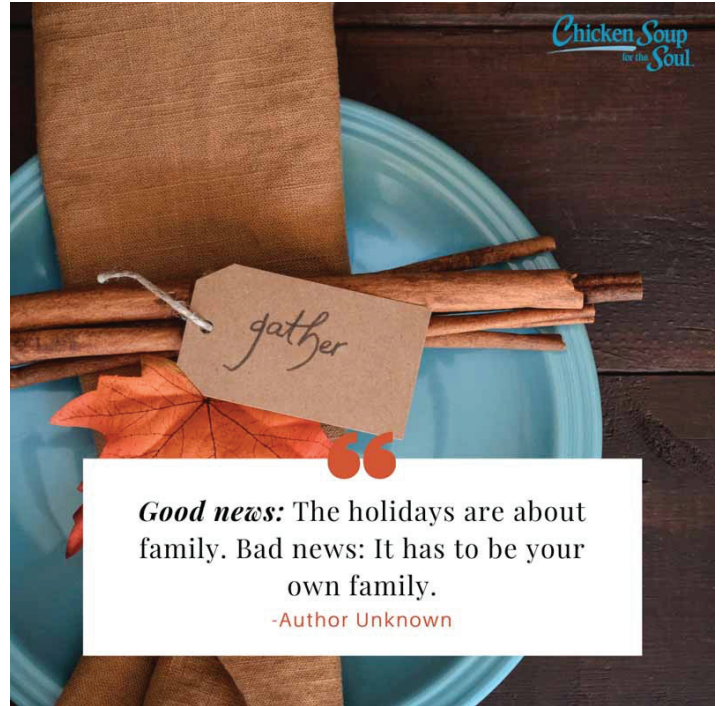


Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 1 of 68

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Dale Wolter Family Donates Antique John Deere Tractors](#)
- [3- Chamber Ad](#)
- [4- SD Searchlight: Widow of former Smithfield employee challenges COVID-19 liability law](#)
- [5- Olive Grove Tour of Homes Ad](#)
- [6- SD Searchlight: Board of Education hears more comments on proposed social studies standards](#)
- [8- SD Searchlight: Fewer South Dakotans fishing, prompting worries of state revenue loss](#)
- [10- SD Searchlight: Leadership teams lean moderate in South Dakota House, Senate](#)
- [11- Weather Pages](#)
- [15- Daily Devotional](#)
- [16- 2022 Community Events](#)
- [17- Subscription Form](#)
- [18- News from the Associated Press](#)



Groton Community Calendar

Tuesday, Nov. 22

- Senior Menu: Potato soup, ham salad sandwich, tomato spoon salad, pineapple tidbits.
- School Breakfast: Egg Omelets.
- School Lunch: Corn dogs, baked beans.
- Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- UMC: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
- St. John's Quilting, 9 a.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 23

- Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes and

- gravy, beets, peaches, dinner roll.
- Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm
- Emmanuel Lutheran: No confirmation; League, 6:30 p.m.
- UMC: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.
- St. John's Thanksgiving Eve Service, 7 p.m.
- NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving break
- Thursday, Nov. 24**
- NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving break
- Community Thanksgiving Dinner, 11:30 a.m., Groton Community Center
- Friday, Nov. 25**
- NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving break
- Saturday, Nov. 26**
- 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.

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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Dale Wolter Family Donates Antique John Deere Tractors by Dorene Nelson



Students in the Groton Area High School shop classes with the John Deere tractors, a 1941 (left) and a 1951 B (right), donated by the Dale Wolter family. From left to right in the back are Tyson Parrow, Aeydon Johnson, Ethan Pigors (seated), and Danny Feist. From left to right, starting with the front of the tractor, Tanner McGannon, Cameron Johnson, Porter Johnson, Ethan Gengerke, Kaden Kampa (seated), Caleb Hanten, Kaleb Antonsen, and Cole Bisbee.

The family of Dale Wolter donated two antique John Deere tractors, a 1941 and a 1951 B, to the shop classes in Groton Area High School. In addition to the other learning involved to restore them, these two items will provide the class with a history lesson in agriculture.

Dale Wolter, a Groton area farmer, grew up on the family farm with John Deere tractors as a definite part of his life. Retiring in December of 2020, Dale said, "At 80 years old, I'm too old to change to the large farmer-semi truck owner kind of farming."

"Dale was a man of few words but a deep thinker," she smiled. "He always had lots of plans and ideas."

Wolter was a life-long farmer on his family farm south of Groton. He and his wife Karen raised four children. Karen, a retired nurse, continues to be very active with her quilting projects, having finished nine quilts that were recently given to veterans at the school's annual Veterans Day celebration.

According to Wessels Living History Farm, York, NE, the source of the John Deere Company history, John Deere tractors with their identifiable motor sound, have been around for a long time.

In the 1930s and 1940s new John Deere models began to emerge as small farmers, recovering from their Depression troubles, turned from horses to tractors.

Engine power in these new designs was increased and a new six-speed transmission was added. Other changes included an electric start and lights.

Later a three-speed transmission was added with the newer models having updated operator platforms,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 3 of 68

a cushioned seat, new steering column, lights, battery, and electric starting.

In 1947, Deere & Company opened a new tractor factory in Dubuque, Iowa, built to produce the John Deere Model M. The M was created to address the increasing demand for small tractors.

In the 50s and 60s, the John Deere line went from two-cylinder "Johnny Poppers" to four- and six-cylinder engines and quickly became the leading company in tractor sales. Deere's first diesel engine was introduced in 1949.

By 1952, the last vestiges of World War II restrictions were gone, and the tractor market had become a highly competitive battle between powerful companies.

Throughout its tractor history, John Deere had built two-cylinder engines that had a distinctive rhythm and musical sound to them. These were simple engines that could produce remarkable power.

**'TIS THE
SEASON TO
SHOP LOCAL**

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Widow of former Smithfield employee challenges COVID-19 liability law

BY JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 21, 2022

The widow of a slaughterhouse worker who died after contracting COVID-19 is challenging the constitutionality of a South Dakota law that preemptively absolves employers of liability for exposing workers to the virus.

The South Dakota Department of Labor (DOL) used the law this summer to justify denying the worker's compensation claim to Karen Franken, whose husband died from COVID-19 at a point in 2020 when his employer, Sioux Falls-based Smithfield Foods, was one of the nation's most significant viral hot spots.

The law in question was drafted by a lawyer who collaborates with the South Dakota Retailers As-



Smithfield Foods in Sioux Falls, as seen on Nov. 21, 2022. (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

sociation (SDRA) and passed in 202. It bars COVID-19 damages in court unless an employer, school, or property owner exposes people to the virus on purpose.

Discussions about House Bill 1046, which became law with Gov. Kristi Noem's signature, were framed around frivolous lawsuits. It had the support of a wide range of stakeholders, including retailers, school districts, local governments and other business owners.

"We've heard rumblings of individuals using COVID-19 to sue businesses, sue churches (or) sue schools, as a result of a pandemic that nobody knew how to control," SDRA Executive Director Nathan Sanderson told the House State Affairs Committee.

Workers comp applicability questioned

Franken's case doesn't involve a wrongful death lawsuit. That was the crux of the argument when her lawyer Mark Welter appeared to make his client's case on Monday before Judge Jon Sogn.

Franken is seeking a worker's compensation benefit, an area of South Dakota law administered by the state labor department.

At least 28 other states have passed some form of liability protection for COVID-19 since 2020. Thirteen of those laws don't specifically mention worker's compensation. Fifteen do. South Dakota is not among those 15.

That's one reason, Welter said, that the DOL was wrong to dismiss a hearing for the insurance claim. A law governing civil lawsuits ought not upend the legal standards by which the DOL renders decisions about benefits for injured workers or their families.

"Every employer and every employee is presumed to have accepted the provisions of (worker's compensation law)," Welter said.

Franken's attorney said that the liability law doesn't explicitly note retroactivity — noteworthy because the illness and death occurred well before its passage.

Smithfield's attorney, Laura Hensley, said that retroactivity and a barring of worker's compensation

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 5 of 68

*Olive Grove's
6th Annual*

Christmas Tour of Homes & Holiday Party

**Charlie & Jenn Dirks
Tigh & Adrienne Flihs
Tom & Barb Paepke
Wage Memorial Library & City Office**

**SATURDAY,
DEC. 3, 2022**

**TOUR OF
HOMES
4-7 P.M.**

**HOLIDAY
PARTY
4-CLOSE**

**Silent Basket Items
Bidding closes at 8:30 p.m.
Live Auction begins at 8:30 p.m.**

**Coffee, Apple Cider and Goodies at the Club House
A variety of snacks served.**

**\$15 tickets available at
Lori's Pharmacy, Groton
Groton Ford**

**Hair & Company, Aberdeen
Olive Grove Golf Clubhouse**

**Come on out for a fun evening!
Support your local golf course!**

claims were both part of lawmakers' intent. In briefs filed before the hearing, Hensley pointed out that the existence of a carve-out provision allowing for worker's compensation claims in 15 states makes it clear that South Dakota's legislature didn't want to let employees file insurance claims for getting sick on the job.

"If the legislature did not intend to have worker's compensation covered (by the law), they could have said so," Hensley said.

But Franken's court filings also argue that the law as written amounts to a violation of the South Dakota Constitution's due process and equal protection rights. "Work-related injury" ought to be liberally interpreted, they argue, as other illness-related claims have been accepted as causes for compensation across the country and in South Dakota.

Hensley rebuffed that concern on Monday. Laws are presumed to be Constitutional, she said, and two other people have had their claims rejected for similar reasons.

Franken and her attorneys could have argued that Smithfield intentionally exposed its workers to COVID-19, as the law requires for a civil action to succeed in South Dakota. They did not.

"No remedy has been removed," she said. "They could plead that there was an intentional act ... they may not like it, but there is a remedy."

Smithfield connection to illness unproven

There has been no determination that Craig Franken's work at Smithfield was the cause of his illness and death, but there's no question that a mass of slaughter-

house employees were sickened in the early days of the pandemic.

Smithfield never faced an extended closure, though it did close for a few weeks in April and May of 2020. Its close-quarters working conditions and alleged lack of worker protections were a source of heavy scrutiny, both in the public square and through official agency action. Workers were pushed to come to work through \$500 "responsibility" bonuses for attendance, and some workers complained the company's masks were similar to hairnets. Some opted to bring their own masks; others opted to stay home.

The company was fined \$13,494 by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in September of 2020.

Craig Franken was a 40-year employee of Smithfield. He died at age 61 on April 19, 2020. Karen Franken asked the DOL for a worker's compensation hearing in March of 2022, but the agency swiftly dismissed it, citing the 2021 law as its reasoning.

Her appeal to circuit court, her lawyers said Monday, is simply a legal action meant to force the DOL to let her prove that her husband's illness was job-related.

Welter told Judge Sogn that she deserves that much.

"We never had the opportunity to present evidence as to the time and place of the injury," Welter said. "These would be questions of fact."

Sogn told the lawyers that he hoped to rule on the matter before the weekend. The judge made a point at the beginning of the hearing to say that none of the legal arguments or decisions would lessen the impact of Karen Franken's loss. She was not present in court.

"Please pass on our condolences on the loss of her husband," he told Welter and his associates.



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.

Board of Education hears more comments on proposed social studies standards

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 21, 2022 5:42 PM

The public had a second opportunity to speak to the South Dakota Board of Education about proposed changes to the state's social studies standards on Monday at the Sioux Falls Convention Center.

The in-person comment session came after nearly 1,000 people submitted written testimony, and dozens of educators braved the cold to protest the document.

Opposition was apparent even before visitors entered the building, as about a dozen protestors carrying signs stood outside.

Inside the convention center, proponents of the standards spoke first, with concerns ranging from supposed Marxist indoctrination and kids using litter boxes in schools to beliefs that the new standards would increase national pride and Native American representation.

Larry Fossum said that he was disappointed that the first draft of the new standards had little mention of Native American history, but said the reworked version of the standards are rich with that history.

"We finally have a social studies standard that would lead this nation by example and begin to represent all the people of the state," Fossum said.



A proponent of the new social studies standards offers a statement of support to the state Board of Education on November 21 in Sioux Falls (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight).

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 7 of 68

South Dakota tribes disagree.

Brian Wager, an education consultant for Crow Creek and education director for Lower Brule, said all nine tribes in the state oppose the new standards.

"The social studies standards, in regards to Native Americans, are missing for great spans of time as if Native Americans didn't and don't exist," Wagner said.

Other opponents argued that the new standards are reductive and replace doing social sciences like geography and history with the memorization of names and dates.

One said reducing history to memorization isn't educational.

"These standards focus on history as a series of things to memorize, rather than to think actively and critically," said Stephen Jackson, who teaches history at the University of Sioux Falls.

While the curriculum does challenge students to memorize a lot of information, proponent and South Dakota State Historian Ben Jones said, that memorization sets them on a path to deeper understanding at higher grade levels.

"The proposed standards build knowledge in the early grades so that students have something to think critically about as their knowledge is building," Jones said.

Few current South Dakota educators spoke in favor of the new standards. The educators backing the standards were largely retired or worked for private, out-of-state charter schools – something opponents like Rob Monson found frustrating.

"Where is the evidence that what we are doing in South Dakota and how we are doing it isn't working?" said Rob Monson, executive director of School Administrators of South Dakota.

Originally, the social studies standards were crafted by a more than 40-person work group.

That initial proposal was scrapped around the time Hillsdale College of Michigan began to work with former president Donald Trump's staff on classroom materials designed to counter so-called "anti-American indoctrination" in education. Those materials were the starting point for a 15-person work group, which included a retired Hillsdale educator, to begin work on the standards up for debate now.

The Department of Education said it collected 968 comments regarding the new standards — 103 are in favor, 828 are opposed. The rest are neutral.

That disparity was mirrored at the convention center. When opponents were asked to identify themselves in the room of about 250 people, nearly every attendee stood.



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.

Fewer South Dakotans fishing, prompting worries of state revenue loss

GF&P sets out to reel anglers back in

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 21, 2022 4:26 PM

Fewer South Dakotans are fishing, and that could spell trouble for the state Game, Fish and Parks department.

A majority of the department's Division of Wildlife revenue funding comes from the sales of hunting and fishing licenses. GF&P relies on that money to conserve the state's wildlife and outdoor recreation.

Over 10,800 fewer resident fishing and combination hunting-fishing licenses were sold through October of 2022, compared to the three-year average. That's a decrease of \$270,167 in revenue.

The GF&P hasn't seen a nosedive in revenues, but resident fishing license sales point to potentially troubling long-term trends as South Dakota's angling population ages. GF&P is working to find the reason behind younger generations' lack of interest in sportsman activities and how to get them back outside.



Man fishes in northern Wisconsin for walleye. (Joanna Gilkeson/USFWS)

By the numbers: GF&P license sales revenue

Part of that drop in resident fishing license sales is due to a change in licensing requirements. The department discontinued the resident junior combination license for 16- through 18-year-olds last year. As of 2022, minors only pay \$5 for apprentice deer hunting and small game hunting.

That loss in 2022 fishing revenue is partially covered by non-resident anglers. Revenues from out-of-staters increased by about \$180,000 in 2022 from the three-year average, in spite of GF&P discontinuing non-resident youth and family fishing licenses.

That 2022 fishing revenue loss is completely overshadowed by the increase in resident and non-resident hunting licenses sold through October, powered by small game licenses for pheasant hunting season.

Factoring in all sales, GF&P license sale revenue increased by \$933,280 for 2022, but fell nearly \$400,000 compared to 2021 sales. The agency had revenues just shy of \$16.5 million at the end of October.

Habitat stamps, which are required for the purchase of general hunting, fishing and furbearer licenses, add another \$4.6 million to department coffers. That revenue stream is dedicated to developing habitat on public lands and waters, or to provide public access to private land.

Less resident anglers since 2015 costs thousands of dollars

While it's beneficial for hunting license sales to cover resident fishing license losses, the decreased interest in angling among residents is a concern.

"If we don't have that money, we don't conserve this. We'll lose it and we'll never get it back," said Shala Larson of the GF&P. "I think it boils down to building outdoor families and making sure those opportunities stay available for South Dakota families and visitors."

R3 is a nationwide movement to recruit, retain and reactivate interest in outdoor recreation. South Dakota implemented the philosophy a decade ago by hiring its first HuntSAFE coordinator to focus on educating residents. Larson was hired to the position in 2021.

Nearly 13,000 less resident fishing and combination licenses were sold in 2022, compared to 2015. That's

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 9 of 68

hundreds of thousands of dollars lost in the last seven years, which affects programming, conservation efforts and staffing.

"It's got to change," Larson said. "Those license dollars, that's a huge chunk of people missing. Not only are we trying to get people outside, but we're also trying to continue our conservation work. Everything revolves around those (license sales)."

How GF&P is reeling South Dakotans back

The department saw a significant bump in angling in 2020, with 15,593 additional license sales compared to 2019. But many of those people have yet to renew their licenses. Larson is set on finding out how to bring them back.

Larson will send out a survey in December to about 28,000 people, inquiring what motivated them to fish and why they stopped shortly after. The survey will be sent to individuals who purchased a fishing license between 2019-2021 but did not renew in 2022.

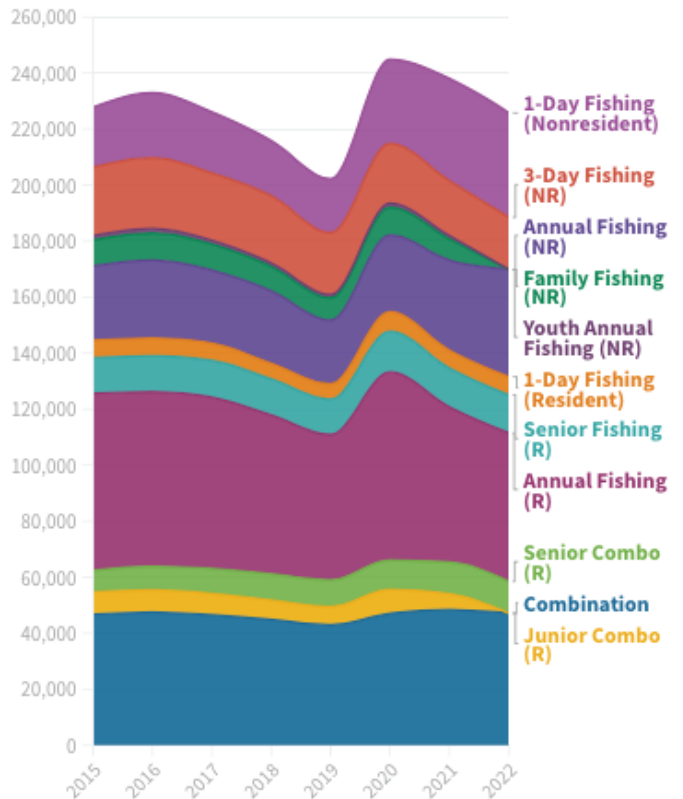
"Were their expectations not met? Did life get busy? Did they not get a good catch or find a species that would catch well? Was there no good shoreline access?" Larson asked. "We want to dig in and see what we can do to get these folks back."

The department has already implemented several strategies to address the shrinking angler population since it released its strategic plan in May 2022. That plan includes shoreline access improvements, marketing to diverse or underrepresented communities and the expansion of urban fishing ponds. A hunting 101 program, meanwhile, connects new hunters with experienced hunters to encourage retention through mentorship and continued education.

"We'll make as many changes that are in our control until spring fishing season," Larson said. "It's beyond just having a fishing program in a classroom."

GFP Fishing License Sales, Resident & Non-resident

Non-resident fishing license sales make up for losses in resident license sales from 2015 to 2022.



Source: SD Game Fish and Parks • Data from Jan. 1 through Oct. 31



MAKENZIE HUBER



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

Leadership teams lean moderate in South Dakota House, Senate

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - NOVEMBER 21, 2022 10:31 AM

The South Dakota House of Representatives elected its leadership team for the 2023 legislative session over the weekend, a week after their counterparts in the Senate did the same.

Members of the 94-member GOP supermajority's more moderate faction came out ahead in both chambers.

Speaker of the House Hugh Bartels, Watertown, was elected to replace outgoing Speaker Brian Gosch, besting Jess Olson of Rapid City and Jon Hansen of Dell Rapids. Gosch clashed with leaders of the upper chamber during the last legislative session, as well as Gov. Kristi Noem. Hansen led an unsuccessful effort to pass a food tax repeal during the 2022 session – a proposal now supported by Noem.

Mike Stevens of Yankton will serve as speaker pro tempore.

Will Mortenson of Ft. Pierre was elected House majority leader on Saturday. Also elected to GOP leadership positions:

Taylor Rehfeldt, Sioux Falls, assistant majority leader

Rocky Blare, Winner, majority whip

Gary Cammack, Union Center, majority whip

Kirk Chaffee, Whitewood, majority whip

Becky Drury, Rapid City, majority whip

James D. Wangsness, Miller, majority whip



SD House Republican leaders for 2023 Session. Front: Assistant Majority Leader Taylor Rehfeldt, R-Sioux Falls, Majority Leader Will Mortensen, R-Ft. Pierre, Speaker Hugh Bartels, R-Watertown, Speaker Pro Tem Mike Stevens, R-Yankton. Middle: Whip Becky Drury, R-Rapid City, Whip Kirk Chaffee, R-Whitewood, Whip Rocky Blare, R-Winner. Back: Whip Gary Cammack, R-Union Center, Whip James D. Wangsness, R-Miller. (courtesy SD Legislative Research Council)

The elections in the House came about a week after the Senate chose its leadership. Sen. Lee Schoenbeck of Watertown will repeat as president pro tempore in the upper house. Casey Crabtree of Madison was elected majority leader, with Mike Diedrich elected as assistant majority leader.

Also serving in Senate leadership:

Helene Duhamel, Rapid City, majority whip

Jack Kolbeck, Sioux Falls, majority whip

Ryan Maher, Isabel, majority whip

David Wheeler, Huron, majority whip

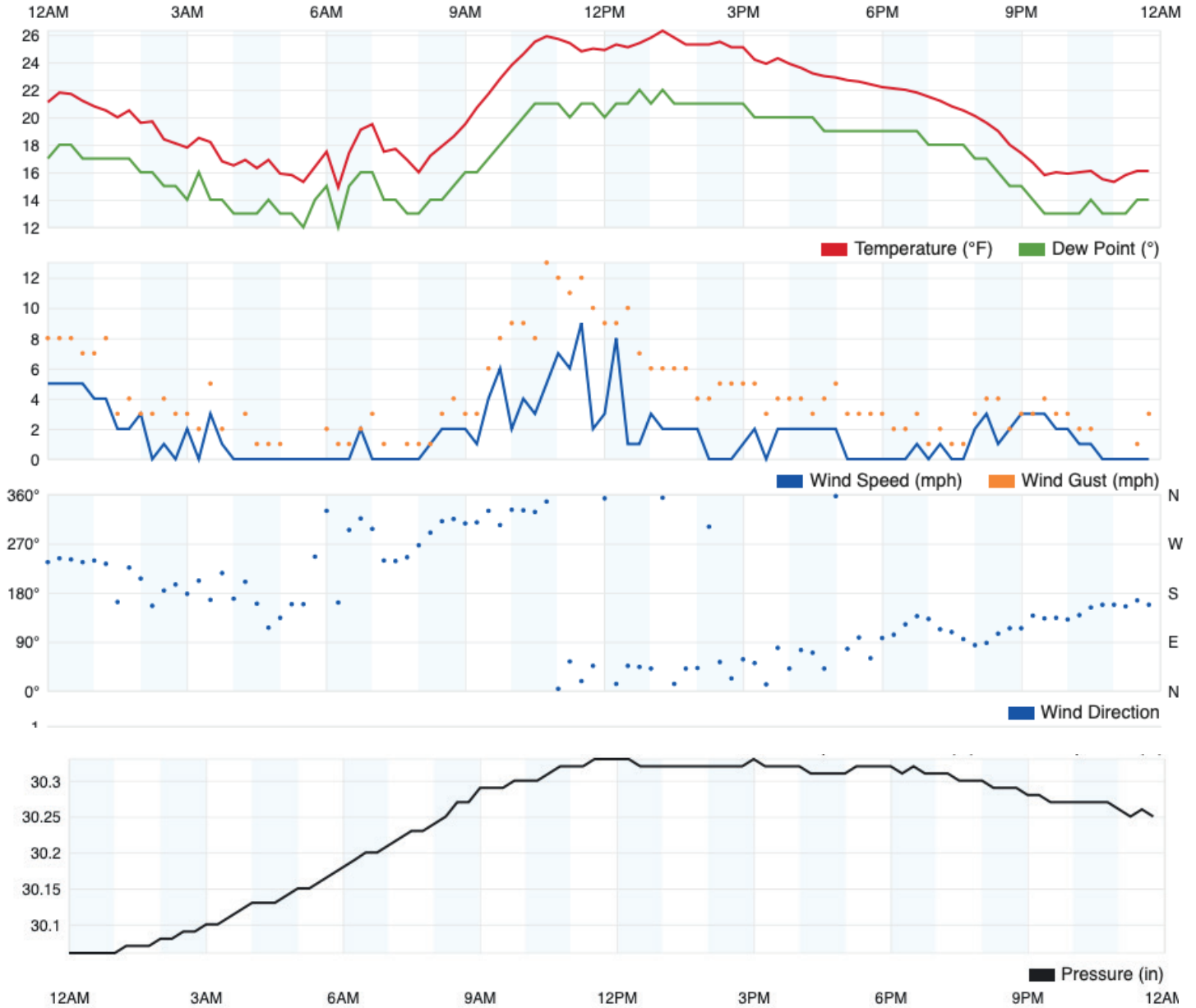
There are 11 Democrats serving in the House and Senate. Oren Lesmeister of Parade will be House minority leader, with Erin Healy of Sioux Falls serving as assistant minority leader.

