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Groton Community Calendar

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.

Sunday, Nov. 27

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

UMC: UM Student Day; Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.;

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

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



"Thanksgiving is a time of togetherness and gratitude."

NIGEL HAMILTON

coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

St. John's worship, 9 a.m.; Zion Lutheran worship, 11 a.m.

Monday, Nov. 28

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, peas, Mandarin oranges, cookie.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Pepperoni pizza, corn.

Noon: Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center with potluck dinner.

Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 29

Senior Menu: Beef tips in gravy with noodles, lettuce salad with dressing, peaches, whole wheat bread.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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Groton Area Junior Kindergarten Students are thankful for . . .



Beau Bahr (Dion & Samantha) -I am thankful for my family because we eat mac-n-cheese together!



Cruz Cleveland (Justin & Gretchan)-I am thankful for my family and my dog because I love them so much!



Harper Cleveland (Justin & Gretchan)-I am thankful for my dog because she is so little and cute!



Ivy Cole (Charles & Carrie)-I am thankful for all of my cats and that they are safe!



Max Erickson (Seth & Megan)-I am thankful for my family because they play with me and my dog because he sleeps with me!



Aunna Freeland (Sara)-I am thankful for my baby kitten because I love him and he is soft!



Emersyn Giedt (Heath & Katelyn)-I am thankful for my dog because she has fun, squeaky toys!



Nolan Gingerich (Daniel & Megan)-I am thankful for balloons because I think they are cool!



Ariadne Gutierrez-Hernandez (Atenogenes & Nora)-I am thankful for my family, I love them! Estoy agradecido por mi familia, ilos amo!



Ruby Henderson (Bradley & Michelle)-I am thankful for my family because they care about me!



Landry Johnson (Gene & Tayla)-I am thankful for my house and the windows!



Bryton Larson (Joshua & Desa)- I am thankful for my family because I like my dad and my mom and they make the best food ever!

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Lexie Locke (Spencer & Kellie)-I am thankful for my mom and dad because I love them so much!



Jed Morehouse (Brent & Jessica)-I am thankful for my family because I like them!



Cort Paulson (Andrew & Kara)-I am thankful for my family because they love me!



Kayleigh Raba (Christopher & Erica)-I am thankful for my teachers because they are the best in the whole world!



Indira Rodriguez-Centeno (Carlos & Karely)-I am thankful for my mom, dad, and Carlos!



Molly Swisher (Travis & Taylor)-I am thankful for my family because I love them and they make me food!



Natalie Walberg (Jeremy & Brittany)-I am thankful for sister and I like helping her clean up!



Nova Washenberger (Daniel & Laura)-I am thankful for my dog because he is so fluffy and nice!



Sunny Washenberger (Daniel & Laura)- I am thankful for my dog because he is fluffy, but not for his loud squeaky toys!



South Dakota retailers adapt to online shopping trend by improving in-person experience

Stu Whitney and Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

South Dakota retailers hope to take advantage of a national trend toward increasing in-store shopping this holiday season by enhancing customer experience and blending online offerings into their business model.

An annual survey by the National Retail Federation and Prosper Insight & Analytics found that of an estimated 115 million Americans who planned to shop this year on Black Friday (the day-after-Thanksgiving retail extravaganza), 67% expected to shop in person, up from 64% in 2021.

That modest increase could be partly attributed to fewer COVID-19 infection concerns and, according to South Dakota shoppers interviewed by News Watch, a growing desire to reconnect with family and friends through shared enjoyment of in-person shopping at a time when retailers across the state are taking steps to improve the overall in-store experience.

The in-person uptick goes against the conventional wisdom that brick-and-mortar shopping faced a dire outlook in recent years due to the rise of digital retail giants such as Amazon and the shift in emphasis among many retailers toward online sales.

"When I took this job four years ago, the narrative was the death of retail, online is going to take over," said Nathan Sanderson, executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association. "But what we've

**'TIS THE
SEASON TO
SHOP LOCAL**

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce



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Nathan Sanderson

seen for decades, even centuries, is that retail is in a constant state of evolution. What I think you're seeing right now is a real hybrid between online shopping and in-person shopping. Online is going to continue to be with us, but that doesn't mean it's happening to the exclusion of what's going on in stores."

Retail stores had reason to be concerned as the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with rising interest in online shopping among Americans over the past few years.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Annual Retail Trade Survey, e-commerce sales increased nationally by \$244.2 billion or 43% in 2020, the first year of the pandemic, rising from \$571.2 billion in 2019 to \$815.4 billion in 2020.

Helping to level the playing field for in-person retailers was South Dakota v. Wayfair, a 2018 U.S. Supreme Court decision that nixed the requirement that a seller have a physical presence in a state to be forced to collect and remit sales taxes to that state. Requiring e-commerce sites to pay the same tax rate as in-store retailers reduced some of their competitive pricing advantage, Sanderson said.

"I don't think the impact (of the court ruling) can be overstated," he said. "If you don't have to pay sales tax, that's a 4.5% difference between the price of a product online as opposed to a (physical) store, and that's significant."

A national inflation rate of 7.75% in November has helped boost sales tax revenue, but retailers are keeping an eye on the percentage increase between overall sales tax and remote sales tax reported by online sellers.

According to the South Dakota Board of Revenue, revenue from sales, use and excise taxes increased by 13.8% from 2020 to 2021, while remote sales tax revenues rose 22.6% during that period.

Seeking balance rather than outright competition between those revenue streams is part of what Sanderson calls the "hybridization" of online and brick and mortar shopping.

The combination of buying online and in-person is the latest example of retail trends changing, he said, "from open-air markets to general stores to department stores to shopping malls, and now online retail and the resurgence of Main Street. There's always this evolutionary process, and we're continuing to see that."

Improving the in-store experience

On the afternoon of Nov. 18, there was a palpable pre-holiday buzz at the Great Outdoor Store in downtown Sioux Falls. Owner DeAnn Echols moved swiftly among recently strung Christmas lights, chatting up customers and sorting merchandise while trying to focus on a winter outdoor sports kickoff sale that night at the Washington Pavilion.

The specialty outdoor store does online sales, but its website is mainly for regional customers who can't make the trip to Sioux Falls. Since moving into the former Rock Island Depot building in 2009, DeAnn and



DeAnn Echols, owner of the Great Outdoor Store in downtown Sioux Falls, prepares for the holiday season by sorting merchandise on Nov. 18. DeAnn and her husband, James, have focused more on in-person customer experience than online sales. Photo: Stu Whitney, South Dakota News Watch

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her husband, James, have focused on in-store service to those seeking brands such as Patagonia or North Face as well as camping and rock-climbing necessities.

"Being able to try things on, touch and feel them, see the exact color, watch what another person is interested in to get ideas for gift-giving, you can't do any of those things online," DeAnn Echols said. "Many of the products we sell are somewhat technical or specific to a certain sport or activity, so it's great to be able to talk to someone who has used that product or has experience or training within that activity. It's about the personal touch."

The Great Outdoor Store was temporarily closed to in-person business for about six weeks in March and April of 2020 after COVID-19 hit, but they still allowed people to purchase and pick up orders by appointment. The momentum of the business – providing apparel and equipment for outdoor activities – wasn't affected as much as others during the pandemic because people were tired of isolation and looking for ways to explore the outdoors.

For most retailers, though, maintaining social distance during COVID-19 led to ramping up online avenues for customers, whether that meant curbside pickup at big-box stores or expanded remote options and contactless payment at grocery stores. Businesses learned to use social media more efficiently to be part of the community conversation and provide updates to customers.

Much of that progress translated to post-pandemic behavior, with businesses maintaining an online presence by necessity. But attention turned to the in-person experience when people started leaving their homes and returning to boutiques and booksellers, seeking the sort of shopping excursion that a computer, for all its convenience, cannot provide.

Uptown Rapid, formerly the Rushmore Mall in Rapid City, features Bar K-9, an indoor dog play center and beer and wine bar as part of a renovation under shopping center investment firm RockStep Capital, which took ownership of the Rapid City mall in 2021. There's also Happy Hills Painting, which combines "professionally led painting classes with a high-energy environment and a few drinks."

"People are looking not just for shopping, but for camaraderie and engagement," said Sandy Brockhouse, general manager of Uptown Rapid, adding that women's clothing



*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!**

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store Böhme offers customized group shopping experiences with a personal assistant. "We get people coming out from the four-state area to do some weekend shopping and have some fun."

