vernon, Washington. The women were roommates. The bodies were found around noon Sunday.

Moscow police released a map Friday and later its statement with a rough timeline of events leading up to the deaths. It asked the public to provide any tips or leads.

The map showed that Chapin and Kernodle were seen at the Sigma Chi fraternity house between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. Saturday. Police said it's believed the two returned to the home by 1:45 a.m. Sunday.

Meanwhile, Goncalves and Mogen went to the Corner Club, a popular bar in downtown Moscow, from 10 p.m. Saturday to 1:30 a.m. Sunday. Then they visited a food truck on Main Street before using a ride-hailing service to return to the house by 1:45 a.m.

Surveillance video from the food truck shows Goncalves and Mogen ordering at the window, taking photos on their phones and chatting with friends in a segment of about 10 minutes.

Police said Friday that detectives do not believe a male seen in the video was involved in the crime.

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Police have said evidence at the scene leads them to believe the students were targeted, though they haven't given details. Investigators say nothing appears to have been stolen from the victims or the home. Police also said online reports of the victims being tied and gagged are not accurate.

Detectives seized the contents of three dumpsters on the same road as the residence for possible evidence. Officers also have been contacting local businesses to determine if a fixed-blade knife was recently purchased, police said.

After initially saying there was no ongoing danger, police reversed themselves Wednesday. "We cannot say that there is no threat to the community," Moscow Police Chief James Fry said. "We still believe it's a targeted attack. But the reality is there still is a person out there who committed four very horrible, horrible crimes."

Two people found unharmed in the sprawling house, described by police Friday as roommates, are not believed to be involved in the case, the statement said.

Fry declined to say whether the roommates were able to provide an account of the killings or to specify who called 911. There was no sign of forced entry and a door was found open by the first officers to arrive, the chief said.

Detectives are investigating nearly 500 tips and have done 38 interviews with people who may have information about the murders, police said. The Idaho State Police, the FBI and the Latah County Sheriff's Office are assisting with the investigation.

## Garland names special counsel to lead Trump-related probes

By ERIC TUCKER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Merrick Garland named a special counsel on Friday to oversee the Justice Department's investigation into the presence of classified documents at former President Donald Trump's Florida estate as well as key aspects of a separate probe involving the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection and efforts to undo the 2020 election.

The appointment of veteran prosecutor Jack Smith, announced just three days after Trump formally launched his 2024 candidacy, is a recognition of the unmistakable political implications of two investigations that involve not only a former president but also a current White House hopeful. It installs a new chain of command over sensitive probes seen as likely to accelerate now that the midterm elections have concluded, with Garland citing Trump's entry into the race and President Joe Biden's stated intention to run again as reasons for Smith's sudden appointment.

"The Department of Justice has long recognized that in certain extraordinary cases, it is in the public's interest to appoint a special prosecutor to independently manage an investigation and prosecution," Garland said from the Justice Department's podium.

Trump addressed the news Friday night at an America First Policy Institute gala at Mar-a-Lago, slamming what he described as the "appalling announcement today by the egregiously corrupt Biden administration and their weaponized Department of Justice."

He called it a "horrendous abuse of power" and "the latest in a long series of witch hunts," and insisted he'd "done nothing wrong,"

Smith, who led the Justice Department's public integrity section in Washington and later served as the acting chief federal prosecutor in Nashville, Tennessee, during the Obama administration, is set to begin his work immediately, Garland said. He has been serving since 2018 as chief prosecutor for the special court in The Hague, Netherlands, that is tasked with investigating international war crimes.

The Justice Department described Smith as a registered independent, an effort to blunt any attack of perceived political bias. Trump is a Republican, and Biden is a Democrat.

"Throughout his career, Jack Smith has built a reputation as an impartial and determined prosecutor who leads teams with energy and focus to follow the facts wherever they lead," Garland said. "As special counsel, he will exercise independent prosecutorial judgment to decide whether charges should be brought."

"The extraordinary circumstances here demand it," Garland said of the appointment.



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In a statement released by the Justice Department, Smith said he intended to do his work independently and "in the best traditions of the Department of Justice."

"The pace of the investigations will not pause or flag under my watch," he vowed.

As special counsel, Smith will inherit two ongoing probes that both touch Trump. One concerns potential interference in the transfer of power following the 2020 presidential election, when Trump allies scrambled for ways to overturn the results of the contest won by Biden. The other involves the retention of classified documents at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida.

The Mar-a-Lago probe has escalated especially quickly, with prosecutors this month granting immunity to a close Trump ally to secure his testimony before a federal grand jury. Investigators in that case have interviewed a broad range of witnesses and, in court filings, have cited legal concerns over the presence of top-secret materials in Mar-a-Lago despite strict procedures that govern the handling of classified information. They've also alleged efforts to obstruct that probe.

In his role as special counsel, Smith will be empowered to decide whether charges should be brought as part of his investigations and to prosecute any crimes he uncovers. Though Garland as attorney general would retain ultimate oversight of his work, he stressed the independent decision-making that Smith will bring to bear on the job.

The selection of someone from outside the department for the special counsel role was notable given how much emphasis Garland has placed in trying to ensure public confidence in his own workforce of prosecutors following the tumultuous years of the Trump administration, and to reassure Americans that his prosecutors' decisions are based on facts, the evidence and the law and can therefore be trusted.

There also does not seem to be an obvious conflict like the one that prompted the last appointment of a special counsel to handle Trump-related investigations.

The Trump Justice Department in 2017 named former FBI Director Robert Mueller as special counsel to lead the investigation into potential coordination between Russia and the Trump 2016 presidential campaign, a recognition of the inherent conflict involved in investigating a president who controls the executive branch.

Mueller declined to make a decision on whether Trump had criminally obstructed justice, noting long-standing Justice Department policy against indicting a sitting president. As a former president, Trump will no longer have that protection.

The special counsel role is the latest in a series of prosecutorial jobs for Smith, who early in his career was an assistant district attorney in New York before later joining the Justice Department.

Lanny Breuer, who led the department's criminal division when Smith ran the public integrity section, called Smith "an exquisite lawyer and an exquisite prosecutor."

"He's not political at all," Breuer said. "He's straight down the middle."

Smith grew up in upstate New York and graduated from Harvard Law School. He told The Associated Press in 2010 that he saw the role of a prosecutor as serving people like his parents and others he grew up with in the town of Clay.

"They pay their taxes, follow the rules, and they expect their public officials to do the same," he said then.

He had returned to the Justice Department at the time to oversee the department's then-troubled public integrity section, which was battered publicly for failing to turn over exculpatory evidence in the criminal trial of former Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens, a Republican. Supporters lauded him as apolitical and hardworking.

During his tenure, his unit brought a series of high-profile cases against elected officials from both political parties. Not all were successful, and not all investigations resulted in criminal charges — a powerful lesson, Smith told the AP.

When there isn't sufficient evidence to bring a case, "you have to be able to admit that if it's not there, it's not there," Smith said. "I think that's hard for people to do, and having been a prosecutor for 15 years that is something I can do."

## Elizabeth Holmes gets more than 11 years for Theranos scam

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

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SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — Disgraced Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes was sentenced Friday to more than 11 years in prison for duping investors in the failed startup that promised to revolutionize blood testing but instead made her a symbol of Silicon Valley ambition that veered into deceit.

The sentence imposed by U.S. District Judge Edward Davila was shorter than the 15-year penalty requested by federal prosecutors but far tougher than the leniency her legal team sought for the mother of a year-old son with another child on the way.

Holmes, 38, faced a maximum of 20 years in prison. Her legal team requested no more than 18 months, preferably served in home confinement.

"This is a very heavy sentence," said Rachel Fiset, a defense lawyer who has also been involved in health care cases.

Holmes, who was CEO throughout the company's turbulent 15-year history, was convicted in January in the scheme, which revolved around the company's claims to have developed a medical device that could detect a multitude of diseases and conditions from a few drops of blood. But the technology never worked, and the claims were false.

Theranos was dashed "by misrepresentations, hubris and just plain lies," the judge said.

"This case is so troubling on so many levels," Davila said. "What was it that caused Ms. Holmes to make the decisions she did? Was there a loss of a moral compass?"

Holmes' meteoric rise once landed her on the covers of business magazines that hailed her as the next Steve Jobs. And her deception was persuasive enough to draw in a list of sophisticated investors, including software magnate Larry Ellison, media mogul Rupert Murdoch and the Walton family behind Walmart.

She sobbed as she told the judge she accepted responsibility for her actions.

"I regret my failings with every cell of my body," Holmes said. She promised Davila she would devote the remainder of her life to trying to help others.

Holmes' attorney, Kevin Downey, indicated she would appeal the sentence. Holmes and her family left the courthouse by a side entrance and managed to evade reporters and photographers.

Before handing down the sentence, Davila reflected on Silicon Valley's transition from an agricultural hub populated by farmers and ranchers to a "crucible of innovation" brimming with bright-eyed entrepreneurs dreaming of changing the world.

Recalling the humble beginnings of technology pioneer Hewlett-Packard in a small garage in Palo Alto — the same city where Theranos was based — he spoke wistfully of "honest, hard work."

"That, I would hope, will be the legacy and continuation of this valley," the judge said.

Amanda Kramer, a former federal prosecutor who is now a defense attorney, described the sentence as "the equivalent of neon, flashing billboard" offering "a reminder the long-term consequences of fraud far outweigh any short-term gains."

The sentencing in the same San Jose courtroom where Holmes was convicted on four counts of investor fraud and conspiracy marked another climactic moment in a saga that has been dissected in an HBO documentary and an award-winning Hulu series.

Her lawyers argued that Holmes was a well-meaning entrepreneur who is now a devoted mother. Their viewpoints were supported by more than 130 letters submitted by family, friends and former colleagues praising Holmes.

Davila suggested that the letters might have struck a different tone had the writers seen and heard all the evidence shown to the jury.

Prosecutors also wanted Holmes to pay \$804 million in restitution — an amount that covers most of the nearly \$1 billion that she raised from investors. But the judge left that question for a future hearing that has not been scheduled.

While wooing investors, Holmes leveraged a high-powered Theranos board that included former Defense Secretary James Mattis, who testified against her during her trial, and two former secretaries of state, Henry Kissinger and the late George Shultz, whose son, Alexander submitted a statement blasting Holmes for concocting a scheme that played Shultz "for the fool."

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Alexander Shultz made a brief appearance Friday to lambaste her for terrorizing his son, Tyler, a former Theranos employee turned whistleblower who helped The Wall Street Journal expose the flaws in the company's blood-testing technology.

Before the first in a series of Journal articles appeared in October 2015, Alexander Shultz said Holmes hired private investigators to follow Tyler. The surveillance made Tyler so fearful that Alexander said his son began sleeping in his bed with a knife.

The judge gave Holmes more than five months of freedom before she must report to prison on April 27 — a window of time that should enable her to give birth to her second child before she is incarcerated. She gave birth to a son shortly before her trial started last year.

If Holmes' pregnancy had a role in determining her sentence, the decision could prove controversial. A 2019 study found that more than 1,000 pregnant women entered federal or state prisons over a 12-month study period; 753 of them gave birth in custody.

According to a 2016 survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, more than half of women entering federal prison — 58% — reported being mothers of minor children.

Kramer said it seemed clear that Davila did not allow the pregnancy to sway his judgement. His sentence "was a lesson about justice being blind, whether you are woman, a mother, a powerful figure, you are still going to be treated equally under the law."

Federal prosecutor Robert Leach described the Theranos scam as one of the most egregious white-collar crimes ever committed in Silicon Valley. In a scathing 46-page memo, Leach urged the judge to send a message to curb the hubris and hyperbole unleashed by the tech boom of the last 30 years.

Even though Holmes was acquitted on four counts of fraud and conspiracy tied to patients who took Theranos blood tests, Leach also asked the judge to factor in the health threats posed by Holmes' conduct.

Evidence submitted during her trial showed the tests produced wildly unreliable results that could have steered patients toward the wrong treatments.

Holmes lawyers painted her as a selfless visionary who spent 14 years trying to revolutionize health care. They asserted that Holmes never stopped trying to perfect the technology until Theranos collapsed in 2018.

They also pointed out that Holmes never sold any of her Theranos shares — a stake valued at \$4.5 billion in 2014. "Where did all the money go? To building technology," Downey said.

In court documents, Downey also asked Davila to consider the alleged sexual and emotional abuse Holmes suffered while she was involved romantically with Ramesh "Sunny" Balwani, who became a Theranos investor, top executive and eventually an accomplice in her crimes.

Balwani, 57, is scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 7 after being convicted in a July trial on 12 counts of fraud and conspiracy.

## California governor set to release \$1B for homelessness

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom agreed to release \$1 billion in state homelessness funding he testily put on pause earlier this month, but only if local governments agree to step up the aggressiveness of their plans going forward to reduce the number of unhoused people in the state.

The Democratic governor said his afternoon meeting Friday with about 100 mayors and local officials in person and virtually was productive, with leaders getting on the same page about what needs to be done and willing to step up on their goals.

"It was nice to hear their progress. And it was nice to hear their recognition that we have to get to another level," he said to reporters after the two-hour plus meeting. "What I want to see is what everybody wants to see: the streets of California cleaned up. We want to see encampments cleaned up, we want to see people housed."

Newsom, who coasted to reelection this month, is on the hook in his second term to show reductions in the growing number of unhoused individuals, some of whom camp out along city sidewalks and under highway underpasses, exasperating even the most politically liberal voters in the country's most populous state.

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He stunned the state when he announced two weeks ago that he would withhold \$1 billion in spending until cities and counties came up with more robust plans, calling submitted plans "simply unacceptable" as they would collectively reduce the state's homeless population by just 2% over the next four years.

Mayors and county officials — many of whom are Democrats — as well as advocates for low-income housing pushed back against his effort to withhold funding, saying it was counterproductive to hold money needed for shelter beds, outreach workers and other services for unhoused people. They pleaded with the governor for more direction — as well as guaranteed, ongoing funding to build more ambitious plans.

On Friday, he reiterated the record amount of money his administration has spent on housing and homelessness, including a recent commitment by state lawmakers to spend \$15.3 billion over the next three years. The money has kept tens of thousands of people housed, he said, but acknowledged people were not seeing results on the streets.

Newsom said he had no plans on turning his back on local governments, but that "finding new dedicated money as we enter into what could be a recession with the headwinds, one has to be sober about that — just as they're sober about that with their budgets."

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg defended Newsom, saying after the meeting that he understood the governor's need to provoke local governments into action. He praised Newsom for his leadership on the issue — from converting motels into homes to new mental health courts to treat homeless people with schizophrenia and other serious mental health conditions.

But not everyone understood the point of Friday's meeting.

San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo, who joined virtually, said there were too many people and little room for "forthright, constructive dialogue." He and other mayors were told several days ago that Newsom planned to release the money if they submitted new plans.

Broadly, the governor seemed to be on a different page than the state housing department, which worked with San Jose and other cities on their original plans, said Liccardo, also a Democrat.

"There seems to be countervailing notions about what is required," he said.

The California State Association of Counties was blunt in its criticism.

"We can't fix an ongoing crisis with one-time commitments. Progress requires clear state, county, and city roles aligned with sustainable, equitable funding. We need to get out of our own way and work together," said Graham Knaus, executive director of the association that represents the state's 58 counties.

Addressing homelessness has for decades been left to local governments in California, but Newsom took office in 2019 vowing to own an issue he said he understood intimately as a former mayor of San Francisco, where tent encampments crowd sidewalks and people in clear mental health crisis are a common sight.

California had an estimated 161,000 unhoused people in 2020 with the number expected to be higher this year, the result of the state's high cost of housing and historic under-building of homes. Advocates for the homeless say that they can't keep up and that even as they find housing for some, many more lose their homes.

That possibility of a separate funding stream for homelessness became dimmer this week after state officials announced Wednesday that California will likely have a \$25 billion budget deficit next year after a run of historic surpluses.

The state's 13 largest cities, 58 counties and 44 groups of homeless service providers submitted 75 applications detailing their plans for spending \$1 billion in what was the third round of disbursements.

An additional \$1 billion is on the table, but Newsom won't release that money unless those governments pledge "to be more aggressive across the board," said Erin Mellon, spokesperson for the governor's office. Plans are due in two weeks.

Applicants also must agree to implement as many best practices as possible, including more efficient methods of getting people into housing and streamlining the building of more homes for poor and extremely poor households.

The Newsom administration is also cracking down on California cities and counties reluctant to build more housing, including affordable housing, with many saying they don't want the congestion and neighborhood changes that come with more people.