On the Senate side, Democrats will be led by Reynold Nesiba of Sioux Falls alongside Assistant Minority Leader Shawn Bordeaux of Mission.

Groton Daily Independent








Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 11 of 68

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs









Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 12 of 68

Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thanksgiving Day	Thursday Night	Friday
						
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 35 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 18 °F	High: 35 °F	Low: 18 °F	High: 41 °F

The Rest of Thanksgiving Week



<p><u>Today</u></p>  <p>H: 32 to 50°F L: 13 to 28°F</p>	<p><u>Wednesday</u></p>  <p>H: 36 to 56°F L: 17 to 28°F</p>	<p><u>Thursday</u></p>  <p>H: 31 to 42°F L: 15 to 24°F</p> <p>Breezy. Slight chance of snow west of the Missouri River early AM</p> 	<p><u>Friday</u></p>  <p>H: 37 to 55°F L: 24 to 32°F</p>
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Overall dry weather expected for Thanksgiving week, with just isolated chances of light show west of the Missouri River early Thanksgiving day. Otherwise, temperatures will continue to warm up through Wednesday with a slight cool down Thursday as a cold front pushes through. Temps will rebound again for Friday into the early weekend.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 13 of 68

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 26.3 °F at 1:15 PM

Low Temp: 14.9 °F at 6:15 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 10:45 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 18 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 66 in 1904

Record Low: -14 in 1895

Average High: 39°F

Average Low: 17°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.58

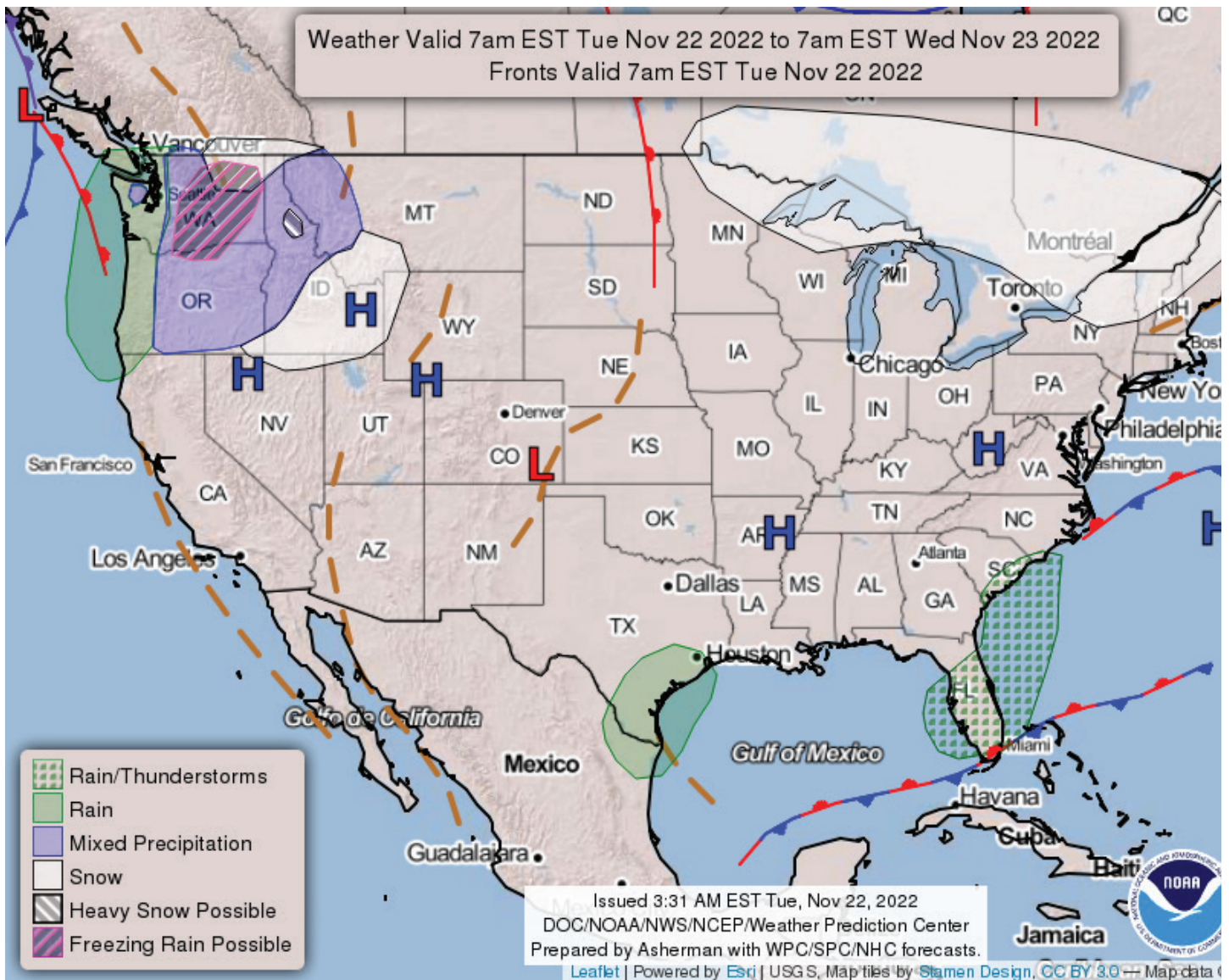
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.05

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 4:57:47 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:40:40 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 14 of 68

Today in Weather History

November 22, 1979: Snow began falling during the morning hours on the 21st and continued until the evening hours on the 22nd. Snowfall totals were in the 6 to 13-inch range with thirteen inches at Sioux Falls being the largest amount reported. Moderate winds of 20 to 35 mph made travel tough. Approximately 50 percent of the corn remained in the fields. The snow did not harm the corn, so most of it was still harvested.

November 22, 1985: Extreme cold temperatures occurred over South Dakota from November 22nd through the 28th, with low temperatures dropping well below zero. Record low temperatures were set in most areas, and Aberdeen set a record low for five of the seven days. Three of those five record lows still stand today: -17 on the 23rd, -18 on the 27th, and -21 on the 28th. The other records set at the time (-16 on both the 24th and 26th), were both broken in November 1996.

November 22, 2003: Heavy snow of 6 to 10 inches fell across Big Stone and Traverse counties in Minnesota, as well as northeastern South Dakota, from the evening of the 22nd to the afternoon of the 23rd. Dumont received 6 inches of snow, with 10 inches reported in Ortonville. Six inches of snow was also reported in Wilmot, White Rock, Estelline, and near Stone Bridge; 7 inches was reported Toronto; 8 inches in Big Stone City; and 9 inches at Clear Lake. Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches also fell in Corson and Lyman counties in South Dakota. Some other snowfall amounts included 8 inches northwest of Presho, Kennebec, and near Iona; and 9 inches southwest of Keldron.

1641 - An observer at Boston, MA, recorded a great tempest of wind and rain from the southeast all night, as fierce as a hurricane, and thereupon followed the highest tide which we have seen since our arrival here. (David Ludlum)

1957 - Extremely destructive Santa Ana winds blew from Oxnard to San Diego and inland parts of southern California. The high winds produced a 28,000 acre brush fire on a 40-mile front west of Crystal Lake. People were ordered off streets in some areas due to flying debris. (21st-22nd) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Eight cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Elkins, WV, reported a low of 5 degrees above zero. Gale force winds continued along the Northern Atlantic Coast. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Wet and windy weather prevailed across the western U.S., with heavy snow in some of the higher elevations. Winds gusted to 62 mph at Vedauwoo WY, and reached 75 mph at Tillamook OR. Shelter Cove CA was drenched with 4.37 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong northerly winds produced squalls along the shore of Lake Michigan, with heavy snow in extreme southeastern Wisconsin. Milwaukee WI received nine inches of snow, and in Racine County there were more than one hundred automobile accidents. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: 45 tornadoes touched down in the Tennessee and Ohio Valleys. Georgia was hard hit with two F4, one F3 and three F2 tornadoes that killed six people and injured 144. Indiana had a total of 15 tornadoes on this day to set a record for an outbreak in November and for the month of November. One, an F4 multiple-vortex type, cut a 22-mile path through extreme southeastern Indiana and northern Kentucky. This tornado debunked the myth that twisters don't cross rivers, as this devastating tornado crossed the Ohio River twice. Indiana had a total of 15 tornadoes on this day to set two state records, the largest November tornado outbreak, and the most tornadoes in November. This tornado outbreak made a significant contribution to what was to become the biggest November ever for the U.S. concerning the number of tornadoes.

2010: A rare November ice storm prompts Fairbanks officials to advise residents to stay off the roads. Ice storm advisories are hoisted across a 950 mile stretch of the state that extends from Anchorage to Nome. The 0.39 inches of rain which fall at Fairbanks rates as that city's greatest November rainfall since November 1936.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 15 of 68

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WAITING FOR WISDOM

"You know," he said stroking his beard, "I have a problem learning from my past sins."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Most people say they learn from previous experiences - including sins."

"Well," he said with confidence, "I can prove them all wrong."

"How can you do that?" I asked.

"Well," he said, stroking his beard once again. "It's easy. Have you ever committed the same sin twice?"

"Unfortunately, I have," I replied.

And before I could explain what I was talking about, he said with great confidence, "I rest my case."

Repeating the same sin more than once is common in the lives of many Christians. Others often lose sight of what living the Christian life is all about and are not even aware of sinning. Some become careless about their responsibility to live in obedience to God's laws and are unconcerned about their lifestyle. We forget that we are accountable to God for everything we have and do. Perhaps it would be helpful if we took some time to do an inventory of the sins we know we frequently commit. To reflect on our past and its problems may keep us close to God and avoid repeating our sins!

The children of Israel had this problem. Listen to the Psalmist: "But they soon forgot what He had done and did not wait for His counsel." If we focus on the great things God has done for us, and if we seek His counsel and wait for His guidance, we can avoid repeating our sins.

Prayer: Lord, we want to live a life that honors You and is free from sin. Our habits and misconceptions often derail our efforts. May we look to You for Your guidance. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But they soon forgot what He had done and did not wait for His counsel. Psalm 106:13



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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 16 of 68

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)
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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 17 of 68

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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 Monday:

Lotto America

03-12-14-29-32, Star Ball: 4, ASB: 5

(three, twelve, fourteen, twenty-nine, thirty-two; Star Ball: four; ASB: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$30,490,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 259,000,000

Powerball

01-06-40-51-67, Powerball: 2, Power Play: 2

(one, six, forty, fifty-one, sixty-seven; Powerball: two; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$30,000,000

South Dakota State women top No. 10 Louisville at Atlantis

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

PARADISE ISLAND, Bahamas (AP) — Myah Selland played the final minutes determined not to let South Dakota State's shot of beating a top-10 opponent slip away.

Selland scored 14 of her 25 points in a dominating fourth quarter to help the Jackrabbits beat 10th-ranked Louisville 65-55 in Monday's fifth-place game at the Battle 4 Atlantis. It marked the highest-ranked opponent the program has beaten since moving to Division I for the 2004-05 season.

It started with the 6-foot-1 sixth-year forward, who was the preseason pick for Summit League player of the year. She helped the Jackrabbits (4-2) regroup after blowing most of a 17-point third-quarter lead against the Cardinals' defensive pressure, scoring 10 of the team's final 11 points.

"I think we just executed really well down the stretch and just stayed within our system," Selland said. "I got good looks but that's because the rest of us were executing."

Maybe so, but that understates how big she played in the most critical minutes.

"I think this is one of the first times this year, and we've played some good opponents, where I really felt like Myah asserted herself," coach Aaron Johnston said. Some of that she did out of some offensive calls and things.

"But where you really need players like that to do it is when things aren't going well. ... And Myah was that for us in the fourth quarter."

She also finished with 11 rebounds for the game, including diving on the floor to snag one late that kept a possession alive and ultimately led to her twisting bucket in the lane for a 62-52 lead with 1:24 left.

Hailey Van Lith scored 26 points for the Cardinals (4-2), though no other Louisville players scored in double figures. Van Lith made 10 of 20 shots and three 3-pointers, including one with 6 1/2 minutes left that brought Louisville to within 50-47.

But the Cardinals got no closer.

Jeff Walz said he was concerned coming in after the team didn't have a good shootaround or pregame warmups.

"We don't execute right now," Walz said. "We're sloppy at both ends of the floor. ... We don't communicate (defensively). And until we can fix that, we're going to be Jekyll and Hyde."

BIG PICTURE

Louisville: This was a perplexing trip for Walz, who reached his fourth Final Four last year. The Cardinals were beaten badly on the glass in both of their losses, first by 19 (50-31) against Gonzaga and then 17 (41-24) against South Dakota State. It was also a three-day trip that had him questioning his team's com-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 19 of 68

petitiveness in key moments.

"We're going to find out real quick who wants to be a player," Walz said, referring to the game as a "gut check."

South Dakota State: Johnston is in his 23rd season as coach and has established the Jackrabbits as a strong mid-major program with 10 NCAA Tournament bids, including a trip to the Sweet 16 in 2019. Add another milestone to the list with this win; South Dakota State has never beaten a team ranked higher than 12th, most recently at Syracuse in the 2019 NCAA Tournament.

TOUGH ROAD

Louisville's loss meant that all three ranked teams entering the Atlantis tournament lost at least twice in three days.

No. 23 Tennessee lost to eventual champion UCLA — which entered the AP Top 25 poll Monday at No. 20 — and Gonzaga, while Louisville also lost to the Zags.

No. 19 Texas lost to Marquette and Louisville, and then beat Rutgers in Monday night's seventh-place game.

UP NEXT

Louisville: The Cardinals host Longwood on Friday.

South Dakota State: The Jackrabbits travel to Washington State next Monday.

Oregon's governor pardons thousands for pot convictions

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced Monday she is pardoning an estimated 45,000 people convicted of simple possession of marijuana, a month after President Joe Biden did the same under federal law.

"No one deserves to be forever saddled with the impacts of a conviction for simple possession of marijuana — a crime that is no longer on the books in Oregon," said Brown, who is also forgiving more than \$14 million in unpaid fines and fees.

Biden has been calling on governors to issue pardons for those convicted of state marijuana offenses, which reflect the vast majority of marijuana possession cases. Biden's pardon applies to those convicted under federal law and thousands convicted in the District of Columbia.

In recent months, the governors of Colorado, Nevada, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Washington state have taken steps to grant pardons to those with low-level marijuana convictions, according to the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, or NORML.

Several states, including California, Illinois, and New Jersey automatically review criminal cannabis convictions and expunge past records. In other jurisdictions, eligible persons must petition the courts for a review.

As a result of these laws, an estimated 2 million Americans had their cannabis-related convictions set aside in recent years, said Paul Armentano, deputy director of NORML.

"Our sense of justice and our principles of fairness demand that public officials and the courts move swiftly to right the past wrongs of cannabis prohibition and criminalization," Armentano said.

In 2019, Oregon lawmakers passed legislation establishing procedures for people found guilty of low-level marijuana possession offenses to file a motion with the court to have the convictions set aside. Yet, to date, relatively few Oregonians have done so.

In Oregon, the pardon will remove 47,144 convictions for possession of a small amount of marijuana from individual records. Brown noted that removing these criminal records eliminates barriers for employment, housing and educational opportunities.

The pardon applies to convictions for possession of 1 ounce (28 grams) or less of marijuana when the person was 21 or older, where it was the only charge where there were no victims.

"Oregonians should never face housing insecurity, employment barriers, and educational obstacles as a result of doing something that is now completely legal, and has been for years," Brown said. She said people of color have been arrested, prosecuted, and convicted at disproportionate rates.

The Oregon Judicial Department will ensure that all court records associated with these pardoned of-

fenses are sealed, Brown said.

Oregonians passed a ballot measure legalizing recreational use of marijuana in 2014, becoming one of the first states to do so. In November, Maryland and Missouri voters also legalized cannabis but voters in Arkansas, South Dakota and North Dakota rejected it.

Maryland's initiative came with a mechanism to erase convictions. By July 1, 2024, the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services must expunge all cases in which the possession of cannabis was the only charge in the case, and the charge was issued before July 1, 2023.

Maryland and Missouri joined 19 other states and the District of Columbia in making recreational marijuana legal.

Bison spread as Native American tribes reclaim stewardship

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK, S.D. (AP) — Perched atop a fence at Badlands National Park, Troy Heinert peered from beneath his wide-brimmed hat into a corral where 100 wild bison awaited transfer to the Rosebud Indian Reservation.

Descendants of bison that once roamed North America's Great Plains by the tens of millions, the animals would soon thunder up a chute, take a truck ride across South Dakota and join one of many burgeoning herds Heinert has helped reestablish on Native American lands.

Heinert nodded in satisfaction to a park service employee as the animals stomped their hooves and kicked up dust in the cold wind. He took a brief call from Iowa about another herd being transferred to tribes in Minnesota and Oklahoma, then spoke with a fellow trucker about yet more bison destined for Wisconsin.

By nightfall, the last of the American buffalo shipped from Badlands were being unloaded at the Rosebud reservation, where Heinert also lives. The next day, he was on the road back to Badlands to load 200 bison for another tribe, the Cheyenne River Sioux.

"Buffalo, they walk in two worlds," said Heinert, 50. "Are they commercial or are they wildlife? From the tribal perspective, we've always deemed them as wildlife, or to take it a step further, as a relative."

Now 82 tribes across the U.S. have more than 20,000 bison in 65 herds — and that's been growing along with the desire among Native Americans to reclaim stewardship of an animal their ancestors depended upon for millennia.

European settlers destroyed that balance, driving bison nearly extinct until conservationists including Teddy Roosevelt intervened to reestablish a small number of herds.

The long-term dream for some Native Americans: return bison on a scale rivaling herds that roamed the continent in numbers that shaped the landscape itself. Heinert, a South Dakota state senator and director of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, views his job more practically: Get bison to tribes that want them, whether two animals or 200.

"All of these tribes relied on them at some point," he said. "Those tribes are trying to go back to that, reestablishing that connection."

Bison for centuries set rhythms of life for the Lakota and other nomadic tribes. Hides for clothing and teepees, bones for tools and weapons, horns for ladles, hair for rope — a steady supply of bison was fundamental.

At so-called "buffalo jumps," herds would be run off cliffs, then butchered over days and weeks.

European settlers brought a new level of industry to the enterprise — and bison killing dramatically increased, their parts used in machinery, fertilizer and clothing. By 1889, only about 1,000 remained.

"We wanted to populate the western half of the United States because there were so many people in the East," U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American cabinet member, said in an interview. "They wanted all of the Indians dead so they could take their land away."

The thinking at the time, she added, was "if we kill off the buffalo, the Indians will die. They won't have anything to eat."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 21 of 68

The day after the bison transfer from the Badlands, Heinert's son T.J. had his rifle fixed on a large bull bison at the Wolakota Buffalo Range. The tribal enterprise in just two years has restored about 1,000 bison to 28,000 acres (11,300 hectares) of rolling, scrub-covered hills near the Nebraska-South Dakota border.

The 28-year-old had talked all morning about the need for a perfect shot in 40-mile (64-kilometer) an hour winds. The first bullet went into the animal's ear, but it lumbered away a couple hundred yards to join a larger group of bison, with the hunter following in an all-terrain vehicle.

After the animal finally went down, Heinert drove up close, put the rifle behind its ear for a shot that stopped its thrashing.

"We got him down," he said. "That's all that matters."

The Rosebud Sioux are intent on expanding the reservation's herds as a reliable food source.

Others have grander visions: The Blackfeet in Montana and tribes in Alberta want to establish a "trans-boundary herd" ranging over the Canada border near Glacier National Park. Other tribes propose a "buffalo commons" on federal lands in central Montana where the region's tribes could harvest animals.

"What would it look like to have 30 million buffalo in North America again?" said Cristina Mormorunni, a Métis Indian who's worked with the Blackfeet to restore bison.

Haaland said there's no going back completely — too many fences and houses. But her agency has emerged as a primary bison source, transferring more than 20,000 to tribes and tribal organizations over 20 years.

Transfers sometimes draw objections from cattle ranchers who worry bison carry disease and compete for grass. Yet demand from the tribes is growing, and Haaland said the transfers will continue. That includes about 1,000 bison trucked this year from Badlands, Grand Canyon National Park and several national wildlife refuges.

Back at Wolakota range, Heinert sprinkled chewing tobacco along the back of the bison he'd just shot and prayed. Then the half-ton animal was hoisted onto a flatbed truck for the bouncy ride to ranch headquarters.

About 20 adults and children gathered as the bison was lowered onto a tarp.

"This relative gave of itself to us, for our livelihood, our way or life," said tribal elder Duane Hollow Horn Bear.

Soon the tarp was covered with bloody footprints from people butchering the animal. They quartered it, sawing through bone, then sliced meat from the legs, rump, and the animal's huge hump. Children, some only 6, were given knives to cut away skin and fat.

Katrina Fuller, who helped guide the butchering, dreams of training others so the reservation's 20 communities can come to Wolakota for their own harvest. "Maybe not now, but in my lifetime," she said. "That's what I want for everyone."

World Cup stunner: Saudi Arabia beats Messi's Argentina 2-1

By STEVE DOUGLAS AP Sports Writer

LUSAIL, Qatar (AP) — Saudi Arabia scored one of the biggest World Cup upsets ever by beating Lionel Messi's Argentina 2-1 on Tuesday.

Messi's quest to win the one major title to elude him got off to a shocking start and brought back memories of Cameroon's 1-0 win over an Argentina team led by Diego Maradona in the opening game of the 1990 World Cup.

Goals by Saleh Alshehri and Salem Aldawsari in a five-minute span in the second half gave the Saudis their greatest win. Messi rolled in a penalty to give Argentina a 10th-minute lead.

This also rivals shocking results such as Senegal beating then-titleholder France 1-0 in the 2002 tournament opener and the United States stunning England by the same score in 1950.

'Stock up on blankets': Ukrainians brace for bleak winter

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Rolling blackouts across Ukraine may continue through March, according to one of the country's energy chiefs, as Ukrainians brace for a grim winter after weeks of relentless Russian strikes against its power grid.

Sergey Kovalenko, CEO of private energy provider DTEK Yasno, said in a Facebook post late Monday that the company was under instructions from Ukraine's state grid operator to resume emergency blackouts in the areas it covers, including the capital Kyiv and the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region.

"Although there are fewer blackouts now, I want everyone to understand: Most likely, Ukrainians will have to live with blackouts until at least the end of March," Kovalenko warned.

"I think we need to be prepared for different options, even the worst ones. Stock up on warm clothes, blankets, think about what will help you wait out a long shutdown," he said, addressing Ukrainian residents.

Russia has been pummeling Ukraine's power grid and other infrastructure from the air for weeks, as the war approaches its nine-month milestone. That onslaught has caused widespread blackouts and deprived millions of Ukrainians of electricity, heat and water.

Temperatures commonly stick below freezing in Ukraine in the winter months. Ukrainian authorities have started evacuating civilians from recently liberated sections of the southern Kherson and Mykolaiv regions out of fear that the winter will be hard to survive.