Balancing camaraderie and convenience

On Nov. 20, Erica Berghammer and her 15-year-old daughter, Elizabeth Kvanvig, carried bags from Bath & Body Works and the upscale clothing store Francesca's after completing a shopping trip to Uptown Rapid.

They were in good spirits after spending a Sunday afternoon on a mother-daughter shopping trip. The communal aspect of in-person shopping is a big reason they sometimes eschew online buying, Berghammer said. They feel freer to be out and about these days now that the pandemic has waned, she said.

"We like to shop because we also like to go to lunch and get coffee," said Berghammer, 42. "It's something to do together."

But Berghammer said she utilizes the convenience of online shopping frequently and uses coupons, pricing deals and free shipping to save money. She's able to buy home goods online and accrue Kohls' Cash coupons that provide discounts and sometimes free merchandise which she can have delivered or pick up at the Rapid City store.

As a girl about to turn 16, Kvanvig said the convenience and ease of shopping online are also incentives for her to shop by phone. "You can do it from your bed at home," she said with a smile. "You don't have to get up and get ready to go out."

Kym Hop of Rapid City said she tries her best to shop in person at local stores to support businesses run by people who she considers her neighbors.

"I'm willing to pay a little bit more for things on the local level," said Hop, 57. "I grew up in Kansas in a small town, so my thinking is always to give back to locals and because we want to keep our city amazing for our business people that are trying to manage within the world of Amazon."

Like many people, Hop also shops online for convenience and to get better deals, especially on products that might be less accessible in the local community. For example, Hop said her husband recently saved money by buying her a Fitbit health monitor from Amazon.

More often, though, especially now that



Erica Berghammer and her daughter, Elizabeth Kvanvig, appreciate the convenience and value of online shopping but also enjoy the togetherness of in-person shopping, including at Uptown Rapid in Rapid City. Photo: Bart Pfankuch,

South Dakota News Watch



Kym Hop of Rapid City took a pizza break during a recent shopping trip to the Uptown Rapid mall in Rapid City. Hop, who likes to support local stores, said she is excited to return to in-person shopping and browsing now that the COVID-19 pandemic has eased. Photo: Bart

Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch

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the COVID-19 pandemic has eased, Hop tries to support Rapid City retailers by shopping in person at local stores. The social, familial aspects of taking a shopping trip are also big reasons Hop likes to shop in person, she said.

"We're really back to normal in how we're getting out and getting together," said Hop, who is married with two adult children who will visit during the holidays. "My husband likes to come along because we have a goofy, funny family, and I love to see people while we're out, to run into people I don't usually see."

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at SDNewsWatch.org.

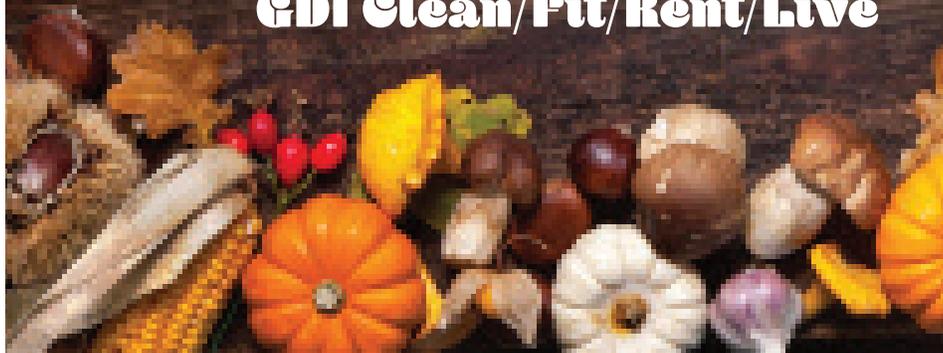
ABOUT STU WHITNEY



Stu Whitney is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A resident of Sioux Falls, Whitney is an award-winning reporter, editor and novelist with more than 30 years of experience in journalism.

*"A thankful heart is the parent of all virtues."
Therefore, Thanksgiving gives us an opportunity to give thanks for all the things we have and those that we are yet to receive.
Have a blessed Thanksgiving.*

**Groton Daily Independent
GDI Clean/Fit/Rent/Live**





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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Can gratitude reduce physical pain? Spearfish researcher wants to find out

West River professor, students study how gratitude affects pain in physical therapy patients

BY: NICOLE SCHLABACH - NOVEMBER 23, 2022 4:30 PM

People in pain might benefit from practicing gratitude, according to a professor who has studied gratitude for nine years at Black Hills State University (BHSU).

Nathan Deichert, professor of psychology at BHSU, and a group of five undergraduate students are studying if more grateful physical therapy patients feel less severe pain, or if pain interferes less in their sleep, movement, work and other daily activities.

If the group finds a connection, a writing-based gratitude practice might be a low-cost way to help people recovering from surgeries, physical therapy patients or those in too much pain to attend physical therapy, Deichert said.

"On the pain scale of 1-10, if you're at an 8, you're not going to go from an 8 to a 0. But, if you go from an 8 to a 7, that's a good thing," he said.

Forty-four patients from the Spearfish area have participated in the study since July. Deichert hopes to involve at least 130 patients by the end of the study next year.

Each patient fills out a collection of surveys about their pain, tendency to feel gratitude, stress, coping strategies and the level of support in their lives. To add genetic context, one DNA sample is also collected from each patient using a cheek swab.

DNA samples will reveal if patients with one genetic variation show a stronger relationship between gratitude and pain than those with another. The gene, called COMT, is commonly associated with pain, stress and anxiety.

Early survey results don't show a correlation between gratitude and physical pain. But more grateful patients experienced less stress and more social support. They also didn't avoid using the painful body part as much.

Deichert expects a relationship between gratitude and pain will emerge if the same trends continue. "I think [the early results] are associated with the fact that we don't have enough people yet," he said.

The study is partially funded by an Institutional Development Award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) designed to support research in states that haven't received much funding from NIH. Black Hills State University also supports the study with a seed grant.

Deichert intends to submit his findings for presentation at the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association's annual convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico in April.

How gratitude might affect pain

Gratitude might affect pain by changing how someone thinks and feels, Deichert said.

"There's a huge psychological component to pain," Deichert said. "How you appraise things and how you interpret things makes a big deal in your physical experience of pain."



Psychology professor Nathan Deichert stands in a laboratory at Black Hills State University on Nov. 8, 2022.

(Photo by Nicole Schlabach for South Dakota Searchlight)

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If someone in pain thinks “this is the worst thing ever. This is never going to end,” he said, “it’s going to probably increase your attention to the pain ... and prevent you from doing things that are going to help like physical therapy.” In reverse, gratitude may help by promoting a more positive mindset.

Reduced stress, increased positive thinking and stronger social support are known benefits of gratitude that also affect pain, Deichert said.

Lilian Jans-Beken, Ph.D., who is not involved in the BHSU project, has studied gratitude for eight years. Jans-Beken suspects gratitude could help people cope with their pain by changing the way pain is interpreted in the brain.

She shared a hypothetical example of two people with the same mental illness. One lacks social support, doesn’t have a meaningful routine and experiences anger and pessimism. The other is “flourishing” with a loving family, volunteer commitments and a grateful, optimistic mindset.

“Although both people experience the same illness on the same level, you can imagine that the [flourishing] person lives a nicer life,” she said. “My guess is that this works the same with physical health ... gratitude can act as a coping mechanism when experiencing pain.”

Why it’s tricky to predict results

Few researchers have tackled the topic, Deichert said.

“The stuff I have seen — which are only just a few studies — they’re sort of mixed. So, it’s pretty unclear as to whether gratitude has an effect or not,” he said.

A couple of factors could influence the results, he said. The study isn’t limited to one type of pain, for example. Also, each patient takes each survey just once. Without a way to look at results over time, it’s hard to know what is causing what.

“Maybe people who are in less pain have an easier time feeling more gratitude,” Deichert said.

Physical therapists: emotions make a difference

Thoughts and emotions like gratitude cause physical responses that influence how patients recover, said Laura Bonsness, a physical therapist and the founder at About You Physical Therapy in Rapid City.

“You can see differences in rehab sometimes based on peoples’ stories,” she said.

Someone who sprained an ankle just after getting fired from their job may have a different rehab outlook from someone who sprained an ankle after scoring a winning football touchdown, for example. “Often-times the neurochemical responses and the resting muscle tension of the individual [who got fired] are heightened up. So within their rehab, there is a tension within that system that is already higher,” she said.