## Twitter risks fraying as engineers exit over Musk upheaval

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

Elon Musk's managerial bomb-throwing at Twitter has so thinned the ranks of software engineers who keep the world's de-facto public square up and running that industry insiders and programmers who were fired or resigned this week agree: Twitter may soon fray so badly it could actually crash.

Musk ended a very public argument with nearly two dozen coders over his retooling of the microblogging platform earlier this week by ordering them fired. Hundreds of engineers and other workers then quit after he demanded they pledge to "extremely hardcore" work by Thursday evening or resign with severance pay.

The newest departures mean the platform is losing workers just at it gears up for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which opens Sunday. It's one of Twitter's busiest events, when tweet surges heavily stress its systems.

"It does look like he's going to blow up Twitter," said Robert Graham, a veteran cybersecurity entrepreneur. "I can't see how the lights won't go out at any moment" — although many recently departed Twitter employees predicted a more gradual demise.

Hundreds of employees signaled they were leaving ahead of Thursday's deadline, posting farewell messages, a salute emoji or other familiar symbols on the company's internal Slack messaging board, according to employees who still have access. Dozens also took publicly to Twitter to announce their departure.

Earlier in the week, some got so angry at Musk's perceived recklessness that they took to Twitter to insult the Tesla and Space X CEO. "Kiss my ass, Elon," one engineer said, adding lipstick marks. She had been fired.

Twitter leadership sent an unsigned email after Thursday's deadline saying its offices would be closed and employee badge access disabled until Monday. No reason was given, according to two employees who got the email— one who took the severance, one still on payroll. They spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing retribution.

A trusted phalanx of Tesla coders at his side as he ransacked a formerly convivial workspace, Musk didn't appear bothered.

"The best people are staying, so I'm not super worried," he tweeted Thursday night. But it soon became clear some crucial programming teams had been thoroughly gutted.

Indicating how strapped he is for programmers, Musk sent all-hands emails Friday summoning "anyone who actually writes software" to his command perch on Twitter's 10th floor at 2 p.m. — asking that they fly into San Francisco if not local, said the employee who quit Thursday but was still receiving company emails.

After taking over Twitter less than three weeks ago, Musk booted half of the company's full-time staff of 7,500 and an untold number of contractors responsible for content moderation and other crucial efforts. Then came this week's ultimatum.

Three engineers who left this week described for The Associated Press why they expect considerable unpleasantness for Twitter's more than 230 million users now that well over two-thirds of Twitter's pre-Musk core services engineers are apparently gone. While they don't anticipate near-term collapse, Twitter could get very rough at the edges — especially if Musk makes major changes without much off-platform testing.

Signs of fraying were evident before Thursday's mass exit. People reported seeing more spam and scams on their feeds and in their direct messages. Engineers reported dropped tweets. People got strange error messages.

Still, nothing critical has broken. Yet.

"There's a betting pool for when that happens," said one of the engineers, all of whom spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation from Musk that could impact their careers and finances.

Another said that if Twitter has been shutting servers and "high volume suddenly comes in, it might start crashing."

"World Cup is the biggest event for Twitter. That's the first thing you learn when you onboard at Twitter," he said.

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With the earlier layoffs of curation employees, Twitter's trending pages were already suffering. The engineering fireworks began Tuesday when Musk announced on Twitter that he had begun shutting down "microservices" he considered unnecessary "bloatware."

"Less than 20% are actually needed for Twitter to work!" he tweeted.

That drew objections from engineers who told Musk he had no idea what he was talking about.

"Microservices are how most modern large web services organize their code to allow software engineers to work quickly and efficiently," said Gergely Orosz, author of the Pragmatic Engineer blog and a former Uber programmer. There are scores of such services and each manages a different feature. Instead of testing the removal of microservices in a simulated real-world environment, Musk's team has apparently been updating Twitter live on everyone's computers.

And indeed, one microservice briefly broke — the one people use to verify their identity to Twitter via SMS message when they log in. It's called two-factor authentication.

"You have hit the limit for SMS codes. Try again in 24 hours," Twitter advised when a reporter tried to download their microblogging history archive. Luckily, the email verification alternative worked.

One of the newly separated Twitter engineers, who had worked in core services, told the AP that engineering team clusters were down from about 15 people pre-Musk — not including team leaders, who were all laid off — to three or four before Thursday's resignations.

Then more institutional knowledge that can't be replaced overnight walked out the door.

"Everything could break," the programmer said.

It takes six months to train someone to work an on-call rotation for some services, the engineers said. Such rotations require programmers to be available at all hours. But if the person on call is unfamiliar with the code base, failures could cascade as they frantically plow through reference manuals.

"If I stayed I would have been on-call constantly with little support for an indeterminate amount of time on several additional complex systems I had no experience in," tweeted Peter Clowes, an engineer who took the severance.

"Running even relatively boring systems takes people who know where to go when something breaks," said Blaine Cook, Twitter's founding engineer, who left in 2008. It's dangerous to drastically reduce a programming workforce to a skeleton crew without first bulletproofing the code, he said.

"It's like saying, 'These firefighters aren't doing anything. So, we'll just fire them all.'"

The engineers also worry Musk will shut down tools involved in content moderation and removing illicit material that people upload to Twitter — or that there simply wouldn't be enough people on staff to run them properly.

Another concern is hackers. When they've breached the system in the past, diminishing damage depends on detecting them quickly and kicking them out.

It's not clear how Musk's housecleaning at Twitter has affected its cybersecurity team, which suffered a major PR black eye in August when the highly respected security chief fired by the company earlier this year, Peiter Zatkó, filed a whistleblower complaint claiming the platform was a cybersecurity shambles.

"So much of the security infrastructure of a large organization like Twitter is in people's heads," said Graham, the cybersecurity veteran. "And when they're gone, you know, it all goes with them."

## US envoy Kerry positive for COVID as UN climate talks drag

By SETH BORENSTEIN, KELVIN CHAN and PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — John Kerry, the top U.S. envoy at this year's U.N. climate talks in Egypt, has tested positive for COVID-19, a spokesperson said late Friday night, another potential setback for negotiations that were already going into overtime with no result in sight.

"He is fully vaccinated and boosted and experiencing mild symptoms. He is working with his negotiations team and foreign counterparts by phone to ensure a successful outcome of COP27," spokesperson Whitney Smith wrote in a statement late Friday.

Kerry's illness was sure to add to worries about the negotiations, which had been scheduled to end

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Friday. A former U.S. senator and secretary of state, Kerry has deep relationships with leaders around the world and carries a lot of weight in international talks. His meetings in Sharm el-Sheikh with China's climate envoy Xie Zhenhua were closely watched for signs that the world's two biggest polluters might agree a deal that would boost the overall talks.

Negotiations, at least those in public, hit a lull Friday afternoon as news conferences and plenaries were postponed or cancelled. Diplomats said they hoped for late night progress and changed airline reservations so talks could continue.

Delegates said there was some headway being made, especially on the most difficult sticking point. That's the issue of rich industrialized nations providing money to vulnerable countries suffering from 'loss and damage' as a result of climate-related disasters.

"I think we're in for a bit of a long haul," World Resources Institute international climate director David Waskow said. "Loss and damage sits at the center in terms of what needs to be done to get this over the finish line."

The United States appeared isolated in opposing a dedicated loss and damage fund after the European Union produced a surprise offer on the issue Thursday. But a State Department official confirmed that negotiations on the issue were ongoing.

A group of developing nations known as G-77 and China have insisted on a fund being established at the meeting and remained outwardly united on the issue late Friday.

Other delegates at the talks expressed hope that a deal might still be possible.

"We are very busy and they're making some progress and they've gotten some clarity on all positions," Molwyn Joseph, who spoke on behalf of small island states, told The Associated Press.

"There is the possibility that we could get an outcome, but also it could fall over at the last minute," said New Zealand's Climate Change Minister James Shaw. "And I think if that happened, it would be a real shame because this is as close (on loss and damage) as we've ever been before."

Climate activist Nakeeyat Dramani Sam of Ghana chided delegates at this year's U.N. climate talks, saying they would act faster to rein in global warming if they were her age.

"It is an emergency," the 10-year-old told negotiators, holding a sign that read "Payment Overdue". "If all of you were to be young people like me, wouldn't you have already agreed to do what is needed to save our planet?"

But after receiving a standing ovation, it was back to nations squabbling over several thorny issues, with the Egyptian presidency acknowledging that the talks will go into overtime on Saturday, if not longer.

"Time is not on our side," said Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. Speaking as the summit's chair, he pledged to try to find common ground going forward. "The global community is looking to us to be bold and ambitious."

The EU proposal on 'loss and damage' payments Thursday would require emerging economies such as China — the second biggest historic polluter after the U.S. — to contribute to the fund.

"We're making clear that Europe is on the side of the most vulnerable states," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said. "Others can now show which side they are on."

The EU proposal would also require stepped up efforts on reducing, or 'mitigating,' greenhouse gas emissions to slow global warming. It also adopts a call to phase down all fossil fuels — a measure first proposed by India and a dramatic step up from previous commitments to just phase down coal.

Unless emissions are cut more steeply, "no money in the world could pay for the damages and losses of the future," Baerbock said.

EU climate chief Frans Timmermans said Friday that the bloc's proposal on funding for loss and damage and mitigation is "a final offer" that seeks to "find a compromise" between countries as negotiators work out a way forward.

The environmental advocacy group Action Aid called the proposal a "wolf in sheep's clothing" because it doesn't go far enough.

The EU plan was a counter to a proposal made by the Group of 77 and China, which would create a

fund but only require developed nations to contribute, excepting top polluters China and India.

China, which had been quiet during much of the talks, and Saudi Arabia both said the money for a loss and damage fund shouldn't come from them. Developed countries should foot the bill, China said. Both also insisted that the 2015 Paris Agreement that aims to limit global warming to an ambitious 1.5 Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) increase should not be altered, which can be interpreted as not strengthening efforts.

A senior official from the Maldives voiced growing frustration at the way vulnerable countries keep getting caught up in battles between more powerful nations at the talks, even as their situation gets increasingly dire due to climate change.

"Small island states have just 86 months and we're already feeling it," the official said, referring to scientists' calculations that greenhouse gas emissions have to be halved by 2030. "We can't be sandwiched between global powers."

Friday's draft of the overarching decision on the outcome of the talks, issued by the Egyptian presidency, includes some vague references to reform to multilateral development banks but did not include or make reference to the detailed Bridgetown Initiative on financial reform from Barbados and its Prime Minister Mia Mottley.

## Saudi prince's new title key to dodging lawsuit over killing

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It raised eyebrows six weeks ago when Saudi Arabia's aged king, Salman, named his son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as prime minister. The kingdom's laws designate the king as prime minister. King Salman had to declare a temporary exception to loan out the title, and at the same time made clear he retains key duties.

But that move reaped dividends Thursday, when the Biden administration declared that Prince Mohammed's standing as prime minister shielded him from a U.S. lawsuit over what the U.S. intelligence community says was his role in Saudi officials' 2018 killing of a U.S.-based journalist. A judge will now decide whether Prince Mohammed has immunity.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby insisted Friday that the administration's declaration of immunity for Saudi Arabia's crown prince was purely a "legal determination" that "has absolutely nothing to do with the merits of the case itself."

Many experts in international law agreed with the administration — but only because of the king's late September title boost for the crown prince, ahead of a scheduled U.S. decision.

"It would have been just as remarkable for the United States to deny MBS's head-of-state immunity after his appointment as Prime Minister as it would have been for the United States to recognize MBS's head-of-state immunity before his appointment," William S. Dodge, a professor at the University of California-Davis School of Law, wrote, using the prince's initials.

State Department spokesman Vedant Patel gave examples Friday of past instances of the U.S. recognizing immunity for heads of government or state — Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Narendra Modi of India, both in allegations of rights abuses.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Washington by the fiancée of slain journalist Jamal Khashoggi and by a D.C.-based rights group he founded. It accuses the crown prince and about 20 aides, officers and others of plotting and carrying out Khashoggi's slaying at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

The killing, condemned by Biden on the campaign trail in 2019 as "flat-out murder" that must have consequences for Saudi rulers, is at the core of a rift between strategic partners, the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Before and immediately after taking office, Biden vowed to take a stand on Saudi Arabia's crown prince, as part of a presidency that would be based on rights and values. But Biden has since offered a fist bump and other conciliatory gestures in hopes — disappointed so far — of persuading the crown prince to pump more oil for world markets.

Biden's administration argues that Saudi Arabia is too important to the global economy and to regional



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security to allow the United States to walk away from the decades-old partnership.

But rights advocates, some senior Democratic lawmakers, and Khashoggi's newspaper, The Washington Post, on Friday condemned the administration's move.

"Jamal died again today," Khashoggi's fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, tweeted.

Fred Ryan, publisher of the Post, called it a "cynical, calculated effort" to manipulate the law and shield Prince Mohammed. Khashoggi wrote columns for the Post that in his last months criticized the crown prince's rights abuses.

"By going along with this scheme, President Biden is turning his back on fundamental principles of press freedom and equality," Ryan wrote.

Cengiz and Khashoggi's rights group, Democracy for the Arab World Now, or DAWN, had argued that the crown prince's late September title change was no more than a maneuver to escape U.S. courts, without legal standing or any change in authority or duties.

Saudi Arabia has not commented publicly on the administration's decision. Spokespeople with the Saudi Embassy and Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment Friday.

Saudi Arabia blames what it says were "rogue" officials for Khashoggi's killing. It says the prince played no part.

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy, as opposed to a constitutional one like the United Kingdom, where a prime minister rather than king or queen governs.

"Pretty pathetic," Sarah Leah Whitson, head of Khashoggi's rights group, said Friday of the title change.

"If anything, it just demonstrated how afraid Mohammed bin Salman was and has been of our lawsuit and actual accountability and actual discovery of his crimes," Whitson said.

The Biden administration appeared to dismiss her group's argument that Prince Mohammed's recent title change ran counter to Saudi Arabia's governing law and should be disregarded.

King Salman has continued making appointments and presiding over meetings of his council since the title change.

But Prince Mohammed for years has been a key decision-maker and actor in the kingdom, including representing the king abroad.

Some Western news outlets had presented the temporary transfer of the prime minister title as King Salman — who is in his late 80s — devolving responsibility to Prince Mohammed, who is 37.

A federal judge had given the U.S. until Thursday to offer an opinion, or not, on the claim by the crown prince that his standing shields him from U.S. courts.

Rights advocates had hoped up to the moment of filing that the administration would stay silent, offering no opinion on Prince Mohammed's immunity either way.

Sovereign immunity, a concept rooted in international law, holds that states and their officials are protected from some legal proceedings in other foreign states' courts.

Prior criminal and civil cases brought against foreign governments and leaders in which the U.S. has not intervened have generally involved countries with which the U.S. has no diplomatic relations or does not recognize their heads of state or government as legitimate.

Cases brought against Iran and North Korea seeking damages for deaths or injuries to American citizens are two prominent examples of instances where the executive branch has not weighed in with an opinion about sovereign immunity.

By contrast, the United States has full diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. The State Department stressed Thursday that honoring the principle for other governments' leaders helps ensure that courts in other countries don't seek to haul U.S. presidents before them to answer to lawsuits there.

Kirby, the National Security Council spokesman, said the U.S. decision had "absolutely nothing" to do with "tense" U.S.-Saudi relations over Saudi-led oil production cuts, and other matters.

Biden has been "very, very vocal" about the "brutal, barbaric murder of Khashoggi," Kirby said.

But some of Biden's fellow Democrats in Congress expressed disappointment at the administration's move.

"Is the Administration casting aside its confidence in its own intelligence community's judgment?" Sen.

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Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat, said in a statement. "If the friends and family of Khashoggi are denied a path to accountability in the American court system, where in the world can they go?"

Whitson, the official for Khashoggi's rights group, said the lawsuit would continue against the others named in the lawsuit.

## Russian strikes force Ukraine to face hours-long power cuts

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's electricity grid chief warned of hours-long power outages Friday as Russia zeroed in on Ukraine's energy infrastructure with heavy artillery and missile attacks that have interrupted supplies to as much as 40% of the country's people at the onset of winter.

Freezing temperatures are putting additional pressure on energy networks, grid operator Ukrenergo said.

"You always need to prepare for the worst. We understand that the enemy wants to destroy our power system in general, to cause long outages," Ukrenergo's chief executive Volodymyr Kudrytskyi told Ukrainian state television. "We need to prepare for possible long outages, but at the moment we are introducing schedules that are planned and will do everything to ensure that the outages are not very long."