Kovalenko added that even if no more Russian strikes occur, scheduled outages will be needed across Ukraine to ensure that power is evenly distributed across the battered energy grid.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says Russian missile strikes have damaged more than 50% of the country's energy facilities, and the World Health Organization is warning that millions face a "life-threatening" winter in Ukraine.

The battle for terrain has continued unabated despite the deteriorating weather conditions, with Ukrainian forces pressing against Russian positions as part of a weeks-long counteroffensive and Moscow's forces keeping up shelling and missile strikes.

In a key battlefield development, a Ukrainian official acknowledged that Kyiv's forces are attacking Russian positions on the Kinburn Spit, which is a gateway to the Black Sea basin and parts of the southern Kherson region that are still under Russian control.

Despite an information blackout around the operation, Natalya Humenyuk, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian army's Operational Command South, said in televised remarks that Ukrainian forces are "continuing a military operation" in the area.

The Kinburn Spit is Russia's last outpost in Ukraine's southern Mykolayiv region, directly west of Kherson. Ukrainian forces recently liberated other parts of the Kherson and Mykolaiv regions.

Moscow has used the Kinburn Spit as a staging ground for missile and artillery strikes on Ukrainian positions in the Mykolaiv province, and elsewhere along the Ukrainian-controlled Black Sea coast.

Ukraine recently recaptured the city of Kherson, on the western bank of the Dnieper River, and surrounding areas in a major battlefield advance.

Capturing the Kinburn Spit could help Ukrainian forces push into territory Russia still holds in the Kherson region "under significantly less Russian artillery fire" than an attempt at a direct crossing of the Dnieper would likely unleash, a Washington-based think tank said late Monday.

The Institute for the Study of War added that control of the area would help Kyiv alleviate Russian strikes on Ukraine's southern seaports and allow Ukraine to increase its naval activity in the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's presidential office said Tuesday morning that at least eight civilians were killed and 16 were injured over the previous 24 hours, as Moscow's forces once again used drones, rockets and heavy artillery to pound eight Ukrainian regions.

Since Russia invaded its neighbor on Feb. 24, the war has killed at least 16,784 civilians and injured 10,189, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights estimates.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 23 of 68

In the eastern Donetsk region, fierce battles continued around the city of Bakhmut, where the Kremlin's forces are keen to clinch an unambiguous victory after weeks of embarrassing military setbacks.

Speaking on Ukrainian TV, Donetsk Governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said Russia launched missiles at the city of Kramatorsk, home to the local headquarters of the Ukrainian military, and on the strategic city of Avdiivka.

Kyrylenko added that power supplies and communications are non-existent in most of the Donetsk region.

According to the Ukrainian presidential office, one civilian was killed and three others were wounded after Russia shelled the city of Kherson, which Ukrainian forces recaptured Nov. 10.

Top US diplomat criticizes FIFA armband threat at World Cup

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — America's top diplomat on Tuesday criticized a decision by FIFA to threaten players at the World Cup with yellow cards if they wear armbands supporting inclusion and diversity.

Speaking alongside his Qatari counterpart at a news conference, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said it was "always concerning ... when we see any restrictions on freedom of expression."

"It's especially so when the expression is for diversity and for inclusion," Blinken said at Doha's Diplomatic Club. "And in my judgment, at least no one on a football pitch should be forced to choose between supporting these values and playing for their team."

FIFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment over Blinken's remark.

Just hours before the first players with the armbands in support of the "One Love" campaign were to take the field on Monday, soccer's governing body warned they would immediately be shown yellow cards — two of which lead to a player's expulsion from that game and also the next.

No player wore the "One Love" armbands Monday though seven European teams had said they planned to wear them ahead of the tournament. England's Harry Kane wore a FIFA-approved "No Discrimination" armband that was offered as a compromise in the match with Iran.

Blinken arrived in Qatar on Monday, where he visited a youth soccer program tied to the World Cup. He later watched the U.S. tie with Wales on Monday night.

While openly critical of FIFA, Blinken struck a more measured tone with Qatar. This energy-rich Mideast nation has been criticized ahead of the tournament over its treatment of migrant laborers and criminalizing gay and lesbian sex.

"We know that without workers, including many migrant workers, this World Cup simply would not have been possible," Blinken said. "Qatar has made meaningful strides in recent years to its labor laws to expand worker rights."

However, he made a point to add: "Real work remains on these issues, and the United States will continue to work with Qatar on strengthening labor rights and human rights more broadly long after the World Cup is over."

Blinken spoke alongside Qatar's foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, at the news conference.

Blinken's visit comes as part of a strategic dialogue with Qatar, which also hosts some 8,000 American troops at its massive Al-Udeid Air Base that serves as the forward headquarters of the U.S. military's Central Command. The base was a key node in America's chaotic 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan and evacuation of Afghan civilians.

One major issue to discuss is Iran. Nonproliferation experts say Iran now has enough uranium enriched up to 60% — a short step from weapons-grade levels — to reprocess into fuel for a nuclear weapon if it chooses to do so.

Tehran insists its program is peaceful, though it has drastically expanded it since the collapse of its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Meanwhile, Iran is being rocked by monthslong protests following the Sept. 16 death of a 22-year-old woman who had been earlier arrested by the country's morality police.

A crackdown by authorities and violence surrounding the demonstrations have killed at least 434 people,

according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that's been monitoring the protests. Iran is playing at the World Cup as well, and will face the U.S. on Nov. 29.

Taylor Swift ticket trouble could drive political engagement

By BROOKE SCHULTZ Associated Press/Report for America

Some of Taylor Swift's fans want you to know three things: They're not still 16, they have careers and resources and, right now, they're angry. That's a powerful political motivator, researchers say.

Look what Ticketmaster made them do.

It started Nov. 15, when millions crowded a presale for Swift's long-awaited Eras Tour, resulting in crashes, prolonged waits and frantic purchases. By Thursday, Ticketmaster had canceled the general sale, citing insufficient remaining tickets and inciting a firestorm of outrage from fans. Swift herself said the ordeal "really pisses me off."

Ticketmaster apologized but the bad blood had already been sowed. And now fans — and politicians — have started acting on it.

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez directed Swifties to where they could make U.S. Department of Justice complaints. Multiple state attorneys general — including in Pennsylvania and Tennessee, key states in Swift's origin story — have announced investigations.

Stephanie Aly, a New York-based professional who has worked on community organizing for progressive politics, for years has thought mobilizing fandoms for social progress could be beneficial.

"Fandoms are natural organizers," said the 33-year-old Swiftie. "If you find the right issues and you activate them and engage them then you can effect real change."

In 2020, for instance, K-pop fans organized to back the Black Lives Matter movement and sought to inflate registration for a Donald Trump rally. Aly and Swifties from different industries — law, public relations, cybersecurity and more — have joined forces to create Vigilante Legal, a group targeting Ticketmaster by creating email templates to petition attorneys general and providing antitrust information. Thousands have expressed interest in helping or learning more.

"The level of anger that you've just seen in the country around this issue is astounding," said Jean Sinzdak, associate director for the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "People are really sharing their feelings about that and building a movement about that online, which I really think is quite fascinating. It's certainly an opportunity to engage people politically. Whether it lasts is hard to say, but it certainly feels like a real opportunity."

In one way, said Sinzdak, this is giving Swift's large following of younger people a direct line to seeing how policy takes shape. It's also targeting a demographic that is seldom courted by politicians during election season.

"Nobody goes out and thinks, 'Let's target young women,'" said Gwen Nisbett, a University of North Texas professor who researches the intersection of political engagement and pop culture. "Be it about abortion or student loans, that age group is super mobilized and young women are super mobilized."

Fan culture and community has boosted that tendency toward mobilization. Nisbett was studying parasocial relationships — when fans have strong one-way relationships with celebrities — in 2018, when the previously apolitical Swift posted an endorsement of Democratic candidates to social media. Nisbett found that while such posts may not determine fans' votes, they still led to the increased likelihood fans would look for more information about voting — and actually vote.

For the record: AP VoteCast, an extensive survey of the U.S. electorate, showed about a third of Tennessee voters in 2018 said they had a favorable opinion of Swift, and among them, a large majority — about 7 in 10 — backed Democrat Phil Bredesen in the Senate contest. That was in clear contrast to the roughly third of voters who had an unfavorable opinion of Swift and overwhelmingly backed Republican Marsha Blackburn.

For Swifties, the ire for Ticketmaster is not just about a ticket: "It's the fact that you can't participate in your community and your fandom and it's part of your identity," Nisbett said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 25 of 68

This isn't even the first time a fandom or an artist has targeted Ticketmaster. Pearl Jam took aim at the company in 1994, although the Justice Department ultimately declined to bring a case. More recently, Bruce Springsteen fans were enraged over high ticket costs because of the platform's dynamic pricing system.

"It's not just about getting vengeance for Swifties. It's not about getting an extra million Taylor Swift fans tickets, or all of us going to a secret session," said Jordan Burger, 28, who is using his law background to help the cause. "It's about fundamental equality. And when you have a monopolist like that, it's just so representative of the class structure of a society where there isn't equality anymore, there isn't fairness."

The sheer power and size of Swift's fandom has spurred conversations about economic inequality, merely symbolized by Ticketmaster.

Aly noted that quite a few of the members of the group did get tickets; the issue is is bigger than Ticketmaster, she said.

"We've gotten some feedback that, 'This is too big, let the government handle it.' Have you seen the U.S. government? The government only functions when the people push it to and when the people demand that it function and the people are involved," she said. "Even when something seems too big to fail or too powerful to fail, there are always enough of us to make a difference. Your involvement may be the thing that pushes it over the edge that forces the government to act."

Aly says many grown-up Swifties have 10-15 years' experience of being bullied for liking the singer — but what fans have in mind might be better than revenge.

"We have thick skin and nothing to lose, really," Aly said.

Iran media blames humiliating World Cup loss on protests

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Iran was reeling Tuesday from the humiliation of starting the World Cup with a lopsided 6-2 loss against England in a match overshadowed by protests on and off the field.

Hard-line Iranian media sought to blame the defeat on the unrest that has gripped the Islamic Republic since the Sept. 16 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in the custody of the country's morality police. Iranian newspapers turned to the familiar tactic of accusing foreign enemies, including the United States, Britain and Israel, of stirring up protests to throw the national team off its game.

"Iran - 2; England, Israel, Saudi and traitors - 6," read the headline in hard-line daily Kayhan. The newspaper, whose editor-in-chief is appointed by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Iran's rout came after "weeks of unfair and unprecedented psychological warfare against the team ... from domestic and foreign-based traitors." It added that a "political media current" has sought to "damage the spirit of Iran's team by attacking them."

Iran fans in the stands on Monday chanted Amini's name, held signs and wore T-shirts with protest slogans and booed during the national anthem. Many fans appeared conflicted over whether to even support their national team against the backdrop of security forces' violent crackdown on demonstrations. At least 419 people have been killed since the protests erupted, according to the watchdog Human Rights Activists in Iran. As the game unfolded on Monday, Iranian security forces unleashed heavy gunfire against protesters in a Kurdish town in the country's west.

Another hard-line daily, Vatanemrooz, reported that protesters in Iran celebrated their country's humiliating defeat in the streets, bursting into cheers in coffee shops when England scored goals and honking car horns with joy after the game. Footage from central Tehran spread online showing motorbike drivers honking and chanting "Six!" in reference England's six goals against Iran. Authorities shut down a coffee shop in the northeastern city of Mashhad for announcing it was rooting for England.

"None of the players were ready in spirit," wrote Iran's pro-reform Shargh daily.

The nationwide protest movement first focused on Iran's state-mandated hijab, or headscarf, for women, but soon morphed into calls for the downfall of Iran's ruling Shiite clerics. Over the course of the demonstrations, filmmakers, actors, sports stars and other celebrities have been speaking out publicly against the government.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 26 of 68

Iran's national team has come under enormous pressure from protesters to show support in the run-up to soccer's global championship. The players faced a barrage of public criticism last week after meeting with President Ebrahim Raisi at a send-off ceremony, where they were silent on the issue of protests. A few players were photographed bowing in respect to Raisi.

"So you went to the president, that was the best opportunity to ask him not to kill kids and teenagers, at the very least!" prominent Iranian actor Parviz Parastouei wrote on Instagram.

Before the kick-off against England, Iranian players did not sing their anthem, standing silently in an apparent act of solidarity. During the match they didn't celebrate the team's two goals.

The players risk heavy backlash for making even the smallest gestures of protest. State-run IRNA news agency has sought to promote the team as a patriotic symbol and national unifier amid the turmoil, describing the players as "soldiers fighting to uplift their country."

Some former soccer stars who have championed the protest movement have been arrested or charged in absentia. Moslem Moein, the head of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard's Cyberspace Organization, called out four of the most vocal retired players, who reportedly refused invitations to attend the World Cup as guests of the government.

"England's forwards did not score the goals," he wrote, adding that Iran's defeat was the work of the outspoken former players, who protested off the pitch.

World Cup host Qatar leaves pearl diving past far behind

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Seventy years ago, Saad Ismail Al Jassim used to free dive 40 feet (13 meters) deep into the waters of the Persian Gulf, holding his breath to comb the seabed for oysters in the hope of finding a cluster of pearls.

Today, an 1,100-foot (335-meter) yacht that serves as a floating hotel for thousands of soccer fans is docked by the shore where divers on wooden boats once left to hunt for pearls — emblematic of the stunning transformation World Cup host nation Qatar has experienced over the past century.

Like its Gulf Arab neighbors, Qatar's main commodity before it began exporting oil and natural gas to the world was pearls, the iridescent precious bead formed when an irritant slips into an oyster's shell.

Al Jassim, now 87, was among the last of the country's professional pearl divers. "Our journey would take three to four months," he said. "We (would) eat, drink, sleep only on the boat."

For centuries, pearls have been used in jewelry and none were considered as fine as the natural ones found in the Gulf, according to author Michael Quinten Morton, who has written eight books on Middle Eastern history, including "Masters of the Pearl: A History of Qatar." At the start of the 20th century, Qatar was at the heart of a booming pearl diving industry.

According to Morton, traders in Qatar worked to satisfy Europe's demand, shipping the gemstones from local markets to Bombay and onward to Baghdad, London or Paris.

Hunting for the glistening beads was dangerous work that kept fishermen, including many who were enslaved, at sea for months at a time. Divers would tie a stone weight to one foot and descend 45 feet (14 meters), often clipping their nose to hold their breath underwater. Fisherman pried open and sorted the oysters back on the boat.

When divers rose to the surface too fast, they risked decompression sickness, also known as the bends, where the wrong gases build up in the blood. Then there were attacks by sharks or other animals. Or drowning.

"Many had hearing problems. Others had vision problems," said John Duke Anthony, founder of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations and an expert on the Gulf nations. "Not a pretty sight, but they did what they did and they supported their families."

In the early 1900s, Japanese businessman Kokichi Mikimoto perfected a process to make "cultured" pearls by implanting an irritant into an oyster, which stimulates the secretion process that creates the hard

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 27 of 68

stone in nature. By World War II, artificial pearls had taken over the market.

One-tenth the cost of natural pearls, according to Morton, cultured pearls quickly destroyed Qatar's pearl-diving industry. The sparsely populated British protectorate was one of the poorest in the Arab world. By 1944, only 6,000 workers remained in the Gulf's pearl trade, compared to 60,000 two decades earlier, Morton wrote.

Within decades, another commodity transformed the country: oil. British geologists in 1939 drilled for and discovered oil in the Dukhan field in western Qatar. A decade later, the country began exporting petroleum. In 1971, Qatar both won independence from Britain and discovered a vast offshore natural gas field it shares with Iran. The country started exporting natural gas in 1997.

It would never be the same. What were once barren stretches of dust and sand turned into towers of glass and steel, artificial islands and shopping malls, with some of the world's biggest brands. Today, tourists take in Doha's skyline on dhows, the traditional wooden boats used by pearl divers — a nod to when the kingdom was a collection of poor fishing and herding tribes led by the Al Thani family, the same one ruling Qatar today.

But little else remains from that era.

Al Jassim runs a small pearl shop in Doha's Souq Waqif, a labyrinthine market. A large black and white portrait of him as a bodybuilder hangs on the wall. The natural pearls he began hunting for at 18, and that his father did before him, are rare today.

"Now, nobody is selling the natural pearl," Al Jassim said. "Those who have them are keeping it."

Visitors often ask Al Jassim about his pearling days, prompted perhaps by a sign on the shop entrance that reads "the old pearl diver" below his name. But he shrugs off the change he's seen in Qatar in his life.

"Any country will change over such a long time," Al Jassim said. "Even yours."

EXPLAINER: Why was Indonesia's shallow quake so deadly?

By VICTORIA MILKO AP Science Writer

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — A 5.6 magnitude earthquake left more than 260 dead and hundreds injured as buildings crumbled and terrified residents ran for their lives on Indonesia's main island of Java.

Bodies continued to be pulled from the debris on Tuesday morning in the hardest-hit city of Cianjur, located in the country's most densely populated province of West Java and some 217 kilometers (135 miles) south of the capital, Jakarta. A number of people are still missing.

While the magnitude would typically be expected to cause light damage to buildings and other structures, experts say proximity to fault lines, the shallowness of the quake and inadequate infrastructure that cannot withstand earthquakes all contributed to the damage.

Here's a closer look at the earthquake and some reasons why it caused so much devastation:

WAS MONDAY'S EARTHQUAKE CONSIDERED "STRONG"?

The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake late Monday afternoon measured 5.6 magnitude and struck at a depth of 10 kilometers (6.2 miles).

Quakes of this size usually don't cause widespread damage to well-built infrastructure. But the agency points out, "There is not one magnitude above which damage will occur. It depends on other variables, such as the distance from the earthquake, what type of soil you are on, building construction" and other factors.

Dozens of buildings were damaged in Indonesia, including Islamic boarding schools, a hospital and other public facilities. Also damaged were roads and bridges, and parts of the region experienced power blackouts.

SO WHY DID THE QUAKE CAUSE SO MUCH DAMAGE?

Experts said proximity to fault lines, the depth of the temblor and buildings not being constructed using earthquake-proof methods were factors in the devastation.

"Even though the earthquake was medium-sized, it (was) close to the surface ... and located inland, close

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 28 of 68

to where people live," said Gayatri Marliyani, an assistant geology professor at Universitas Gadjah Mada, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. "The energy was still large enough to cause significant shaking that led to damage."

The worst-affected area is close to several known faults, said Marliyani.

A fault is a place with a long break in the rock that forms the surface of the earth. When an earthquake occurs on one of these faults, the rock on one side of the fault slips with respect to the other.

"The area probably has the most inland faults compared to the other parts of Java," said Marliyani.

She added that while some well-known faults are in the area, there are many other active faults that are not well studied.

Many buildings in the region are also not built with quake-proof designs, which further contributed to the damage, said Danny Hilman Natawidjaja, an earthquake geology expert at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences Geotechnology Research Center.

"This makes a quake of this size and depth even more destructive," he said.

DOES INDONESIA USUALLY HAVE EARTHQUAKES LIKE THIS?

The country of more than 270 million people is frequently struck by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis because of its location on the arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin known as the "Ring of Fire." The area spans some 40,000 kilometers (25,000 miles) and is where a majority of the world's earthquakes occur.

Many of Indonesia's earthquakes are minor and cause little to no damage. But there have also been deadly earthquakes.

In February, a magnitude 6.2 earthquake killed at least 25 people and injured more than 460 in West Sumatra province. In January 2021, a magnitude 6.2 earthquake killed more than 100 people and injured nearly 6,500 in West Sulawesi province.

A powerful Indian Ocean quake and tsunami in 2004 killed 230,000 people in a dozen countries, most of them in Indonesia.

World Cup Viewer's Guide: Messi seeks history with Argentina

By JENNA FRYER AP National Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Lionel Messi returns to the World Cup for a fifth attempt at finally winning soccer's biggest prize.

He'll also be hoping to make history with Argentina.

The Argentines are among the favorites to win in Qatar and victory would fill the one gaping hole in his resume. But a win or a draw Tuesday against Saudi Arabia, one of the weakest teams in the tournament, would give Argentina a record-tying result.

Argentina arrived in Qatar on a 36-match unbeaten streak, one shy of tying Italy's record in international men's soccer, set from 2018-21.

Argentina has not lost since falling to Brazil 2-0 in the 2019 Copa América. Argentina first won the World Cup in 1978, and then again in 1986 — one year before Messi was born. The team reached the final in 2014 and lost to Germany, and in a bitter follow-up four years later was eliminated in the round of 16 in Russia.

Messi, meanwhile, is one of four players making their fifth World Cup appearance. He joins Portugal forward Cristiano Ronaldo, and Mexico teammates Guillermo Ochoa and Andrés Guardado.

Saudi Arabia was eliminated in the first round in 2018, opening with a 5-0 loss to host Russia. In a tough Group C that includes Mexico and Poland, the Saudis will be trying to advance out of the group stage for only the second time, after 1994. The team has won two of its last 10 matches.

DEFENDING CHAMPS

Defending champion France opens play Tuesday against Australia in a rematch from four years ago.

France won 2-1 in Russia when Paul Pogba's shot in the 81st minute deflected in off a defender for an own-goal. Pogba is not in the squad following knee surgery, and France is also down another two stars with N'Golo Kante and Karim Benzema sidelined.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 29 of 68

France does expect defender Raphael Varane to play following a hamstring injury he picked up in October. Kylian Mbappé is ready to lead France to back-to-back titles. He was only 19 when he scored in the final and helped France win the World Cup four years ago. With 28 international goals, Mbappé wants to add to his count in the Group D opener.

However, France arrived in Qatar with only one win in its last six games.

Australia barely made the World Cup field and needed a dramatic penalty shootout win over Peru in the playoffs. The Socceroos have been eliminated from the group stage in four of five previous appearances.

OTHER GAMES

Mexico faces Poland, while Denmark plays Tunisia on the first of 11 consecutive days in which four games are played each day.

Poland advanced to the World Cup behind striker Robert Lewandowski, who scored nine goals with four assists in qualifying. His 13 direct-goal involvements were twice as many as any teammate.

He's never scored in the World Cup, though, as Poland finished last in its group in 2018. The Barcelona striker is eager to find the net in Qatar.

"I think about the last World Cup for sure," Lewandowski said. "To score at a World Cup would be a huge dream and I'm going to do everything for this dream. I hope in this World Cup it will happen. I am glad for everything I have achieved and these memories for the World Cup, so now is the time to enjoy."

Poland last advanced out of group stage in 1986.

Mexico, meanwhile, has advanced out of group play in each of its past eight appearances, last failing to move on in 1978. The national team has also won its opening match in five of its past six World Cups.

Christian Eriksen figures to play for Denmark against Tunisia, 17 months after he was revived on the field during the European Championship.

The Manchester United midfielder's presence will be inspirational for Denmark, which sailed through its World Cup qualifying group by winning its first nine games — with clean sheets through the first eight.

Tunisia has been strong at keeping games tight but its World Cup record isn't great: Tunisia has lost 60% of its World Cup games (nine out of 15), trailing only Saudi Arabia and Australia.

OUTSIDE CHAOS

The first few days of the World Cup have been marred by logistical snags, the latest on Monday when fans complained their tickets to the England-Iran match had vanished from their mobile FIFA application.

Long lines grew outside the Khalifa International Stadium about an hour before kickoff with fans furious they might not get inside.

The night before, the official fan zone quickly became overcrowded during the opening match between host nation Qatar and Ecuador. Tens of thousands of fans pushed and shoved against police lines to enter the venue, one of the few places where fans could purchase beer and watch the game.

DAVIES UPDATE

Canada coach John Herdman is expected to give a medical update on Tuesday regarding Alphonso Davies, who arrived in Qatar last week after receiving treatment on a hamstring strain he picked up this month while playing for Bayern Munich.

Bayern has said Davies' participation in Qatar was "not at risk," but he has not played since the Nov. 5 injury.

"My mission is to make sure he plays at this World Cup, it's a childhood dream for him," Herdman said. "And not to put him in a position where he's unsafe."

Read up on all 32 teams playing at the World Cup.

'It's the reflex': Veteran helped disarm gunman at gay club

By JESSE BEDAYN and SAM METZ Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — When army veteran Rich Fierro realized a gunman was spraying bullets inside the club where he had gathered with friends and family, instincts from his military training

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 30 of 68

immediately kicked in.

First he ducked to avoid any potential incoming fire, then moved to try to disarm the shooter.

"It's the reflex. Go! Go to the fire. Stop the action. Stop the activity. Don't let no one get hurt. I tried to bring everybody back," he said Monday outside his home.