Positive emotions like gratitude might help by calming the nervous system and relaxing muscle tension.

“Gratitude has a similar response to some degree as deep breathing,” she said.

Emotions also heighten the body’s sensitivity to pain, said Rhianna Wickett, who has a doctorate of physical therapy and is an owner and practitioner at Elevate Performance Physical Therapy in Rapid City.

“If someone is experiencing a challenge finding gratitude or other emotional stressors, any smaller pain that the brain might normally not see as an immediate threat might be interpreted as significant pain,” Wickett said



From left, undergraduate students Hadley Binstock and Brooke Franklin practice using pipettes in a laboratory at Black Hills State University on Nov. 8, 2022. They will later use the pipettes to extract DNA samples. (Photo by Nicole Schlabach for South Dakota Searchlight)

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Undergraduate student Brooke Franklin demonstrates collecting a DNA sample using a cheek swab from psychology professor Nathan Deichert at Black Hills State University on Nov. 8, 2022. (Photo by Nicole Schlabach for South Dakota Searchlight)

bach for South Dakota Searchlight)

For those in pain, Deichert said, gratitude practices may turn out to be a low-cost, low-risk way to ease suffering.

"You don't have to spend a dime on being grateful. In terms of the cost benefits, I think there's a huge benefit that could be gained without a lot of cost," Deichert said.

A gratitude journal prescription for patients could be a great idea, she said. But it might be difficult to integrate gratitude practices unless the patient is open to it.

"When peoples' stress goes up, sometimes it can be hard to find that gratitude within themselves. If it isn't something they're naturally in tune with, it could be a challenge," Wickett said.

Deichert recommends a gratitude practice

Despite his research, Deichert said he isn't naturally the most grateful person. Still, he tries to practice gratitude in times of stress.

"I definitely have used what I know to do what gratitude does — it changes your perception of things, changes your interpretation of things and just reminds you of the good things that are present," he said.

Writing or thinking for 5-10 minutes about someone you're grateful for is a good practice to try a couple of times a week, or whenever the mood strikes you, Deichert said.



NICOLE SCHLABACH

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

Incoming Secretary of State looks to hand-count ballots, audit each election

Auditors, current state office holder disagree on accuracy of tabulator machines

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 23, 2022 12:52 PM

Secretary of State-Elect Monae Johnson campaigned as the candidate who would secure South Dakota's elections.

That message helped her defeat Democratic challenger Tom Cool – who campaigned on concerns about Johnson being an “election denier” – with 65% of the vote.

But the campaign is over, and Johnson is thinking about the changes she hopes to make when she takes office next year.

Changes like an audit of every precinct in South Dakota and a state-level push to convince county auditors to hand-count all ballots. She's also suggesting that lawmakers consider barring the use of tabulator machines altogether.

Election officials across the state – including the outgoing secretary of state and a county auditor who presided over the last fully hand-counted election nearly two decades ago – worry that such changes would complicate counting and render it less accurate.

“You'd never get an accurate count,” said Julie Pearson, the former Pennington County auditor that oversaw the transition from hand-counted ballots to tabulation. “Plus, the time. Our scanners, I think, run 200 ballots a minute.”

Secretary-Elect Johnson comes to office with election credentials of her own. She spent more than eight years working in the office she'll take over in January.

Johnson agreed to an interview with South Dakota Searchlight on her plans for the office, not the results of the 2020 election. She discussed her views on that election in a pre-election interview.

The incoming election official said that her previous time in the secretary of state's office showed her the value of customer service. Her predecessor, Steve Barnett, excelled in that regard, Johnson said, but she also said there are important differences.

“The main difference is I'm totally against voter fraud, online voting, or online voter registration and updates, and that secretary of state (Barnett) was pushing it his whole four years,” Johnson said. “His last bill was that if you were already in the system, you could go online and update your address to make it more convenient.”

Current Secretary of State Steve Barnett has publicly rejected tabulator-related concerns of voter fraud. He also said that voters can't change any of their voting information via the state's online system at the moment. The bill he proposed that would have made that possible, which did not pass, would have required a valid state ID and social security card to make any change.



Secretary-Elect Monae Johnson celebrates her November 8, 2022 election victory. Behind Johnson (from left) stands her campaign manager, Gretchen Weible, and her husband Rick Weible. (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight).

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Machine mistrust

Johnson said her concerns about voting tabulator machines and online voter updates are shared by "highly qualified professionals."

"I had people reaching out to me saying 'no' because anything can be hacked," Johnson said. "That was the biggest thing. The people reaching out to me were IT people, military people."

Johnson did not name the IT and military sources who expressed those concerns, but campaign manager Gretchen Weible did point to sources for the hacking claims.

Firstly, her husband Rick Weible, a former mayor of St. Bonifacius Minnesota, who traveled his state prior to the midterms posting videos about election fraud and pushing for changes to election procedures, hardware, and software. The Weibles were on stage with Johnson during her election night victory speech in downtown Sioux Falls.

Rick Weible said his time as mayor exposed him to the flaws of machine counts, which led him to the election integrity fray.

"It was off by one to two votes every election," Weible said.

However, Weible said tabulators proved valuable in post election audits.

The Johnson campaign also pointed to Jessie Pollema of South Dakota Canvassing – an organization that advocates for no electronic devices in South Dakota elections.

The crowd pushing election integrity has a misunderstanding of what "the machines" in question are and do, Barnett said.

"These people think anything that can be plugged into a wall can be hacked, whether it has a modem or not," he said.

The state already uses paper ballots and requires voter ID, but Johnson said there is room for improvement. Specifically, she would like to implement a post-election review. All but five states have some sort of post-vote audit, and those audits can look very different from state to state.

A March story from the Minnesota Reformer about an election reform rally that featured Rick Weible noted that 3% of precincts in that state perform hand counts after each election. Those counts are observed by representatives from both parties.

The 400,000-ballot audit of the 2020 election in Minnesota confirmed the validity of the state's machine-run results.

Secretary-Elect Johnson would like to see auditors in each county take a sample of the ballots from each precinct and hand count them to make sure the votes line up with tabulator machine counts.

"And if the hand count matches, your precinct is good to go," Johnson said.

Hand counting ballots

County auditors make the call about tabulator use on the county level, but Johnson said would advise against their use. It would take lawmakers to do away with tabulators altogether, she said.

"I know there's a lot of people that would love all the machines gone," Johnson said.

One South Dakota county tried hand-counting ballots on Election Day. Tripp County gave it a go during the recent midterms – the only county in South Dakota in nearly 20 years to perform one.

Several races had to be recounted by Tripp County's volunteer counting boards – sometimes three or four



A vote here sign, pictured on Nov. 8, 2022 at the All Souls Church on Cliff Avenue in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. (Josh Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

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Brown County Auditor Lynn Heupel explains how the tabulator machine works to count election ballots. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

times on election night. 75 ballots even went “missing” in one precinct during the post election audit.

Ironically, the explanation for the mismatch was identified by a voting tabulator – the machines Johnson and Tripp County commissioners dislike.

“It’s been a nightmare,” Tripp County Auditor Barb Desersa told South Dakota Searchlight the day after the election. “To me, it’s plain as day (that the machine is more accurate), but I know there are others that don’t see it that way and question it.”

Johnson advisor Rick Weible said the issue in Tripp County wasn’t hand-counting ballots, but that the people counting those ballots grew tired. A fine-tuned process for hand counts would alleviate fatigue-related problems, he said.

“The way we’re doing it in South Dakota is terrible,” Weible said. “We need multiple shifts.”

For larger counties like Pennington, where nearly 46,000 ballots were cast for the 2022 general election, counting by hand isn’t realistic, Auditor Cindy Mohler said.

Mohler anticipates election integrity legislation to be introduced during the upcoming legislative session, but she hopes legislators reach out and listen to officials like her.

“Please talk to your county auditors, They’re the ones in the trenches, dealing with this every day. The laws will affect the work they do,” Mohler said.

Minnehaha County Auditor Ben Kyte echoed Mohler’s concerns about moving away from tabulators.

“It would create some challenges,” Kyte said. “We had over 75,000 ballots cast. I would be concerned about the accuracy of hand counting.”

Rick Weible said there wouldn’t be a problem because larger counties have a precinct per so many people that would each be counting ballots, making the counts scalable.