The capital of Kyiv is already facing a "huge deficit in electricity," Mayor Vitali Klitschko told The Associated Press. Some 1.5 million to 2 million people — about half of the city's population — are periodically plunged into darkness as authorities switch electricity from one district to another.

"It's a critical situation," he said.

Klitschko added that Russian President Vladimir Putin's military planners apparently are hoping "to bring us, everyone, to depression," to make people feel unsafe and "to think about, 'Maybe we give up.'" But it won't work, he said.

"It's wrong, it's (a) wrong vision of Putin," he said. "After every rocket attack, I talk to the people, to simple civilians. They (are) not depressed. They were angry, angry and ready to stay and defend our houses, our families and our future."

Kudrytskyi added that the power situation at critical facilities such as hospitals and schools has been stabilized.

Those facilities were targeted overnight in the northeastern Kharkiv region, where energy equipment was damaged, according to governor Oleh Syniehubov. Eight people including energy crews and police were injured trying to clear up the debris, he said.

Moscow's attacks on Ukraine's energy and power facilities have fueled fears of what the dead of winter will bring. Ukraine's energy infrastructure had again been targeted Thursday, two days after Russia unleashed a nationwide barrage of more than 100 missiles and drones that knocked out power to 10 million people.

Those attacks have also affected neighboring countries like Moldova, where a half-dozen cities across that country experienced temporary blackouts.

In the past 24 hours, Russian forces unleashed the breadth of their arsenal to attack Ukraine's southeast, employing drones, rockets, heavy artillery and warplanes that killed at least six civilians and wounded six others, the president's office said.

In the Zaporizhzhia region, part of which remains under Russian control, artillery pounded 10 towns and villages. The death toll from a Russian rocket attack on a residential building in the city of Vilniansk on Thursday climbed to 10 people, including three children.

In Nikopol, located across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, 40 Russian missiles damaged several high-rise buildings, homes and a power line.

In the wake of its humiliating retreat from the southern city of Kherson, Moscow intensified its assault on the eastern Donetsk region, where Russia's Defense Ministry said Friday its forces took control of the village of Opytne and repelled a Ukrainian counteroffensive to reclaim the settlements of Solodke, Volodymyrivka and Pavlivka.

The city of Bakhmut, a key target of Moscow's attempt to seize the whole region of Donetsk, remains the scene of heavy fighting, the regional governor said.

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The Russian Defense Ministry also said Ukrainian troops were pushed back from Yahidne in Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv province, and Kuzemivka in the neighboring Luhansk province. Donetsk and Luhansk were among the four Ukrainian provinces illegally annexed by Moscow in September, together with Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

At the same time, Moscow is fortifying its defenses in the southern region to thwart further Ukrainian advances. Russian troops have built new trench systems near the border of Crimea, as well as near the Siversky-Donets River between Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, according to a British Ministry of Defense report.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian and international investigators were forging ahead on uncovering suspected war crimes committed by Russian forces during the Kharkiv region's near seven-month occupation. Ukraine's National Police said Friday that its officers had initiated over 3,000 criminal proceedings against Russian troops.

Reports of torture and other atrocities committed by Russian troops have also emerged from the southern Kherson region, where Ukrainian officials said they have opened more than 430 war crimes cases and are investigating four alleged torture sites.

Alesha Babenko, a 27-year-old from the village of Kyselivka said he was arrested by the Russians in September and locked in a basement, then beaten daily while bound, blindfolded and threatened with electric shocks.

"I thought I was going to die," he told the AP.

On Friday, Russian officials denounced videos that appeared on social media that purportedly show Ukrainian troops executing Russian soldiers. Russia said the videos were recorded in Ukraine's eastern Luhansk region, which is almost entirely under Russian control.

"We demand international organizations to condemn this egregious crime, to conduct a thorough investigation of it," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said. Russia's human rights council said it had sent the videos to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International and other international organizations.

Earlier this week, the head of the Matilda Bogner, head of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Matilda Bogner, said the mission had investigated torture of prisoners on both sides of the conflict.

"We have received credible allegations of summary executions of persons hors de combat and several cases of torture and ill-treatment, reportedly committed by members of the Ukrainian armed forces," Bogner said.

The recapture of Kyselivka after Russia's withdrawal last week has sparked hopes in neighboring Mykolaiv province that they will once again have tap water, which was switched off after the village fell into Russian hands. But Mykolaiv administrator Vitali Kim predicted Friday that could take several weeks.

Hungry and cold, Kherson residents lined up Friday for food from a charity, with many saying they had nothing to eat and had no heat or electricity. Residents were further shaken after a missile struck the fourth floor of an apartment building, reminding them that the Russian occupation may be over but not the danger from Russian missiles.

"There was an explosion ... it was very scary. We cannot calm down," said Tatiana Kruvorchko, who lived in the building.

Despite the tremendous hardships across Ukraine, one hopeful sign emerged with the news that the first train from Kyiv to Kherson would be departing Friday night. Ukraine's state rail network Ukrzaliznytsia said 200 passengers will travel on the train – the first in nine months.

Dubbed the "Train to Victory," the train's carriages were painted in eclectic designs by Ukrainian artists and the tickets were sold as part of charity project.

## 'Viral jambalaya': Early flu adding to woes for US hospitals

By MIKE STOBBE and LINDSEY TANNER Associated Press

As Americans head into the holiday season, a rapidly intensifying flu season is straining hospitals already

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overburdened with patients sick from other respiratory infections.

More than half the states have high or very high levels of flu, unusually high for this early in the season, the government reported Friday. Those 27 states are mostly in the South and Southwest but include a growing number in the Northeast, Midwest and West.

This is happening when children's hospitals already are dealing with a surge of illnesses from RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus, a common cause of coldlike symptoms that can be serious for infants and the elderly. And COVID-19 is still contributing to more than 3,000 hospital admissions each day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Atlanta, Dr. Mark Griffiths describes the mix as a "viral jambalaya." He said the children's hospitals in his area have at least 30% more patients than usual for this time of year, with many patients forced to wait in emergency rooms for beds to open up.

"I tell parents that COVID was the ultimate bully. It bullied every other virus for two years," said Griffiths, ER medical director of a Children's Health Care of Atlanta downtown hospital.

With COVID-19 rates going down, "they're coming back full force," he said

The winter flu season usually doesn't get going until December or January. Hospitalization rates from flu haven't been this high this early since the 2009 swine flu pandemic, CDC officials say. The highest rates are among those 65 and older and children under 5, the agency said.

"It's so important for people at higher risk to get vaccinated," the CDC's Lynnette Brammer said in a statement Friday.

But flu vaccinations are down from other years, particularly among adults, possibly because the past two seasons have been mild. Flu shots are recommended for nearly all Americans who are at least 6 months old or older.

Adults can get RSV too and that infection can be especially dangerous for older adults who are frail or have chronic illnesses, doctors say. There is not yet a vaccine against RSV although some are in development.

One infectious disease specialist urged Americans to take precautions before gathering for Thanksgiving, including avoiding public crowds, getting COVID-19 tests before they meet, and wearing masks indoors — particularly if you are old or frail, or will be around someone who is.

"Nobody wants to bring a virus to the table," said Dr. William Schaffner, of Vanderbilt University.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and Children's Hospital Association this week urged the Biden administration to declare an emergency and mount a national response to "the alarming surge of pediatric respiratory illnesses." An emergency declaration would allow waivers of Medicaid, Medicare or Children's Health Insurance Program requirements so that doctors and hospitals could share resources and access emergency funding, the groups said in a letter.

## **EXPLAINER: What Griner may endure in Russian penal system**

By JOANNA KOZLOWSKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — WNBA star Brittney Griner has begun serving her nine-year sentence for drug possession at a remote Russian penal colony that human rights advocates say is known for harsh conditions and violent criminals. It's in a region once synonymous with the Soviet gulag.

Griner was convicted Aug. 4 after customs agents said they found vape canisters containing cannabis oil in her luggage at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport. The all-star center with the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury and two-time Olympic gold medalist said she had been prescribed cannabis for pain and had no criminal intent.

After a Russian court rejected her appeal last month, her lawyers said she was taken to the IK-2 colony in Mordovia, a region 350 kilometers (210 miles) southeast of Moscow.

Here is a look at what life looks like at Russian penal colonies, and at Griner's prospects of being freed in a U.S.-Russia prisoner exchange.

**WHAT IS A PENAL COLONY?**

Penal colony is a term used to describe the most common type of prison in Russia, where inmates are housed in barracks and engage in menial labor for symbolic pay.

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Under Josef Stalin, forced-labor camps in farflung locations dotted the entire USSR; some well-known ones were in Mordovia.

"In Russia, Mordovia is known as 'the land of prisoners.' Its colonies descend directly from the Stalin-era camps, and have a reputation for being particularly strict," said Zoya Svetova, a Russian journalist and human rights defender who previously worked with the Public Monitoring Commission, a state-backed prison watchdog.

The gulag system and its czarist predecessor, which saw criminals and dissidents dispatched to remote regions of Siberia, provided prisoner labor to develop industries such as mining and logging, and to build highways and railroads. While conditions vary among modern-day penal colonies, Russian law still allows for inmates to be put to work, with most sewing uniforms for the Russian army and law enforcement.

Mordovia is home to over 15 similar colonies, including the IK-17 facility where American Paul Whelan, a retired U.S. Marine detained in 2018, is serving a 16-year sentence. Whelan was convicted on spying charges, which he and Washington deny.

## WHAT IS LIFE LIKE AT IK-2?

The IK-2 is an all-female facility for first-time offenders, according to Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service. Its over 800 inmates are housed in barracks.

But Svetova said IK-2 holds mostly women convicted of murder and assault, as well as a rising number of those incarcerated for drug crimes. She told The Associated Press in an interview that she and her colleagues received multiple reports of women being brutalized by their fellow inmates, "cruel" wardens and inadequate medical facilities.

"The women's colonies are all served by one hospital, which we were previously notified lacked basic medicines," she said.

Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of the protest music group Pussy Riot, who was imprisoned in another female colony in Mordovia for protesting against Russian President Vladimir Putin in a Moscow cathedral, said in an open letter in September 2013 that she was going on a hunger strike to bring attention to the brutal conditions.

She alleged that inmates at the IK-14 colony were "collapsing under the strain of slavery-like conditions," forced to work up to 17 hours a day and succumbing to hunger and frostbites.

"I demand that the Mordovia camp function in accordance with the law. I demand that we are being treated like human beings, not slaves," her letter said.

Tolokonnikova was released in December that year under an amnesty from the Russian Parliament.

Ulyana Khmeleva, a Russian entrepreneur who spent 11 years in Mordovia's penal colonies on drug charges that she says were trumped-up, described the facilities as "a moral hell" in a 2019 essay in the Russian independent news outlet Mediazona.

She and fellow inmates were forced to work punishing hours in freezing temperatures, she said, and witnessed the deaths of multiple fellow prisoners.

## WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR AN EXCHANGE?

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said in July that Washington had made a "substantial proposal" to Moscow to get Griner home.

While Blinken didn't elaborate, the AP and other news organizations have reported that the Biden administration has offered to exchange Griner and Whelan for Viktor Bout, a Russian arms dealer serving a 25-year sentence in the U.S. Bout once earned the nickname "the merchant of death."

This week, a senior Russian diplomat confirmed that back-channel talks are ongoing between Moscow and Washington.

"I would like to hope that the prospect of (exchanging Bout) is not only preserved, it is being strengthened, and the moment will come when we get a concrete agreement," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told reporters on Friday.

Ryabkov said that while the two countries "have not yet agreed on a common denominator," it was "undeniable" that a swap was being discussed.

"We certainly count on a positive result," he said.

The Biden administration has classified Griner and Whelan as wrongfully detained. Analysts have pointed out that Moscow may be using the jailed Americans as bargaining chips amid soaring U.S.-Russian tensions over the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine.

## What to know if you've applied for student loan forgiveness

By CORA LEWIS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Joe Biden's plan to provide up to \$20,000 in federal student loan forgiveness has been blocked by two federal courts, leaving millions of borrowers wondering what happens next. The Justice Department on Friday asked the Supreme Court to reverse one of the lower court decisions, warning that many Americans will face financial hardship if the plan remains blocked.

Here's what to know if you've applied for relief:

### WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

While the application for relief has been taken down from the Federal Student Aid website, applications that have already been filed are on hold while the appeal works its way through the courts.

"Courts have issued orders blocking our student debt relief program," the Education Department said on its site. "As a result, at this time, we are not accepting applications. We are seeking to overturn those orders."

A federal judge in Texas ruled that the plan overstepped the White House's authority. Before that, a federal appeals court in St. Louis put the plan on temporary hold while it considers a challenge from six Republican-led states.

Still, advocates believe the administration will succeed in court.

"We're really confident they're going to find a way forward to cancel people's debt," said Katherine Welbeck at the Student Borrower Protection Center.

Experts say student loan forgiveness has the potential to end up before the Supreme Court, meaning this could be a lengthy process.

### WHEN DO PAYMENTS RESUME?

Most people with student loan debt have not been required to make payments during the coronavirus pandemic, but payments are set to resume, along with the accrual of interest, in January.

Biden previously said the payment pause will not be extended again, but that was before the courts halted his plan. He's now facing mounting pressure to continue the pause while the legal challenges to the program play out.

### WHAT IF I ALREADY APPLIED FOR RELIEF?

More than 26 million people applied for cancellation over the course of less than a month, according to the Education Department. If you're one of them, there's nothing more you need to do right now.

About 16 million people already had their applications approved, according to the Biden administration. Yet because of court actions, none of the relief has actually been delivered.

The Education Department will "quickly process their relief once we prevail in court," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

### WHAT IF I HAVEN'T YET APPLIED FOR RELIEF?

For those who have not yet applied, the application for debt cancellation is no longer online. But there are still steps people can take to make sure their debt is canceled, should the appeal be successful, according to Welbeck.

"People should still check their eligibility," she said. "As news changes, people should look out for updates from the Department of Education."

You can sign up to receive the latest from the Federal Student Aid website here.

### WHO QUALIFIES, SHOULD THE APPEAL SUCCEED?

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

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of \$20,000.

Borrowers qualify if their loans were disbursed before July 1.

About 43 million student loan borrowers are eligible for some debt forgiveness, with 20 million who could have their debt erased entirely, according to the administration.

ARE THERE OTHER PATHWAYS TO CANCELLATION?

For those who have worked for a government agency or a nonprofit organization, the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program offers cancellation after 10 years of regular payments, and some income-driven repayment plans cancel the remainder of a borrower's debt after 20 to 25 years, according to Welbeck.

"Borrowers should make sure they're signed up for the best income-driven repayment plan possible," Welbeck said. In July, the administration will be reviewing and adjusting some of the accounts enrolled in these plans. You can find out more about those plans here.

Borrowers who have been defrauded by for-profit schools may also apply for borrower defense and receive relief on that account, Welbeck said.

SHOULD I RESUME PAYMENTS WHEN THE PAYMENT PAUSE IS LIFTED?

Advocates, including the Student Borrower Protection Center, are still urging the president to extend the pandemic-era payment freeze, arguing that students are entitled to the promised cancellation before the January repayment date arrives.

That said, Welbeck recommends logging on to your account, making sure you know who your servicer is, your due date, and whether you're enrolled in the best income-driven repayment plan, as you resume making payments.

The Student Borrower Protection Center is holding regular webinars on how to follow the changing policy in the coming months. You can sign up for those here.

If your budget doesn't allow you to resume payments, it's important to know how to navigate the possibility of default and delinquency on a student loan. You can read more about those here. Both can hurt your credit rating, which would make you ineligible for additional aid.

If you're in a short-term financial bind, you may qualify for a deferment or a forbearance. With either of these options, you can talk to your servicer about ways to temporarily suspend your payments. You can learn more about those options here.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

Watch out for scams and get information only from trusted sources such as the Federal Student Aid site of the Department of Education.

IS IT POSSIBLE THE DEBT WON'T BE CANCELLED?

Yes. The issue of debt forgiveness is now before the courts.

The administration is not saying whether or not it's exploring other options for canceling debt if it loses its appeals. But advocates point to other ways the debt might be forgiven, including through the Higher Education Act.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR STUDENT LOAN PAYMENTS TO RESTART?

Betsy Mayotte, President of the Institute of Student Loan Advisors, encourages people not to make any payments until the pause has ended.

"I've been telling people to pretend they're paying their student loan, but to put it into an interest-bearing account for now if you're able," she said. "Then you've maintained the habit of making the payment, but earning a little bit of interest as well. There's no reason to send that money to the student loans until the last minute of the zero percent interest rate."