Fierro is one of two people police are crediting with saving lives by subduing a 22-year-old man armed with multiple firearms, including an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle, who went on a shooting rampage Saturday night at Club Q, a well-known gathering place for the LGBTQ community in Colorado Springs. Five people were killed and at least 17 wounded.

Fierro was there with his daughter Kassy, her boyfriend and several other friends to see a drag show and celebrate a birthday. He said it was one of the group's most enjoyable nights. That suddenly changed when the shots rang out and Kassy's boyfriend, Raymond Green Vance, was fatally shot.

Speaking to reporters at his home Monday, Fierro teared up as he recalled Raymond smiling and dancing before the shots rang out.

Fierro could smell the cordite from the ammunition, saw the flashes and dove, pushing his friend down before falling backwards.

Looking up from the floor, Fierro saw the shooter's body armor and the crowd that had fled to the club's patio. Moving toward the attacker, Fierro grasped the body armor, yanked the shooter down while yelling at another patron, Thomas James, to move the rifle out of reach.

As the shooter was pinned under a barrage of punches from Fierro and kicks to the head from James, he tried to reach for his pistol. Fierro grabbed it and used it as a bludgeon.

"I tried to finish him," he said.

When a performer who was there for the drag show ran by, Fierro told them to kick the gunman. The performer stuffed a high-heeled shoe in the attacker's face, Fierro said.

"I love them," Fierro said of the city's LGBTQ community. "I have nothing but love."

Fierro served three tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan, and said he's dealt with violence. That's what he signed up for. "Nobody in that club asked to do this," he said, but everyone "is going to have to live with it now."

Fierro and James, about whom little was known as of Monday evening, pinned the shooter down until officers arrived minutes later. Fierro was briefly handcuffed and sat in a police car as law enforcement tried to calm the chaos.

Colorado Springs Police Chief Adrian Vasquez said Monday that Fierro acted courageously.

"I have never encountered a person who had engaged in such heroic actions who was so humble about it," Vasquez said. "He simply said to me, 'I was trying to protect my family.'"

When asked about being hailed a hero, Fierro demurred. "I'm just some dude from San Diego," he said, standing outside his home and alternating between English and a smattering of Spanish words.

The suspect, who was said to be carrying multiple guns and additional ammunition magazines, faces murder and hate crime charges.

Fierro's wife, Jess, said via Facebook that her husband had bruised his right side and injured his hands, knees and ankle. "He was covered in blood," she wrote on the page of their brewery, Atrevida Beer Co.

Though his actions saved lives, Fierro said the deaths — including his daughter's boyfriend, Vance — were a tragedy both personal and for the broader community.

"There are five people that I could not help. And one of which was family to me," he said, as his brother put a consoling hand on his shoulder.

Fierro said he doesn't remember if the gunman responded as he yelled and struggled to subdue him, but he has thought about their next interaction.

"I'm gonna see that guy in court," Fierro said. "And that guy's gonna see who did him."

Report: Welding sparked central China fire that killed 38

BEIJING (AP) — Investigators said that sparks from welding work appears to have been the cause of a

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 31 of 68

fire that killed 38 people at a company dealing in chemicals and other industrial goods in central China's Henan province.

Two other people were injured in the blaze that tore through the building in the city of Anyang starting at about 4:30 p.m. Monday. It took firefighters about 3 1/2 hours to bring the flames under control, the Wenfang district government said.

One or more welders operating in violation of safety rules appear to have let loose sparks that ignited cotton fabric in the building, according to officials cited by the official Xinhua News Agency. The investigation was ongoing, with company managers and local government officials being questioned, Xinhua said.

China has a history of industrial accidents caused by lax regard to safety measures fueled by rising competition and abetted by corruption among officials.

Online listings for the company, Kaixinda, said it wholesaled in a wide range of industrial goods including chemicals.

Video footage on state broadcaster CCTV showed flames and smoke billowing out of what appeared to be a two-story building engulfed in fire. In nighttime shots, firefighters examined the scarred, skeletal remains of the structure with an extension ladder and lights.

More than 250 firefighters and rescue workers were deployed, according to the statement.

Henan, a densely-populated and economically vital province, has seen a number of recent deadly incidents leading to the arrest of local officials.

Five were arrested after a building collapse that killed 53 people on the outskirts of the provincial capital Changsha in April.

The central government has pledged stronger measures ever since a massive 2015 explosion at a chemical warehouse in the northern port city of Tianjin killed 173 people, most of them firefighters and police officers. The chemicals were found to be falsely registered and stored, with local officials found complicit in turning a blind eye to the potential threat.

Seoul: Kim's daughter unveiled last week is his 2nd child

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un who was recently seen in public for the first time at a missile launch site is his second child aged about 10, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers Tuesday, as speculation swirled about his motives for bringing her to the attention of the outside world.

On Saturday, North Korea said that Kim observed the launch of the country's most powerful intercontinental ballistic missile -- Hwasong-17 -- the previous day with his wife Ri Sol Ju and their "beloved daughter." State media released photos showing Kim walking hand-in-hand with a young girl clad in a white coat and red shoes past a massive missile placed on a launch truck, and watching a soaring weapon from a distance.

In a closed-door briefing at a parliament committee, South Korea's National Intelligence Service, the country's main spy agency, told lawmakers that it assesses the daughter is Kim's second child named Ju Ae and aged around 10, Yoo Sang-bum, one of the lawmakers who attended the meeting, said.

The NIS determined she is Kim's second child because her looks matched information that she's taller and bigger than other girls who are the same age, Yoo cited the NIS as saying.

Youn Kun-young, who also attended the NIS meeting, said he also was briefed that she is Kim's second child but refused to provide further details.

The NIS said it cannot confirm the lawmakers' comments. It typically neither confirms nor denies the contents of its private briefings provided at parliament. The NIS has a spotty record in confirming developments in North Korea, one of the world's most secretive nations.

The daughter apparently is Kim's child who retired NBA star Dennis Rodman saw during his trip to Pyongyang in 2013. After that Pyongyang visit, Rodman told the British newspaper 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.

It was the first time North Korea officially confirmed her existence. North Korea's state media didn't

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 32 of 68

disclose the age, name and other details of Kim's daughter last week. South Korean media have speculated Kim married Ri in 2009 and that they have three children, who were born in 2010, 2013 and 2017, respectively. Some reports said Kim's first child is a son and the third one is a daughter.

Kim, 38, is a third generation of his family to run North Korea since 1948. He inherited power in late 2011 upon the death of his father Kim Jong Il.

Kim and his father were both first mentioned in state media dispatches after they became adults. Given that, the revealing of the daughter believed to be in her early teens came as a surprise to outside observers.

Some experts say the daughter's disclosing at a missile test site showed that Kim was emboldened by his advancing nuclear arsenal, the backbone of his family's rule. Others speculate if Kim continues to bring her to major public events, that could suggest that Kim might have her as his early heir apparent in his mind.

North Korea's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper said Sunday that it will continue to expand its nuclear arsenal to ensure "the bright smiles and beautiful dreams of our future generations" Some observers linked the article to the daughter's presence, saying Kim might have revealed her to stress the justification of his nuclear ambitions or show it's his family that governs the nation's nuclear and missile programs.

In war-torn states hurt by climate, scant hope for new funds

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt (AP) — In conflict-ravaged nations like Yemen and Somalia, devastating floods and droughts kill hundreds of people and uproot tens of thousands from their homes.

These countries and many others in the Middle East and Africa have been plunged into turmoil and wars for several years. Now climate change is an added disaster for those already struggling for survival.

The United Nations' climate conference, which wrapped up last weekend in Egypt, established a new fund to help poor, vulnerable countries hit hard by climate change. Countries like Yemen and Somalia are among the world's poorest and more vulnerable to climate change impacts as they are less able to adapt to weather extremes.

But they have little or no access to climate financing.

Conflict-hit countries are unlikely to receive funds because they lack stable governments, said Nisreen el-Saim, chair of the U.N. Secretary-General Youth Advisory Group.

"They don't have institutions in order to have climate finance," she said. "You have to have strong institutions, which don't exist in many countries."

Robert Mardini, the director general of the International Committee for the Red Cross, said that "close to zero amount of climate finance" is reaching conflict-affected nations "because decision makers who decide to allocate those funds consider that it is too risky to invest" there.

He warned that the worst is yet to come for Yemenis and Somalis amid worsening food shortages.

Those decision makers "need to reconsider the risk appetite because there are also big risks in not investing in these countries and huge (human) costs that should be avoided," he said.

In Yemen, a third of the population — 19 million people — are not able to find sufficient food in 2022, up from 15 million last year. Those include 161,000 living in famine-like conditions, according to the U.N. food agency.

Children and women are the most affected, with 1.3 million pregnant and breastfeeding women and 2.2 million children under 5 years acutely malnourished. Of those, 538,000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition, said the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Yemen has endured a brutal civil war since 2014, when the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels seized the capital, Sanaa, forcing the government into exile. A Saudi-led coalition entered the war in early 2015 to try restore the internationally recognized government to power.

The conflict devastated the country, created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises and over the years, turned into a regional proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. More than 150,000 people have been killed, including over 14,500 civilians.

The country has also suffered from droughts, soil erosion and yet worsening floods every year. Accord-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 33 of 68

ing to the U.N. agriculture agency, this year's rainfall was 45% higher compared to 2021.

At least 72 people were killed in flooding this year, and some 74,000 families in 19 of the country's 22 provinces were affected, with those living in displacement camps bearing the brunt of the deluge. There are 4.3 million people displaced, most made homeless by the raging conflict, according to U.N. figures.

To meet the increasing humanitarian needs, the World Food Program says it needs more than \$1 billion until March 2023.

The situation is worse in Somalia. The country is inching towards famine, the U.N. says. Prolonged drought has brought hunger and death to hundreds of thousands.

The country experienced its fifth consecutive failed rainy season this year, forcing at least 700,000 people from their homes, said Mohamed Osman, an economic advisor to the Somali president.

He said Somalia needs \$55.5 billion in investment and assistance in the next 10 years to be able to recover from climatic shocks.

"Somalia is paying the price already," he said. "We have received so far nothing and in total, Africa has received less."

In the past two months alone, more than 55,000 Somalis fled drought and conflict to neighboring Kenya, and the number is expected to reach 120,000 in the next few months, according to the International Rescue Committee.

"Hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees will struggle to find life-saving assistance by fleeing to Kenya this year unless urgent steps are taken," said IRC's director in Kenya, Mohamed El Montassir Hussein.

Somalia descended into chaos following the 1991 ousting of longtime dictator Siad Barre by warlords who then turned on each other. The al-Shabab militants, who are affiliated with al-Qaida, are also active in the country which occupied a strategically important position in the Horn of Africa.

In Nigeria, seasonal rainfall and flooding killed more than 55 people in extreme weather scientists say was made 80 times more likely because of climate change. Around 20 million people in the country are estimated to face acute food insecurity amid crop losses and lower yields, according to official figures.

The ICRC has warned about an outbreak of cholera and other waterborne diseases amid dire a shortage of life-saving aid, including shelter, water, sanitation, food, and emergency healthcare.

The country's northeastern regions where yearslong fighting against Islamic insurgency are centered were the worst hit.

"With more than 440,000 hectares of land already impacted by this flood, the magnitude of its effect on food security can be better imagined," said Benson Agbro, head of the Nigerian Red Cross Society's disaster response.

Agbro added they urgently need more than \$13.5 million to address dire humanitarian conditions in the most hard hit areas.

"But longer term, we also need to build resilience to climate shocks as we know that communities affected by conflict are among the most vulnerable to climate change," he said.

The Russian war in Ukraine has also doubled the challenges and costs of living for people in conflict-hit countries, according Mardini of the Red Cross.

"There is a knock-on effect of the Ukraine international armed conflict," he said, pointing to the skyrocketing prices of food, energy, fertilizers and the straining supply chain.

"So doing the same thing in a place like Somalia or Mali is more costly for us, and we need to mobilize more funds from our donors to do the same type of project that we used to do a year ago," he said.

Osman, the Somali official, said greater efforts are also needed for conflict-hit countries to access funds beyond the new proposed compensation deal. The package is just one part of a proposed "mosaic of funding arrangements" for climate vulnerable nations.

He called for "innovative ways" to receive funds, including initiatives on debt relief and help to build government institutions.

"No country should be left behind," he said.

Insurgency, neglect hurt flood relief in Pakistani province

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

GANDAKHA, Pakistan (AP) — Maryam Jamali should have been preparing for an economics exam. Instead, the teenager from the flood-hit Pakistani province of Baluchistan was helping organize postpartum clinics and shelter for people neglected by relief efforts.

Baluchistan is Pakistan's largest and poorest province, plagued by under-development, bad governance, corruption, and a long-running insurgency. When catastrophic floods submerged vast swaths of Pakistan this summer, about 75% of Baluchistan's population was affected, the largest proportion of any province in the country.

Yet recovery here has been slower, and residents say they are paying the price of years of neglect by the local and central government. Red tape is making it difficult for international aid workers to reach devastated areas. Much of the already dilapidated pre-flood infrastructure has been washed away, further hampering aid efforts.

People still wade in waist-high water or float on rafts through Baluchistan's fields. On the pot-holed and suspension-shattering drive to Jamali's village, there are deep ruts carved out by desperate locals to free trapped floodwaters. It is an uncomfortable car journey around the province's flood-affected areas, though not so impossible or inaccessible as to be a reason for the slowness of aid.

It is a contrast to neighboring Sindh province, an agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing hub. At the height of the flooding, people in the Sindh city of Sukkur used boats on submerged roads. But pumps were brought in to remove water, and now there is little sign the city was ever flooded.

Baluchistan was not so prepared, despite disaster striking it often. There was severe flooding in 2010 and 2011. The arid region normally has low rainfall, but any rain in this mountainous area can cause flash floods.

Jamali, her father, and dozens of volunteers have helped more than 20,000 flood survivors since mid-June. "We haven't seen any international organizations come here themselves," said Jamali, 19. "Maybe they think this is a scary place. It's not, it's just a lack of effort on their part. It's difficult to navigate through the bureaucracy. Because of all those hurdles they just didn't come here this time."

A drainage canal not far from her village illustrates what residents say is infrastructure that protects Sindh at the expense of Baluchistan.

Water from Baluchistan's Gandakha city is meant to be drained toward Sindh through the canal. But only one of the canal's five gates are open. Cement seals the rest. Someone has written in Urdu "For God's sake, open it up" on one of the canal's walls. The floodwater was choking the city at one point, Jamali said.

Baluchistan is not a political or economic heavyweight and doesn't have a political patron like other provinces. Sindh is the power base of the Bhutto dynasty. Punjab is the home of a past and present prime minister and contributes the most to Pakistan's GDP, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a stronghold of former premier Imran Khan.

Though Pakistan's largest province, Baluchistan is its least populated, made up largely of high mountains. It's also a center for the country's small ethnic Baluch minority, who say they face discrimination from the central government. That has fueled a separatist insurgency demanding independence.

The government says it has largely quelled the insurgents, but violence persists, with frequent raids by security forces and counterattacks by insurgents. But the closest flashpoint is several hours drive away from the areas hit by flooding.

Local politician Sana Baloch claims the flood relief focus has been on Sindh and that there is a closed-door policy for Baluchistan, unfairly using the insurgency as an excuse.

"International agencies and groups are willing to support people, but they are not welcomed by the federal government," said Baloch. "They are not encouraged or allowed to come here."

But there has also been criticism of local authorities for doing little even as the scale of the crisis grew. In Sohbat Pur district, Muhammad Ismail is rebuilding his destroyed home while his family lives on the roadside.

"Nobody has come here to help us," said Ismail, a 28-year-old father of five. "We ourselves drained the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 35 of 68

floodwater out – without any machinery – from this patch of land so we have somewhere to sit.”

An official from Baluchistan’s disaster management authority, Naseer Nasir, said the central government had provided sufficient funds that were being distributed locally. He also said the authority had passed on people’s complaints to the provincial government.

The tents of Pakistani charities can be seen across flood-affected areas. Because of bureaucratic hurdles, foreign NGOs are partnering with local organizations, which don’t need permits for their work, said Huzaifa Rafique, from one Pakistani charity, Baitussalam.

Abdul Shakoor from another charity, AlKhidmat, said it has hosted at least 90 different foreign delegations. He said some international NGOs are fearful of traveling to Baluchistan because of security issues.

The province’s lack of social development only worsens the disaster’s impact. Poverty forces people to live on floodplains, while illiteracy prohibits them from adapting to the effects of climate change, said Rafique.

Although the province receives tens of millions of dollars for development work - the World Bank had a \$250 million portfolio there as of 2019 - its human development indicators are dire. The maternal mortality rate is 298 per 100,000 live births, Pakistan’s highest. Its literacy rate is around 40%, and 40% of its population lives in poverty, both the worst rates in the country. Patchy information about Baluchistan, at the local, national, and international level, means accurate and up-to-date figures are scarce.

“The difference between an educated person and an illiterate person in everyday life is that he knows how to get help, he knows how to plug into the setup,” says Shakoor. “In the coming years, there should be a focus on educating Baloch children.”

The prospects for lasting rehabilitation are bleak; Jamali says one Gandakha resident has lived in a relief tent for 12 years, since the flooding of 2010.

“It’s not the same tent, it’s his second one, but he’s still in a tent,” she said.

Cuban singer-songwriter Pablo Milanés dies at 79

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Pablo Milanés, the Latin Grammy-winning balladeer who helped found Cuba’s “nueva trova” movement and toured the world as a cultural ambassador for Fidel Castro’s revolution, has died in Spain, where he had been under treatment for blood cancer. He was 79.

One of the most internationally famous Cuban singer-songwriters, he recorded dozens of albums and hits like “Yolanda,” “Yo Me Quedo” (I’m Staying) and “Amo Esta Isla” (I Love This Island) during a career that lasted more than five decades.

“The culture in Cuba is in mourning for the death of Pablo Milanés,” Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz tweeted Monday night.

Milanés’ representatives issued a statement saying he had died early Tuesday in Madrid.

In early November, he announced he was being hospitalized and canceled concerts.

Pablo Milanés was born Feb. 24, 1943, in the eastern city of Bayamo, in what was then Oriente province, the youngest of five siblings born to working-class parents. His musical career began with him singing in, and often winning, local TV and radio contests.

His family moved to the capital and he studied for a time at the Havana Musical Conservatory during the 1950s, but he credited neighborhood musicians rather than formal training for his early inspiration, along with trends from the United States and other countries.

In the early ’60s he was in several groups including Cuarteto del Rey (the King’s Quartet), composing his first song in 1963: “Tu Mi Desengano,” (You, My Disillusion), which spoke of moving on from a lost love.

“Your kisses don’t matter to me because I have a new love/to whom I promise you I will give my life,” the tune goes.

In 1970 he wrote the seminal Latin American love song “Yolanda,” which is still an enduring favorite everywhere from Old Havana’s tourist cafes to Mexico City cantinas.

Spanish newspaper El Pais asked Milanés in 2003 how many women he had flirted with by saying they inspired the song. “None,” he responded, laughing. “But many have told me: ‘My child is the product of

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 36 of 68

Yolanda.”

Milanés supported the 1959 Cuban Revolution but was nevertheless targeted by authorities during the early years of Fidel Castro’s government, when all manner of “alternative” expression was highly suspect. Milanés was reportedly harassed for wearing his hair in an afro, and was given compulsory work detail for his interest in foreign music.

Those experiences did not dampen his revolutionary fervor, however, and he began to incorporate politics into his songwriting, collaborating with musicians such as Silvio Rodríguez and Noel Nicola.

The three are considered the founders of the Cuban “nueva trova,” a usually guitar-based musical style tracing to the ballads that troubadours composed during the island’s wars of independence. Infused with the spirit of 1960s American protest songs, the nueva trova uses musical storytelling to highlight social problems.

Milanés and Rodríguez in particular became close, touring the world’s stages as cultural ambassadors for the Cuban Revolution, and bonding during boozy sessions.

“If Silvio Rodríguez and I got together, the rum was always there,” Milanés told *El País* in 2003. “We were always three, not two.”

Milanés was friendly with Castro, critical of U.S. foreign policy and for a time even a member of the communist government’s parliament. He considered himself loyal to the revolution and spoke of his pride at serving Cuba.

“I am a worker who labors with songs, doing in my own way what I know best, like any other Cuban worker,” Milanés once said, according to *The New York Times*. “I am faithful to my reality, to my revolution and the way in which I have been brought up.”

In 1973, Milanés recorded “Versos Sencillos,” which turned poems by Cuban Independence hero José Martí into songs. Another composition became a kind of rallying call for the political left of the Americas: “Song for Latin American Unity,” which praised Castro as the heir of Martí and South American liberation hero Simon Bolívar, and cast the Cuban Revolution as a model for other nations.

In 2006, when Castro stepped down as president due to a life-threatening illness, Milanés joined other prominent artists and intellectuals in voicing their support for the government. He promised to represent Castro and Cuba “as this moment deserves: with unity and courage in the presence of any threat or provocation.”

Yet he was unafraid to speak his mind and occasionally advocated publicly for more freedom on the island.

In 2010 he backed a dissident hunger striker who was demanding the release of political prisoners. Cuba’s aging leaders “are stuck in time,” Milanés told Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*. “History should advance with new ideas and new men.”

The following year, as the island was enacting economic changes that would allow greater free-market activity, he lobbied for President Raul Castro to do more. “These freedoms have been seen in small doses, and we hope that with time they will grow,” Milanés told *The Associated Press*.

Milanés disagreed without dissenting, prodded without pushing, hewing to Fidel Castro’s notorious 1961 warning to Cuba’s intellectual class: “Within the Revolution, everything; outside the Revolution, nothing.”

“I disagree with many things in Cuba, and everyone knows it,” Milanés once said.

Ever political even when his bushy afro had given way to more conservatively trimmed, gray, thinning locks, in 2006 he contributed the song “Exodo” (Exodus), about missing friends who have departed for other lands, to the album “Somos Americans” (We Are Americans), a compilation of U.S. and Latin American artists’ songs about immigration.

Rodríguez and Milanés had a falling out in the 1980s for reasons that were unclear and were barely on speaking terms, though they maintained a mutual respect and Rodríguez collaborated musically with Milanés’ daughter.

Milanés sang in the 1980’s album “Amo esta isla” that “I am from the Caribbean and could never walk on terra firma;” nevertheless, he divided most of his time between Spain and Mexico in later years.

By his own count he underwent more than 20 leg surgeries.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 37 of 68

Milanés won two Latin Grammys in 2006 — best singer-songwriter album for “Como un Campo de Maiz” (Like a Cornfield) and best traditional tropical album for “AM/PM, Lineas Paralelas” (AM/PM, Parallel lines), a collaboration with Puerto Rican salsa singer Andy Montanez.

He also won numerous Cuban honors including the Alejo Carpentier medal in 1982 and the National Music Prize in 2005, and the 2007 Haydee Santamaria medal from the Casa de las Americas for his contributions to Latin American culture.

Wave of sex abuse lawsuits seen as NY opens door for victims

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Sexual assault victims in New York will get a one-time opportunity to sue over their abuse starting Thursday, under a new law expected to bring a wave of allegations against prison guards, middle managers, doctors and a few prominent figures including former President Donald Trump.

For one year the state will waive the normal deadlines for filing lawsuits over sex crimes, enabling survivors to seek compensation for assaults that happened years or even decades ago.

Advocates say the Adult Survivors Act is an important step in the national reckoning over sexual misconduct and could provide a measure of justice to people who may have needed time to come forward due to trauma, embarrassment or fear of retaliation.

“I feel like I’ve been in jail for almost three decades,” said Liz Stein, 49, who says she was abused by the millionaire and notorious sex offender Jeffrey Epstein when she was a young woman. “And it’s more than time for me and the other victims to be free of that prison that we’ve been in, and for the people who are accountable to be held accountable.”

The law is modeled after the state’s Child Victims Act, which opened a two-year window in 2019 during which almost 11,000 people sued churches, hospitals, schools, camps, scout groups and other institutions over abuse they said they suffered as children.

Most states that have opened such windows did so only for people abused as children, though New Jersey’s included adults.

New York will begin accepting electronic filings on Thanksgiving Day, six months after the law was signed by Gov. Kathy Hochul. Lawyers say they have been getting calls from people considering lawsuits, mostly women.