Auditor with hand-counting experience trusts tabulators

Former Pennington County Auditor Julie Pearson oversaw that county’s transition from hand-counted ballots to tabulator counts in 2004.

“(I) guarantee you 99.9% of the time your machine count is more accurate than a hand count is ever going to be,” Pearson said. “They’re gonna lose track of where they’re at. And when all you’re doing is doing little sticks (to keep count), you know, one two, three four five, how do you not lose track of where you’re at?”

The current system in South Dakota already offers a pre-election audit, she said. Prior to an election, a foot-tall deck of filled-out sample ballots is run through the tabulators, Pearson said.

“And then on election night, we’re required to run the test deck through each machine,” Pearson said. “And our machines are secure. The auditor’s office is always locked. Nobody is allowed in there. Once we start voting or have ballots, nobody else touches our ballots but deputy auditors and law enforcement.”

The right spirit

Pearson disagrees with Johnson’s policy prescriptions, but she thinks her intentions come from the right place.

“Whether you call her an election denier or not, I think it’s good that any new secretary of state, as the primary election official in the state of South Dakota ... review everything that is in that election process,” Pearson said. “That’s really part of their job.”

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Johnson said she does not want to make elections and voting harder for people. She's particularly concerned about voting rights for the state's Native American population, she said.

"I want to work with the tribes," Johnson said. "I don't know if other secretaries of state have reached out to the tribes. So once I am sworn in, that's one of my main goals."

Beyond elections

The office of the secretary of state is responsible for state elections and South Dakota's public documents. That is another area Johnson sees room for improvement.

The state's campaign finance expenditure reports ought to be more navigable, she said. A searchable database would help reporters "follow the money trail."

"A lot of reporters reached out to me and said, 'Is there any way that we could just put in a name like, say Monae Johnson, and then see who Monae donated to right now?' You can't do that search right now."



Minnehaha County Auditor Ben Kyte.

(John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)



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.

COMMENTARY

Playing turkey day Tetris again this year? Consider charity on Tuesday An overstuffed fridge is a luxury many lack in South Dakota



Thanksgiving table. (Getty images)

“Oh, man. Where am I supposed to put all this milk?”

That was me last week, having returned from a trip to the madhouse that is the Sioux Falls Costco on a Saturday with two gallons of a staple beverage my wife had restocked the day before.

I cursed my failure to investigate the fridge’s inventory before the trip. I cursed the smallness of the appliance, although it seems smallest on days when we double up on milk purchases. I cursed our leftovers, our swelling collection of rarely used condiments, and the children who swore off juice boxes after consuming just two of them from the 12-pack now hoarding space in the overstuffed cooling unit.

I cursed our prosperity, more or less.

Reading or hearing thousands of words in the days since about turkey pardons and turkey shortages and turkey inflation put that reality into stark focus.

On the one day of the year that overfull fridges are more likely than not in kitchens all across the country, it’s important to remember just how lucky we are to have such a complaint.

My family didn’t grow up with little or nothing, but we grew up with far less than I have now. My father’s father was a Centerville-area farmer; my mother’s father collected trash. Both of my grandmothers worked in hospitals or picked up other odd jobs. My dad worked in a warehouse for the power company in Huron; my mom ran a daycare, then worked in school district kitchens, in part so she could be home when her kids got there.

My wife, a Clear Lake native, came from similarly modest means. Like me, she grew up to be a writer who collects larger paychecks than her parents ever did.

Perhaps that’s why we both jump at the chance to pick up a few gallons of cheap milk, or why we shudder at the demand-driven \$375 weekly price tag now attached to daycare for infants in a city where in-home daycares are closing as the population rises.

We don’t want to pay that much for our 6-month-old, but we wouldn’t go hungry if we had to.



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.

Thomas Deadrick named Deputy Secretary of State

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - NOVEMBER 23, 2022 3:20 PM

Secretary of State-Elect Monae Johnson announced Thomas J. Deadrick as Deputy Secretary of State on Wednesday.

"As an attorney, former legislator, and former deputy, Tom brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position that will be invaluable to me." Johnson said in a statement, "Tom has a long history of service to our state and the people of South Dakota, and I am thrilled to have him as part of my team." Deadrick practiced law around the state and served as the state's attorney in Turner and Charles Mix counties. He also served in the South Dakota House of Representatives from 2003-2010 and was Speaker of the House from 2007-2008.

Deadrick previously served as Deputy of Business Services from 2015-2018 under former Secretary of State Shantel Krebs. He served as an Assistant Attorney General for South Dakota since 2019.

Former South Dakota House Speaker Debra Anderson dies

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - NOVEMBER 22, 2022 4:51 PM

Flags at the South Dakota State Capitol will fly at half-staff through December 10 in honor of the first and only woman to ever serve as Speaker of the House in Pierre.

Former state Rep. Debra Anderson died in her home in Washington, D.C. at age 73. She served in the South Dakota House of Representatives from 1977-1989. She was elected Speaker of the South Dakota House of Representatives in 1987.

Anderson later worked for George W. Bush's administration as Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs in 1989, and spent time in the mid-1990s working for former Minnesota Gov. Arne Carlson as commissioner of administration.

Former Sioux Falls Mayor Dave Munson served alongside Anderson during her time in the state legislature. He said she had a lot of common sense and had earned respect of the entire legislature.

"She had really good judgment," Munson said. "That was a really strong thing about her. She knew what needed to be done to make it a better state and she was always willing to learn and to listen."

Governor Kristi Noem, the state's first female governor, said in a statement that Anderson broke a glass ceiling for women in the state.

"She had a true servant's heart, and she also served in President George H.W. Bush's administration. She will be missed, and our prayers are with her family," Noem said.

Funeral services for Debra Anderson will take place on Saturday, December 10, at the Farina United Methodist Church in Farina, IL.



Photo by Kevin Woster

Special Session

There'll be something fishy on the agenda of 50 to 60 state legislators again this summer as they gather for Legislative Fishing Day in Pierre. Last year, Sen. George Shanard, Mitchell, got to show off the 8-pound walleye caught by his wife Neva, left. Rep. Debra Anderson, Sioux Falls, helped land the lunger. Fishing Day is sponsored by the Game, Fish and Parks Department, South Dakota Tourism, The Great Lakes Association and the Pierre Chamber of Commerce. It will be held July 18th.

1987 – Then Rep. Debra Anderson (right) poses with then Sen. George Shanard (center) with an 8-pound walleye the two caught (courtesy of the Capitol Journal)

Thousands of veterans deluge VA with claims for toxic exposure benefits, health care

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - NOVEMBER 23, 2022 3:02 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is processing claims at the fastest rate in its history, hoping to avoid a significant backlog as hundreds of thousands of veterans apply for health care and benefits under the landmark toxic exposure law Congress passed earlier this year.

The day after President Joe Biden signed the bill into law in August, veterans set an all-time record for benefits claims filed online and more than 136,000 have applied for benefits under the toxic exposure law as of mid-November. The VA expects the number of veterans and surviving family members applying could reach more than 700,000 in the coming months.

To address the surge in claims, VA is hiring more employees to provide health care and process applications, but officials do expect an increase in the backlog in the short term.

Joshua Jacobs, who is performing the delegable duties of the VA under secretary for benefits, said in mid-November that the VA is "in a better position to tackle this increased workload" than it was in 2013 when the agency was widely rebuked for letting the backlog swell to more than 600,000.

"For members who followed the claims backlog for that long, you may be asking, 'Are we about to watch the same story unfold here today?'" he told members of the U.S. Senate at a hearing. "I'm happy to say that today, we are in a better position to tackle this increased workload."

Jacobs said the VA moving to a paperless system and hiring of thousands more people will help avoid a significant backlog in the months to come as hundreds of thousands of veterans likely apply for the health care and benefits that are part of the toxic exposure law, known as the PACT Act.

"As we continue to encourage more veterans and survivors to apply for their PACT Act benefits, we do expect an increase to the inventory and the backlog in the short term," he said at an oversight hearing of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Jacobs noted the VA has gotten the total backlog down to its lowest in years, below 150,000 claims as of this month. He also said the VA is encouraging veterans and eligible surviving family members of deceased veterans now covered under the toxic exposure law to apply before Aug. 10, 2023, on the VA's website or with an accredited representative at a veterans service organization in order to get the earliest possible effective date.

The VA has set up a website at va.gov/pact as well as a phone number, 800-698-2411, for veterans to call for more information or to file a claim.