Mayotte recommends that borrowers use the loan simulator tool at StudentAid.gov or the one on TISLA's website to find the repayment course that best fits their needs. Once you plug in your information, it tells you what your monthly payment would be under each available plan, as well as what the long-term costs amount to.

"I really want to emphasize the long-term," Mayotte said. "Oftentimes I see people who might be having a financial struggle. They'll find a lower monthly repayment option, and then, 'Set it and forget it.'"

Mayotte encourages people to switch to higher payments if their financial situation stabilizes, so the loan

doesn't end up costing more in the long run.

Other useful tips that can shave costs for borrowers:

— If you sign up for automatic payments, the servicer takes a quarter of a percent off your interest rate, according to Mayotte.

— Income-driven repayment plans aren't right for everyone. That said, if you know you will eventually qualify for forgiveness under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, it makes sense to make the lowest monthly payments possible, as the remainder of your debt will be cancelled once that decade of payments is complete.

— Re-evaluate your monthly student loan repayment at tax time, when you already have all your financial information in front of you. "Can you afford to increase it? Or do you need to decrease it?" Mayotte said. "Always look at your long-term student loan management strategy."

— Break up payments into whatever ways work best for you, whether that means two installments during the month, so it's not a large lump sum at the end or the beginning, or setting aside cash in envelopes for designated purposes.

"Even if it's an extra \$5 or \$20 a month, that's a good strategy," Mayotte said. "If they can afford to pay a little more per month — the more you pay and faster you pay, the less you'll pay in the long run."

Mayotte gave one example of a borrower with debt from higher education in the six figures. She was recently married, and she and her husband and kids decided to save every five dollar bill in a cookie jar to go towards the loans.

"That added up to a few more hundred dollars each quarter," Mayotte said. "Everybody has a different financial personality. There are those who are really good at budgets. There are people who need to play games and trick themselves. And people shouldn't judge each other people's financial personalities."

## Taylor Swift angry for fans in Ticketmaster meltdown

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Swifties, your girl has spoke on the Ticketmaster meltdown.

Taylor Swift posted a story Friday on Instagram expressing her anger and frustration over the hours spent by fans trying to buy tickets for her tour next year.

"I'm not going to make excuses for anyone because we asked them, multiple times, if they could handle this kind of demand and we were assured they could," she wrote. "It's truly amazing that 2.4 million people got tickets, but it really pisses me off that a lot of them feel like they went through several bear attacks to get them."

Of those who lost out, Swift said she hopes to "provide more opportunities for us to all get together and sing these songs."

Fans trying to scoop up tickets Tuesday in a pre-sale for Swift's The Eras tour were met by massive delays and error messages that Ticketmaster blamed on bots and historically unprecedented demand. It was the most tickets sold on the platform in a single day, the company said in a statement. A general public sale scheduled for Friday was canceled the day before.

Some fans wondered why Swift hadn't spoken out sooner.

On Instagram, the pop star didn't address timing but said she has trust issues when it comes to her fans' experience, trying to keep many elements of her career in house.

"It's really difficult for me to trust an outside entity with these relationships and loyalties, and excruciating for me to just watch mistakes happen with no recourse," Swift said.

In addition to Tuesday's nightmare, Ticketmaster cited "extraordinarily high demands on ticketing systems and insufficient remaining ticket inventory to meet that demand" as a reason for calling off Friday's sale.

Fresh off one of the biggest album launches of her career, Swift announced earlier this month that she was going on a new U.S. stadium tour, with international dates to follow. Fans who received a special code after registering had exclusive access to buy tickets Tuesday. Those who didn't score tickets were placed on a waiting list.

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.

## Ghanaian girl cuts through jargon, delivers message at COP27

By PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

SHARM el-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — By their very nature, U.N. climate negotiations are filled with scientific and diplomatic jargon.

So, when 10-year-old Nakeeyat Dramani Sam spoke during a plenary session Friday with hundreds of delegates, her soft voice and direct message cut through the dryness, a reminder to negotiators and everybody listening that decisions made at climate talks can have a direct impact on people.

Talking about suffering in Ghana due to flooding, she held up a sign that said, "Payment Overdue."

"I put a simple question on the table," she said. "When can you pay us back? Because payment is overdue."

Sam was talking about a thorny issue that has taken center stage over the last two weeks of negotiations at the summit called COP27, hosted in the Red Sea resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Many developing nations are insisting that rich countries, which have contributed most to climate change because of high greenhouse emissions, compensate them for the damage.

In climate negotiations, the issue is called "loss and damage." It's a topic that produces a wide range of opinions and nuanced battle lines. Developed nations like the United States have resisted such calls for compensation, not wanting to be on the hook for what could be open-ended liability. China, also a high-carbon emitting country, supports the idea of rich nations contributing to such payments but doesn't want to pay. On Thursday, the European Union put forward a proposal to create a fund for loss and damage. While the proposal gave negotiators something specific to chew on, it also likely deepened divisions.

Sam's speech didn't bother with the machinations of negotiations, but rather had the kind of frankness and freshness that comes natural to children.

She told the attendees that she had met with U.S. Climate Envoy John Kerry earlier this week. Kerry had been nice, she said, and the meeting got her thinking about the future.

Her next sentence had humor in it, though she certainly didn't mean for that.

"By the time I'm his age, God willing, it will be the end of this century," she said, implicitly saying, as kids often do about adults, that Kerry was old. Kerry is 78.

Shortly after that came a powerful and direct message.

Talking about how scientists say the world has less than a decade left to continue polluting at today's rates before the effects of global warming get much worse, Sam said: "Have a heart and do the math. It's an emergency."

When Sam finished speaking, she received a standing ovation.

In an interview afterward, Sam said that her environmentalism began a few years ago with a love for trees. She wrote a children's book about trees in Ghana and to date has planted over 100 trees.

"I also call for action that every child must plant a tree," she said, standing with her mother and aunt.

Sam said that she was a poet, and when prompted recited from memory a poem about climate change that ended with exhortations for rich countries to assume responsibility for historical climate damage and pay up. Children were the best people to deliver such messages, she said, because they would be around to suffer the consequences of warming planet.

"We are the future leaders, so when we talk people listen," she said. "I don't know about the adults because I'm not at their age."

## US moves to shield Saudi crown prince in journalist killing

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration says Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's high office should shield him from a lawsuit over his role in the killing of a U.S.-based journalist, making a turnaround from Joe Biden's passionate campaign trail denunciations of the prince over the brutal slaying.

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The administration spoke out in support of a claim of legal immunity from Prince Mohammed — Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, who also recently took the title of prime minister — against a suit brought by the fiancée of slain Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi and by the rights group Khashoggi founded, Democracy for the Arab World Now.

"Jamal died again today," Khashoggi's fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, tweeted after the U.S. filing late Thursday in her lawsuit.

The U.S. government's finding of immunity for the Prince Mohammed, sometimes known as MBS, is non-binding, and a judge will ultimately decide whether to grant immunity. But it angered rights activists and risked blowback from Democratic lawmakers. The U.S. move came as Saudi Arabia has stepped up imprisonment and other retaliation against peaceful critics at home and abroad and has cut oil production, a move seen as undercutting efforts by the U.S. and its allies to punish Russia for its war against Ukraine.

The State Department on Thursday called the administration's call to shield the Saudi crown prince from U.S. courts in Khashoggi's 2018 killing "purely a legal determination." It cited what it called longstanding precedent.

Despite its recommendation to the court, the State Department said in its filing late Thursday that it "takes no view on the merits of the present suit and reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the heinous murder of Jamal Khashoggi."

Saudi officials killed Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. They are believed to have dismembered him, although his remains have never been found. The U.S. intelligence community concluded Saudi Arabia's crown prince had approved the killing of the widely known and respected journalist, who had written critically of Prince Mohammed's harsh ways of silencing of those he considered rivals or critics.

The Biden administration statement Thursday noted visa restrictions and other penalties that it had meted out to lower-ranking Saudi officials in the death.

"From the earliest days of this Administration, the United States Government has expressed its grave concerns regarding Saudi agents' responsibility for Jamal Khashoggi's murder," the State Department said. Its statement did not mention the crown prince's own alleged role.

Biden as a Democratic presidential candidate vowed to make a "pariah" out of Saudi rulers over the 2018 killing of Khashoggi.

"I think it was a flat-out murder," Biden said in a 2019 CNN town hall, as a candidate. "And I think we should have nailed it as that. I publicly said at the time we should treat it that way and there should be consequences relating to how we deal with those — that power."

But Biden as president has sought to ease tensions with the kingdom, including bumping fists with Prince Mohammed on a July trip to the kingdom, as the U.S. works to persuade Saudi Arabia to undo a series of cuts in oil production.

Khashoggi's fiancée and DAWN sued the crown prince, his top aides and others in Washington federal court over their alleged roles in Khashoggi's killing. Saudi Arabia says the prince had no direct role in the slaying.

"It's beyond ironic that President Biden has singlehandedly assured MBS can escape accountability when it was President Biden who promised the American people he would do everything to hold him accountable," the head of DAWN, Sarah Leah Whitson, said in a statement, using the prince's acronym.

Biden in February 2021 had ruled out the U.S. government imposing punishment on Prince Mohammed himself in the killing of Khashoggi, a resident of the Washington area. Biden, speaking after he authorized release of a declassified version of the intelligence community's findings on Prince Mohammed's role in the killing, argued at the time there was no precedent for the U.S. to move against the leader of a strategic partner.

The U.S. military long has safeguarded Saudi Arabia from external enemies, in exchange for Saudi Arabia keeping global oil markets afloat.

"It's impossible to read the Biden administration's move today as anything more than a capitulation to Saudi pressure tactics, including slashing oil output to twist our arms to recognize MBS's fake immunity

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ploy," Whitson said.

A federal judge in Washington had given the U.S. government until midnight Thursday to express an opinion on the claim by the crown prince's lawyers that Prince Mohammed's high official standing renders him legally immune in the case.

The Biden administration also had the option of not stating an opinion either way.

Sovereign immunity, a concept rooted in international law, holds that states and their officials are protected from some legal proceedings in other foreign states' domestic courts.

Upholding the concept of "sovereign immunity" helps ensure that American leaders in turn don't have to worry about being hauled into foreign courts to face lawsuits in other countries, the State Department said.

Human rights advocates had argued that the Biden administration would embolden Prince Mohammed and other authoritarian leaders around the world in more rights abuses if it supported the crown prince's claim that his high office shielded him from prosecution.

Prince Mohammed serves as Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler in the stead of his aged father, King Salman. The Saudi king in September also temporarily transferred his title of prime minister — a title normally held by the Saudi monarch — to Prince Mohammed. Critics called it a bid to strengthen Mohammed's immunity claim.

## World Cup fans ready to celebrate despite stadium beer ban

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Flag-draped fans poured into Qatar on Friday ahead of the Middle East's first World Cup as organizers banned the sale of beer at stadiums — a last-minute decision that stunned FIFA sponsor Budweiser but was largely welcomed by the country's conservative Muslims and shrugged off by some visitors.

This small, energy-rich country, home to some 3 million people and roughly the size of Jamaica, expects another 1.2 million fans to fly in for the tournament that begins on Sunday.

After Friday prayers, the talk of Doha became the sudden ruling by the government to halt all beer sales at stadiums.

Many welcomed the decision in this conservative emirate, which follows the same austere Wahhabi Islam of neighboring Saudi Arabia — despite allowing beers, wine and liquor to be sold at discrete hotel bars in the country. Already, the country's some 300,000 citizens have criticized the Western excesses of some celebrations and vehemently dismissed criticism of its views on LGBTQ rights.

"The whole reason why I came to this country is so that I can enjoy and have the facilities and the advantage of living in a modern economy, but with Islamic heritage," said Mohammad Ali, a 50-year-old doctor from Sheffield, England, who lives in Qatar. "I wouldn't want to see that lifestyle compromised."

"I wouldn't want with my kids and my family enjoying my time out and being confronted by a drunken — I'm not gonna say a hooligan — but drunken and disorderly fans," he added.

Alcohol will still be served in hotels, luxury suites and private homes during the tournament. Budweiser continued its work turning a luxury hotel into a massive themed bar. It won't be cheap: a standard bottle of beer went for a little over \$15.

In Doha's Souq Waqif market, 35-year-old Pablo Zambrano of Ecuador shrugged off the news of the beer ban ahead of his country's opening night match against Qatar on Sunday. He's staying with his mother who lives here and said the fridge already is stocked with beer, which foreigners can buy legally in selected depots.

"There's things about the alcohol and the women with the dress codes," Zambrano said, referring to the country's conservative customs. "It's different. But it's going to be good."

Zambrano was one of a growing number of fans sightseeing in the traditional market and along the Corniche, a seaside boulevard with views of Doha's glittering skyline.

Just down the street, 24-year-old vegetable seller Ajmal Pial from Khulna, Bangladesh, took in the breeze with the city's skyscrapers stretched out behind him across the waters of the Persian Gulf.

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But instead of his nation's green and red disc flag, Pial waved Brazil's over his head as his friend took pictures of him. He and his friends support Argentina and Brazil, two of the tournament favorites.

For Pial and others, the World Cup represents a pinnacle of work in Qatar and likely a final hurrah before heading home as jobs slow. Labor conditions in Qatar, like much of the Gulf Arab states, have been criticized for exploiting the low-paid workers who built this former pearling port into a desert metropolis.

Qatar has overhauled its labor laws, but activists have asked for more to be done. There are no guarantees for freedom of speech in Qatar, but Pial said he felt genuinely happy at the chance to see the tournament.

His friend, 32-year-old Shobuz Sardar, also from Khulna, Bangladesh, said part of that excitement came from the fact that it's only the second time that an Asian country hosts the World Cup, 20 years after Japan and South Korea co-hosted the tournament.

He also hinted at the conditions he and other workers from Asia can face in Qatar.

"You also know that there are too many people all here for work, for jobs," Sardar said. "They don't have any option for having fun. This World Cup makes them have fun."

Laborers from the Middle East and Asian nations mixed with fans marching up and down the Corniche. Across government buildings and electronic displays, Qatar's deep purple and white flag with its nine-jagged points seemed to fly nearly everywhere.

For Qatar, coming off a yearslong boycott by four Arab nations over a political dispute, nearly reaching the opening match shows they were able to overcome. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken plans to visit Qatar during the tournament — showing the close relationship America shares with a nation hosting some 8,000 of its troops at its massive Al-Udeid Air Base.

On the Corniche as the sun set and the call to prayers could be heard, crowds gathered around a clock counting down to the opening match.

Qatari fans marched and chanted, waving a banner bearing the face of its ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. That same image of Sheikh Tamim, with the Arabic inscription "Tamim, the Glory," could be seen everywhere in Doha during the boycott.

Tarek Mujahid, a 37 year old from Alexandria, Egypt, praised Qatar for being the first Arab nation to host the World Cup.

"I'm very, very, very, very happy — No. 1 because it's an Arab country" hosting, he said.

## Ned Rorem, prize-winning composer and writer, dies at 99

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Ned Rorem, the prolific Pulitzer- and Grammy-winning musician known for his vast output of compositions and for his barbed and sometimes scandalous prose, died Friday at 99.

The news was confirmed by a publicist for his longtime music publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, who said he died of natural causes at his home on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

The handsome, energetic artist produced a thousand-work catalog ranging from symphonies and operas to solo instrumental, chamber and vocal music, in addition to 16 books. He also contributed to the score for the Al Pacino-starring film "Panic in Needle Park."

Time magazine once called Rorem "the world's best composer of art songs," and he was notable for his hundreds of compositions for the solo human voice. The poet and librettist J.D. McClatchy, writing in The Paris Review, described him as "an untortured artist and dashing narcissist."

His music was mostly tonal, though very much modern, and Rorem didn't hesitate to aim his printed words at other prominent contemporaries who espoused the dissonant avant-garde, like Pierre Boulez.

"If Russia had Stalin and Germany had Hitler, France still has Pierre Boulez," Rorem once wrote.

He had a basic motto for songwriting: "Write gracefully for the voice — that is, make the voice line as seen on paper have the arched flow which singers like to interpret."

Rorem won the 1976 Pulitzer for his "Air Music: Ten Etudes for Orchestra." The 1989 Grammy for outstanding orchestral recording went to The Atlanta Symphony for Rorem's "String Symphony, Sunday Morning, and Eagles."

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His 1962 "Poems of Love and the Rain" is a 17-song cycle set to texts by American poets; the same text is set twice, in a contrasting way.