“I think there will be a lot of women who will say, ‘I think that’s me. Because I think what happened at that Christmas party in 1998 wasn’t right. And I couldn’t tell anybody about it at the time.’ And they want to tell somebody about it,” attorney Jeanne Christensen said.

Legal action has already been promised on behalf of hundreds of women who say they were sexually abused while serving sentences at state prisons.

Other cases could come from college students assaulted by professors, athletes abused by coaches or workers assaulted by bosses.

A lawsuit against Trump is expected from E. Jean Carroll, a longtime advice columnist for Elle magazine who says he raped her in a department store dressing room in the mid-1990s.

Trump denies the allegation, saying Carroll made it up to sell a book. Carroll is already suing Trump for defamation, saying his denials and disparaging comments to the media damaged her reputation.

Claims can be made against negligent institutions and the estates of dead people. Some are expected from women who were inspired to come forward by the #MeToo movement, only to be told that too much time had passed to take legal action.

It’s unclear there will be as many lawsuits as were filed under the Child Victims Act. That law attracted many lawyers because of the possibility of verdicts against deep-pocketed institutions involved in caring for or educating children.

Stein’s lawsuit, to be filed by her lawyer, Margaret Mabie, will be against Epstein’s longtime companion, Ghislaine Maxwell, and other parties. Stein was working at a shop in Manhattan in 1994 when she met Maxwell, who introduced her to Epstein.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 38 of 68

Maxwell is serving a 20-year sentence for helping Epstein sexually abuse underage girls. Maxwell's attorneys did not immediately respond to an email request for comment. Epstein killed himself in jail in 2019 after his arrest on sex trafficking charges.

In addition to the high-profile claims, there will be "many, many more" cases that don't get publicity, said Liz Roberts, CEO of the victim assistance nonprofit Safe Horizon. Roberts said that for many survivors, just telling their story can be healing.

"I'm just finding my voice, and I'm learning how powerful that can be," said Laurie Maldonado, one of scores of women who say they were molested during examinations by New York City gynecologist Robert Hadden.

Hadden surrendered his medical license after being convicted in 2016 on sex-related charges in state court. He has pleaded not guilty to federal charges of sexually abusing many young and unsuspecting female patients for over two decades.

The medical institutions that employed Hadden, Columbia University Irving Medical Center and NewYork-Presbyterian, have already resolved claims by 225 women, including one group of 147 that recently settled for \$165 million. They said in a statement that they remain open to settling other claims "irrespective of the Adult Survivors Act."

While the Child Victims Act received a lot of publicity when its window opened in 2019, some advocates are worried too few people are aware of the one opening for adults.

Safe Horizon last week launched a public awareness campaign featuring survivors, including a public service announcement and a news conference in Times Square.

"We're just keenly aware that a year is a short time," Roberts said.

Georgia runoff: Why one Senate seat is crucial for Democrats

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats have secured their majority in the Senate for the next two years. But holding on to Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock's seat in Georgia's runoff next month could be crucial to their success.

If Warnock wins the runoff against Republican Herschel Walker, Democrats will have 51 seats. That would make legislating a lot easier than it is in the current 50-50 Senate, the narrowest possible balance of power. For the last two years, Democrats have had to rely on Vice President Kamala Harris — she is the president of the Senate — to break ties.

Republicans and Democrats are spending millions of dollars to win the seat in the Dec. 6 runoff in Georgia after neither Warnock nor Walker, a famed former football player, won the necessary 50 percent margin to triumph on Election Day. Warnock beat Sen. Kelly Loeffler in a 2020 special election and is now vying for a full six-year term.

A 50-50 Senate "slows everything down," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in an interview last week. "So it makes a big difference to us."

A look at what a 51st seat would mean for Senate Democrats:

OUTRIGHT MAJORITY

A 51-49 Senate would give Democrats an outright majority, meaning that Schumer wouldn't have to negotiate a power-sharing agreement with Republican leader Mitch McConnell. The two parties had to do that two years ago and also in 2001, the last time the Senate was evenly split.

In early 2021, confirmations of new President Joe Biden's nominees were stalled for several weeks while Schumer and McConnell worked out an agreement on how to split committees and move legislation on the Senate floor. Using the little leverage he had, McConnell threatened not to finalize a deal until Democrats promised that they wouldn't try to kill the legislative filibuster that forces a 60-vote threshold.

The Republican leader finally relented after two Democratic senators — West Virginia's Joe Manchin and Arizona's Kyrsten Sinema — made it clear they would not support such a move on the filibuster.

COMMITTEE BALANCE

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 39 of 68

Committees are now evenly split between the two parties due to the 50-50 power-sharing deal. This often creates extra steps when a committee vote is tied, forcing Democrats to hold votes on the Senate floor to move ahead with bills or nominees.

Should they win an outright 51-seat majority, Democrats would likely hold an extra seat on every committee, making it much easier to move nominees or legislation on party-line votes.

Biden, a longtime senator before becoming president, acknowledged this reality after Democrats clinched 50 seats and the Senate majority.

"It's always better with 51, because we're in a situation where you don't have to have an even makeup of the committees," Biden said. "And so that's why it's important, mostly. But it's just simply better. The bigger the numbers, the better."

THE JOE MANCHIN PROBLEM

The extra seat would also give Democrats the ability to pass bills while losing one vote within their caucus — a luxury they haven't had over the last two years. Manchin, a moderate from conservative West Virginia, often used the narrow margin to his advantage, forcing Democrats to bend to his will on several pieces of legislation.

Manchin's opposition to Biden's sweeping health, climate and economic package stalled it for months, until Schumer negotiated a narrower version with the West Virginia senator. In the end, several of Biden's legislative priorities were left out.

That pressure could be even more acute in the next Congress, as Manchin and Sinema, a fellow moderate, are both up for reelection and will want to prove their bipartisan credentials.

CONFIRMING JUDGES

With Republicans taking charge of the House majority next year, Democrats won't have much of a chance to pass major legislation. So one of Schumer's main priorities will be confirming judges nominated by Biden in the last two years of his term.

A rules change under former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., a decade ago allowed the Senate to pass judges with only a simple majority, or 51 votes. Winning Warnock's seat would make that process easier and more expedient.

"We've been able to achieve a lot, but we can do even more with additional senator," said Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the No. 2 Democrat in the chamber and the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

FREE KAMALA HARRIS

The vice president has already broken 26 tied votes as vice president — twice as many as Mike Pence did in his four years in the job. Biden never broke a tie in his eight years as vice president.

The need to break tie votes requires Harris to keep close to Washington. A 51st vote would free up the vice president somewhat, allowing her to be out of town when the Senate is holding important votes.

In a speech earlier this year, Harris noted that she had broken President John Adams' record of casting the most tie-breaking votes in a single term.

"I think we should all fully appreciate how history can take a turn," Harris said.

EXPLAINER: Rail strike would have wide impact on US economy

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — American consumers and nearly every industry will be affected if freight trains grind to a halt next month.

One of the biggest rail unions rejected its deal Monday, joining three others that have failed to approve contracts over concerns about demanding schedules and the lack of paid sick time. That raises the risk of a strike, which could start as soon as Dec. 5.

It wouldn't take long for the effects of a rail strike to trickle through the economy. Many businesses only have a few days' worth of raw materials and space for finished goods. Makers of food, fuel, cars and chemicals would all feel the squeeze, as would their customers.

That's not to mention the commuters who would be left stranded because many passenger railroads

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 40 of 68

use tracks owned by the freight railroads.

The stakes are so high for the economy that Congress is expected to intervene and impose contract terms on railroad workers. The last time US railroads went on strike was in 1992. That strike lasted two days before Congress intervened. An extended rail shutdown has not happened for a century, partly because a law passed in 1926 that governs rail negotiations made it much harder for workers to strike.

Here are some of the expected impacts of a rail strike:

\$2 BILLION A DAY

Railroads haul about 40% of the nation's freight each year. The railroads estimated that a rail strike would cost the economy \$2 billion a day in a report issued earlier this fall. Another recent report put together by a chemical industry trade group projected that if a strike drags on for a month some 700,000 jobs would be lost as manufacturers who rely on railroads shut down, prices of nearly everything would increase even more and the economy could be thrust into a recession.

And although some businesses would try to shift shipments over to trucks, there aren't nearly enough of them available. The Association of American Railroads trade group estimated that 467,000 additional trucks a day would be needed to handle everything railroads deliver.

CHEMICALS RUN DRY

Chemical manufacturers and refineries will be some of the first businesses affected, because railroads will stop shipping hazardous chemicals about a week before the strike deadline to ensure that no tank cars filled with dangerous liquids wind up stranded.

Jeff Sloan with the American Chemistry Council trade group said chemical plants could be close to shutting down by the time a rail strike actually begins because of that.

That means the chlorine that water treatment plants rely on to purify water, which they might only have about a week's supply of on hand, would become hard to get. It would be hard for manufacturers to make anything out of plastic without the chemicals that are part of the formula. Consumers will also pay more for gasoline if refineries shut down either because they can't get the ingredients they need to make fuel or because railroads aren't available to haul away byproducts like sulfur.

Chemical plants also produce carbon dioxide as a byproduct, so the supply of carbon dioxide that beverage makers use to carbonate soda and beer would also be restricted, even though the gas typically moves via pipelines.

PASSENGER PROBLEMS

Roughly half of all commuter rail systems rely at least in part on tracks that are owned by freight railroads, and nearly all of Amtrak's long-distance trains run over the freight network.

Back in September, Amtrak cancelled all of its long-distance trains days ahead of the strike deadline to ensure passengers wouldn't be left stranded in remote parts of the country while still en route to their destination.

And major commuter rail services in Chicago, Minneapolis, Maryland and Washington state all warned then that some of their operations would be suspended in the event of a rail strike.

FOOD FEARS

It would take about a week for customers to notice shortages of things like cereal, peanut butter and beer at the grocery store, said Tom Madrecki, vice president of supply chain for the Consumer Brands Association.

About 30% of all packaged food in the U.S. is moved by rail, he said. That percentage is much higher for denser, heavier items like cans of soup.

Some products, like cereal, cooking oils and beer, have entire operations built around rail deliveries of raw ingredients like grain, barley and peanuts, along with shipments of finished products.

Those companies typically keep only two to four days' worth of raw ingredients on hand because it's expensive to store them, Madrecki said, and grocers also keep a limited supply of products on hand.

Madrecki said big food companies don't like to discuss the threat of a rail strike because of worries about product shortages can lead to panic buying.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 41 of 68

HUNGRY HERDS

Any disruption in rail service could threaten the health of chickens and pigs, which depend on trains to deliver their feed, and contribute to higher meat prices.

"Our members rely on about 27 million bushels of corn and 11 million bushels of soybean meal every week to feed their chickens. Much of that is moved by rail," said Tom Super, a spokesman for the National Chicken Council, a trade group for the industry raising chickens for meat.

The National Grain and Feed Association said a rail strike now would hit pork and chicken producers in the southern U.S. hardest, because their local supply of corn and soybeans from this year's harvest is likely exhausted and they'd have to ship feed by truck, dramatically increasing costs.

"They only have so much storage. They can't go without rail service for too long before they'd have to shut down the feed mills and they run into problems," said Max Fisher, the NGFA's chief economist.

RETAIL RISKS

Jess Dankert, the vice president for supply chain at the Retail Industry Leaders Association, said retailers' inventory is largely in place for the holidays. But the industry is developing contingency plans.

"We don't see, you know, canceling Christmas and that kind of narrative," Dankert said. "But I think we will see the generalized disruption of really anything that moves by rail."

David Garfield, a managing director with the consulting firm AlixPartners, said a rail strike could still impact holiday items shipped to stores later in December, and would definitely hamper stocking of next season's goods.

Retailers are also concerned about online orders. Shippers like FedEx and UPS use rail cars that hold roughly 2,000 packages in each car.

AUTOMOBILE ANGST

Drivers are already paying record prices and often waiting months for new vehicles because of the production problems in the auto industry related to the shortage of computer chips in recent years.

That would only get worse if there is a rail strike, because roughly 75% of all new vehicles begin their journey from factories to dealerships on the railroad. Trains deliver some 2,000 carloads a day filled with vehicles.

And automakers may have a hard time keeping their plants running during a strike because some larger parts and raw materials are transported by rail.

Virginia cancels Virginia Tech game after players killed

By HANK KURZ Jr. Associated Press

The University of Virginia has canceled its game against rival Virginia Tech scheduled for Saturday following the slaying of three football players on campus just over a week ago.

The university made the announcement Monday night, two days after a nearly two-hour memorial service to remember Lavel Davis Jr., Devin Chandler and D'Sean Perry. The three were fatally shot on Nov. 13 after a field trip to see a play in Washington.

"The decision was made following communication between the Atlantic Coast Conference, Virginia and Virginia Tech athletic department administration," Virginia Tech said in a statement. "The ACC and Virginia Tech continue to support UVA following the devastating tragedy"

Authorities have said that Christopher Darnell Jones Jr., a UVA student and former member of the football team who was on the trip, began shooting at students on the bus as it pulled to a stop at a campus parking garage.

A prosecutor said in court last week that a witness told police the gunman targeted specific victims, shooting one as he slept. Two other students were wounded.

Jones, 23, faces second-degree murder and other charges stemming from the shooting, which set off a manhunt and 12-hour campus lockdown before Jones was apprehended in suburban Richmond. Jones is being held without bond.

Authorities have not released a motive.

Virginia also canceled a game against No. 23 Coastal Carolina last Saturday.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 42 of 68

Neither the Cavaliers (3-7, 1-6 Atlantic Coast Conference), under first-year coach Tony Elliott, nor the Hokies (3-8, 1-6), under first-year coach Brent Pry, have anything to lose by not playing their Commonwealth Cup matchup, the last scheduled game for both.

The Hokies, who endured a massacre that left 33 dead, including the gunman, in 2007, wore orange uniforms as they ended a seven-game losing streak with a 23-22 victory at Liberty on Saturday. The Hokies and Virginia share orange as a signature color.

Biden opens holidays, pardons turkeys Chocolate and Chip

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden continued a 75-year tradition Monday and pardoned a pair of Thanksgiving turkeys named after his favorite flavor of ice cream while cracking jokes about his political party's better-than-expected performance in this month's midterm elections.

"The votes are in, they've been counted and verified," Biden said as he welcomed turkeys Chocolate and Chip before hundreds of people gathered on the South Lawn in unseasonably cold weather. "There's no ballot stuffing. There's no fowl play. The only red wave this season's gonna be if German shepherd Commander knocks over the cranberry sauce on our table." Commander is his dog.

Chocolate and Chip, each weighing nearly 50 pounds (23 kilograms), were driven up from North Carolina on Saturday. They were checked into a room at the Willard hotel, near the White House, to await their visit with the president and his declaration of their freedom.

Chocolate chip is Biden's favorite flavor of ice cream. The president joked at the event that "we could have named them Chips and Science," after the \$280 billion CHIPS and Science Act that he championed and signed into law this year.

"I hereby pardon Chocolate and Chip," Biden declared. Before the ceremony, his son Hunter Biden brought his toddler son, Beau, who is almost 3, outside to see the turkeys.

Both gobblers were hatched in July in Monroe, North Carolina, according to the National Turkey Federation, sponsor of the turkey tradition, which dates to 1947 and President Harry Truman.

The burst of holiday activity at the White House followed a busy weekend personally for Biden and his family, along with midterm elections that saw the president's Democratic Party perform well enough to defy historical trends that had forecast huge losses. Democrats will keep control of the Senate. Although Republicans will control the House when a new Congress is seated in January, Democrats did keep GOP gains in that chamber to a minimum.

The official White House Christmas tree was delivered Monday, and the Bidens helped serve a Thanksgiving-style dinner on a North Carolina Marine Corps base later that evening.

Biden and his wife, Jill, were scheduled to leave Washington on Tuesday to continue their family tradition of spending the Thanksgiving holiday on the Massachusetts island of Nantucket. They hosted the wedding of their granddaughter Naomi Biden at the White House on Saturday, followed by a family brunch on Sunday for the president's 80th birthday.

Humor aside, the president ended Monday's White House event on a serious note, encouraging people to get their COVID-19 vaccines to ensure a healthy holiday season. He also encouraged Americans to reflect and "be grateful for what we have."

"This is a special time ... in the greatest nation on Earth, so let's be thankful," he said.

Chocolate and Chip were set to live the rest of their lives on the campus of North Carolina State University.

Jill Biden did her part by receiving the official White House Christmas tree. The 18 foot-tall (5.5 meters) Concolor fir grown on a farm in Pennsylvania, the state where the the president was born and the first lady grew up, will fill the Blue Room after a chandelier is temporarily removed to allow the tree to be anchored in place for safety.

"I love the tree," the first lady said after she was asked how she liked it. She held the hand of her grand-son Beau. "He wanted to come out and see the tree."

Volunteer decorators began arriving at the White House on Monday to start sprucing it up for Christmas according to a theme first ladies traditionally reveal after Thanksgiving.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 43 of 68

Paul and Sharon Shealer of Auburn, Pennsylvania, were crowned this year's Grand Champion Grower in the National Christmas Tree Association's national Christmas tree contest. With the award, the winner gets to present a Christmas tree to the White House.

It's the second time that the Shealers have claimed the association's top honor. They presented a tree to first lady Hillary Clinton in 2000.

Later Monday, the Bidens traveled to Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, near the North Carolina coast for "friendsgiving," or to share a Thanksgiving-style meal with members of the military and their families. The first couple expressed gratitude for their sacrifices to the roughly 350 people in attendance.

"You represent 1 percent of the population and defend the rest of us," Biden told the servicemembers and their families, who came from Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, Camp Lejeune, and Marine Corps Air Station, New River, before dinner began. "You're the backbone, the sinew, the spine of the country."

Later, Biden helped serve heaping mounds of mashed potatoes, while the first lady doled out stuffing.

Jill Biden leads a White House initiative named Joining Forces to support and promote the sacrifices and needs of military families. The president has pushed for and has signed several bills to help service members and veterans, including legislation expanding health care for those who were exposed to toxic substances from the burning of waste in Iraq or Afghanistan, or to chemicals that were used in previous conflicts.

The Bidens' late son, Beau Biden, served in the Delaware Army National Guard, including a tour in Iraq, before he died of brain cancer in 2015.

Bale salvages 1-1 draw for Wales against US in World Cup

By RONALD BLUM AP Sports Writer

AL RAYYAN, Qatar (AP) — A young United States team was nearing victory in its World Cup return. Then Walker Zimmerman needlessly plowed into Gareth Bale.

Bale converted the resulting penalty kick in the 82nd minute, giving Wales a 1-1 draw Monday night that left the Americans feeling frustrated and made their path to the knockout stage more precarious.

"You feel like you have the game and you're going to win the game," midfielder Brenden Aaronson said. "It's a punch in the face."

Tim Weah put the Americans ahead in the 36th minute off a pass from Christian Pulisic, scoring in front a crowd that included his father, former FIFA Player of the Year and current Liberia President George Weah.

Back in the World Cup after missing the 2018 tournament, the United States had only to close out the final minutes. But Brennan Johnson made a throw-in that Aaron Ramsey cut back to Bale, who had his back to the goal near the penalty spot. Zimmerman's sliding tackle took out Bale's left leg, and Qatari referee Abdulrahman Al-Jassim pointed to the penalty spot.

"He probably just puts his leg not for the ball but to try and get in the way of me hitting the ball," Zimmerman said. "So I kind of went through him and I think I still got the ball. But clever move — I wish I would have seen him out of the corner my eye."

Shooting in front of the Red Wall of supporters, Bale sent his kick past goalkeeper Matt Turner for his 41st goal in 109 international appearances, salvaging a point for Wales in its first World Cup match since 1958.

"Obviously, a difficult game," Bale said. "First half was not how we wanted to play and the United States played really well. We played quite poorly."

Next up for the United States is a high-profile matchup Friday against England, which opened with a 6-2 rout of Iran. Wales faces the Iranians.

The top two teams advance.

"It think it's pretty clear — a disappointing result for us," Turner said.

Weah, just 22, was part of a new-look American team that is the tournament's second-youngest.

Yunus Musah, at 19 years, 358 days the youngest American to start a Cup match, started the move to Weah's goal when he headed the ball to Josh Sargent at the midfield stripe. Sargent dished off to Pulisic, who burst up the middle of the field. On his fourth touch Pulisic rolled the ball ahead to Weah, who timed

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 44 of 68

his run perfectly to break in ahead of Neco Williams.

From near the penalty spot, Weah used the side of his right foot to poke the ball over the left thigh of sliding goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey for his fourth goal in 26 international appearances.

"It's a dream come true for every attacker, for every player to score in a World Cup," Weah said, "and I did that tonight in front of my fans, my teammates, my family."

In the 750th international U.S. match, the Americans started a U.S. Cup record 10 players from European clubs, with only Zimmerman from Major League Soccer. DeAndre Yedlin, who entered in the 74th minute, was the only American with previous World Cup experience.

Sargent nearly put the Americans ahead in the 10th minute when he hit a post with a header from Antonee Robinson's cross.

After the U.S. dominated the first half with 66% possession, Wales switched to a three-man attack and had 67% in the first 15 minutes of the second. Ben Davies' header in the 64th minute was pushed over the crossbar by a leaping Turner.

The match was played in the Arabian desert west of Doha at rebuilt Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, lit in brilliant colors and featuring an exterior facade meant to replicate undulating sand dunes. The U.S. Soccer Federation sold about 3,300 tickets, and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken was on hand in the crowd of 43,418.

"The nerves were there," Pulisic said. "Now we have to figure out how to put that together for 90 minutes."

CARDED

Sergio Dest, Weston McKennie, Tim Ream and Kellyn Acosta received yellow cards.

TRAINER'S ROOM

U.S. midfielder Gio Reyna was held out because of what coach Gregg Berhalter said was tightness without specifying. Berhalter envisioned him playing against England.

NASA capsule buzzes moon, last big step before lunar orbit

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's Orion capsule reached the moon Monday, whipping around the far side and buzzing the lunar surface on its way to a record-breaking orbit with test dummies sitting in for astronauts.

It's the first time a capsule has visited the moon since NASA's Apollo program 50 years ago, and represents a huge milestone in the \$4.1 billion test flight that began last Wednesday.

Video of the looming moon and our pale blue planet more than 230,000 miles (370,000 kilometers) in the distance left workers "giddy" at Houston's Johnson Space Center, home to Mission Control, according to flight director Judd Frieling. Even the flight controllers themselves were "absolutely astounded."

"Just smiles across the board," said Orion program manager Howard Hu.

The close approach of 81 miles (130 kilometers) occurred as the crew capsule and its three wired-up dummies were on the far side of the moon. Because of a half-hour communication blackout, flight controllers in Houston did not know if the critical engine firing went well until the capsule emerged from behind the moon. The capsule's cameras sent back a picture of the Earth — a tiny blue dot surrounded by blackness.

The capsule accelerated well beyond 5,000 mph (8,000 kph) as it regained radio contact, NASA said. Less than an hour later, Orion soared above Tranquility Base, where Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on July 20, 1969. There were no photos of the site because the pass was in darkness, but managers promised to try for pictures on the return flyby in two weeks.

Orion needed to slingshot around the moon to pick up enough speed to enter the sweeping, lopsided lunar orbit. Another engine firing will place the capsule in that orbit Friday.

This coming weekend, Orion will shatter NASA's distance record for a spacecraft designed for astronauts — nearly 250,000 miles (400,000 kilometers) from Earth, set by Apollo 13 in 1970. And it will keep going, reaching a maximum distance from Earth next Monday at nearly 270,000 miles (433,000 kilometers).

The capsule will spend close to a week in lunar orbit, before heading home. A Pacific splashdown is planned for Dec. 11.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 45 of 68

Orion has no lunar lander; a touchdown won't come until NASA astronauts attempt a lunar landing in 2025 with SpaceX's Starship. Before then, astronauts will strap into Orion for a ride around the moon as early as 2024.

Mission manager Mike Sarafin was delighted with the progress of the mission, giving it a "cautiously optimistic A-plus" so far.

The Space Launch System rocket — the most powerful ever built by NASA — performed exceedingly well in its debut, Sarafin told reporters. He said teams are dealing with two issues that require workarounds — one involving the navigational star trackers, the other the power system,

The 322-foot (98-meter) rocket caused more damage than expected, however, at the Kennedy Space Center launch pad. The force from the 8.8 million pounds (4 million kilograms) of liftoff thrust was so great that it tore off the blast doors of the elevator, leaving it unusable.

Sarafin said the pad damage will be repaired in plenty of time before the next launch.