'There are going to be hiccups'

Montana Democratic Sen. Jon Tester, chairman of the committee, said that everyone expects "there are going to be hiccups" implementing the sweeping law that's the largest expansion of health care and benefits in the VA's history.

"Veterans who previously filed claims will now hear of many more of their brothers and sisters joining them in line," Tester said. "But the VA must ensure that each of them gets the right decision as quickly as possible."

As more new faces show up in hospital waiting rooms, Tester said, "VA must ensure they get the quality care they deserve." He also noted that while the panel will work on some new legislation during the next Congress, the committee's primary focus will be on oversight of the VA.

Kansas Sen. Jerry Moran, the top Republican on the committee, said his main priority for the panel is the "appropriate, sufficient implementation of the legislation" Congress has passed, including the PACT Act.

Shereef Elnahal, under secretary for health, said the VA is working to "reach every veteran who may qualify for new benefits and care to make sure they are aware" of what the toxic exposure law does and how to apply for benefits.

Department leaders are looking to increase staffing to handle the influx of veterans and to start on "groundbreaking new research on toxic exposure," Elnahal said.

The department is reaching out to more than 300,000 veterans who have put information into the burn

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pits registry and planning to hold more than 80 events the week of Dec. 10 to let veterans know about the new law.

They've started a standard toxic exposure screening for veterans going to primary care clinics and in "just over one week, this clinical screening has already reached 166,000 veterans with over 37% reporting exposures," Elnahal told the panel.

The VA, Elnahal said, is working on a plan to boost hiring in rural areas, though he told the committee that might be easier if Congress implements a section of the president's budget request that lifts the \$400,000 cap on salaries.

"In order to recruit the right folks — on the physician, dentist and podiatrist side — it's becoming much more difficult, especially in rural areas, as salaries go up and the health care labor market becomes more difficult," he said. "And we would be able to pay more innovatively as well, to incentivize the right behavior among these clinicians."

More outreach needed

The Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America believes the very beginning of the implementation has gone well so far.

But the organization that represents more than 425,000 members says both the VA and the U.S. Department of Defense need to do a lot more to reach all the veterans who are eligible.

"IAVA played a lead role along with our VSO partners in getting this landmark legislation passed into law, so we are greatly vested in its success," IAVA Executive Vice President for Government Relations Tom Porter said in a written statement.

"We are encouraged by the energy in the initial roll-out of the new law by VA Secretary McDonough and his team, as well as the commitment to oversight by the House and Senate Veterans Committees," he said. "All parties, including VSOs, must make every effort to inform veterans of their new benefits."



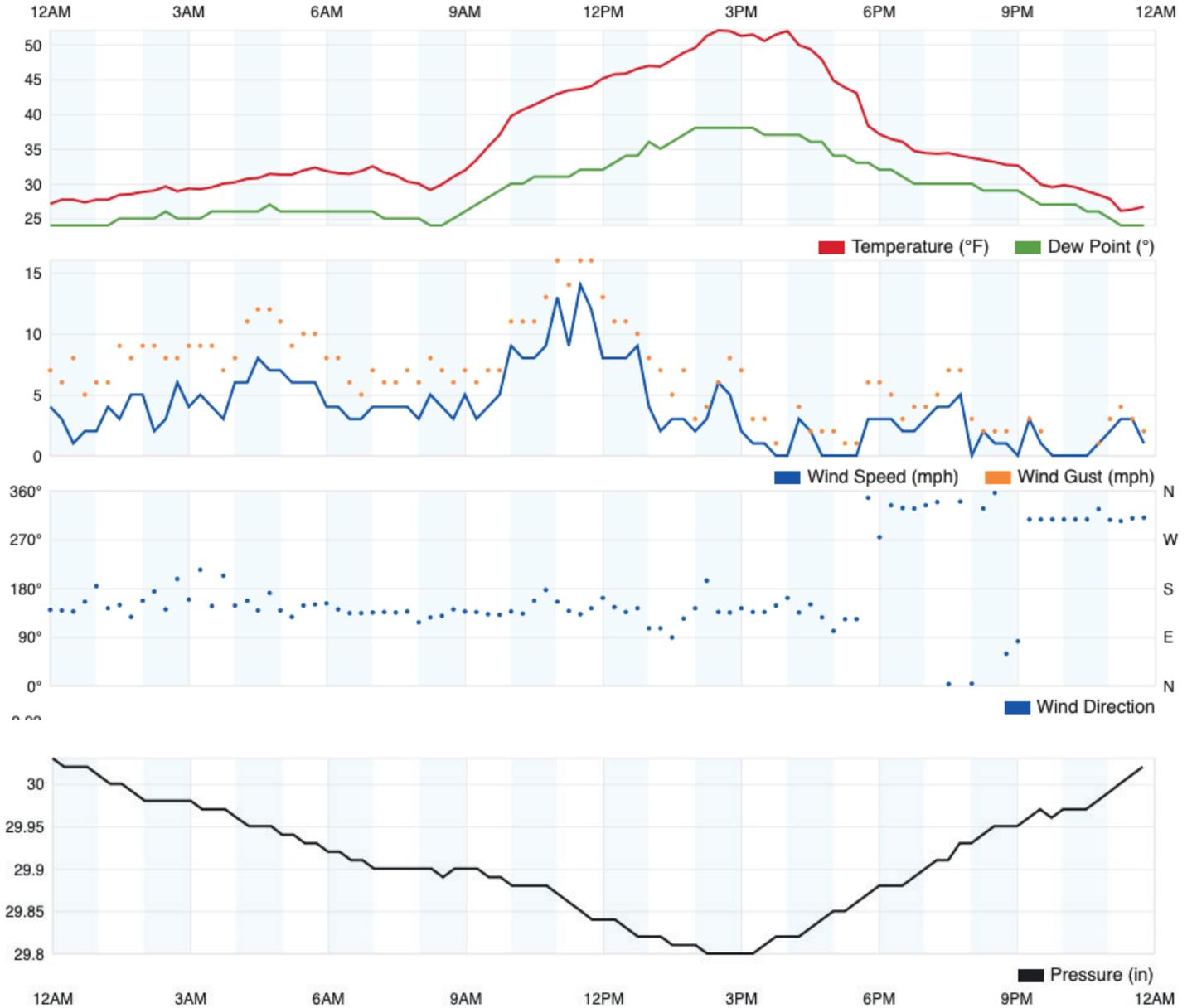
JENNIFER SHUTT  

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Thanksgiving
Day



Sunny

High: 37 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 20 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 50 °F

Friday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 24 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 43 °F

Saturday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 18 °F

Sunday



Sunny

High: 38 °F



Happy Thanksgiving!



Today



High: 33 to 47°

Tonight



Low: 21 to 29°



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Happy Thanksgiving from all of us here at NWS Aberdeen! Beautiful weather expected for today and great road conditions across the state if you are traveling. A blend of clouds and sun is expected for today with high temperatures ranging from the lower 30s to the mid-40s. Partly cloudy for tonight with lows ranging in the 20s. Sunny and warmer for Friday.