Born in Richmond, Indiana, Rorem was the son of C. Rufus Rorem, whose ideas in the 1930s were the basis for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield insurance plans and who turned to Quaker philosophy, raising his son as a pacifist.

The younger Rorem went to day school at the elite University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. By the time he was 10, his piano teacher introduced him to Debussy and Ravel, which "changed my life forever," said the composer whose music was tinged with French lyricism.

He went on to study at the American Conservatory of Music in Hammond, Indiana, and Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, then the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia and the Juilliard School in New York.

As a young composer in the 1950s, he lived abroad for eight years, mostly in Paris but with two years in Morocco.

"The Paris Diary" covers his stay there and is filled with famous names of people he met — Jean Cocteau, Francis Poulenc, Balthus, Salvador Dali, Paul Bowles, John Cage, Man Ray, and James Baldwin. The late writer Janet Flanner called it "worldly, intelligent, licentious, highly indiscreet." Rorem himself said his text was "filled with drunkenness, sex, and the talk of my betters."

His literary self-portrait continued through 1985, contained in "The New York Diary," "The Later Diaries" and "The Nantucket Diary."

"His essays are composed like scores," McClatchy once wrote of him. "The same hallmarks we listen for in Rorem's music will be found in his essays as well: indirection, instinctive grace, intellectual aplomb, a lyrical line."

Some were appalled by Rorem's notorious accounting of his relationships with four big-name men in music: Leonard Bernstein, Noel Coward, Samuel Barber, and Virgil Thomson. He also outed a few others.

But most of his private life was centered around James Holmes, an organist and choir director with whom he lived for three decades in New York City. Holmes died in 1999. A statement from Boosey & Hawkes said Rorem died surrounded by friends and family and is survived by six nieces and nephews and eleven grandnieces and grandnephews.

Drawing on his upbringing, Rorem based his "Quaker Reader" — a collection of pieces for organ — on Quaker texts.

As for his non-musical writings, he said: "My music is a diary no less compromising than my prose. A diary nevertheless differs from a musical composition in that it depicts the moment, the writer's present mood which, were it inscribed an hour later, could emerge quite otherwise."

Rorem's essays on music appear in anthologies titled "Setting the Tone," "Music from the Inside Out," and "Music and People."

"Why do I write music?" he once asked. "Because I want to hear it — it's as simple as that."

## **Qatar bans sale of beer at World Cup stadiums in about-face**

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Qatar banned the sale of beer at World Cup stadiums on Friday, a sudden U-turn on the deal the conservative Muslim emirate made to secure the soccer tournament with only two days to go before the opening game.

The move was the latest sign of the tension of staging the event, which is not just a sports tournament but also a monthlong party, in the autocratic country where the sale of alcohol is heavily restricted. It's also a significant blow to World Cup beer sponsor Budweiser and raised questions about how much control FIFA retains over its tournament.

When Qatar launched its bid to host the World Cup, the country agreed to FIFA's requirements of selling alcohol in stadiums — but the details were only released in September, just 11 weeks before the first kickoff, suggesting how fraught the negotiations may have been. Friday's statement from FIFA said non-alcoholic beer will still be sold at the eight stadiums, while champagne, wine, whiskey and other alcohol

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will be served in the luxury hospitality areas of the arenas.

But the vast majority of ticket holders don't have access to those areas; they will be able to drink alcoholic beer in the evenings in what is known as the FIFA Fan Festival, a designated party area that also offers live music and activities. Outside of the tournament-run areas, Qatar puts strict limits on the purchase and consumption of alcohol, though its sale has been permitted in hotel bars for years.

"Following discussions between host country authorities and FIFA, a decision has been made to focus the sale of alcoholic beverages on the FIFA Fan Festival, other fan destinations and licensed venues, removing sales points of beer from ... stadium perimeters," FIFA said in a statement.

Several soccer fans took the decision in stride, with some noting that they knew the rules would be different in Qatar.

"We're not here to drink beer," said Adel Abou Hana, a fan from the United States. "We're here to watch the world-class soccer."

But Federico Ferraz lamented that the decision came on such short notice. "I think it's a bit bad because for me, beer and football go hand in hand," said Ferraz, who was visiting from Portugal.

As the news broke, Budweiser's Twitter account tweeted: "Well, this is awkward..." without elaborating. The tweet was later deleted.

Ab InBev, the parent company of Budweiser, acknowledged in a statement that some of its plans "cannot move forward due to circumstances beyond our control."

The company pays tens of millions of dollars at each World Cup for exclusive rights to sell beer and has already shipped the majority of its stock from Britain to Qatar in expectation of selling its product to millions of fans. While the actual sales at the tournament might not be a significant percentage of the massive company's revenues, the World Cup nonetheless represents a major branding opportunity.

The company's partnership with FIFA started at the 1986 tournament, and they are in negotiations for renewing their deal for the next World Cup in North America.

Ronan Evain, the executive director of the fan group Football Supporters Europe, called the decision to ban beer sales at the stadiums in Qatar "extremely worrying."

"For many fans, whether they don't drink alcohol or are used to dry stadium policies at home, this is a detail. It won't change their tournament," Evain wrote on Twitter. "But with 48 (hours) to go, we've clearly entered a dangerous territory — where 'assurances' don't matter anymore."

Qatar, which is governed by a hereditary emir who has absolute say over all governmental decisions, follows an ultraconservative form of Islam known as Wahhabism like neighboring Saudi Arabia. In recent years, Qatar has transformed into an ultra-modern hub following a natural gas boom in the 1990s, but it has faced pressure from within to stay true to its Islamic heritage and Bedouin roots.

Islam forbids the consumption of alcohol, and several Muslim residents of Qatar cheered the decision on Friday, noting that visitors should respect the country's customs.

In the runup to the World Cup, rights groups have raised concerns about how the nation will host millions of foreign fans, some of whom might violate Islamic laws criminalizing public drunkenness, sex outside of marriage and homosexuality.

Qatar's government and its Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Friday's was not Qatar's first backtrack — but it was the most significant. Last weekend, AB InBev was left surprised by a new policy insisted on by Qatari organizers to move beer stalls to less visible locations within the stadium compounds.

And Qatar also changed the date of the opening match only weeks before the World Cup began.

Previous World Cup hosts have been asked to make concessions. For the 2014 tournament, Brazil was forced to change a law to allow alcohol sales in stadiums — but the same cultural issues were not at play.

AB InBev's deal with FIFA was renewed in 2011 — after Qatar was picked as host. However, the Belgium-based brewer has faced uncertainty in recent months on the exact details of where it can serve and sell beer in Qatar. And some have balked at the price, which was confirmed at \$14 for a beer.

At the W Hotel in Doha — where the company will be based — workers continued putting together a

Budweiser-themed bar planned at the site. Its familiar AB logo was plastered on columns and walls at the hotel, with one reading: "The World Is Yours To Take."

## Schools struggle to staff up for youth mental health crisis

By PATRICK WALL and KALYN BELSHA of Chalkbeat and ANNIE MA of The Associated Press undefined  
Mira Ugwuadu felt anxious and depressed when she returned to her high school in Cobb County, Georgia, last fall after months of remote learning, so she sought help. But her school counselor kept rescheduling their meetings because she had so many students to see.

"I felt helpless and alone," the 12th grader later said.

Despite an influx of COVID-19 relief money, school districts across the country have struggled to staff up to address students' mental health needs that have only grown since the pandemic hit.

Among 18 of the country's largest school districts, 12 started this school year with fewer counselors or psychologists than they had in fall 2019, according to an analysis by Chalkbeat. As a result, many school mental health professionals have caseloads that far exceed recommended limits, according to experts and advocates, and students must wait for urgently needed help.

Some of the extra need for support has been absorbed by social workers — their ranks have grown by nearly 50% since before the pandemic, federal data shows — but they have different clinical training from other mental health professionals and many other duties, including helping families. Districts included in the analysis, which serve a combined 3 million students, started the year with nearly 1,000 unfilled mental health positions.

Hiring challenges are largely to blame, but some school systems have invested relief money in other priorities. The Cobb County district, for one, has not added any new counselors.

"They have so many students that they're dealing with," said Mira, 17. "I personally don't want to blame them. But I also deserve care and support, too."

A spokesperson for Cobb County Public Schools said school counselor positions are based on a state funding formula, and the district strongly supports more funding.

The Chalkbeat analysis is based on school staffing and vacancy data obtained through open records requests. The 31 largest districts in the U.S. were surveyed, but some did not track or provide data.

Some school systems used federal relief money to add mental health staff, but others did not because they worried about affording them once the aid runs out. Districts have limited time to spend the nearly \$190 billion allocated for recovery.

"Here's this conundrum that we're in," said Christy McCoy, the president of the School Social Work Association of America. "It's like we are trying to put a Band-Aid on something that needs a more comprehensive and integrated approach."

Many of the schools that have wanted to hire more mental health workers simply can't find them. School psychologist positions have been particularly hard to fill.

Chicago, for example, added 32 school psychologist positions since fall 2019 but ended up with just one additional psychologist on staff this fall. Dozens of positions couldn't be filled.

Schools in Hillsborough County, Florida eliminated dozens of unfilled psychologist positions, leaving schools with 33 fewer psychologists this fall than pre-pandemic. Houston schools also cut more than a dozen psychologist roles it couldn't fill before the pandemic. Instead, the district used the money to pay outside providers and hire psychologist interns.

With their extended training, school psychologists are relied upon to provide intensive one-on-one counseling and help determine whether students are at risk for suicide.

In Maryland, a shortage of psychologists at Montgomery County Public Schools has kept the short-staffed department focused on crisis intervention and providing legally mandated services like special education assessments, said Christina Connolly-Chester, director of psychological services. That has meant they cannot keep up with other, less urgent counseling services.

"If that psychologist has more schools because there are vacancies and they're not able to spend as

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much time in their assigned schools, then things like counseling go away," she said.

The district sought to hire staff to address increased student needs such as anxiety, depression and struggles with conflict management, but still had 30 vacant psychologist positions, a district official said this month.

Even before the pandemic, some schools struggled to find psychologists. New practitioners have not been entering the field fast enough, and others have been switching to telehealth or private practices with higher pay and often better working conditions.

"We can't afford to pay professionals enough to make it a desirable position," said Sharon Hoover, a psychologist who co-directs the National Center for School Mental Health at the University of Maryland.

Counselor staffing has been a challenge for some districts, too, with nine of the large districts down counselors this year, while another nine saw increases.

Where hiring has been toughest, schools have turned to alternatives. In Hawaii, which had 31 vacant counselor positions and 20 vacant psychologist roles at the start of the year, the state has trained educators to spot signs that a student is in distress — an increasingly common practice — and pays a private company to provide tele-mental health services.

It isn't just hiring challenges that have led to smaller-than-expected staffing increases. Some school systems spent most of their federal aid on more lasting investments, such as technology or building repairs. And many opted not to add new mental health workers at all.

In the Chalkbeat analysis, half of the 18 large districts budgeted for fewer counselor or psychologist positions this school year than they did in fall 2019.

In April, just 4 in 10 districts reported hiring new staffers to address students' mental health needs, according to a national survey.

"For all the talk about mental health, the actual money they're spending on it is not that high," said Phyllis Jordan, associate director of FutureEd, a think tank at Georgetown University that tracks school spending. School districts only planned to spend about 2% of the largest round of federal COVID aid on mental health hiring, according to the group's analysis of more than 5,000 district spending plans.

One bright spot in the school mental health landscape, though, is the increase in social workers.

Montgomery County in Maryland, Gwinnett County in Georgia, and Orange, Broward, and Palm Beach counties in Florida all started the year with dozens more social workers than they had in fall 2019. Chicago added the most — nearly 150 additional social workers — in part due to staffing promises in the latest teachers union contract.

The Chalkbeat analysis echoes national data collected by the White House that show the number of school social workers was up 48% this fall compared with before the pandemic, while the number of school counselors was up a more modest 12% and the count of school psychologists inched up 4%.

In Houston, staffing increases meant nearly every school started this fall with a counselor or social worker.

Newly hired social worker Natalie Rincon is able to meet one-on-one with students who are in crisis and teach other students calming strategies, such as tracing their hand with a finger while breathing.

Still, need often outstrips capacity at Rincon's school, where many students are refugees or recent immigrants coping with trauma. She often has to prioritize helping students with urgent issues, leaving less time to check in on others.

"I want to be able to meet with a kindergartner just to talk about how they're feeling," Rincon said. "Those are the kind of things that I think slip through the cracks."

## NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Split-ticket voting in Arizona isn't a sign of fraud



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**CLAIM:** The fact that incumbent Republican state treasurer Kimberly Yee got tens of thousands more votes than GOP gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake shows the Arizona election was rigged.

**THE FACTS:** While Yee did get more votes, that isn't proof of fraud. Many Arizona voters, including Republicans and independents, have a history of voting for candidates from both political parties. That continued this cycle. But as Lake lost her gubernatorial bid to Democrat Katie Hobbs in Arizona on Monday, social media users baselessly suggested that the fact that Yee garnered more votes than Lake was a sign of manipulation. "It makes no mathematical sense that the GOP State Treasurer just won reelection by 250,000 votes, but none of those voters also felt like voting for Kari Lake," one Twitter user wrote Monday in a tweet shared over 7,000 times. Far from being a sign of election fraud, such results in Arizona indicate that voters picked candidates from both political parties or voted in some races and not others, experts and political operatives say. In fact, such voter behavior was common in 2022 in elections across the country. "Split-ticket voters are very common," said Paul Bentz, a Republican pollster in Phoenix. "It happens all of the time. It speaks to the various strengths or drawbacks of a particular candidate." Arizona voters in particular have a track record of not always voting along party lines. In 2018, many Arizona voters opted for Democrat Kyrsten Sinema, who was running for U.S. Senate, and incumbent Republican Gov. Doug Ducey, Bentz said. And in this election, Republican Maricopa County Attorney Rachel Mitchell fended off her Democratic challenger, outperforming Lake. Lake, Republican Senate candidate Blake Masters and Republican secretary of state candidate Mark Finchem, all of whom lost, were all endorsed by Trump and promoted conspiracy theories about the 2020 election. Johnny Melton, acting chair of the Legislative District 29 Republicans in Maricopa County, said he personally knows Republicans and right-leaning independents who didn't vote for candidates like Lake and Finchem due to their embrace of election conspiracies. "Of course I know people who either split or just withheld their vote," Melton said.

— Associated Press writer Josh Kelety in Phoenix contributed this report.

## Posts misrepresent Arizona official's ballot comments

**CLAIM:** Maricopa County Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Gates admitted that tens of thousands of early ballots dropped off on Election Day were mishandled when he said during a CNN interview, "We do not know where these are from."

**THE FACTS:** The interview clip circulating on social media doesn't show Gates admitting to misconduct. He was responding to a specific question from a CNN host about the geographic origin of absentee ballots in a batch that had just been tabulated. Social media users shared a clip of the Nov. 11 CNN interview with Gates, suggesting that it showed him admitting that tens of thousands of ballots were mishandled. "We do not know where these are from. These could be from anywhere in the county," Gates said in the clip, referring to ballots tabulated that day. "This is not picked out of a certain area, these are not pulled by precinct." Archived video of the complete interview shows Gates was responding to a question from CNN news anchor John King about the geographic origin of ballots in a batch of roughly 75,000 tabulated ballots released that day. King specifically asked about "late-earlies," referring to absentee ballots that were mailed to voters ahead of the election and dropped off at voting sites on Election Day. King said, "Are we now, in the sense that you have a giant county, it's 9,200 plus square miles, do you know, the ones that were released tonight, are they from the central Phoenix area, the more close-in suburbs that tend to be more Democratic?" In his response, which is where the clip circulating on social media begins, Gates explains that the majority of the 75,000 ballots were late-earlies, and he could not comment on their origin because of the way they are cast and tabulated in Maricopa. Almost all of Arizona's vote happens by mail, although some voters cast their ballots in-person at voting centers. Election officials then release their vote totals in batches. Maricopa County allows voters to cast absentee ballots at any one of 223 vote centers across the county. Ballots dropped off on Election Day are driven to a central tabulation facility in downtown Phoenix. Those that arrive at the facility first get priority. Therefore, any batch of Maricopa votes could contain ballots from all over the county. The social media users sharing the clip of Gates are "misrepresenting what the chairman said," Fields Moseley, a spokesperson for Maricopa County, wrote in an email to the AP. "While the chairman doesn't know where every batch of ballots came from,

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our elections workers can account for all of them through documentation and chain of custody," he wrote.  
— Josh Kelety

States report election results at different speeds

CLAIM: Florida's ability to report election results quickly during the 2022 midterms means states that have taken longer, such as Arizona and Nevada, are engaged in fraud.