Consumers could pay price if railroads, unions can't agree

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Consumers could see higher gas prices and shortages of some of their favorite groceries during the winter holiday season if railroads and all of their unions can't agree on new contracts by an early-December deadline that had already been pushed back.

The likelihood of a strike that would paralyze the nation's rail traffic grew on Monday when the largest of the 12 rail unions, which represents mostly conductors, rejected management's latest offering that included 24% raises and \$5,000 in bonuses. With four of the 12 unions that represent half of the 115,000 rail workers holding out for a better deal, it might fall to Congress to impose one to protect the U.S. economy.

The Retail Industry Leaders Association said a rail strike "would cause enormous disruption" although retail stores are well stocked for the crucial holiday shopping season. It's not clear what a strike would mean for packages because FedEx and UPS, which both rely on rail to some degree, haven't commented in detail.

"Fortunately, this year's holiday gifts have already landed on store shelves. But an interruption to rail transportation does pose a significant challenge to getting items like perishable food products and e-commerce shipments delivered on time, and it will undoubtedly add to the inflationary pressures already hitting the U.S. economy," said Jess Dankert with the group that represents more than 200 major retailers.

Even getting close to the deadline could cause problems because railroads will freeze shipments of dangerous chemicals and perishable goods ahead of time. And commuters could be stranded if there is a strike because so many passenger railroads operate on tracks owned by the freight railroads.

Just about every industry could be affected because so many businesses need railroads to deliver their raw materials and completed products, and there aren't enough trucks to pick up the slack.

Tom Madrecki with the Consumer Brands Association said a rail strike "would effectively bring hundreds of America's largest food, beverage, household and personal care manufacturing operations to a halt in a matter of days as inputs and ingredients run out. On-shelf availability and accessibility will quickly drop, compounded by almost inevitable panic buying."

There's no immediate threat of a strike even though four unions have rejected deals the Biden administration helped broker before the original strike deadline in September. Those unions agreed to try to hash out a contract before a new Dec. 5 strike deadline. But those talks have deadlocked because the railroads refuse to add paid sick time to what they've already offered.

Railroad engineers voted Monday to join seven smaller unions in approving the deal, but conductors' union rejected its contract, joining three unions that previously voted no.

It appears increasingly likely that Congress will have to settle the dispute. Lawmakers have the power to impose contract terms, and hundreds of business groups have urged Congress and President Joe Biden to be ready to intervene.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre reiterated to reporters on Monday that Biden believes

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 46 of 68

"a shutdown is unacceptable" but that "the best option is still for the parties to resolve this themselves."

Workers frustrated with the demanding schedules and deep job cuts in the industry pushed to reject these contracts because they wouldn't do enough to resolve their quality-of-life concerns. The deals for the engineers and conductors did include a promise to improve the scheduling of regular days off and negotiate the details of those schedules further at each railroad. Those two unions also received three unpaid days off a year to tend to medical needs as long they were scheduled at least 30 days in advance and the railroads said they wouldn't penalize workers who were hospitalized.

The railroads also lost out on their bid to cut crew sizes to one person as part of the negotiations. But the conductors in the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers union still narrowly rejected the deal. A small division of the SMART-TD union did approve it.

"The ball is now in the railroads' court. Let's see what they do. They can settle this at the bargaining table," SMART-TD President Jeremy Ferguson said. "But, the railroad executives who constantly complain about government interference and regularly bad-mouth regulators and Congress now want Congress to do the bargaining for them."

Dennis Pierce, the president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen union, said the deal engineers ratified should help improve working conditions somewhat, but that the railroads must address workers' frustrations, especially after they cut nearly one-third of their jobs over the past six years as they overhauled their operations.

"When you've got to offer \$20,000 to get somebody to go to work for the railroad in Lincoln, Nebraska, you've got a problem. People used to stand in line there," Pierce said. "The reason for that is the word is out that if you go to work here, you're not going to ever see your family."

The railroads maintain that the deals with the unions should closely follow the recommendations made this summer by a special panel of arbitrators Biden appointed. That's part of the reason why they don't want to offer paid sick time. Plus, the railroads say the unions have agreed over the years to forgo paid sick time in favor of higher pay and strong short-term disability benefits.

The unions say it is long overdue for the railroads to offer paid sick time and that the pandemic highlighted the need for it.

The group that negotiates on behalf of the railroads that include Union Pacific, Norfolk Southern, BNSF, Kansas City Southern and CSX said Monday that the unions that rejected their deals shouldn't expect to receive more than the Presidential Emergency Board of arbitrators recommended.

It's unclear what Congress might do given the deep political divisions in Washington D.C. and a single lawmaker could hold up a resolution. But the head of the Association of American Railroads trade group, Ian Jefferies, said "if the remaining unions do not accept an agreement, Congress should be prepared to act and avoid a disastrous \$2 billion a day hit to our economy."

Jan. 6 sedition trial of Oath Keepers founder goes to jury

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As angry supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol, ready to smash through windows and beat police officers, Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes extolled them as patriots and harkened back to the battle that kicked off the American Revolutionary War.

"Next comes our 'Lexington,'" Rhodes told his fellow far-right extremists in a message on Jan. 6, 2021. "It's coming."

Jurors will begin weighing his words and actions on Tuesday, after nearly two months of testimony and argument in the criminal trial of Rhodes and four co-defendants. Final defense arguments wrapped up late Monday.

The jury will weigh the charges that the Oath Keepers were not whipped into an impulsive frenzy by Trump on Jan. 6 but came to Washington intent on stopping the transfer of presidential power at all costs.

The riot was the opportunity they had been preparing for, prosecutors say. Rhodes' followers sprang into

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 47 of 68

action, marching to the Capitol, joining the crowd pushing into the building, and attempting to overturn the election that was sending Joe Biden to the White House in place of Trump, authorities allege.

Not true, the Oath Keepers argue. They say there was never any plot, that prosecutors have twisted their admittedly bombastic words and given jurors a misleading timeline of events and messages.

Hundreds of people have been convicted in the attack that left dozens of officers injured, sent lawmakers running for their lives and shook the foundations of American democracy. Now jurors in the case against Rhodes and four associates will decide, for the first time, whether the actions of any Jan. 6 defendants amount to seditious conspiracy — a rarely used charge that carries both significant prison time and political weight.

The jury's verdict may well address the false notion that the 2020 presidential election was stolen, coming soon after 2022 midterm results in which voters rejected Trump's chosen Republican candidates who supported his baseless claims of fraud. The outcome could also shape the future of the Justice Department's massive and costly prosecution of the insurrection that some conservatives have sought to portray as politically motivated.

Failure to secure a seditious conspiracy conviction could spell trouble for another high-profile trial beginning next month of former Proud Boys national chairman Enrique Tarrio and other leaders of that extremist group. The Justice Department's Jan. 6 probe has also expanded beyond those who attacked the Capitol to focus on others linked to Trump's efforts to overturn the election.

In the Oath Keepers trial, prosecutors built their case using dozens of encrypted messages sent in the weeks leading up to Jan. 6. They show Rhodes rallying his followers to fight to defend Trump and warning they might need to "rise up in insurrection."

"We aren't getting through this without a civil war. Prepare your mind body and spirit," he wrote shortly after the 2020 election.

Three defendants, including Rhodes, took the witness stand to testify in their defense — a move generally seen by defense lawyers as a last-resort option because it tends to do more harm than good. On the witness stand, Rhodes, of Granbury, Texas, and his associates — Thomas Caldwell, of Berryville, Virginia, and Jessica Watkins, of Woodstock, Ohio — sought to downplay their actions, but struggled when pressed by prosecutors to explain their violent messages.

The others on trial are Kelly Meggs, of Dunnellon, Florida, and Kenneth Harrelson of Titusville, Florida. Seditious conspiracy carries up to 20 years behind bars, and all five defendants also face other felony charges. They would be the first people convicted of seditious conspiracy at trial since the 1995 prosecution of Islamic militants who plotted to bomb New York City landmarks.

The trial unfolding in Washington's federal court — less than a mile from the Capitol — has provided a window into the ways in which Rhodes mobilized his group and later tried to reach Trump.

But while authorities combed through thousands of messages sent by Rhodes and his co-defendants, none specifically spelled out a plan to attack the Capitol itself. Defense attorneys emphasized that fact throughout the trial in arguing that Oath Keepers who did enter the Capitol were swept up in an spontaneous outpouring of election-fueled rage rather than acting as part of a plot.

Jurors never heard from three other Oath Keepers who have pleaded guilty to seditious conspiracy.

Over two days on the witness stand, a seemingly relaxed Rhodes told jurors there was no Capitol attack plan. He said he didn't have anything to do with the guns some Oath Keepers had stashed at a Virginia hotel that prosecutors say served as the base for "quick reaction force" teams ready to ferry an arsenal of weapons across the Potomac River if necessary. The weapons were never deployed.

Rhodes, a Yale Law School graduate and former Army paratrooper, said his followers were "stupid" for going inside. Rhodes, who was in a hotel room when he found out rioters were storming the Capitol, insisted that the Oath Keepers' only mission for the day was to provide security for Trump ally Roger Stone and other figures at events before the riot.

That message was repeated in court by others, including a man described as the Oath Keepers' "operations leader" on Jan. 6, who told jurors he never heard anyone discussing plans to attack the Capitol.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 48 of 68

A government witness — an Oath Keeper cooperating with prosecutors in hopes of a lighter sentence — testified that there was an “implicit” agreement to stop Congress’ certification, but the decision to enter the building was “spontaneous.”

“We talked about doing something about the fraud in the election before we went there on the 6th,” Graydon Young told jurors. “And then when the crowd got over the barricade and they went into the building, an opportunity presented itself to do something. We didn’t tell each other that.”

Prosecutors say the defense is only trying to muddy the waters in a clear-cut case. The Oath Keepers aren’t accused of entering into an agreement ahead of Jan. 6 to storm the Capitol.

Defense attorneys for Caldwell, Watkins and Harrelson worked on Monday to cast doubt on the timeline presented by prosecutors, saying that communications were hampered by overwhelmed cell towers and that other rioters forced Congress to recess before they arrived.

Prosecutor Jeffrey Nestler, though, said any lag was brief and the Oath Keepers were among the rioters who interrupted congressional proceedings by preventing lawmakers from coming back into session to certify the presidential vote.

Citing the Civil War-era seditious conspiracy statute, prosecutors tried to prove the Oath Keepers conspired to forcibly oppose the authority of the federal government and block the execution of laws governing the transfer of presidential power. Prosecutors must show the defendants agreed to use force — not merely advocated it — to oppose the transfer of presidential power.

After the riot, Rhodes tried to get a message to Trump through an intermediary, imploring the president not to give up his fight to hold onto power. The intermediary — a man who told jurors he had an indirect way to reach the president — recorded his meeting with Rhodes and went to the FBI instead.

Rhodes told the man, speaking of Trump, “If he’s not going to do the right thing and he’s just gonna let himself be removed illegally then we should have brought rifles.” He said, “We should have fixed it right then and there. I’d hang (expletive) Pelosi from the lamppost,” Rhodes said, referring to Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Elon Musk’s Twitter reinstates Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene

By The Associated Press undefined

Elon Musk’s Twitter has reinstated the personal account of far-right Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, which was banned in January for violating the platform’s COVID misinformation policies.

The Georgia Republican’s reinstatement comes after Musk over the weekend reinstated the account of former President Donald Trump, who was banned in the aftermath of the deadly Jan. 6 riots on the Capitol in 2021. Twitter — at the time — feared there was a risk of further incitement to violence if Trump were allowed to remain on the platform. Trump himself has said he won’t return to Twitter and as of Monday had not tweeted since the reinstatement, although he also hasn’t deleted his account.

Musk apparently based his decision to allow Trump back on the site on an unscientific Twitter poll he posted on his timeline. There appeared to be no such poll for Greene’s account.

Earlier, Musk said he would not make major decisions about content or restoring banned accounts before setting up a “content moderation council” with diverse viewpoints. Neither Twitter nor Musk have announced the existence of such a council. Twitter did not respond to a message for comment on Monday.

Musk has frequently expressed his belief that Twitter had become too restrictive. Before the U.S. midterm elections this month, he urged his “independent-minded” Twitter followers to vote Republican.

One account Musk has said he won’t allow back on Twitter is that of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who was banned in 2018 for abusive behavior.

“My firstborn child died in my arms. I felt his last heartbeat,” Musk tweeted Sunday in response to calls for Jones’ reinstatement. “I have no mercy for anyone who would use the deaths of children for gain, politics or fame.”

Jones was sued by victims’ families for promoting false conspiracy theories about the Sandy Hook school massacre. Judgements against him have totaled \$1.44 billion.

Iger back on top in a Disney plot twist that few saw coming

BURBANK, Calif. (AP) — Bob Iger, the enterprising entertainment executive who brought Star Wars, Pixar and Marvel under the Disney marquee and challenged the streaming dominance of Netflix, will replace his handpicked successor, CEO Bob Chapek, whose two-year tenure has been marked by clashes, missteps and a weakening financial performance.

The stunning development comes two weeks after Disney's quarterly financial performance fell well short of Wall Street expectations on both profit and revenue, a rarity, sending shares tumbling 12%.

The company's stock jumped more than 6% Monday, with the appointment of Iger effective immediately. The stock is still down 37% this year.

"It is with an incredible sense of gratitude and humility — and, I must admit, a bit of amazement — that I write to you this evening with the news that I am returning to The Walt Disney Company as Chief Executive Officer," Iger, 71, wrote in an email to employees.

The tumult atop Disney came quickly with reports that Iger was first approached by board members about a possible return Friday.

Iger separated completely with Disney near the end of last year after remaining onboard for two years as executive chairman, helping to guide Chapek and to guarantee a smooth transition.

That transition was anything but smooth and on Sunday, Iger agreed to a two year contract to redirect Disney's trajectory and to help find a new chief executive.

Iger was Disney's public face for 15 years as chief executive before handing the job off to Chapek in 2020, a stretch in which he compiled a string of victories lauded in the entertainment industry and by Disney fans.

Chapek oversaw Disney during one of the most challenging periods in company history that began with a pandemic and ended, at least under Chapek's rule, with spiraling inflation.

But his time as chief executive was also marked by what many saw as unforced errors for a company that, under Iger, appeared could do no wrong.

The company based in Burbank, California, became embroiled in a public fight with Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida — where Disney runs the giant Walt Disney World theme park resort — enacted a measure that forbids instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in elementary schools up to third grade, a rule critics dubbed the "don't say gay" law.

Chapek remained silent publicly at first, and that ignited an employee revolt. When Chapek then denounced the measure, it kicked off a political backlash with conservative lawmakers and media outlets pushing boycotts and labeling Disney as too "woke."

Months later Chapek fired Peter Rice, the chairman of Disney General Entertainment Television, among the most highly regarded television executives in the industry. The firing stunned Hollywood and fueled new criticism from investors over Chapek's leadership.

It was highly unusual for conflicts at Disney to spill into the public sphere but rightly or wrongly, it seemed to be a trait under Chapek.

A fight with one of Hollywood's top stars went public last year after Scarlett Johansson sued Disney over her pay for "Black Widow." Johansson's potential earnings were tied to the box office performance of the 2021 Marvel film, which the company released simultaneously in theaters and on its streaming service Disney+ for a \$30 rental.

Over the last several weeks, more doubts were raised over Chapek's plans to cut costs, including reports of plans for major layoffs, while Disney devotees chafed under price hikes at Disney parks.

"The Board has concluded that as Disney embarks on an increasingly complex period of industry transformation, Bob Iger is uniquely situated to lead the company through this pivotal period," Susan Arnold, Disney's chairman, said in a prepared statement.

Arnold thanked Chapek for leading the company through the pandemic.

Wall Street applauded Iger's return.

"We believe there is little doubt that investors will applaud this move," wrote Citi analyst Jason Bazinet.

"The Street likes Mr. Iger almost as much as we do. We view his return as an unalloyed positive."

Disney said in a filing with regulators Monday that Iger will earn a base salary of \$1 million, be eligible for a performance bonus, and get a package of long-term incentives with a target value of \$25 million for each year of his contract.

New York issues first licenses for legal pot dispensaries

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York issued its first 36 cannabis dispensary licenses on Monday, taking a monumental step in establishing a legal — and lucrative — marketplace for recreational marijuana.

The licenses approved by the state's Cannabis Control Board were the first of 175 the state plans to issue, with many in the first round reserved for applicants with past convictions for marijuana offenses.

Eight nonprofit groups were among the 36 licensees granted Monday.

Some of the dispensaries, selected from a pool of more than 900 applicants, are expected to open by the end of the year.

New York has also planned a \$200 million public-private fund to aid "social equity" applicants to help redress the ravages of the war on drugs, especially in communities of color.

"This is a monumental moment and it represents the last leg of the cannabis supply chain that requires licensure," said Tremaine Wright, who chairs the Cannabis Control Board.

"Not long ago, the idea of New York legalizing cannabis seemed unbelievable. Now, not only have we legalized it, but we're also building a legal adult-use market with an equity driven approach that embodies the ambitious goals" of the state's marijuana law.

A court ruling earlier this month has delayed the board from approving dispensaries in some parts of the state amid a legal dispute over licensing criteria. Nevertheless, officials said they would issue the remaining licenses as quickly as possible.

Angel Turusetta and Emely Chavez, who operate Royal Leaf NY in the Bronx, were among those snagging one of the first licenses.

"I'm still trying to comprehend it," said Turusetta, who expressed surprise when contacted just after the board's meeting.

Another new licensee, Suzanne Furboter of Queens, fumbled for words, too. "It is very exciting, and we feel grateful," she said.

Housing Works, a New York City nonprofit, said the license it received Monday would allow it to continue its work helping low-income New Yorkers living with HIV or AIDS.

"It was clear to us that sales from the legal recreational cannabis industry would allow us to help more people and increase services to our clients whether that is supporting those that have been unjustly incarcerated in the War on Drugs, or people experiencing homelessness and/or living with HIV/AIDS," the agency said in a statement,

With the first licenses now issued, it remains to be seen whether officials will step up their efforts to go after scores of unauthorized dispensaries opened in the past year by people who shrugged at licensing requirements.

New York legalized recreational use of marijuana in March 2021 but is still in the process of licensing people to sell it.

The cannabis board also advanced proposed regulations for the sale of marijuana, with a focus on public health, product quality and safety and preventing those under 21 from buying cannabis.

While some rejoiced over Monday's development, others took a more cautious view.

"We're a little concerned about whether these license holders are being set up for failure," said Reginald Fluellen, a spokesman for the Cannabis Social Equity Coalition.

He contends that more attention needs to focus on the quality and safety of the products that will be put on shelves at these legal dispensaries, as well as making available more resources to help train entrepreneurs and their workers.

Just as concerning, Fluellen said, is whether these new legal recreational dispensaries will be able to compete with existing medical marijuana outlets if allowed to enter the recreational market at the same time as new licensees. But according to the draft regulations released Sunday, medical outlets may have to wait another three years before they can enter the recreational market.

The New York Medical Cannabis Industry Association applauded the cannabis board's move to issue licenses but said the accompanying draft regulations approved for public comment "present a number of serious concerns." Among them, the group said, was "the restrictive nature of the state's medical program."

Dan Livingston, the executive director of the Cannabis Association of New York hailed the long-awaited issuance of the first licenses as "tremendous progress" in establishing a sustainable cannabis industry in the state, adding that "New York's cannabis farmers and processors can finally start preparing products for sale at these soon-to-be-established stores."

"It's exciting to see a full supply chain established and we're looking forward to kicking off legal sales soon," he said.

Ukraine to civilians: Leave liberated areas before winter

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian authorities have begun evacuating civilians from recently liberated sections of the Kherson and Mykolaiv regions, fearing that a lack of heat, power and water due to Russian shelling will make living conditions too difficult this winter. The World Health Organization concurred, warning that millions face a "life-threatening" winter in Ukraine.

Authorities urged residents of the two southern regions, which Russian forces have been shelling for months, to move to safer areas in the central and western parts of the country. Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said Monday that the government will provide transportation, accommodations and medical care for them, with priority for women with children, the sick and elderly.

Vereshchuk last month asked citizens now living abroad not to return to Ukraine for the winter to conserve power. Other officials have suggested that residents in Kyiv or elsewhere who have the resources to leave Ukraine for a few months should do so, to save power for hospitals and other key facilities.

The WHO delivered a chilling warning Monday about the energy crisis' human impact on Ukraine.

"This winter will be life-threatening for millions of people in Ukraine," said the WHO's regional director for Europe, Dr. Hans Henri P. Kluge. "Attacks on health and energy infrastructure mean hundreds of hospitals and healthcare facilities are no longer fully operational, lacking fuel, water and electricity."

He warned of health risks such as respiratory and cardiovascular problems from people trying to warm themselves by burning charcoal or wood and using diesel generators and electric heaters.

The evacuations are taking place more than a week after Ukraine recaptured the city of Kherson, on the western bank of the Dnieper River, and surrounding areas in a major battlefield gain. Since then, heading into the winter, residents and authorities alike are realizing how much power and other infrastructure the Russians damaged or destroyed before retreating.

Ukraine is known for its brutal winter weather, and snow has already covered Kyiv, the capital, and other parts of the country.

Russian forces are fortifying their defense lines along Dnieper River's eastern bank, fearing that Ukrainian forces will push deeper into the region. In the weeks before Ukraine's successful counteroffensive, Russian-installed authorities relocated tens of thousands of Kherson city residents to Russian-held areas.

On Monday, Russian-installed authorities urged other residents to evacuate an area on the river's eastern bank that Moscow now controls, citing intense fighting in Kherson's Kakhovskiy district.

Russia has been pounding Ukraine's power grid and other infrastructure from the air for weeks, causing widespread blackouts and leaving millions of Ukrainians without electricity, heat and water.

To cope, four-hour or longer power outages were scheduled Monday in 15 of Ukraine's 27 regions, according to Volodymyr Kudrytsky, head of Ukraine's state grid operator Ukrenergo. Ukrenergo plans more outages Tuesday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says Russian missile strikes have damaged

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 52 of 68

more than 50% of the country's energy facilities.

Zelenskyy on Monday repeated his calls for NATO nations and other allies to recognize Russia as a terrorist state, saying its shelling of energy facilities was tantamount "to the use of a weapon of mass destruction." Zelenskyy also again urged stricter sanctions against Russia and appealed for more air defense aid.

"The terrorist state needs to see that they do not stand a chance," he told NATO's 68th Parliamentary Assembly meeting in Madrid in a video address, after which he said the body approved the terrorist designation.

Also Monday, Zelenskyy and his wife made a rare joint public appearance to observe a moment of silence and place candles at a Kyiv memorial for those killed in Ukraine's pro-European Union mass protests in 2014. As bells rang in a memorial tribute, Ukraine's first couple walked under a gray sky on streets dusted with snow and ice up to a wall of stone plaques bearing the names of fallen protesters.

Their visit coincided with fresh reminders Monday of more death and destruction on Ukrainian soil.

At least four civilians were killed and eight more wounded in Ukraine over the past 24 hours, the deputy head of the country's presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, said Monday.

A Russian missile strike in the northeast Kharkiv region on Sunday night killed one person and wounded two as it hit a residential building in the village of Shevchenkove, according to the region's governor.

One person was wounded in the Dnipropetrovsk region, where Russian forces shelled the city of Nikopol and surrounding areas, Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko said. Nikopol lies across the river from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant.

In the eastern Donetsk region, which Moscow partially controls, Russian forces shelled 14 towns and villages, the region's Ukrainian governor said.

Heavy fighting was taking place near the Ukrainian-held city of Bakhmut, where a school was damaged. In Makiivka, which is under Russian control, an oil depot was hit and caught fire.

Russian-installed authorities said more than 105,000 people in the province's capital, Donetsk, were left without electricity on Monday after Ukrainian shelling damaged power lines. One person was killed, officials said, and 59 miners were trapped underground after power was cut to four coal mines.

In the neighboring Luhansk region, most of which is under Russian control, the Ukrainian army is advancing towards the key cities of Kreminna and Svatove, where the Russians have set up a defense line, according to Luhansk's Ukrainian Gov. Serhiy Haidai.

"There are successes and the Ukrainian army is moving very slowly, but it will be much more difficult for Russians to defend themselves after Svatove and Kreminna (are retaken)," Haidai told Ukrainian television.

Britain's Defense Ministry said retaining control of Svatove should be a political priority for Russia but that "both Russian defensive and offensive capability continues to be hampered by severe shortages of munitions and skilled personnel."