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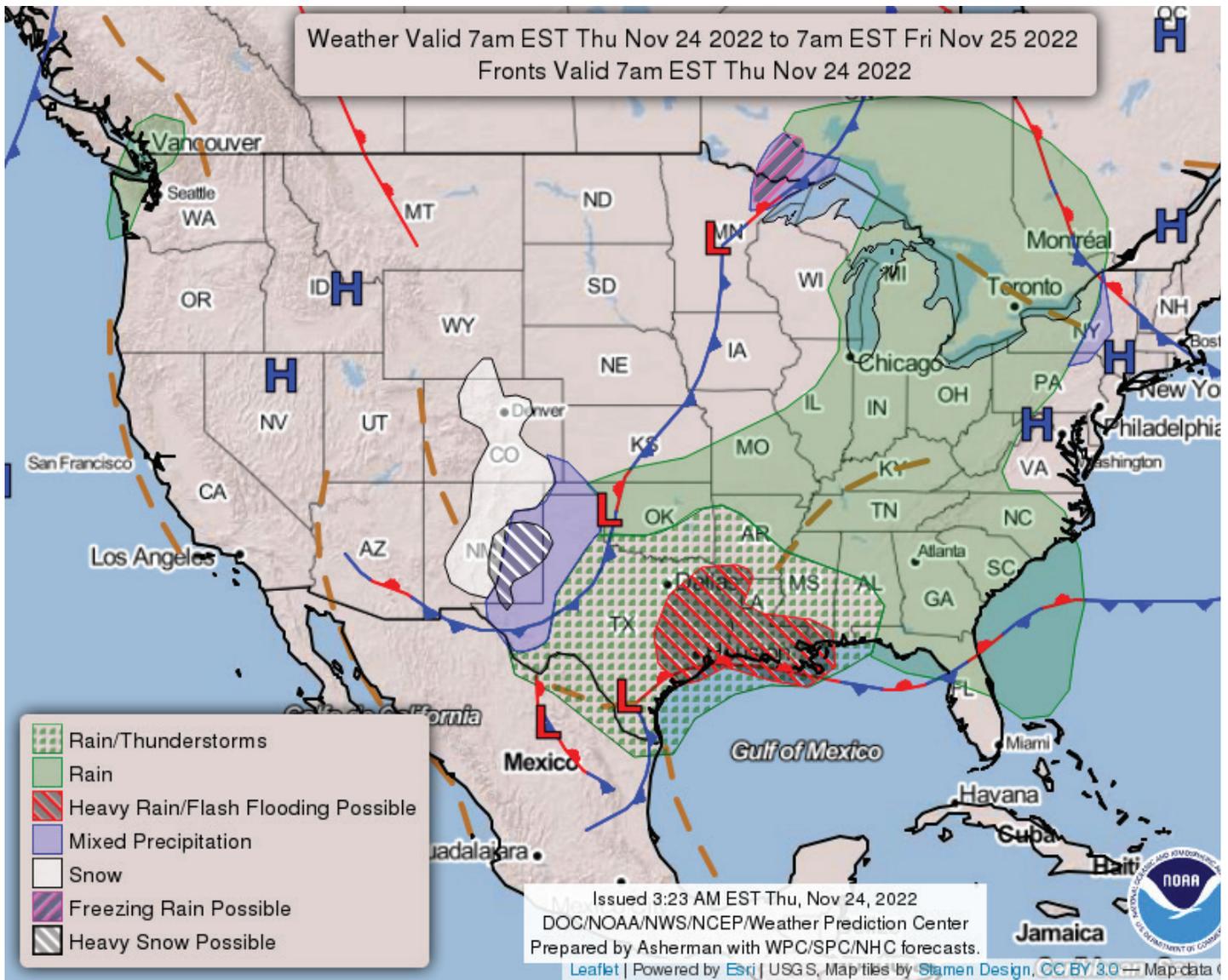
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 52 °F at 2:41 PM
Low Temp: 26 °F at 11:13 PM
Wind: 17 mph at 11:03 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 14 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 65 in 1932
Record Low: -17 in 1996
Average High: 38°F
Average Low: 16°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.62
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.09
Precip Year to Date: 16.50
Sunset Tonight: 4:56:20 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:43:12 AM



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Today in Weather History

November 24, 1993: A major slow-moving storm system traveled across the upper Midwest during the Thanksgiving holiday, dumping heavy snow across most of South Dakota and Minnesota from November 24 through the 27th. The highest snowfall amounts of two to three feet occurred in northeast South Dakota. Over a foot of snow accumulated in west central Minnesota, and needless to say, travel became tough across the entire area. Storm total snowfall amounts included 31.8 inches at Westport, 29.5 inches at Leola, 28 inches at Britton, 25.3 inches at Aberdeen, 24.3 inches at Mellette, 24.0 inches at McLaughlin, and 22.0 inches near Victor. The snowfall of 25.3 inches at Aberdeen was a single storm record (that still stands today), and it made November 1993 one of the snowiest months on record in Aberdeen with a total of 30.1 inches of snowfall. Only three months have recorded more snow: November 1898, February 1915, and November 2000. The storm closed numerous schools and offices on November 24th across the area, resulting in an early start to the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Some freezing rain and freezing drizzle preceded the snowstorm in southeast South Dakota from late on the 23rd to the 24th, causing at least 60 vehicle accidents. The heavy snow also clogged roads, causing vehicles to become stuck and resulting in numerous accidents. As a consequence of the heavy snow, low wind chills, and low visibilities, a 23-year old man was stranded in his pickup truck in a snow bank north of Aberdeen for 18 hours on the 23rd and 24th. The weight of snow collapsed many structures in northeast South Dakota from the 25th to the 26th. The roof of a metal barn collapsed two miles northwest of Aberdeen, killing one dairy cow in the barn. In Castlewood, a 100-foot by 40-foot metal pole shed fell in, causing damage to a grain truck inside. A machine shed also caved in on a farm east of Bowdle. During the afternoon of the 26th, part of the roof and wall of the Roscoe Senior Center collapsed, causing a near-total loss to the building. Strong northwest winds followed the snowstorm in western and central South Dakota, causing considerable blowing and drifting snow and wind chills as low as 50 degrees below zero. In North Dakota, over two feet of snow fell over a large part of central and southeastern portions of the state. Most of North Dakota had over a foot of snow from this storm. The greatest snowfall amount was reported at Oakes, in Dickey County where 31 inches fell. At the National Weather Service office in Bismarck, 28.3 inches of snow were measured during the 108-hour snow event. This amount set a new single storm record for snow in Bismarck. The snow began the evening on the 22nd and did not end until the morning of the 27th. Except for about six hours during the day on the 26th, the snow was continuous through this period. Fortunately, the wind was only 10 to 25 mph during this storm, so it was well below blizzard conditions and blowing and drifting of snow was not a problem.

1812 - Southwesterly winds of hurricane force sank ships and unroofed buildings at Philadelphia and New York City. (David Ludlum)

1863: The "battle above the clouds" was fought on Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga. Pre-frontal clouds obscured the upper battlefield aiding a Union victory.

1950 - The temperature at Chicago, IL, dipped to 2 below zero to equal their record for the month established on the 29th in 1872. On the first of the month that year Chicago established a record high for November with a reading of 81 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1982: Hurricane Iwa, a Category 1 hurricane, impacted the Hawaii Islands of Ni'ihau, Kaua'i, and O'ahu with gusts exceeding 100 mph and a storm surge of 30 feet. The first significant hurricane to hit the Hawaiian Islands since statehood in 1959, Iwa severely damaged or destroyed 2,345 buildings, including 1,927 houses, leaving 500 people homeless. Damage throughout the state totaled \$312 (\$765 million 2015 USD). One person was killed from the high seas, and three deaths were indirectly related to the hurricane's aftermath.

1987 - Showers and thunderstorms produced heavy rain in southern Missouri, southeast Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma. Flooding was reported in Greene County of southwestern Missouri. Springfield MO was drenched with more than six inches of rain. Thunderstorms over southern Texas produced more than eight inches of rain in Caldwell County and Hayes County, and thunderstorms over south central Oklahoma produced one inch hail at Temple twice within an hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

When days are good and times are trouble-free, we often forget that God is present in our lives and protecting us from possible tragedies. This seems to be a very real fact of history - for individuals and nations.

The children of Israel believed in God. They were aware of His goodness and grace, presence and power and had experienced them on many occasions. But they often left Him out of their plans - as we often do. Then, when times became difficult or when situations became uncontrollable, or beyond their - or our - ability to manage, they called on God to deliver them - like we do.

As they became absorbed in the physical, they would forget the spiritual - like we do. They would major on temporal and ignore the eternal - as we do. God was not at the center of their lives or uppermost in their thoughts. How like us!

So, the Psalmist reminded them that "They soon forgot what He had done" - as we do!

The word forgot is an interesting word. It signifies something that has been "misplaced." In other words, they put God aside. That left a space in their hearts that had to be filled. They needed a god. So, what did they do? They made a calf, and instead of the God who called them His children, they worshiped an idol made of metal.

We were created to worship and have fellowship with the living God. If we forget that and put Him aside, we will "create" another god and put that god in place of the living God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to worship You continually and never forget the good things You do for us constantly. Help us to truly see those things and remember you each time we do. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: – In the desert they gave in to their craving; in the wilderness they put God to the test. Psalm 106:13-15



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

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2022-23 Community Events

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

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News from the Associated Press

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined
Yankton Press & Dakotan. November 22, 2022.

Editorial: 1922: A Call For Unity, Hope

Here's America in a snapshot: The nation is still recovering from a global calamity and the political times are contentious with debates over isolation and immigration restrictions. The possibility of a railway strike concerns the nation, while on the other side of the world, the specter of Russia grows ominous ...