THE FACTS: Florida has measures in place to speed up its count on Election Day. But the fact that Florida reports results faster than other states does not mean that those states are committing fraud, elections experts told the AP. Election officials repeatedly warned prior to the 2022 midterm elections that results in some states might not be known for days. Despite this, many falsely suggested the length of time is correlated with election integrity. Some compared Florida — which had finished counting its ballots, except those from overseas, by Wednesday — to Arizona and Nevada. "This is absurd. Arizona and Nevada have a lot fewer voters than Florida and yet they take days longer to tally the results," one tweet said. "Total fraud." Arizona had nearly 14,000 ballots left to count on Thursday. Sophia Solis, a spokesperson for the Arizona secretary of state's office, told the AP that no counties in Arizona had fully reported their unofficial results by midnight on Election Day. In Nevada, all 17 counties submitted initial tallies, including in-person vote reports, to election administrators by the early morning hours of Nov. 9. Jennifer Russell, an aide to Republican Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske, told the AP Wednesday. However, the state accepted mail ballots postmarked by Election Day until Saturday, and had 22,000 left to process in the state's largest county, Clark, the day of the deadline, Clark County Registrar of Voters Joe Gloria said at a press conference. But states' reporting speeds largely reflect the different ways absentee and mail-in ballots are processed in each jurisdiction, election experts told the AP. "There are many reasons Florida counts quicker than other states, or other states haven't completed their counts yet, and it has nothing to do with fraud in other states," Michael Morley, an election law expert and professor at Florida State University, wrote in an email. One of the main differences is how soon before Election Day officials are allowed to begin pre-processing early ballots, which may involve confirming their validity or scanning them, Morley wrote. Under state law, Florida officials can start this process nearly a month before Election Day. By contrast, Arizona counties did not send mail ballots to voters until Oct. 12 and the earliest they went out in Nevada was Oct. 7. Florida was required to send mail ballots no later than Sept. 24. Another key difference is whether states accept mail ballots after Election Day. In Florida, most mail ballots must be received by 7 p.m. local time on Election Day. Most early and mail voting results must be reported to the Florida Department of State starting within 30 minutes after the polls close and continuing every 45 minutes until all results are reported. Nevada, however, accepts mail ballots up to 5 p.m. four days after the election as long as they were postmarked by Election Day. Arizona's deadline is the same as Florida's, local time. Still, there is nothing unusual or improper about votes being counted after Election Day, said Michael McDonald, a professor of political science at the University of Florida. Morley explained that other differences that may speed up reporting include staffing levels, available equipment, the length of time needed to verify each ballot and how long after Election Day voters are able to fix, or "cure," their ballots if any problems are found.

— Associated Press writer Melissa Goldin in New York contributed this report with additional reporting from Ken Ritter in Las Vegas.

Posts spin baseless theory about FTX, Ukraine and Democrats

CLAIM: U.S. aid to Ukraine was laundered back to the Democratic Party through the failed cryptocurrency exchange firm FTX.

THE FACTS: These claims misrepresent a short-term initiative in Ukraine that used FTX to convert cryptocurrency donations for the war effort into government-issued currency. The Ukrainian government has not invested nor stored money in FTX, according to the country's Ministry of Digital Transformation. FTX, the third-largest cryptocurrency exchange in the world, filed for bankruptcy protection on Nov. 11 amid news it was short billions of dollars and may have been hacked. Sam Bankman-Fried, the company's CEO,

resigned the same day. The moves have fueled baseless conspiracy theories. "So Biden gave loads of money to Ukraine, who gave loads of money to FTX, who gave loads of money to Democrats," reads one tweet with over 100,000 likes. No evidence has been presented to support the claims. Still, they have been shared by U.S. lawmakers, prominent Republicans and Russian accounts. Ukraine's government "never invested any funds into FTX," Alex Bornyakov, the deputy minister of digital transformation in Ukraine said on Twitter on Monday. After Russia invaded Ukraine, a new crypto fundraising foundation called Aid For Ukraine began taking donations to help the Ukrainian war effort, the ministry said in an emailed statement to the AP on Wednesday. The ministry said it "provided informational support" to the foundation, which was run by the cryptocurrency exchange Kuna and the blockchain company Everstake. In early March, Aid For Ukraine began working with FTX to convert cryptocurrency donations into Ukraine's government-issued currency, a partnership that ended in April 2022, according to the ministry. Sergey Vasylychuk, the CEO of Everstake, told the AP that cryptocurrencies were an efficient way to raise funds for Ukraine to defend itself amid Russia's invasion. He said FTX was only used in the beginning of the war to convert cryptocurrency donations. The donations would then get sent to the National Bank of Ukraine and no crypto was stored on FTX. Michael Chobanian, the founder of the Kuna exchange, said they had converted cryptocurrencies to U.S. dollars through FTX and deposited them in the national bank of Ukraine at the beginning of the war. "That is it," Chobanian said. The Ministry of Digital Transformation added that it "has never funded FTX" and "has never worked with any political party of the United States of America." It's true that Bankman-Fried has been a major Democratic donor. FEC records show that he made significant donations to Democratic candidates and PACS this year. However, he has also made contributions to some Republican candidates and conservative-leaning PACS. FTX's co-CEO Ryan Salame also donated to groups that supported Republican candidates in 2022. White House spokesperson Robyn Patterson said any claim that U.S. assistance to Ukraine has "been diverted to aid American political parties is unequivocally false and not grounded in reality." Vedant Patel, principal deputy spokesperson at the State Department, said there's "no reason to believe that these reports are anything but pure falsehoods and misinformation." A spokesperson for the U.S. Agency for International Development said safeguards put in place by the World Bank, coupled with expert third-party monitoring support within the Ukrainian government, ensure accountability around the use of the funds. FTX and lawyers representing the company did not respond to requests for comment.

## **Pfizer booster spurs immune response to new omicron subtypes**

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Pfizer said Friday that its updated COVID-19 booster may offer some protection against newly emerging omicron mutants even though it's not an exact match.

Americans have been reluctant to get the updated boosters rolled out by Pfizer and rival Moderna, doses tweaked to target the BA.5 omicron strain that until recently was the most common type. With relatives of BA.5 now on the rise, a question is how the new boosters will hold up.

Pfizer and its partner BioNTech said their updated booster generated virus-fighting antibodies that can target four additional omicron subtypes, including the particularly worrisome BQ.1.1.

The immune response wasn't as strong against this alphabet soup of newer mutants as it is against the BA.5 strain. But adults 55 and older experienced a nearly 9-fold jump in antibodies against BQ.1.1 a month after receiving the updated booster, according to a study from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston and the companies. That's compared to a 2-fold rise in people who got another dose of the original vaccine.

The preliminary data was released online and hasn't yet been vetted by independent experts.

It's not the only hint that the updated boosters may broaden protection against the still mutating virus. Moderna recently announced early evidence that its updated booster induced BQ.1.1-neutralizing antibodies.

It's too soon to know how much real-world protection such antibody boosts translate into, or how long it will last. Antibodies are only one type of immune defense, and they naturally wane with time.

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The BA.5 variant was responsible for about 30% of new cases in the U.S. as of Nov. 12, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but two new variants have been crowding out the once-dominant strain in recent weeks. The BQ.1.1. variant now accounts for 24% of cases, up from 2% in early October and the close cousin BQ.1 accounts for 20% of cases.

The original COVID-19 vaccines have offered strong protection against severe disease and death no matter the variant.

That's a good reason to stay up-to-date on boosters, Dr. Kathryn Stephenson of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center said earlier this week, ahead of Pfizer's data.

"Any kind of boost really reduces your chances of getting very sick from COVID," she said.

Updated boosters are available for anyone 5 or older, but only about 35 million Americans have gotten one so far, according to the CDC. Nearly 30% of seniors are up-to-date with the newest booster but only about 13% of all adults.

## Ukraine experts join probe of fatal missile blast in Poland

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Experts from Ukraine have joined Polish and American investigators who are looking into a missile blast that killed two men in eastern Poland this week.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Friday that the Ukrainian experts were at the grain-drying facility in the Polish village of Przewodow where the missile landed Tuesday. The village is located about 6 kilometers (4 miles) from Poland's border with Ukraine.

"We will continue our cooperation in an open and constructive manner, as closest friends do," Kuleba tweeted.

"I am grateful to the Polish side for granting them access," he wrote.

Polish media reported seeing officials in Ukraine uniforms arriving at the site mid-day Friday.

On Tuesday, two workers were killed when a Russian-made projectile hit the grain-drying facility. Ukraine came under a heavy Russian bombardment that day.

NATO and Poland's leaders have said the missile most likely came from a Ukrainian air defense system that fired in response to Russia's attack. Ukrainian authorities initially said the missile was not theirs and asked to join the probe.

U.S. and Polish experts have been working at the site all week to establish the source and circumstances of the missile's launch. Poland's officials say there are camera recordings of the events leading up to the blast but they remain classified.

State funerals for the two men who died are expected over the weekend.

## Grannies will dance again in parade where tragedy struck

By ADAM GELLER AP National Writer

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The high winds forecasters warned about are blasting down Wisconsin Avenue, but 15 grandmothers lining up in the street are ready to march.

They're dressed for this morning's parade in wide-brimmed hats held on tight with elastic chin straps. They've subbed out red pom poms for white ones so the dye won't run in rain that is teasing its return from a leaden November sky.

"This is like my calling," says Kathi Schmeling, a retired human resources assistant, her grin framed by the crimson lipstick that is a signature of the women who call themselves the Milwaukee Dancing Grannies. "This is my happy place."

Given where they've come from, it's no small accomplishment that they're here at all.

A year ago, a driver plowed an SUV through a Christmas parade in the nearby suburb of Waukesha, killing six people and scarring many more. Four of the victims were from the Dancing Grannies, including their longtime leaders, threatening to extinguish the tight-knit band of women — not old, they say, just well-seasoned — first drawn together by the aerobics craze of the 1980s.

Somehow, they held on. They drew on resilience banked well before the tragedy, during bouts with can-

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cer and divorce, the loss of jobs and loves ones. They accepted that to keep going would require taking a risk on new ways of doing things, with new dancers who had not lived their history.

Soon, though, the calendar will come full circle. And to keep moving forward, the group has made a decision. When the parade returns to Main Street in Waukesha, they need to go back.

That day a year ago, eight women were slated to march through Waukesha's cozy downtown, where the annual Christmas parade, cancelled the previous year because of the pandemic, had returned with a new theme: "Comfort and Joy."

Families thronged Main when the Grannies funneled into the procession behind a Girl Scout troop and a youth dance corps. At 4:38 p.m. they sauntered through an intersection to a crowd favorite, Winter Wonderland, swinging pom poms skyward.

In the din, they didn't hear the red SUV plowing down Main until it hit them.

"It was a flash," says Donna Kalik, who was watching the parade with her boyfriend from a coffee shop window. "And as I'm running out there's a body on the left of me and there's a body on the right ... It looked like a war zone."

A few feet from the curb, group leader Ginny Sorenson lay dead. Hurling to the sidewalk, the bodies of Leanna Owen and Tamara Durand, both killed instantly, would not be identified until hours later.

Nearby, the husband of another Granny who was a regular volunteer, lay bruised and battered, and succumbed to his injuries the following day. Down Main, an 8-year-old who had been parading with his Little League team and a 52-year-old woman marching with co-workers from a local bank were also killed.

Wandering through the chaos, Schmeling found fellow dancer Sharon Millard, a teacher's aide so invested in the group that she had called to sign up the night before the birth of her first grandchild.

"Kathi!" she said, dazed. "What's going to happen to the Grannies?"

The days and weeks after the parade were filled with doubt. Several dancers were injured, including 64-year-old Betty Streng, comatose for five days afterward with a double skull fracture.

Others nursed hidden scars. One granny kept replaying the choice she'd made to dance on the left side of the formation — leaving Durand a few feet to her right, in death's path. Another, at work, broke down when "Winter Wonderland" played over the school intercom.

Yet it seemed like they owed it to those who'd died to keep the group going, or at least to try.

When they reconvened in late January, 34 hopefuls showed up, forming a dance line that circled the tables of a fraternal hall.

Some peeled away in the weeks that followed, reluctant to commit to months of practices and more than 20 parades a year. A few veterans, taxed by memories, retired.

Early on a frigid Saturday the Original Grannies marched again for the first time in a Milwaukee St. Patrick's Day procession, new arrivals wearing sashes identifying them as trainees walked alongside.

By spring's end, the Grannies — increasingly seen as an embodiment of the region's "Waukesha Strong" motto — were fielding parade invites from around the state. In town after town, spectators shouted their thanks for the group's return, shaping hearts with outstretched hands.

"It's bittersweet at times," Jeannie Knutson, one of the Original Grannies, recalls thinking. "I mean, before the tragedy you'd have crowds clapping and singing along, but now it's totally different."

In October arrived, the terrifying memories of Waukesha were revived in a Milwaukee courtroom.

"I didn't want to hear about it," says Schmeling, recalling the anger that welled up inside when she recounted her memory of Waukesha for prosecutors before the trial. "I'm done with that chapter."

The driver, Darrell Brooks, was convicted of all 76 counts against him, and sentenced to life in prison.

With that resolution behind them, the Grannies, old and new, hope that going back will bring comfort, proof that the recovery of the past year is permanent.

They move to the message Ginny Sorenson long preached.

"Ginny always had this saying before parades: 'If you make a mistake, if you get off kilter, if you drop your pom poms, no matter what, you keep on dancing,'" says Jan Kwiatkowski, one of the new leaders

of the Grannies.

## To heal after parade tragedy, the Grannies must march again

By ADAM GELLER AP National Writer

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The high winds forecasters warned about are blasting down Wisconsin Avenue, but 15 grandmothers lining up in the street are ready to march.

They're dressed for this morning's parade in wide-brimmed hats held on tight with elastic chin straps. And they've subbed out red pom poms for white ones so the dye won't run in rain that is teasing its return from a leaden November sky.

"This is like my calling," says Kathi Schmeling, a retired human resources assistant, her grin framed by the crimson lipstick that is a signature of the women who call themselves the Milwaukee Dancing Grannies. "This is my happy place."

Given where she and the others have come from, it's no small accomplishment that they're here at all.

A year ago, a driver plowed an SUV through a Christmas parade in the nearby suburb of Waukesha, killing six people and scarring many more. Four of the victims were from the Dancing Grannies, including their longtime leaders, threatening to extinguish the tight-knit band of women — not old, they say, just well-seasoned — first drawn together by the aerobics craze of the 1980s.

Somehow, they held on. They drew on resilience banked well before the tragedy, during bouts with cancer and divorce, the loss of jobs and loves ones. They accepted that to keep going would require taking a risk on new ways of doing things, with new dancers who had not lived their history.

Soon, though, the calendar will come full circle. And to keep moving forward, the group has made a decision. When the parade returns to Main Street in Waukesha, they need to go back.

Today, when the speakers atop the group's sound truck erupt in downtown Milwaukee, the Grannies sashay to a carefree beat: "We are family! I've got all my sisters with me!"

Pom poms and lipstick, though, distract from conflicted feelings about the parade a few weeks ahead.

"If we go past that spot, if we (stop to) remember it, if I lose it and start crying ..." says Kathy Zdarstek, 77, whose line partner, dancing a few feet away, was killed that night last November.

Others are anxious to return.

"That fool thought he could take my Main Street away from me," says Donna Kalik, 61, who was a spectator when the Grannies were mowed down right in front of her, then weeks later applied to join the ranks of the survivors. "He doesn't know who he's messing with."

Regardless, every step today brings Waukesha that much closer.

On the phone last Nov. 21, Tamara Durand sounded ecstatic. "I got an earlier flight! I can be in the parade!"

Durand, a teacher and long-ago cheerleader, was the newest Granny. When she showed up in the blue velvet jacket, long skirt and white fur hat reserved for winter parades, though, leader Virginia Sorenson sounded mildly annoyed.

"What are you doing here?" asked Sorenson, 79, who'd already arranged the dancers in even rows.

In recent years, retirements had shrunk the group's ranks to fewer than a dozen dancers. And only eight were slated to march through Waukesha's cozy downtown, where the annual Christmas parade, cancelled the previous year because of the pandemic, had returned with a new theme: "Comfort and Joy."