In another development, the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency said its inspectors on Monday reported that weekend shelling of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, had not damaged key equipment and they had identified no nuclear safety concerns.

The six reactors, which are all shut down, are stable, and the integrity of spent and fresh fuel, along with stored radioactive waste, was confirmed, the IAEA said, adding that staff are repairing damage to other equipment.

As they have for months, Kyiv and Moscow blamed each other for the shelling of the Russian-occupied power station, and again the IAEA didn't comment on who was responsible.

FIFA threat makes World Cup teams nix 'One Love' armbands

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — FIFA's threat of on-field punishment for players pushed World Cup teams to back down Monday and abandon a plan for their captains to wear armbands that were seen as a rebuke to host nation Qatar's human rights record.

Just hours before the first players with the armbands in support of the "One Love" campaign were to

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 53 of 68

take the field, soccer's governing body warned they would immediately be shown yellow cards — two of which lead to a player's expulsion from that game and also the next.

That changed the calculus for the seven European teams, which may have expected merely to be fined. The displays are a violation of FIFA rules.

No player had the "One Love" armbands Monday, although England's Harry Kane wore the FIFA-approved "No Discrimination" armband that was offered as a compromise in the match with Iran.

It was the latest dispute that threatened to overshadow play on the field. Since being awarded the World Cup hosting rights in 2010, conservative Muslim Qatar has faced a raft of criticism, including its treatment of low-paid migrant workers and women and its suppression of free speech. It came under particular fire for its criminalization of homosexuality.

The decision came three days after beer sales at stadiums were suddenly banned under pressure from the Qatari government and two days after FIFA president Gianni Infantino delivered an extraordinary tirade defending the host nation's human rights record.

The captains of seven European nations had vowed to wear armbands carrying the heart-shaped, multicolored logo of the "One Love" campaign, which promotes inclusion and diversity in soccer and society. That set up the prospect of worldwide viewers seeing a symbol of disapproval with the host country and defiance of FIFA on the arms of Kane, the Netherlands' Virgil van Dijk and Wales' Gareth Bale on Monday.

But in the end, the teams said they couldn't sacrifice success on the field.

"As national federations, we can't put our players in a position where they could face sporting sanctions, including bookings," the seven soccer federations said in a joint statement, referring to the yellow cards.

The captains of Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Denmark had also pledged to wear the armbands in the coming days.

"Our No. 1 priority at the World Cup is to win the games," the Dutch soccer federation said in a separate statement. "Then you don't want the captain to start the match with a yellow card."

The risk of getting a second yellow, which would see a player sent off the field for the rest of the game and banned from the next, is particularly tricky in a tournament where teams play only three games before the knockout rounds begin.

"One thing is clear: We are not going to wear the armband if we are going to get a yellow card," said Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal. "And I think that we need to question whether this is a correct act on the part of FIFA. I think you can give the answer to that question."

National soccer federations and fan associations lashed out at FIFA for its decision to penalize the players. Danish soccer federation CEO Jakob Jensen told Danish broadcaster TV2 that the organization was "extremely disappointed with FIFA," and German soccer federation president Bernd Neuendorf called it "another low blow."

"FIFA today prohibited a statement for diversity and human rights — those are values to which it is committed in its own statutes," Neuendorf told reporters in Qatar. "From our point of view, this is more than frustrating and, I think, an unprecedented action in World Cup history."

The global players' union FIFPRO called the FIFA move "disappointing."

"Players must have a right to express their support for human rights on and off the field of play and we will support any of them who will use their own platforms to do so," the union said. "We maintain that a rainbow flag is not a political statement but an endorsement of equality and thus a universal human right."

England's Football Supporters Association said it felt betrayed by FIFA.

"Today we feel contempt for an organization that has shown its true values by giving the yellow card to players and the red card to tolerance," the FSA said.

The Belgium federation expressed frustration that FIFA didn't act sooner to resolve an issue that began two months ago, only to come to a head on the morning of matches for three teams. The Europeans "tried several times to avoid escalating this initiative ... but we have had no response," the Belgian federation said.

Manon Aubry of France, the president of the Left group at the European Parliament, wore the rainbow armband Monday during a debate on human rights in the context of the World Cup.

"Shame on those who did not allow armbands — 'One Love' armbands — to support the LGBTQI. I'm

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 54 of 68

proud to wear that armband here," said Aubry, who was reprimanded for wearing it inside the Parliament, where such displays are not allowed during plenary sessions.

Gurchaten Sandhu, of the Geneva-based International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, said FIFA put "athletes in a very, very awkward" position.

"You've bound the hands of the national teams. They're there to compete," he said.

He also criticized Infantino's speech Saturday in which the soccer chief defended Qatar and lectured Europeans who have criticized the emirate's human rights record. In that speech, Infantino said: "Today I feel Qatari. Today I feel Arab. Today I feel African. Today I feel gay. Today I feel disabled. Today I feel a migrant worker."

Sandhu took issue with Infantino's choice of words, saying: "You don't feel gay. You are gay."

It wasn't immediately clear what, if any, influence Qatar's autocratic government had on the armband decision. The government and its Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, which oversees the World Cup, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The European plans were in breach of World Cup regulations and FIFA's general rules on team equipment at its games.

"For FIFA final competitions, the captain of each team must wear the captain's armband provided by FIFA," its equipment regulations state.

The soccer body's proposal, announced Saturday, was for captains to wear armbands with socially aware, though generic, slogans. In that offer, armbands reading "No Discrimination" — the only one of its chosen slogan aligned with the European teams' wish — would appear only at the quarterfinal stage.

On Monday, it offered the compromise that captains of all 32 teams "will have the opportunity" to wear an armband with the slogan "No Discrimination" in the group games.

Brazil's players were not planning any type of protest but striker Richarlison said he would "support anything that other players or national teams were doing."

"We live in a dangerous world where you are not allowed to have an opinion," he said at Brazil's training camp. "I support any cause out there."

Alabama pausing executions after 3rd failed lethal injection

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey sought a pause in executions and ordered a "top-to-bottom" review of the state's capital punishment system Monday after an unprecedented third failed lethal injection.

Ivey's office issued a statement saying she had both asked Attorney General Steve Marshall to withdraw motions seeking execution dates for two inmates and requested that the Department of Corrections undertake a full review of the state's execution process.

Ivey also requested that Marshall not seek additional execution dates for any other death row inmates until the review is complete.

The move followed the uncompleted execution Thursday of Kenneth Eugene Smith, which was the state's second such instance of being unable to put an inmate to death 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.

Denying that prison officials or law enforcement are to blame for the problems, Ivey said "legal tactics and criminals hijacking the system are at play here."

"For the sake of the victims and their families, we've got to get this right," she said.

Corrections Commissioner John Hamm said the department is fully committed to the review and is "confident that we can get this done right."

"Everything is on the table — from our legal strategy in dealing with last minute appeals, to how we train and prepare, to the order and timing of events on execution day, to the personnel and equipment involved," Hamm said in a statement issued through the governor's office.

Marshall, the state's top prosecutor, didn't immediately say whether he would agree to Ivey's request.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 55 of 68

The attorney general "read the governor's and commissioner's comments with interest" and "will have more to say on this at a later date," said spokesman Mike Lewis.

Alabama Arise, a nonprofit that advocates on behalf of the poor, said Marshall should agree to a moratorium and urged legislators to "do their part to reduce the unfairness of Alabama's death penalty system."

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.

The executive director of the organization, Robert Dunham, said Ivey was right to seek an investigation and a pause, but any review of the system needs to be done by someone other than the state's prison system. While Ivey blamed defense efforts for execution failures, Dunham said her "willful blindness" to the prison system's woes were part of the problem.

"The Alabama Department of Corrections has a history of denying and bending the truth about its execution failures, and it cannot be trusted to meaningfully investigate its own incompetence and wrongdoing," he said.

Earlier this year, after Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee halted a lethal injection in April because he learned the drugs hadn't been tested as required, he ordered an independent investigation and paused all executions through the end of the year.

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

In September, the state called off the scheduled execution of Alan Eugene 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.

Ivey asked the state to withdraw motions seeking execution dates for Miller and James Edward Barber, the only two death row inmates with such requests before the Alabama Supreme Court.

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.

Alabama should have imposed an execution moratorium after Hamm's failed execution for the benefit of everyone, said Bernard Harcourt, an attorney who represented Hamm for years.

"As a political matter, Gov. Ivey mentions only the victims, but these botched executions have been ordeals for the men on the gurney, their families, friends, ministers, and attorneys, and all the men and women working at the prison and involved in these botched attempts. The trauma of these executions extend widely to everyone that they touch," Harcourt said.

Activists: Iranian forces unleash heavy fire on protesters

By The Associated Press undefined

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranian security forces used heavy gunfire against protesters in a Kurdish town in the country's west on Monday, killing at least five during an anti-government protest that erupted at the funeral of two people killed the day before, activists said.

Videos circulating online show dozens of protesters taking shelter in alleyways as heavy gunfire echoes through the streets. Some show individuals lying motionless and bloodied in the streets, while others show residents gathering at a local hospital to donate blood.

Iran has been convulsed by anti-government protests since the Sept. 16 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, a Kurdish woman who died in the custody of the country's morality police in the capital, Tehran. The protests, which were initially concentrated in the western, Kurdish region of Iran where Amini was from, have spread across the country and escalated into calls for the overthrow of Iran's ruling clerics.

Hengaw, a Kurdish human rights group, said Iranian security forces unleashed heavy gunfire on protest-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 56 of 68

ers in the town of Javanrud, where a funeral was held for two protesters killed the day before. It cited witnesses as saying that Iranian forces used heavy machine guns.

Hengaw said seven people were killed on Monday, while another group, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network, put the toll at five. The latter group said many of the wounded were being treated in homes because of fears they could be arrested from hospitals, making it difficult to confirm the toll. It said several were shot in the head or chest.

Iranian authorities heavily restrict media coverage of the protests and have periodically shut off internet access, making it difficult to confirm details of the unrest.

The semiofficial Fars news agency reported protests in Javanrud on Sunday night, saying security forces were fired upon with live ammunition. It said two people were killed and four wounded.

Later on Monday, state TV interviewed a local security official, Mohammad Pourhashemi, who blamed the shooting in Javanrud on local gunmen who he said had exchanged fire with security forces. The report did not provide further details.

Funerals have often been the scene of renewed protests in recent weeks, as they were during the 1979 Islamic Revolution that brought the clerics to power. The latest demonstrations mark the biggest challenge to the theocracy in over a decade.

At least 426 people have been killed and more than 17,400 arrested, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group monitoring the unrest. It says at least 55 members of the security forces have been killed.

Jalal Mahmoudzadeh, a lawmaker representing the Kurdish city of Mahabad, told the Etemad daily that 11 people have been killed during protests in the city since late October, many of them in recent days. He said some members of the security forces fired upon homes and businesses on Saturday, and he called on authorities to adopt a softer touch.

The unrest cast a shadow over the World Cup on Monday, where the Iranian national team faced off against England. Iran's players did not sing along to their national anthem, and some fans chanted Amini's name at the 22nd minute of the match.

The violence has also spilled across the border into neighboring Iraq's northern Kurdish region. Iran has blamed the unrest at home in part on Kurdish groups based in Iraq, and has targeted them with missile and drone attacks.

Iran said Monday that its latest strikes were necessary to protect the country's borders, while Kurdish officials condemned the attacks as unprovoked aggression. Iraq's central government, which is dominated by parties close to Iran, also condemned the strikes.

A strike late Sunday killed a member of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, said Mohammed Nazif Qaderi, a senior official in the Kurdish Iranian group living in exile in Iraq.

The group said Iranian surface-to-surface missiles and drones hit its bases and adjacent refugee camps in Koya and Jejnikan. The group also asserted that the strikes had hit a hospital in Koya.

The Iranian strikes come in the wake of a visit to Baghdad last week by Esmail Ghaani, the commander of Iran's elite Quds Force. During the visit, Ghaani threatened Iraq with a ground military operation in the country's north if the Iraqi army does not fortify the border.

Some Kurdish groups have been engaged in a low-intensity conflict with Tehran since the 1979 revolution. Iran accuses them of inciting protests in Iran and smuggling weapons into the country, allegations the Kurdish groups have denied. Iran has not provided evidence to back up the claims.

On Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani told reporters that Iran had acted to "protect its borders and security of its citizens based on its legal rights." He alleged that the government in Baghdad and the Irbil-based administration of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region had failed to implement purported commitments to prevent threats against Iran from Iraqi areas.

The government of the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq condemned the strikes as a "gross infringement of international law and neighborly relations."

Qaderi told The Associated Press the Kurdish opposition groups in Iraq support the protests in Iran, which he described as a reaction to "the policies of this regime" he said oppresses its people. He denied

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 57 of 68

that his group has sent fighters or weapons to Iran.

He said that his group had moved fighters away from the border to avoid giving Iran an "excuse" for further attacks. He called on the international community to prevent further aggression by Iran.

The United States condemned the latest Iranian strikes. "Such indiscriminate and illegal attacks place civilians at risk, violate Iraqi sovereignty, and jeopardize the hard-fought security and stability of Iraq and the Middle East," Gen. Michael E. Kurilla, who heads U.S. Central Command, said in a statement.

Sunday's Iranian strikes in northern Iraq come a day after Turkey launched deadly airstrikes over northern regions of Syria and Iraq, targeting Kurdish groups that Ankara holds responsible for last week's bomb attack in Istanbul.

On Monday, Turkish officials said suspected Kurdish militants in Syria fired rockets into the border town of Karkamis in Turkey, killing two people, including a teacher and a 5-year-old boy.

Amid Musk Twitter chaos, athletes & celebs cope just like us

By HOWARD FENDRICH and KRISTIN M. HALL Associated Press

No, LeBron James does not want to be traded — that was put into the world by a fake Twitter feed purporting to belong to the Los Angeles Lakers superstar when a pay-\$8-and-pretend-to-be-anyone verification system made a brief appearance.

And no, actor Edward Norton is not all that worried about the possible demise of the social media site under Elon Musk's leadership.

"If a lot of that stuff went away," Norton said, "I think we'd be the better for it."

In a similar vein, Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, a four-time NFL MVP with 4.5 million followers, said: "I look forward to the day I have no social media, which may be coming sooner rather than later."

Yes, athletes and celebrities from the entertainment world are just like us: They're monitoring the chaos and uncertainty surrounding Twitter since its new owner came aboard. They're not necessarily sure how to proceed — and not necessarily sure the microblogging bird app's disappearance would be the sky-is-falling disaster some are making it out to be.

"I just look at it like, you know, Twitter is, was and will always be a dumpster fire," said actor Ryan Reynolds, surely echoing the sentiments of many, famous or otherwise.

"But who knows? We've got to play it by ear. I mean, we'll see where it all goes," said Reynolds, who has 20 million followers. "I was around when MySpace and Friendster were a thing and ... it feels like Twitter and TikTok are everything right now. But these things, they all come and go, like anything in life."

Launched in 2006, Twitter created a space where the well-known could circumvent traditional media and communicate directly with fans to push messages or products while, in turn, increasing the site's popularity among the hoi polloi. There are now more than 230 million users.

Questions about Twitter's future arose the moment Musk completed his \$44 billion takeover in late October. He got rid of half of the full-time staff, prompted hundreds of engineers and others to quit last week and now is expected to eliminate jobs related to content moderation.

Concerns about fraudulent accounts and misinformation (which Musk himself has spread) are not new. But they're amplified lately.

"It's scary right now," said Indiana Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton, who has more than 85,000 followers. He said he gets "the majority of my news" via Twitter and uses it to connect with friends, interact with fans and promote companies.

He likened the current state of the site to "Wikipedia when I was growing up: You always have to fact-check, because it wasn't always correct."

Timelines have been littered with posts telling people to find accounts on Instagram or Mastodon or whatever other spot might become a go-to if — when? — Twitter isn't an option.

"If you want to get your voice out there, there's other ways," said Charles Leno Jr., a Washington Commanders offensive lineman with more than 25,000 followers. "This may sound bad, because I feel every-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 58 of 68

body should have a voice, but it's not true in terms of Twitter: It's given voice to the voiceless — people who shouldn't say anything. You don't need to be talking about somebody else's job, their relationship, their business. Support them or just shut up. There are positives about Twitter; we just need more focus on that aspect, so it can be a more engaging place."

Seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton, whose followers number nearly 8 million, sees both sides, too. He explained how the app can "pollute your mind" but also praised it as "a really powerful tool to connect with people."

Ian Poulter, a pro golfer with 2.2 million followers, would love to see Twitter evolve into "a forum to have open discussion without there being some form of bullying and bad-mouthing and bots."

Indeed, the toxicity is inescapable for — though certainly not limited to — many public figures.

"It's a lot. I'm not really sure what you can do," said Jessica Pegula, a pro tennis player ranked No. 3 in the world. "If you're going to be on social media, you have to deal with it to some extent."

Some in entertainment bid adieu.

Shonda Rhimes, creator of TV hits "Grey's Anatomy," "Scandal" and "How to Get Away With Murder," actor Jesse Tyler Ferguson of "Modern Family" fame and singer Sara Bareilles are just a few of the folks who said they're done with Twitter — and did so, of course, via Twitter.

Those who advise entertainers and athletes — and, in some cases, tweet for them — don't know how to proceed, even though they've long had a direct line to Twitter employees to resolve issues.

"Everybody who's a Twitter user is doing their best to ride the wave," said George Atallah, assistant executive director for external affairs at the NFL Players' Association, one of several sports unions in touch with each other about this. "Everybody — agents, governing bodies, athletes, marketing reps, unions — is all in the same boat, adjusting based on the whims of the new owner."

Jennie Smythe, founder of Girlilla Marketing, a digital marketing firm in Nashville, Tennessee, said changes to the verification process caused problems for entertainment clients, including country star Darius Rucker, who abruptly lost his blue check without warning. She said many of her clients, including musicians, actors and non-profits, are constantly dealing with imposters.

"It is not a vanity play," Smythe said. "It is more as a protection measure for followers."

Drew Rosenhaus, an agent whose firm represents about 100 active NFL players, said he longs for the days "when you could just look at the blue mark and know it was real."

"We're living in a new world on Twitter. It's going to require a little more due diligence," Rosenhaus said, adding that he doesn't expect "a mass exodus" of his clients from the app, because "there's a lot of value from it."

Benito Perez-Barbadillo, a publicist whose clients include Rafael Nadal, likes that the 22-time Grand Slam champion easily can reach his 15 million followers — for now.

"We have our verified account. If that's taken away from us, we might consider not using Twitter anymore. I don't know," Perez-Barbadillo said. "If we're not going to be official anymore, we might just say, 'Well, goodbye, Twitter.'"

Indonesian quake kills at least 162 and injures hundreds

By FIRMAN TAUFIQ and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

CIANJUR, Indonesia (AP) — A powerful earthquake killed at least 162 people and injured hundreds on Indonesia's main island on Monday. Terrified residents fled into the street, some covered in blood and debris.

Many of the dead were public-school students who had finished their classes for the day and were taking extra lessons at Islamic schools when they collapsed, West Java Governor Ridwan Kamil said as he announced the latest death toll in the remote, rural area.

Hospitals were overwhelmed by injured people, and the toll was expected to rise further. No estimates were immediately available because of the area's far-flung, rural population, but many structures collapsed, and residents and emergency workers braced for grim news.

"Buildings were completely flattened," said Dwi Sarmadi, who works for an Islamic educational founda-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 59 of 68

tion in a neighboring district.

Roughly 175,000 people live in the town of Cianjur, part of a mountainous district of the same name with more than 2.5 million people. Known for their piety, the people of Cianjur live mostly in towns of one- and two-story buildings and in smaller homes in the surrounding countryside.

Kamil said that more than 13,000 people whose homes were heavily damaged were taken to evacuation centers.

Emergency workers treated the injured on stretchers and blankets outside hospitals, on terraces and in parking lots in the Cianjur region, about three hours drive from the capital, Java. The injured, including children, were given oxygen masks and IV lines. Some were resuscitated.

Hundreds of people gathered outside the Cianjur regional hospital building, waiting for treatment

"I was working inside my office building. The building was not damaged, but as the quake shook very strongly, many things fell. My leg was hit by heavy stuff," Sarmadi said.

Sarmadi was waiting near a tent outside the hospital after some overwhelmed clinics were unable to see him. Many people were coming in worse shape.

"I really hope they can handle me soon," he said.

Hasan, a construction worker who, like many Indonesians, uses one name, is also one of the survivors that is being taken to the hospital.

"I fainted. It was very strong," said Hasan.

"I saw my friends running to escape from the building. But it was too late to get out and I was hit by the wall."

Residents, some crying and holding their children, fled damaged homes after the magnitude 5.6 quake shook the region in West Java province in the late afternoon, at a depth of 10 kilometers (6.2 miles). It also caused panic in the greater Jakarta area, where high-rises swayed and some people evacuated.

In many homes in Cianjur, chunks of concrete and roof tiles fell inside bedrooms.

Shopkeeper Dewi Risma was working with customers when the quake hit, and she ran for the exit.

"The vehicles on the road stopped because the quake was very strong," she said. "I felt it shook three times, but the first one was the strongest one for around 10 seconds. The roof of the shop next to the store I work in had collapsed, and people said two had been hit."

Twenty-five people were still stuck buried in the debris in Cijedil village, National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Abdul Muhari said earlier in the day.

Several landslides closed roads around the Cianjur district. Among the dozens of buildings that were damaged was a hospital, the agency said. Power outages were reported.

Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency recorded at least 25 aftershocks.

"The quake felt so strong. My colleagues and I decided to get out of our office on the ninth floor using the emergency stairs," said Vidi Primadhania, a worker in the capital, where many residents ran into the streets and others hid under desks.

The country of more than 270 million people is frequently struck by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis because of its location on the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

In February, a magnitude 6.2 earthquake killed at least 25 people and injured more than 460 in West Sumatra province. In January 2021, a magnitude 6.2 earthquake killed more than 100 people and injured nearly 6,500 in West Sulawesi province.

A powerful Indian Ocean quake and tsunami in 2004 killed nearly 230,000 people in a dozen countries, most of them in Indonesia.

GOP's lackluster fundraising spurs post-election infighting

By BRIAN SLODYSKO and AARON KESSLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trailing badly in his Arizona Senate race as votes poured in, Republican Blake Masters went on Tucker Carlson's Fox News program and assigned blame to one person: Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 60 of 68

"You know what else is incompetent, Tucker? The establishment. The people who control the purse strings," Masters said before accusing the long-serving GOP leader and the super PAC aligned with him of not spending enough on TV advertising. "Had he chosen to spend money in Arizona, this race would be over. We'd be celebrating a Senate majority right now."

Masters not only lost his race against Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly, but he also trailed every other Republican running for statewide office in Arizona. There's another problem Masters didn't acknowledge: He failed to raise significant money on his own.

He was hardly alone.

As both parties sift through the results of Democrats' stronger-than-expected showing in the midterm elections, Republicans are engaged in a round of finger-pointing, including a failed attempt by Florida Sen. Rick Scott, who led the Senate GOP's campaign arm, to challenge McConnell for his leadership post.

But the recriminations obscure a much deeper dilemma for the party. Many of their nominees — a significant number of whom were first-time candidates who adopted far-right positions — failed to raise the money needed to mount competitive campaigns. That forced party leaders, particularly in the Senate, to make hard choices and triage resources to races where they thought they had the best chance at winning, often paying exorbitant rates to TV stations that, by law, would have been required to sell the same advertising time to candidates for far less.

The lackluster fundraising allowed Democrats to get their message out to voters early and unchallenged, while GOP contenders lacked the resources to do the same.

"This has become an existential and systemic problem for our party, and it's something that needs to get addressed if we hope to be competitive," said Steven Law, a former McConnell chief of staff who now leads Senate Leadership Fund, a super PAC that spent at least \$232 million on advertising to elect Republicans to the Senate this year.

"Our (donors) have grown increasingly alarmed that they are being put in the position of subsidizing weak fundraising performances by candidates in critical races. And something has got to give. It's just not sustainable," Law said.

In key Senate and House battlegrounds, Democratic candidates outraised their Republican counterparts by a factor of nearly 2-to-1, according to an Associated Press analysis of campaign finance data.

Consider the handful of races that helped Democrats retain their Senate majority.

In Arizona, Masters was outraised nearly 8-to-1 by Kelly, who poured at least \$32 million into TV advertising from August until Election Day, records show. Masters spent a little over \$3 million on advertising during the same period after Senate Leadership Fund pulled out of the race.