In other words, welcome to 1922, which at times stirs more than a few echoes of 2022. Back then, it was World War I, not COVID-19, from which we were still recovering, and the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was announced, changing the global political and military landscape for decades. And the Great Railroad Strike began in the summer but was mostly resolved by fall, unlike the current deadlock.

It was a time of headaches but also a season of hope. In 1922, a memorial honoring the legacy of Abraham Lincoln was dedicated in Washington, and it gave this nation a new, towering symbol of enduring unity.

That November, President Warren G. Harding issued the annual presidential decree of national Thanksgiving, a ritual that Lincoln himself had revived in 1863 and established a tradition that holds to this day. The decree by Harding (who would die the following year) acknowledged the nation's struggles but also called on Americans to cherish the things that unite us together as one, as well as herald the call for lasting peace everywhere in the post-war world.

As is our own tradition each Thanksgiving, we have turned to the Pilgrim Hall archives and today present Harding's 1922 decree, which offers an optimistic view that hopefully resonates a century later.

By The President Of The United States Of America: A Proclamation

In the beginnings of our country the custom was established by the devout fathers of observing annually a day of Thanksgiving for the bounties and protection which Divine Providence had extended throughout the year. It has come to be perhaps the most characteristic of our national observances, and as the season approaches for its annual recurrence, it is fitting formally to direct attention to this ancient institution of our people and to call upon them again to unite in its appropriate celebration.

The year which now approaches its end has been marked, in the experience of our nation, by a complexity of trials and of triumphs, of difficulties and of achievements, which we must regard as our inevitable portion in such an epoch as that through which all mankind is moving. As we survey the experience of the passing twelve-month we shall find that our estate presents very much to justify a nationwide and most sincere testimony of gratitude for the bounty which has been bestowed upon us. Though we have lived in the shadow of the hard consequences of great conflict, our country has been at peace and has been able to contribute toward the maintenance and perpetuation of peace in the world. We have seen the race of mankind make gratifying progress on the way to permanent peace, toward order and restored confidence in its high destiny.

For the Divine guidance which has enabled us, in growing fraternity with other peoples, to attain so much of progress; for the bounteous yield which has come to us from the resources of our soil and our industry, we owe our tribute of gratitude, and with it our acknowledgment of the duty and obligation to our own people and to the unfortunate, the suffering, the distracted of other lands. Let us in all humility acknowledge how great is our debt to the Providence which has generously dealt with us, and give devout assurance of unselfish purpose to play a helpful and ennobling part in human advancement. It is much to be desired that in rendering homage for the blessings which have come to us, we should earnestly testify our continued and increasing aim to make our own great fortune a means of helping and serving, as best we can, the cause of all humanity.

Now, therefore, I, Warren G. Harding, President of the United States of America, do designate Thursday,

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the thirtieth day of November, as a day of Thanksgiving, supplication and devotion. I recommend that the people gather at their family altars and in their houses of worship to render thanks to God for the bounties they have enjoyed and to petition that these may be continued in the year before us.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington this second day of November, in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and forty-seventh.

Warren G. Harding

END

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

13-17-18-24-33

(thirteen, seventeen, eighteen, twenty-four, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$190,000

Lotto America

12-21-29-35-42, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 2

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

Estimated jackpot: \$30,540,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 284,000,000

Powerball

01-02-31-39-66, Powerball: 25, Power Play: 2

(one, two, thirty-one, thirty-nine, sixty-six; Powerball: twenty-five; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$48,000,000

\$740M in crypto assets recovered in FTX bankruptcy so far

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The company tasked with locking down the assets of the failed cryptocurrency exchange FTX says it has managed to recover and secure \$740 million in assets so far, a fraction of the potentially billions of dollars likely missing from the company's coffers.

The numbers were disclosed on Wednesday in court filings by FTX, which hired the cryptocurrency custodial company BitGo hours after FTX filed for bankruptcy on Nov. 11.

The biggest worry for many of FTX's customers is they'll never see their money again. FTX failed because its founder and former CEO Sam Bankman-Fried and his lieutenants used customer assets to make bets in FTX's closely related trading firm, Alameda Research. Bankman-Fried was reportedly looking for upwards of \$8 billion from new investors to repair the company's balance sheet.

Bankman-Fried "proved that there is no such thing as a 'safe' conflict of interest," BitGo CEO Mike Belshe said in an email.

The \$740 million figure is from Nov. 16. BitGo estimates that the amount of recovered and secured assets has likely risen above \$1 billion since that date.

The assets recovered by BitGo are now locked in South Dakota in what is known as "cold storage," which means they're cryptocurrencies stored on hard drives not connected to the internet. BitGo provides what is known as "qualified custodian" services under South Dakota law. It's basically the crypto equivalent of financial fiduciary, offering segregated accounts and other security services to lock down digital assets.

Several crypto companies have failed this year as bitcoin and other digital currencies have collapsed in value. FTX failed when it experienced the crypto equivalent of a bank run, and early investigations have

found that FTX employees intermingled assets held for customers with assets they were investing.

"Trading, financing, and custody need to be different," Belshe said.

The assets recovered include not only bitcoin and ethereum, but also a collection of minor cryptocurrencies that vary in popularity and value, such as the shiba inu coin.

California-based BitGo has a history of recovering and securing assets. The company was tasked with securing assets after the cryptocurrency exchange Mt. Gox failed in 2014. It is also the custodian for the assets held by the government of El Salvador as part of that country's experiment in using bitcoin as legal tender.

FTX is paying Bitgo a \$5 million retainer and \$100,000 a month for its services.

Armed guards a fixture outside pot farm before 4 were slain

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

Armed guards were a fixture outside the marijuana growing operation in rural Oklahoma where four people were slain execution-style.

The mail carrier "was met with guns pretty much all the time," Jack Quirk, the owner of the local paper, All About Hennessey, told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "Why are there guards anyway? You know, if it's a legit farm, what's the deal?"

The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation announced Tuesday that the suspect in the weekend killings, Wu Chen, was taken into custody by Miami Beach police and brought to the Miami-Dade County Detention Center.

He was arrested "after a car tag reader flagged (the) vehicle he was driving," the bureau said. The suspect will be charged with murder and shooting with intent to kill and faces extradition to Oklahoma. No attorney has been assigned to him yet.

Authorities said the victims — three men and one woman, all Chinese citizens — were shot dead, "executed" on the 10-acre (4-hectare) property west of Hennessey, a town about 55 miles (90 kilometers) northwest of Oklahoma City. A fifth victim who is also a Chinese citizen was wounded and taken to an Oklahoma City hospital.

The survivor had been shot twice, said Quirk, who showed up when crews were setting up a landing zone for a medical helicopter and watched them load up the man.

The victims had not yet been identified publicly, and officials were still working to notify next of kin, police said.

"The suspect was inside that building for a significant amount of time before the executions began," OSBI said in a news release earlier Tuesday. "Based on the investigation thus far, this does not appear to be a random incident."

Oklahoma voters legalized medical marijuana in 2018, and the industry quickly boomed thanks to an open-ended law that put in place fewer restrictions than in other states.

In March, voters will decide whether to legalize recreational use of the drug.

Maryland and Missouri approved recreational marijuana in this month's midterm elections, bringing the total number states that allow recreational use to 21. Arkansas, North Dakota and South Dakota voters rejected legalization proposals in the midterms.

Quirk said he's heard from residents who think the marijuana farms in Oklahoma are poorly regulated.

"They weren't prepared for what comes along with this stuff," he said. "This particular facility is a great example of that ... they were doing questionable things that the neighbors feel weren't checked on."

He said the majority of the workers spoke no English and he never saw them off of the property. That has led locals to raise concerns about the working conditions, Quirk said.

Porsha Riley, spokeswoman for the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority, said there is an active license for a medical marijuana grow business at the location.

The operation was put up for sale earlier this year for just under \$1 million. The listing described it as having several thousand square feet of indoor grow space, as well as two separate living quarters.

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Tami Amsler-ZumMallen, the listing agent for the property, said the listing had expired. She said the brokers had told her not to comment.

The Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control has targeted criminal growing and trafficking of marijuana for the black market in recent years. But agency spokesman Mark Woodward said Tuesday it was too soon to say that was a focus of this investigation.

None of the 14 marijuana growing operations in the Hennessey area responded to email inquiries from The Associated Press, and officials would not identify which one operated at the site of the shootings.