Having a round number of dancers pleased Sorenson, a career nurse who had given up performing since a hip replacement, but remained the leader, equal parts demanding and doting.

"Ginny was our glue — she held the group together," one of the others dancing that day recently recalled.

With the sun dropping, Sorenson reshuffled the lineup. She would step in to help carry the banner, replacing a granddaughter unable to make it. Dancers arranged in alternating rows would follow the lead of 71-year-old Leanna Owen, the "little firecracker" who managed an apartment complex and was the group's longtime coach.

In the middle, Betty Streng, a retired systems analyst for the city of Milwaukee dancing in her second

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parade, would serve as one of the anchors. Durand and two others would bring up the rear.

Families thronged Main when the Grannies funneled into the procession behind a Girl Scout troop and a youth dance corps. At 4:38 p.m. they sauntered through an intersection to a crowd favorite, Winter Wonderland, swinging pom poms skyward.

In the din, they didn't hear the red SUV plowing down Main until it hit them.

"It was a flash," says Donna Kalik, who was watching the parade with her boyfriend from a coffee shop window. "And as I'm running out there's a body on the left of me and there's a body on the right ... It looked like a war zone."

At a restaurant next door, Brian Peterson, an off-duty paramedic, glanced out the window just as bodies clad in vivid blue were flung through the air.

"When I got out the front door the first thing that will stick with me forever, besides people lying everywhere, is that it was absolutely dead silent," Peterson says. "And then the crescendo of screams started."

A few feet from the curb, Ginny Sorenson lay dead. Hurling to the sidewalk, the bodies of Owen and Durand, both killed instantly, would not be identified until hours later.

In the middle of the street, Streng, 64, lay unconscious and not breathing.

"Wake up, Betty! Wake up!" implored Schmeling, her fellow Granny.

Crouched on the pavement, Peterson cradled Streng's head, pushing back on her jaw to force open the airway. One touch and he knew the dancer's skull was shattered. When her eyes fluttered, he lay down to hold her head still until help could arrive. But there were so many victims and when rescuers finally came for Streng, Peterson rushed to aid others.

Nearby, Wilhelm Hospel, the husband of another Granny who was a regular volunteer, lay bruised and battered, and succumbed to his injuries the following day. Down Main, an 8-year-old who had been parading with his Little League team, and a 52-year-old woman marching with co-workers from a local bank were also killed.

Wandering through the chaos, Schmeling found fellow dancer Sharon Millard, a teacher's aide so invested in the group that she had called to sign up the night before the birth of her first grandchild.

"Kathi!" she said, dazed. "What's going to happen to the Grannies?"

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The pain of the weeks after Waukesha was followed by doubt.

"There's no leaders. There's no history. There's nothing left," Jeannie Knutson, one of the Original Grannies, recalls thinking.

Two of the dancers were in the hospital, including Streng, comatose for five days afterward with a double skull fracture.

Others nursed hidden scars. Zdarstek kept replaying the choice she'd made to dance on the left side of the formation — leaving Durand a few feet to her right, in death's path. At work, Millard broke down when "Winter Wonderland" played over the school intercom.

Knutson, who had skipped the parade to watch her Green Bay Packers, pictured the spot she would have taken. Listening to survivors during a meetup at the home of a former Granny 10 days afterward, she mulled the route forward. It seemed like they owed it to those who'd died to keep the group going, or at least to try.

The group chose two Grannies to be their new leaders: Knutson, because of her work in human resources, and Jan Kwiatkowski, a family therapist and ordained chaplain.

The day of Sorenson's funeral, a group of 15 dancers, retirees and family members went from the chapel to a parade in nearby Franklin, walking silently, arm in arm, in memory of those lost.

"Milwaukee Dancing Grannies are gathering our thoughts, regrouping," Knutson posted online. The only way to regroup would be to rebuild.

Dozens of notes flooded the inbox of a group that had never added more than a couple of dancers at a time. When they reconvened in late January, 34 hopefuls showed up, forming a dance line that circled the tables of a fraternal hall.

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"I felt like we were the rock that they could lean on," says Doreen Lopez, 66, a native New Yorker who came searching for a way to connect with others in a new hometown. "We all felt the grief and the sorrow for what had happened ... but we weren't emotionally involved, so we thought we could be the strong ones.

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The only thing he could be certain of was that her name was Betty.

Ever since Waukesha, Peterson, the paramedic, had struggled to sleep. In 34 years of answering emergency calls he had never felt wired to a patient the way he did to the silver-haired dancer who'd been whisked away on a stretcher.

He did not know that, rushed into an operating room that night with blood pressing against her brain, Betty Streng had come within minutes of a permanent coma or death, according to the surgeon, Dr. Christopher Sarkiss.

Streng had pulled through with no memory of what happened. But after Peterson contacted the group, her family reached out to him and a few nights before Christmas, he and his wife rang the Strengs' front bell.

The Betty at the door was missing half her hair, sutures crossed her shaven scalp, and she leaned hard on a walker. To Peterson, she looked "glorious," a "miracle."

A long winter of rehabilitation lay ahead. So, too, for the Grannies.

"Ginny always had this saying before parades: 'If you make a mistake, if you get off kilter, if you drop your pom poms, no matter what, you keep on dancing,'" says Kwiatkowski, 67, one of the new leaders. "And that's the mantra we all grabbed on to."

Inside the fraternal hall, leaders split new arrivals into two groups, dancing in turns to fit everyone in tight quarters. Some peeled away in the following weeks, reluctant to commit to months of practices and more than 20 parades a year. A few veterans, taxed by memories, retired.

Others moved to take on the coaching roles left vacant by Sorenson and Owen. But when poms poms were passed out, some new arrivals noticed theirs were marked with the names of those killed. It didn't feel right to use them.

When one of the new trainees, Donna Kalik, broke her leg a month in, the leaders told her not to worry about falling behind on routines. Eventually, she earned a spot as the volunteer coordinator.

Before Waukesha, many Grannies had followed what now seemed like an outdated ethic, keeping disagreements to themselves. To keep going, Kwiatkowski and Knutson decided, dancers needed to tell them about tensions surrounding the group's reorganization so they could be resolved in meetings after practice.

"We're like sisters," Streng says. "You get along or you don't get along. You agree or disagree. But you care about each other."

Returning to the hospital to start physical therapy, it took Streng nearly a half minute to cover 10 feet with the walker, her balance shaky. She spent weeks learning to steady herself, practicing tasks like getting in and out of a bed and raising herself off the floor.

"There was a lot of anxiety, fear of falling, fear of not being able to progress, fear of the unknown," therapist Lisa Miller says.

By late January, though, Streng started moving around the house without the walker. In February, she put it aside altogether. In March, the Grannies called.

Early on a frigid Saturday the group gathered in the lobby of a Milwaukee hotel, ready to dance in a parade for the first time since Waukesha. Ginny Sorenson would be so proud, her husband, Dave, told the dancers, before a toast.

When the Original Grannies joined the St. Patrick's Day procession, new arrivals wearing sashes identifying them as trainees walked alongside.

Just behind, slow and steady, came Streng and another injured Granny, backed up by family members with wheelchairs. Streng, though, walked the whole route on her own. And she was beaming.

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By spring's end, the Grannies — increasingly seen as an embodiment of the region's "Waukesha Strong"



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motto — were fielding parade invites from around the state. In town after town, spectators shouted their thanks for the group's return, shaping hearts with outstretched hands.

"It's bittersweet at times," Knutson says. "I mean, before the tragedy you'd have crowds clapping and singing along, but now it's totally different."

The exhilaration was tempered. When sirens sounded to clear parades routes, some who'd been at Waukesha flinched and others teared up. At a Memorial Day parade, dancers glanced up to see police snipers on rooftops of surrounding buildings.

But as more trainees mastered the dance routines and were promoted to Granny status, there was much to celebrate.

The group's regular banner carrier, 14-year-old Ali Wachter, a family friend of a retired dancer, returned to processions "because I didn't want my fears to overcome me." At a parade in Ginny Sorenson's hometown of Muskego, her granddaughters were invited to lead the way.

On July 4, the group danced in a morning parade, then headed to Streng's house for a cookout before another march scheduled for afternoon's end. The celebration swelled when a fire engine carrying Peterson and his co-workers came by to join in.

Then phones began to buzz: a mass shooter in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park, barely an hour away, had turned another holiday parade into a bloodbath.

On television that night, seeing footage of the suburban street littered with lawn chairs and coolers abandoned by terrified spectators felt like a "gut punch," Kwiatkowski says. Shaken, two of the dancers who'd survived Waukesha stopped coming to practice.

The rest danced on. To Allenton in August with five new members promoted to their ranks. To the Wisconsin Dells in September, with the names of those they'd lost printed inside hearts on costumes echoing the Packers' green and gold.

Then October arrived and the memories of Waukesha were revived in a Milwaukee courtroom.

It had long been clear at least one of the Grannies would be called to testify at the trial of Darrell Brooks, 40, charged with murder and numerous other counts stemming from the violence at Waukesha, which came after he fled a heated dispute with his ex-girlfriend.

Prosecutors, calling witnesses from the length of the parade route and the pursuit that followed, did not divulge who would need to testify or how many. As testimony unfolded, the Grannies who lived through Waukesha were sequestered, barred from talking with one another about their recollections or the trial.

In the end only one now-retired dancer was called to testify. But some continued to keep their distance from the proceedings.

"I didn't want to hear about it," says Schmeling, recalling the anger that welled up inside when she recounted her memory of Waukesha for prosecutors before the trial. "I'm done with that chapter."

For others, watching the trial stirred intense feelings. During a parade weekend in northern Wisconsin, a few gathered around a laptop to watch jurors inspect the vehicle used in the crime. Seeing one of the Grannies' white fur hats hanging from a side-view mirror left some feeling shaky.

As the judge prepared to read the jury's verdict, Kwiatkowski was waiting to get off a plane. When Brooks was convicted of all 76 counts against him, she felt such relief she had to stop herself from shouting out loud in the aircraft's crowded aisle. The trial had been hard on some of the Grannies, but its completion put them over one more hurdle.

The storm blowing through Milwaukee this morning has kept away all but the hardiest spectators, leaving the Grannies to strut their stuff past block after block of nearly empty sidewalks.

But it takes little to visualize the crowds — and the memories — awaiting just a few weeks ahead.

"A year later and I can still break down talking about this ... It's like a demon I'm fighting," says Peterson, who plans to walk alongside Betty Streng in the Waukesha parade, scheduled for Dec. 4, to the place where he found her on the pavement.

"I know where the spot is," he says, "and I just hope I make it."

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For banner carrier Ali Wachter, fears about the parade increase as the day gets closer, though she knows the group has retired "Winter Wonderland." But going back will also bring comfort, she hopes, proof that the recovery of the past year is permanent.

"We've got to get back out there," says Knutson, one of the Original Grannies.

When the speakers atop her group's sound truck short out a few blocks before the terminus of today's prelude, Knutson and the others know what to do.

They keep count of the beat, even without music. A few mouth the words of the song gone missing, while others maintain carefully lipsticked smiles.

They move to the message Ginny Sorenson long preached. No matter what, you've got to keep on dancing.

## Coastal grandmother vibe endures for holiday gifting

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The look of Nancy Meyers' movies. Inside Ina Garten's kitchen. Oversize cable knit sweaters. A quality, timeless trench. All things pumpkin spice.

These are some of Lex Nicoleta's favorite things.

The California TikToker who coined the term "coastal grandmother" in a video that has racked up thousands of views since March helped set the summer's mood for long beach walks, laid-back interiors and that farmer's market way of life.

"And no," Nicoleta insists on camera, "you don't have to be a grandmother to be a coastal grandmother. It's for anyone and everyone."

Now that her coastal grandma-heavy feed has moved into cold-weather vibes, Nicoleta has given us lots of holiday gifting possibilities. Some ideas:

Coastal grandmother has everything to do with pumpkin spice and comfort cooking. Share your grandmother's treasured soups and stews, wrap up a piece of Le Creuset cookware, find a collection of soup crocks, a fancy wine decanter or a nice wine bottle stopper. Even a great bottle of wine or olive oil would do.

So would a nice hot dish, a standout pie dish, some biscotti or fancy tea, a set of tea towels. You can't go wrong there in capturing the mood. Etsy seller Claylicious sells a blue and gold ceramic egg tray for \$87 offering just the ride touch. Another Etsy seller, ZLATNA porcelain, has a ceramic milk carton with a cork stopper in a white-and-black polka dot design for \$109.

The ambiance isn't restricted to "coastal." Gift a wicker picnic basket, some beautiful dried flowers in a vase, a candle with outdoor or baking scents, a charcuterie board, a high-end set of soaps. How about a trip to Napa Valley? Nicoleta suggests Yountville in particular. Lex has spoken.

If Nicoleta is the Pied Piper of all things coastal grandmother, Meyers the filmmaker is her muse — and Diane Keaton her patron saint. Wrap up a copy of Meyers' "The Holiday," "Something's Gotta Give" or "It's Complicated." They're full of coastal grandma energy. Lex likes the Garten kitchen vibe, too. Garten creates her simple, sophisticated magic in a converted barn on her property in East Hampton, New York.

Looking for a cute, no-cost gesture? Put together a worthy playlist, or just share the one Nicoleta dropped on Spotify. It's a doozy, featuring Natalie Cole's "This Will Be (An Everlasting Love)," "Sunrise" by Norah Jones and "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" by Queen. There's James Taylor, Coralie Clement, Fine Young Cannibals, Michael Buble, Jason Mraz and more.

Coastal grandmother can be pricey, roomy cashmere turtlenecks, or something cheaper but equally as cozy from H&M. It can be a classic coat, a set of loafers or ballet flats, a nice warm scarf. Anything timeless — not trendy. A nice pair of over-the-knee boots would work. So would the perfect white T-shirt or a slouchy bag. Any classic worn effortlessly and with style reaches the coastal grandma bar. Try one of these finds in coats and jackets from Refinery29.com.

"Think everything in neutral tones," said Etsy trend expert Dana Isom Johnson.

For the home, try a warm throw, an accent pillow or a tabletop fire pit. Indoor-outdoor living is the name of the coastal grandma game. Think what one would do on a wraparound porch. Read, for instance. Pick up a Kindle. Backyards are also big in the coastal grandma universe. A comfy lounge chair set, perhaps?

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Coastal grandmother, Johnson said, is "all about comfort and making sure that things are feeling Zen and quiet and comfortable in the home."

Some other sellers on Etsy, a global online marketplace, have also captured the mood.

The Etsy store Sea and Stable has turned oyster shells into blue decoupage chinoiserie jewelry holders and trinket bowls. Another, Jess by Jess Designs, sells colorful floral wreaths sealed to prolong all the hydrangea, peony and rose goodness.

An extension of coastal grandmother, Johnson said, is a top trend for the holidays on Etsy: crustacean-core. White pearls have been around for centuries but interest is high, she said. There has been a 44% increase in searches for pearls on shoes on Etsy, and the same for pearl bags or purses. The interest stretches to festive decor and all things crustacean, Johnson said.

Etsy seller Melissa Ceramics hand makes porcelain ceramic bowls finished in a pearly glaze on the inside. A set of three sells for \$47.42. Another seller, Shop Noir Doux, sells a small vintage-style pearl shoulder bag for \$105. Seller Lings Pearls Studio offers a handmade freshwater pearl hair pin for \$12.28.

"Everyone," Johnson said, is looking "to find inspiration from the sea."

## Politics, climate conspire as Tigris and Euphrates dwindle

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

DAWWAYAH, Iraq and ILISU DAM, Turkey (AP) — Next year, the water will come. The pipes have been laid to Ata Yigit's sprawling farm in Turkey's southeast connecting it to a dam on the Euphrates River. A dream, soon to become a reality, he says.

He's already grown a small corn patch on some of the water. The golden stalks are tall and abundant. "The kernels are big," he says, proudly. Soon he'll be able to water all his fields.

Over 1,000 kilometers (625 miles) downstream in southern Iraq, nothing grows anymore in Obeid Hafez's wheat farm. The water stopped coming a year ago, the 95-year-old said, straining to speak.

"The last time we planted the seed, it went green, then suddenly it died," he said.

The starkly different realities are playing out along the length of the Tigris-Euphrates river basin, one of the world's most vulnerable watersheds. River flows have fallen by 40% in the past four decades as the states along its length — Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq — pursue rapid, unilateral development of the waters' use.

The drop is projected to worsen as temperatures rise from climate change. Both Turkey and Iraq, the two biggest consumers, acknowledge they must cooperate to preserve the river system that some 60 million people rely on to sustain their lives.