Meanwhile, in Nevada, Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto raised \$52.8 million compared to Republican Adam Laxalt's \$15.5 million. And in Pennsylvania, Democratic Sen.-elect John Fetterman took in \$16 million more than his GOP opponent, Dr. Mehmet Oz. That's despite the celebrity TV doctor lending \$22 million to his campaign, records show.

Similar disparities emerged in crucial House races, including in Nevada, Pennsylvania and Virginia, helping limit House Republicans to a surprisingly narrow majority.

When it came to purchasing TV ad time, Democrats' fundraising advantage yielded considerable upside. Ad sellers are required by law to offer candidates the cheapest rate. That same advantage doesn't apply to super PACs, which Republican candidates relied on to close their fundraising gap — often at a premium.

In Las Vegas, for example, a candidate could buy a unit of TV advertising for \$598, according to advertising figures provided to the AP. That same segment cost a super PAC \$4,500. In North Carolina's Raleigh-Durham media market, a \$342 spot cost a super PAC \$1,270. And a \$580 candidate segment in the Philadelphia area cost a super PAC nearly \$2,000, the advertising figures show.

Republicans also found themselves playing defense in states that weren't ultimately competitive.

JD Vance, who won his Ohio Senate race by more than 6 percentage points, was outraised nearly 4-to-1 by Democratic Rep. Tim Ryan. To shore him up, Senate Leadership Fund poured \$28 million into the state. The group's advertising ultimately accounted for about 70% of all Republican media spending from August until Election Day.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 61 of 68

A similar situation played out in North Carolina, where the McConnell-aligned super PAC was responsible for 82% of the Republican advertising spending during the same period. GOP Rep. Ted Budd won his Senate race by over 3% of the vote.

But money woes weren't the only complicating factor.

Donald Trump elevated a series of untested, first-time candidates. They included Masters, Vance and former NFL star Herschel Walker, whose complicated backstory includes threats of violence against his ex-wife, false claims of business success and allegations that he pressured two girlfriends to get abortions, which Walker denies. Then there was Oz, who moved to Pennsylvania to seek the seat and also secured Trump's endorsement, but was pilloried by Democrats as an out-of-touch carpetbagger.

The former president gave them his endorsement, but he was parsimonious when it came to sharing some of the more than \$100 million he's amassed in a committee designed to help other candidates. He ended up spending about \$15 million on ads across five Senate races, records show.

Meanwhile, the National Republican Senatorial Committee, led by Scott, often worked at cross-purposes with McConnell's political operation.

Early on, Scott ruled out getting involved in primaries, which he saw as inappropriate meddling. McConnell's allies, meanwhile, moved to fend off candidates they saw as poor general-election contenders, like Don Bolduc, a far-right conservative who lost his New Hampshire Senate race by nearly 10 percentage points. McConnell forces also defended Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, a GOP moderate, against a conservative challenger.

"Senate races are just different," McConnell said in August. "Candidate quality has a lot to do with the outcome."

In response, Scott took a shot at McConnell without mentioning him by name, suggesting in an opinion article published in the Washington Examiner that any "trash-talking" of Republican candidates was an "act of cowardice" that was "treasonous to the conservative cause."

But his committee also struggled after making a series of bad bets, including a costly investment to boost the committee's online fundraising.

An internal document obtained by the AP, which was previously reported by The New York Times, shows the committee invested \$23.3 million to build out their digital fundraising program between June and January of 2021. But the NRSC raised just \$6.1 million during that time — a deficit. Then, as inflation soared, the stream of cash from online donors slowed to a trickle.

Chris Hartline, an NRSC spokesperson, said the document showed a direct return from one part of the investment and did not reflect the total raised through the program, which he said topped more than \$15 million, a figure that is still lower than what the committee put into the effort.

That prevented the NRSC from spending as much on TV ads as in years past, even as Scott made bullish predictions of picking up as many as five Senate seats. The digital fundraising effort was a boon, however, for consultants, who collected at least \$31 million in payments, disclosures show.

Some Republican senators are now clamoring for an audit of the committee. In an at-times heated Senate GOP lunch at the Capitol last week, Maine Sen. Susan Collins questioned Scott's management of the NRSC.

Scott's aides dismissed suggestions of financial impropriety, saying that the payments to consultants were ordinary and part of the effort to grow the NRSC's online fundraising. They also accuse McConnell of undercutting the committee.

During a Senate GOP lunch in August, Scott asked senators for donations to the NRSC, which is now at least \$20 million in debt. Then McConnell addressed the room and told the senators to instead prioritize giving to Senate Leadership Fund, according to two people familiar with the discussion who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe it.

The interaction was part of a broader pattern by McConnell to sabotage the NRSC, said Hartline.

"There was a very clear implication to donors that they should not give to the NRSC," Hartline said. "And the result is it hurt our ability to boost our candidates and get their message out."

Scott has also said improper bonuses were paid out by the committee before he took over. And in a statement, he suggested that Senate Leadership Fund should be audited, too.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 62 of 68

McConnell allies, however, believe Scott has ulterior motives and has used his post to burnish his own image at the expense of the party, potentially working to set himself up for a presidential bid, according to senior Republican strategists. They were not authorized to discuss the McConnell allies' conclusions and did so on condition of anonymity.

The gambit failed, as did Scott's challenge of McConnell's leadership position last week.

Faced with the prospect of solidifying their majority with another seat during a December runoff election in Georgia, Democrats were happy to offer unsolicited guidance to Republicans.

"My advice is to keep on doing what they are doing," said Michigan Sen. Gary Peters, who led Senate Democrats' campaign arm this year.

Women's protests overshadow Iran's World Cup loss

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Iran's players didn't sing their national anthem and didn't celebrate their goals. In the stands, many Iranian fans showed solidarity with the protest movement that has roiled the country for months.

Iran's World Cup opener Monday against England was not just about soccer, but the political struggles gripping the Islamic Republic. And for some Iranian women, barred from attending men's soccer matches at home, it was a precious first chance to see the national team live.

"Do you know how painful it is to be the biggest football fan and never go to a match in 34 years?" said Afsani, a 34-year-old beekeeper from Tehran, who traveled to Qatar to watch the men's team for the first time. She said she wept when she entered the Khalifa International Stadium.

Like other Iran fans, Afsani declined to give her last name for fear of government reprisals.

Iran lost 6-2 to a superior England team, but the result wasn't the most important to Mayram, a 35-year-old Tehran resident who also watched her first soccer match live. She was disappointed that the players didn't show more overt solidarity with the protests at home.

"You have girls being killed in the street," she said. "It's hard to say but this is not a happy occasion. It is really sad."

Iran is competing in the World Cup amid a violent crackdown on a major women's protest movement that has resulted in the deaths of at least 419 people, according Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that has been monitoring the protests.

The unrest was spurred by the Sept. 16 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in the custody of the country's morality police. It first focused on the state-mandated hijab, or headscarf, for women, but has since morphed into one of the most serious threats to the Islamic Republic since the chaotic years following its founding.

Many Iran fans in Doha wore T-shirts and waved signs with the mantra of the uprising — "Woman, Life, Freedom." Others wore jerseys bearing the names of female protesters killed by Iranian security forces in recent weeks.

In the 22nd minute of the match — a reference to Amini's age when she died — some fans chanted her name, though the refrain quickly faded out and was replaced by "Iran."

Other fans dressed in conservative black chadors and hijabs in the color of the Iranian flag cheered loudly for their national team. Many of them declined to speak about the political situation, saying it was not relevant to them.

Before international matches, Iran's players usually sing the national anthem with the right hands on their heart. On Monday they stood silently, their arms draped around each other's shoulders, prompting Iran's state TV to cut from a close-up of the players' faces to a wide shot of the pitch. During the match, the players didn't celebrate their two goals, something that has become common in Iranian league matches since the protests began.

The question of whether to root for the national team has divided Iranians. Many now view support for the Iranian team as a betrayal of the young women and men who have risked their lives in the streets.

"The protest movement has overshadowed the football," said Kamran, a linguistics professor who lives

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 63 of 68

in the verdant northern province of Mazandaran. "I want Iran to lose these three games."

Others insist the national team, which includes players who have spoken out on social media in solidarity with the protests, is representative of the country's people and not its ruling Shiite clerics. The team's star forward, Sardar Azmoun, has been vocal about the protests online. He was on the bench during the match, to the dismay of fans who said they were looking to him to make a gesture of protest on the pitch. Two former soccer stars have even been arrested for backing the movement.

Ali Jassim, a 14-year-old Iranian fan, said he was sure the political crisis was affecting the team's performance, as England went up 3-0 at half-time.

"I don't know how they can focus in a stadium full of so many people who want them to fail," he said.

The Iranian government has tried to encourage citizens to support their team against Iran's traditional enemies. Iran plays the United States on Nov. 29 — a contentious showdown that last occurred at the 1998 World Cup in France.

Observers note that the players are likely facing government pressure not to side with the protests. Already, Iranian athletes have drawn enormous scrutiny. When Iranian climber Elnaz Rekabi competed in South Korea without wearing her country's mandatory headscarf, she became a lightning rod of the protest movement.

"At the end of the day, I want the players to achieve their dreams," said Mariam, a 27-year-old sports fan and international relations student who traveled to Doha from Tehran to watch her first men's soccer match live. "It's not their fault our society is so polarized."

Mariam said a big achievement for the women protesting at home would be the right to choose whether to wear the hijab.

"But after that, women will go for their right to be in stadiums," she said.

How cooking food and gathering for feasts made us human

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If you're cooking a meal for Thanksgiving or just showing up to feast, you're part of a long human history — one that's older than our own species.

Some scientists estimate our early human cousins may have been using fire to cook their food almost 2 million years ago, long before Homo sapiens showed up.

And a recent study found what could be the earliest known evidence of this rudimentary cooking: the leftovers of a roasted carp dinner from 780,000 years ago.

Cooking food marked more than just a lifestyle change for our ancestors. It helped fuel our evolution, give us bigger brains — and later down the line, would become the centerpiece of the feasting rituals that brought communities together.

"The story of human evolution has appeared to be the story of what we eat," said Matt Sponheimer, an anthropologist at the University of Colorado at Boulder who has studied the diets of early human ancestors.

The new study, published in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, is based on material from Gesher Benot Ya'aqov in Israel — a watery site on the shores of an ancient lake.

Artifacts from the area suggest it was home to a community of Homo erectus, an extinct species of early humans that walked upright, explained lead author Irit Zohar of Tel Aviv University.

Over years of "digging in mud" at the site, researchers examined a curious catch of fish remains, especially teeth, said Naama Goren-Inbar, an archaeologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem who led the excavations.

Many were from a couple of species of big carp, and they were clustered around certain spots at the site — places where researchers also found signs of fire. Testing revealed the teeth had been exposed to temperatures that were hot, but not super-hot. This suggests the fish were cooked low and slow, rather than tossed right onto a fire, Zohar explained.

With all of this evidence together, the authors concluded that these human cousins had harnessed fire for cooking more than three quarters of a million years ago. That's much earlier than the next oldest

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 64 of 68

evidence for cooking, which showed Stone Age humans ate charred roots in South Africa.

The researchers — like many of their colleagues — believe cooking started long before this, though physical evidence has been hard to come by.

"I am sure that in the near future an earlier case will be reported," study author Israel Hershkovitz of Tel Aviv University said in an email.

That's in part because harnessing fire for food was a key step for human evolution.

Cooking food makes it easier for the body to digest and get nutrients, explained David Braun, an archaeologist at George Washington University who was not involved with the study. So, when early humans figured out how to cook, they got access to more energy, which they could use to fuel bigger brains.

Based on how human ancestors' brains and bodies developed, scientists estimate that cooking skills would have had to emerge nearly 2 million years ago.

"If we're out there eating raw items, it is very difficult to make it as a large-bodied primate," Braun said.

Those first cooked meals were a far cry from today's turkey dinners. And in the many, many years in between, humans started not just eating for fuel, but for community.

In a 2010 study, researchers described the earliest evidence of a feast — a specially prepared meal that brought people together for an occasion 12,000 years ago in a cave in Israel.

The cave, which served as a burial site, included the remains of one special woman who seemed to be a shaman for her community, said Natalie Munro, a University of Connecticut anthropologist who led the study.

It seems her people held a feast to honor her death. Munro and her team found large numbers of animal remains at the site — including enough tortoises and wild cattle to create a hearty spread.

This "first feast" came from another important transition point in human history, right as hunter-gatherers were starting to settle into more permanent living situations, Munro said. Gathering for special meals may have been a way to build community and smooth tensions now that people were more or less stuck with each other, she said.

And while the typical feast may no longer involve munching on tortoise meat in burial caves, Munro said she still sees a lot of the same roles — exchanging information, making connections, vying for status — happening at our modern gatherings.

"This is something that's just quintessentially human," Munro said. "And to see the first evidence of it is exciting."

World Cup ticketing app problem delays fans at England-Iran

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Problems with FIFA's mobile application for World Cup tickets caused hundreds of fans to miss the start of England's match against Iran on Monday.

Fans said their tickets had disappeared from their phone apps and lines began to form outside the Khalifa International Stadium about an hour before the 4 p.m. kickoff in Doha.

Although some fans had their ticket purchase verified with email checks, others appeared to have been sent into the stadium without further checks.

The lines cleared at a ticketing help desk about 30 minutes into the game. It was unclear if each ticket holder's problem was resolved or if fans had simply been sent in to see the game.

"All the tickets I have have disappeared," Avinash Fernando of Sri Lanka told The Associated Press.

He and a friend, Chathura Perera, each had seven tickets for the tournament vanish.

Another fan, who gave only his first name Farhood, said his tickets had gone.

"I don't have them anymore on the app. It might have been a hacker, I'm not sure," he said.

FIFA acknowledged in a statement that "some spectators are currently experiencing an issue with accessing their tickets."

"The issue is no tickets on the app," England fan John Eastern told the AP. "I'm not sure I'll get in."

While the fans were waiting outside, play had stopped for about seven minutes to deal with Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand's facial injury. He continued playing briefly but then was substituted.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 65 of 68

As the kickoff approached, FIFA advised fans to check the inbox of the email account they used to register with the ticketing app.

"In case fans cannot access their email accounts, the stadium's Ticket Resolution Point will be able to support," FIFA said.

Cold and dark: Kyiv readies for 'worst winter of our lives'

By YURAS KARMANAU and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — When the power is out, as it so often is, the high-rise apartment overlooking Ukraine's war-torn capital feels like a deathtrap. No lights, no water, no way to cook food. And the risk of not being able to escape from the 21st floor in time should a Russian missile strike. Even when electricity comes back, it's never on for long.

"Russian strikes are plunging Ukraine into the Stone Age," says Anastasia Pyrozhenko. In a recent 24-hour spell, her 26-story high-rise only had power for half an hour. She says the "military living conditions" have driven her and her husband from their apartment.

"Our building is the highest in the area and is a great target for Russian missiles, so we left our apartment for our parents' place and are preparing for the worst winter of our lives," said the 25-year-old.

The situation in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, and other major cities has deteriorated drastically following the largest missile attack on the country's power grid on Tuesday. Ukrainian state-owned grid operator Ukrenergo reported that 40% of Ukrainians were experiencing difficulties, due to damage to at least 15 major energy hubs across the country.

Warning that electricity outages could last anywhere from several hours to several days, the network said that "resilience and courage are what we need this winter."

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko, too, stressed the need to be ready and resilient in the face of a potential blackout: "Worst case scenario. Actually, I don't like to talk about that, but I have to be prepared if we (do not) have electricity, blackout, no water, no heating, no services and no communication," Klitschko told the AP on Friday.

Ukrenergog said in a statement that "thousands of kilometers of key high-voltage lines are not working," affecting the entire country.

It published a picture of a transformer station that was destroyed by a Russian missile, leaving around 400,000 people without power. According to the report, "there are dozens of such transformers in the power system now. This equipment cannot be replaced quickly."

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said after last week's strikes that more than 10 million Ukrainians were left without electricity; by Sunday, he said some areas had seen improvements.

"The restoration of networks and technical supply capabilities, the de-mining of power transmission lines, repairs — everything goes on round the clock," Zelenskyy said in his nightly address.

Blackouts were scheduled Sunday night in 15 regions and the city of Kyiv, he said. Ukrenergog said there would be scheduled outages in every region on Monday.

A sharp cold snap and the first snow have significantly complicated the situation in Kyiv, where temperatures are often below freezing in winter months. The cold forces people to turn on their heaters, which drastically increases the load on the grid and makes power outages longer. In light of the dropping temperatures, the Kyiv authorities announced they were setting up communal heating points.

In the city of 3 million people, 528 emergency points have been identified. Here, residents will be able to keep warm, drink tea, recharge their phones and get any necessary help. The heating points will be equipped with autonomous power sources, as well as special boiler rooms.

Mayor Klitschko, too, spoke of measures taken to prepare for energy outages with the onset of colder temperatures: "We prepared and we (asked for) electric generators (from) our partners, which they send to us. For this case, we have a reserve of diesel, (of) oil. We have a lot of warm stuff. We have medication."

Many residents in Kyiv have begun to leave boxes of food, flashlights and power banks in elevators, in case anyone gets stuck in one for a long time. Due to the lack of electricity, public transport is disrupted,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 66 of 68

many small shops cannot operate, and some medical institutions can only work to a limited capacity.

Dentist Viktor Turakevich said that he was forced to postpone his patients' appointments "for an indefinite time" because without electricity his central Kyiv clinic cannot function even during the day, and the generator will only arrive in a few weeks.

"We cannot accept patients even with acute toothache, people have to suffer and wait a long time, but the light comes on only for a few hours a day," Turakevich said. "Generator prices have skyrocketed, but even with money, they are not easy to come by."

Most hospitals in Kyiv have already received generators and there are no power outages there yet. The Oleksandriivska hospital, the largest and oldest one in the center of Kyiv, reported that it had not canceled elective surgeries because the hospital had received electric generators from France. Generators have also been supplied to educational institutions and social services.

"Such facilities are a priority for us, and most of them are equipped with autonomous energy sources," Ukrenergo head Volodymyr Kudrytskyi said on Friday. However, many schools in Kyiv have endured significant disruption to the learning process, with a lack of electricity meaning internet outages that make remote learning near impossible.

Yaroslav, age 8, stopped attending his school in the Vynohradar district of Kyiv after a rocket attack blew out all the windows of the school and damaged a shelter there.

"Most of the children studied remotely, but now it is no longer possible to do this," said Yaroslav's mother, Olena, who asked for her last name to be withheld for safety reasons, in a phone interview. "We are trying to protect children from the horrors of war, but the cold and the lack of power greatly hinder this."

Analysts say that Russian rocket attacks on the energy industry do not affect the successful advance of the Ukrainian army in the south and the situation on the battlefield in general.

"The Russians cannot win on the battlefield, and therefore they use cold and darkness as a weapon against the civilian population, trying to sow panic, depression and demoralize Ukrainians," Volodymyr Fesenko, an analyst at the Penta Center think tank in Kyiv, told the AP.

Russian President Vladimir Putin "is suffering military defeats and is in dire need of a military pause, which is why he is forcing Zelenskyy into negotiations in such a wild way," he said.

The analyst believes the Kremlin is also trying to put pressure on Western support for Ukraine, as the EU and the U.S. will be forced to expand aid packages to a freezing Kyiv amid growing domestic troubles.

"Putin is trying to make the price of supporting Ukraine too high — this applies both to money and to a possible new flow of refugees to Europe from a freezing country," Fesenko said.

Pyrozhenko, having left her high-rise, moved in with her mother in a small apartment in Kyiv, now home to five people. The family has a wooden house in a village near Kyiv and has already prepared firewood in case of a forced evacuation.

"We understand that winter can be long, cold and dark, but we are ready to endure," Pyrozhenko said. "We are ready to live without light, but not with the Russians."

Today in History: November 22, JFK is assassinated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 22, the 326th day of 2022. There are 39 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 22, 1963, John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, was shot to death during a motorcade in Dallas; Texas Gov. John B. Connally, riding in the same car as Kennedy, was seriously wounded. Suspected gunman Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as president.

On this date:

In 1718, English pirate Edward Teach — better known as "Blackbeard" — was killed during a battle off present-day North Carolina.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 67 of 68

In 1906, the "S-O-S" distress signal was adopted at the International Radio Telegraphic Convention in Berlin.

In 1935, a flying boat, the China Clipper, took off from Alameda, California, carrying more than 100,000 pieces of mail on the first trans-Pacific airmail flight.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek (chang ky-shehk) met in Cairo to discuss measures for defeating Japan.

In 1967, the U.N. Security Council approved Resolution 242, which called for Israel to withdraw from territories it had captured the previous June, and implicitly called on adversaries to recognize Israel's right to exist.

In 1975, Juan Carlos was proclaimed King of Spain.

In 1977, regular passenger service between New York and Europe on the supersonic Concorde began on a trial basis.

In 1990, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, having failed to win reelection to the Conservative Party leadership on the first ballot, announced she would resign.

In 1995, acting swiftly to boost the Balkan peace accord, the U.N. Security Council suspended economic sanctions against Serbia and eased the arms embargo against the states of the former Yugoslavia.

In 2005, Angela Merkel (AHN'-geh-lah MEHR'-kuhl) took power as Germany's first female chancellor.

In 2010, thousands of people stampeded during a festival in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, leaving some 350 dead and hundreds injured in what the prime minister called the country's biggest tragedy since the 1970s reign of terror by the Khmer Rouge.

In 2014, a 12-year-old Black boy, Tamir (tuh-MEER') Rice, was shot and mortally wounded by police outside a Cleveland recreation center after brandishing what turned out to be a pellet gun. (A grand jury declined to indict either the patrolman who fired the fatal shot or a training officer.)

Ten years ago: In a series of constitutional amendments, Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi granted himself sweeping new powers and placed himself above judicial oversight.

Five years ago: Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb general whose forces carried out the worst massacre in Europe since World War II, was convicted of genocide and other crimes by the United Nations' Yugoslav war crimes tribunal and sentenced to life behind bars. A former confidant of ousted leader Robert Mugabe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, returned to Zimbabwe to become the next president a day after Mugabe resigned; he promised a "new, unfolding democracy." Former sports doctor Larry Nassar, accused of molesting at least 125 girls and young women while working for USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University, pleaded guilty to multiple charges of sexual assault. (Nassar would be sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison on those charges.)

One year ago: A committee investigating the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection issued subpoenas to five more individuals, including former President Donald Trump's ally Roger Stone and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, as lawmakers deepened their probe of the rallies that preceded the deadly attack. President Joe Biden said he was nominating Jerome Powell for a second term as Federal Reserve chair. The families of most of those killed and wounded in the 2018 Florida high school massacre said they had reached a multi-million dollar settlement with the federal government over the FBI's failure to stop the gunman even though it had received information he intended to attack. A judge in Florida officially exonerated four Black men of the false accusation that they had raped a white woman seven decades earlier in Groveland, Florida.

Today's Birthdays: Animator and movie director Terry Gilliam is 82. Actor Tom Conti is 81. Singer Jesse Colin Young is 81. Astronaut Guion (GEYE'-uhn) Bluford is 80. International Tennis Hall of Famer Billie Jean King is 79. Rock musician-actor Steve Van Zandt (a.k.a. Little Steven) is 72. Rock musician Tina Weymouth (The Heads; Talking Heads; The Tom Tom Club) is 72. Retired MLB All-Star Greg Luzinski is 72. Rock musician Lawrence Gowan is 66. Actor Richard Kind is 66. Actor Jamie Lee Curtis is 64. Alt-country singer Jason Ringenberg (Jason & the Scorchers) is 64. Actor Mariel Hemingway is 61. Actor Winsor Harmon is 59. Actor-turned-producer Brian Robbins is 59. Actor Stephen Geoffreys is 58. Rock musician Charlie Colin is 56. Actor Nicholas Rowe is 56. Actor Mark Ruffalo is 55. International Tennis Hall of Famer Boris Becker is 55. Actor Sidse (SIH'-sa) Babett Knudsen is 54. Country musician Chris Fryar (Zac Brown Band)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 138 ~ 68 of 68

is 52. Actor Josh Cooke is 43. Actor-singer Tyler Hilton is 39. Actor Scarlett Johansson is 38. Actor Jamie Campbell Bower is 34. Singer Candice Glover (TV: "American Idol") is 33. Actor Alden Ehrenreich is 33. Actor Dacre Montgomery is 28. Actor Mackenzie Lintz is 26.