But political failures and intransigence conspire to prevent a deal sharing the rivers.

The Associated Press conducted more than a dozen interviews in both countries, from top water envoys and senior officials to local farmers, and gained exclusive visits to controversial dam projects. Internal reports and revealed data illustrate the calculations driving disputes behind closed doors, from Iraq's fears of a potential 20% drop in food production to Turkey's struggles to balance Iraq's and its own needs.

"I don't see a solution," said former Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi.

"Would Turkey sacrifice its own interests? Especially if that means that by giving more (water) to us, their farmers and people will suffer?"

### A FARMER'S DREAM

Turkey has been harnessing the river basin with a massive project to boost agriculture and generate hydroelectricity. Under its Southeast Anatolia Project, or GAP by its Turkish acronym, it has built at least 19 dams on the Euphrates and Tigris and several more are envisaged for a total of 22.

It aims to develop the southeast, long an economic backwater and the wellspring of the Kurdistan Worker's Party, or PKK, a Kurdish separatist movement that Ankara considers a terrorist organization.

For the farmer, Yigit, the project will be transformative.

Until now, his reliance on well water only permitted half his land to be irrigated.

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But in June, the irrigation pipes finally reached his farm in Mardin province. Next year, his entire 4,500 acres will be watered via the Ataturk Dam on the Euphrates River.

Lower water availability forced a revision in the area that GAP will irrigate, down to 1.05 million hectares, from an original 1.8 million. Half the reduced goal has been met. The rest depends on how quickly authorities can install infrastructure linking villages to the dams.

Farmers benefitting from GAP must use advanced irrigation techniques that Turkish authorities say use two-thirds less water.

But for an anxious Iraq, every drop of water diverted for irrigation means less downstream.

Still, in Yigit's world, the future is finally bright.

"Next year, the canals will be open."

## "A SINGLE TRUTH"

Iraq is the downstream prisoner of geography, relying almost entirely for its water on the twin rivers and tributaries originating outside its borders.

In 2014, Iraq's Water Ministry prepared a confidential report that spelled out a "single truth:" In two years, Iraq's water supply would no longer meet demand, and the gap would keep widening. The report, seen by the AP, warned that by 2035, the water deficit would cause a 20% reduction in food production.

The doomsday predictions are playing out in 2022. Lakes have dried up, crops have failed and thousands of Iraqis are migrating. An author of the report, who spoke anonymously because it is not public, said the predictions were "remarkably accurate."

They show Iraqi officials knew how bleak the future would be without the recommended \$180 billion in investment and an agreement with neighbors. Neither transpired.

Decades of talks have still not found common ground on water-sharing.

Turkey approaches the water issue as if it were the river basin's benevolent owner, assessing needs and deciding how much to let flow downstream. Iraq considers ownership shared and wants a more permanent arrangement with defined portions.

In a rare interview, Turkey's envoy on water issues with Iraq, Veysel Eroglu, told the AP that Turkey cannot accept to release a fixed amount of water because of the unpredictability of river flows in the age of climate change.

Eroglu said Turkey could agree to setting a ratio to release — but only if Syria and Iraq provide detailed data on their water consumption.

"That is the only way to share water in an optimal and fair manner," Eroglu said.

The question of Syria is a major obstacle. Turkey insists it must be part of any broad agreement but that for the time being it has no interlocutor in war-torn Syria.

Both sides treat some data like state secrets, fueling mistrust.

"I like to keep it to myself," Eroglu's Iraqi counterpart, Mahdi Hamdani, said regarding his country's water consumption data. "They are tools in our negotiations."

Hamdani stepped down from his position after a new government was voted into power in October, underscoring another gripe from Turkey: The frequent changing of Iraqi interlocutors in the water talks.

One Iraqi ambassador said it was "a mistake" that his side once informed the Turks they were aware that 70% of their water is effectively wasted on ancient farming practices then discharged to the Persian Gulf, leading Ankara to double down on demands that Iraq reform itself first.

Turkey is relatively forthcoming with Tigris data but reveals little about the Euphrates, particularly the vital question of how much water will be diverted to irrigation under GAP. It says only that diversion will be minimal.

It also argues that, if it's shared water, Iraq must be more responsible with it and introduce greater efficiency, like Turkey.

Iraq bristles at being told how to use its water.

"Sometimes they ask us why Iraq cultivates (water-intensive) rice," Hamdani said. "I ask them, why are

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you cultivating cotton? And they say it's part of their history, civilization. And I tell them yes, we also have our history, our civilization."

"If we keep talking like this, we will never reach an agreement."

## "YOUR EYES, YOUR SCALE"

Sheikh Thamer Saeedi decided enough is enough. The streams were dry in his village in southern Iraq. Despairing families were abandoning their farms for the city after crops failed.

What he did next underscores rising anger among farmers following devastating, back-to-back droughts — and the Iraqi government's weaknesses that make managing water nearly impossible.

"One week," Saeedi told local water authorities in Dhi Qar province. Release more water to his district, Dawwayah, he threatened, or else he would take matters into his own hands.

In Iraq's south, tribal allegiance transcends government authority. As a tribal leader, Saeedi had to guarantee water for his people to safeguard his legitimacy.

The authorities were in a bind. Water levels in the Gharraf River, the Tigris' branch here, were so low it didn't reach the diversion gates, designed in the 1970s when flows were twice as high. Districts like Dawwayah, further along the irrigation network, were left dry.

At the same time, the government had cut the province's water allocation by 60%.

Time ran out.

Saeedi marched with dozens of followers to the irrigation regulator on the riverbank, armed with a long pipe and shovels. They dug until a water corridor was secured to his district.

"My people are thirsty," he said.

To ensure he left enough water for other communities, Saeedi invoked the Arabic idiom: "Your eyes, your scale." That is, he took a wild guess.

Rival tribal leaders were enraged, fearing for their own water supplies. Security officials rushed to put a halt to the diversion. Many feared gun battles if they hadn't.

"It was a destructive act," said Ghazwan Kadhim, head of Dhi Qar's Water Resources Directorate. "The Gharraf River has 154 gates to different areas. If anyone does anything like that, the entire river would become unfit for distributing water."

But authorities are having a harder time keeping a lid on fights over water. Threats of lawsuits do little to stop tribal leaders diverting flows or digging illegal wells; using security forces risks escalation.

"We are terrified of conflict breaking out in central and southern Iraq over the water shortages," said Issa Fayadh, an official at the Environment Ministry in Baghdad.

## A NUMBERS GAME

Straddling between ridges in southeast Turkey, the Ilisu Dam is — for Iraqis — a stark reminder of an irretrievable past.

Before Turkey began operating the dam in May 2020, all the waters of the Tigris River flowed into Iraq. Now how much water comes down depends on Ankara's consideration of Iraq's month-to-month requests for a minimum flow, weighed against Turkey's own needs.

The AP was given an exclusive tour of the dam facility in October by Turkey's State Hydraulics Works, known by the Turkish acronym DSI, and given figures for the first time detailing flow rates and electricity production over two years.

A decade ago, Iraq received an average flow of 625 cubic meters of water per second from the Tigris. Today, the rate averages only 36% of that because of less precipitation combined with the dam's effect, Iraqi water ministry officials say.

The dam is used for hydroelectricity, not irrigation, so eventually water must be let through for the turbines.

But how much and when are another matter. Turkish officials must maintain a minimum reservoir level of 500 meters above sea level to produce electricity, even as they face a lower, less predictable flow into the reservoir.

In 2021, Ilisu discharged 20% more water than it received and had to draw on water stored from previ-

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ous years, according to figures from Eroglu.

In January, the reservoir's level dropped below the 500-meter mark. Power production this year fell 20%, compared to 2021. Ilisu on average produces less than half its potential.

Turkish officials argue that with the dam, they can regulate flow for Iraq's benefit, storing more during floods and discharging more during drought.

Data provided by DSI shows that Turkey respected a request made by Iraq that it release at least 300 cubic meters per second down the Tigris during summer months, when shortages are common.

But Iraqi officials say depending on such ad hoc arrangements makes planning difficult.

"They can cut water, they can release water. We urgently need a water agreement just to satisfy Iraq's minimum requirements," said Hatem Hamid, head of the National Centre for Water Resources Management.

Once the Tigris waters reach Mosul Dam, Hamid decides how much goes where in Iraq. The impact of his calculations can be monumental.

With dire shortages anticipated in 2022, Hamid had to make severe cuts, slicing water quotas in half for agriculture. Water rationing was enforced with military patrols.

That also reduced the Tigris' water entering the marshlands of southern Iraq. What Hamid could not have predicted was that water-stressed Iran then diverted tributaries feeding the marshes.

The result was an environmental emergency: Not enough fresh water was entering the marshes to wash away salinity.

Hamid scrambled to divert more water, but the damage was done.

## "LIFE HAS ENDED"

In the famed Chibayish marshes, the carcasses of water buffalos float along the riverbanks, poisoned by the salty water.

Herders circulate the iconic wetland, fabled to have been the biblical Garden of Eden, looking for trickles of fresh water to save their animals.

Over the past two years, the lush greenery of the marshes has degenerated and yellowed, killed by salinity building up from two years of insufficient fresh-water inflow.

It is a haunting vision of the future. Along with dying livestock, harvests are declining for a second year in a row; both are the principal employers in rural Iraq. At least 62,000 people in south-central Iraq have migrated to congested urban centers due to drought, the U.N. reported in September.

Obeid Hafez, the elderly farmer, once produced nearly 2,500 acres of wheat. Today his lands in southern Iraq are barren.

Portraits of Hafez's forefathers hang in his spartan living room. Their stern faces look down on him as he speaks.

He inherited the lands from them, one generation to another.

But there will be no one to come after him. His sons have gone, looking for work in the cities.

"Life has ended here," he said.

## Sweden: Traces of explosives found at Baltic Sea pipelines

By JARI TANNER Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — Investigators found traces of explosives at the Baltic Sea site where two natural gas pipelines were damaged in an act of "gross sabotage," the prosecutor leading Sweden's preliminary investigation said Friday.

Mats Ljungqvist of the Swedish Prosecution Authority said the investigators carefully documented the area where the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines ruptured in September, causing significant methane leaks. The parallel undersea pipelines run from Russia to Germany.

"Analysis carried out shows traces of explosives on several of the foreign objects that were found" at the site, Ljungqvist said in a statement.

The prosecution authority said the preliminary investigation was "very complex and comprehensive" and

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further scrutiny would show whether anyone could be charged "with suspicion of crime."

Investigators in Sweden, Denmark and Germany are looking into what happened. Danish officials confirmed in October that there was extensive damage to the pipelines caused by "powerful explosions."

The leaks, which stopped after several days, occurred in international waters but within the exclusive economic zones of Denmark and Sweden. Investigators have not given indications of whom they think might be responsible but reported earlier that the blasts were likely to have involved several hundred pounds of explosives.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday it was "very important to find those who are behind the explosion."

Sweden's findings of "a sabotage act or a terrorist act -- you can call it whatever you like" confirm "the information that the Russian side has had," Peskov said. Moscow needs to wait for a full damage assessment to decide whether to repair the pipelines, he said.

Nord Stream 1 carried Russian gas to Germany until Moscow cut off supplies at the end of August. Nord Stream 2 never entered service as Germany suspended its certification process shortly before Russia invaded Ukraine in February.

The governments of Denmark, Germany and Sweden have refrained from speculating over who may be behind the sabotage, saying only that there's no sufficient proof yet to identify the perpetrator.

"We have no information on possible initiators of this act of sabotage," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's spokesman, Steffen Hebestreit, said at a regular government news conference in Berlin on Friday.

But some Nordic and other European media outlets have pointed a finger of blame on Moscow, hosting military experts suggesting that Russia has all the resources to carry out such a precise attack requiring careful advance planning.

Fatih Birol, head of the International Energy Agency, said late September it was "very obvious" who was responsible of the pipeline sabotage, suggesting Russia's involvement.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused the West of blowing up the pipelines and singled out the United States as profiting from attacks on Europe's energy infrastructure.

Earlier this week, Germany marked the completion of port facilities for the first of five planned liquefied natural gas terminals it is scrambling to get running as it replaces the Russian pipeline gas that once accounted for more than half its supplies.

## Today in History: November 19, Lincoln speaks at Gettysburg

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 19, the 323rd day of 2022. There are 42 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln dedicated a national cemetery at the site of the Civil War battlefield of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania.

On this date:

In 1831, the 20th president of the United States, James Garfield, was born in Orange Township, Ohio.

In 1919, the Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY') by a vote of 55 in favor, 39 against, short of the two-thirds majority needed for ratification.

In 1942, during World War II, Russian forces launched their winter offensive against the Germans along the Don front.

In 1959, Ford Motor Co. announced it was halting production of the unpopular Edsel.

In 1969, Apollo 12 astronauts Charles Conrad and Alan Bean made the second manned landing on the moon.

In 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat became the first Arab leader to visit Israel.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev met for the first time as they began their summit in Geneva.

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In 1997, Iowa seamstress Bobbi McCaughey (mihk-KOY') gave birth to the world's first set of surviving septuplets, four boys and three girls.

In 2004, in one of the worst brawls in U.S. sports history, Ron Artest (now known as Metta Sandiford-Artest) and Stephen Jackson of the Indiana Pacers charged into the stands and fought with Detroit Pistons fans, forcing officials to end the Pacers' 97-82 win with 45.9 seconds left.

In 2007, in Pakistan, a Supreme Court hand-picked by President Gen. Pervez Musharraf (pur-VEHZ' moo-SHAH'-ruhv) dismissed legal challenges to his continued rule.

In 2010, President Barack Obama, attending a NATO summit in Lisbon, Portugal, won an agreement to build a missile shield over Europe, a victory that risked further aggravating Russia.

In 2020, Georgia's top elections official released results of a hand tally of ballots that affirmed Democrat Joe Biden's narrow lead over President Donald Trump in the state. With the coronavirus surging out of control, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention pleaded with Americans not to travel for Thanksgiving and not to spend the holiday with people from outside their household.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama became the first U.S. chief executive to visit Myanmar, where he promised more American help if the Asian nation kept building its new democracy. Former U.S. Sen. Warren B. Rudman died at 82; the New Hampshire Republican co-authored a ground-breaking budget balancing law.

Five years ago: Charles Manson, the hippie cult leader behind the gruesome murders of actress Sharon Tate and six others in Los Angeles in 1969, died in a California hospital at the age of 83 after nearly a half-century in prison. State media and a monitoring group in Syria reported that pro-government forces had defeated the Islamic State group in its last major stronghold in the country. Longtime country music star Mel Tillis died in Florida at the age of 85. Actor and singer Della Reese died at 86 in her Los Angeles area home.

One year ago: Kyle Rittenhouse was acquitted of all charges in the shooting deaths of two men and the wounding of a third during a night of protests over the shooting of a Black man, Jacob Blake, by a white police officer in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in the summer of 2020. The Denver suburb of Aurora agreed to pay \$15 million to settle a lawsuit brought by the parents of Elijah McClain, a Black man who died after suburban Denver police stopped him on the street and put him in a neck hold.

Today's Birthdays: Talk show host Dick Cavett is 86. Broadcasting and sports mogul Ted Turner is 84. Former Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, is 83. Former Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson is 81. Fashion designer Calvin Klein is 80. Sportscaster Ahmad Rashad is 73. Actor Robert Beltran is 69. Actor Kathleen Quinlan is 68. Actor Glynnis O'Connor is 67. Broadcast journalist Ann Curry is 66. Former NASA astronaut Eileen Collins is 66. Actor Allison Janney is 63. Rock musician Matt Sorum (Guns N' Roses, Velvet Revolver) is 62. Actor Meg Ryan is 61. Actor-director Jodie Foster is 60. Actor Terry Farrell is 59. TV chef Rocco DiSpirito is 56. Actor Jason Scott Lee is 56. Olympic gold medal runner Gail Devers is 56. Actor Erika Alexander is 53. Rock musician Travis McNabb is 53. Singer Tony Rich is 51. Actor Sandrine Holt is 50. Country singer Billy Currington is 49. Dancer-choreographer Savion Glover is 49. R&B singer Tamika Scott (Xscape) is 47. R&B singer Lil' Mo is 45. Olympic gold medal gymnast Kerri Strug is 45. Actor Reid Scott is 45. Movie director Barry Jenkins (Film: "Moonlight") is 43. Actor Katherine Kelly is 43. Actor Adam Driver is 39. Country singer Cam is 38. Actor Samantha Futerman is 35. NHL forward Patrick Kane is 34. Rapper Tyga is 33.