The deaths at the marijuana farm were the third mass killing in Oklahoma in a little over a month. On Oct. 27, six children were killed in a suspected murder-suicide in the Tulsa suburb of Broken Arrow, and on Oct. 14, the bodies of four men who'd gone missing were found dismembered in an Oklahoma river.

According to a database run by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University, the United States has now had 40 mass killings so far this year. In just the past week, six were killed in the break room of a Walmart store in Virginia and five were slain at a Colorado Springs gay nightclub. The database defines a mass killing as at least four people killed, not including the killer.

US aid to Ukraine puts pressure on Pentagon's arms stockpile

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The intense firefight over Ukraine has the Pentagon rethinking its weapons stockpiles. If another major war broke out today, would the United States have enough ammunition to fight?

It's a question confronting Pentagon planners, not only as they aim to supply Ukraine for a war with Russia that could stretch years longer, but also as they look ahead to a potential conflict with China.

Russia is firing as many as 20,000 rounds a day, ranging from bullets for automatic rifles to truck-sized cruise missiles. Ukraine is answering with as many as 7,000 rounds a day, firing 155 mm howitzer rounds, Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and now NASAMS air defense munitions, and thousands of rounds of small arms fire.

Much of Ukraine's firepower is being supplied through U.S. government-funded weapons that are pushed almost weekly to the front lines. On Wednesday, the Biden administration announced an additional round of aid that will provide 20 million more rounds of small arms ammunition to Kyiv.

"We've not been in a position where we've got only a few days of some critical munition left," Pentagon comptroller Michael McCord told reporters this month. "But we are now supporting a partner who is."

U.S. defense production lines are not scaled to supply a major land war, and some, like for the Stinger, were previously shut down.

That's putting pressure on U.S. reserves and has officials asking whether U.S. weapons stockpiles are big enough. Would the U.S. be ready to respond to a major conflict today, for example if China invaded Taiwan?

"What would happen if something blew up in Indo-Pacom? Not five years from now, not 10 years from now, what if it happened next week?" Bill LaPlante, the Pentagon's top weapons buyer, said, referring to the military's Indo-Pacific Command. He spoke at a defense acquisitions conference this month at George Mason University in Virginia.

"What do we have in any degree of quantity? That will actually be effective? Those are the questions we're asking right this minute," he said.

The Army uses many of the same munitions that have proven most critical in Ukraine, including High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, known as HIMARS, Stinger missiles and 155 mm howitzer rounds, and is now reviewing its stockpile requirements, Doug Bush, the Army's assistant secretary for acquisition, told reporters Monday.

"They're seeing what Ukraine is using, what we can produce and how fast we can ramp up, all of which are factors you would work into, 'OK, how (big) does your pre-war stockpile need to be?' Bush said. "The slower you ramp up, the bigger the pile needs to be at the start."

The military aid packages the U.S. sends either pull inventory from stockpiles or fund contracts with

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industry to step up production. At least \$19 billion in military aid has been committed to date, including 924,000 artillery rounds for 155mm howitzers, more than 8,500 Javelin anti-tank systems, 1,600 Stinger anti-aircraft systems and hundreds of vehicles and drones. It's also provided advanced air defense systems and 38 HIMARS, although the Pentagon does not disclose how many rounds of ammunition it sends with the rocket systems.

The infusion of weapons is raising questions on Capitol Hill.

This month, the administration asked Congress to provide \$37 billion more in military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine in the post-election legislative session, and to approve it before Republicans take control of the House in January. House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy of California, who is seeking to become speaker, has warned that Republicans would not support writing a "blank check" for Ukraine.

Even with fresh money, stockpiles cannot be quickly replenished. Several of the systems proving most vital in Ukraine had their production lines shut down years ago. Keeping a production line open is expensive, and the Army had other spending priorities.

The Pentagon awarded Raytheon a \$624 million contract for 1,300 new Stinger missiles in May, but the company said it will not be able to increase production until next year due to parts shortages.

"The Stinger line was shut down in 2008," LaPlante said. "Really, who did that? We all did it. You did it. We did it," he said, referring to Congress and the Pentagon's decision not to fund continued production of the Army's anti-aircraft munition, which can be launched by a soldier or mounted to a platform or truck.

Based on an analysis of past Army budget documents, Center for Strategic and International Studies senior adviser Mark Cancian estimates that the 1,600 Stinger systems the U.S. has provided to Ukraine represent about one-quarter of its total arsenal.

The HIMARS system, which Ukraine has used so effectively in its counteroffensive, faces some of the same challenges, LaPlante said.

"The thing now that is saving Ukraine, and that everybody around the world wants, we stopped production of it," he said.

HIMARS production was shut down by the Army from about 2014 to 2018, LaPlante said. The Army is now trying to ramp up production to build up to eight a month, or 96 a year, Bush said.

HIMARS effectiveness in Ukraine has increased interest elsewhere, too. Poland, Lithuania and Taiwan have put in orders, even as the U.S. works to rush more to Ukraine. If the conflict drags on and more HIMARS ammunition is prioritized for Ukraine, that could potentially limit U.S. troops' access to the rounds for live-fire training.

The Pentagon this month announced a \$14.4 million contract to speed production of new HIMARS to replenish its stocks.

"This conflict has revealed that munitions production in the United States and with our allies is likely insufficient for major land wars," said Ryan Brobst, an analyst at the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

The U.S. also recently announced it would be supplying Ukraine with four Avenger air defense systems, portable launchers that can be mounted on tracked or wheeled vehicles, to provide another shorter-range option against the Iranian drones being used by Russia's forces. But the Avenger systems rely on Stinger missiles, too.

Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh said stockpile concerns were taken into account.

"We wouldn't have provided these Stinger missiles if we didn't feel that we could," Singh said at a recent Pentagon briefing.

Bombed not beaten: Ukraine's capital flips to survival mode

By JOHN LEICESTER and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Residents of Ukraine's bombed but undaunted capital clutched empty bottles in search of water and crowded into cafés for power and warmth Thursday, switching defiantly into survival mode after new Russian missile strikes a day earlier plunged the city and much of the country into the dark.

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In scenes hard to believe in a sophisticated city of 3 million, some Kyiv residents resorted to collecting rainwater from drainpipes, as repair teams labored to reconnect supplies.

Friends and family members exchanged messages to find out who had electricity and water back. Some had one but not the other. The previous day's aerial onslaught on Ukraine's power grid left many with neither.

Cafés in Kyiv that by some small miracle had both quickly became oases of comfort on Thursday.

Oleksiy Rashchupkin, a 39-year-old investment banker, awoke to find that water had been reconnected to his third-floor flat but power had not. His freezer thawed in the blackout, leaving a puddle on his floor.

So he hopped in a cab and crossed the Dnieper River from left bank to right, to a café that he'd noticed had stayed open after previous Russian strikes. Sure enough, it was open, serving hot drinks, hot food and with the music and WiFi on.

"I'm here because there is heating, coffee and light," he said. "Here is life."

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said about 70% of the Ukrainian capital was still without power on Thursday morning.

With cold rain falling and the remnants of a previous snowfall still on the streets, the mood was grim but steely. The winter promises to be a long one. But Ukrainians say that if Russian President Vladimir Putin's intention is to break them, then he should think again.

"Nobody will compromise their will and principles just for electricity," said Alina Dubeiko, 34. She, too, sought out the comfort of another, equally crowded, warm and lit café. Without electricity, heating and water at home, she was determined to keep up her work routine. Adapting to life shorn of its usual comforts, Dubeiko said she uses two glasses of water to wash, then ties her hair in a ponytail and is ready for her working day.

She said she'd rather live without power than live with the Russian invasion, which crossed the nine-month mark on Thursday.

"Without light or you? Without you," she said, echoing remarks President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made when Russia on Oct. 10 unleashed the first of what has now become a series of aerial onslaughts on key Ukrainian infrastructure.

Klitschko said in a Telegram statement that power engineers "are doing their best" to restore electricity. Water repair teams were making progress, too. In the early afternoon, Klitschko announced that water supplies had been restored across the capital, with the caveat that "some consumers may still experience low water pressure."

People lined up at public water points to fill plastic bottles. In a strange new war-time first for her, 31-year-old Health Department employee Kateryna Luchkina resorted to collecting rainwater from a drainpipe, so she could at least wash her hands at work, which had no water. She filled two plastic bottles, waiting patiently in the rain until they had water to the brim. A colleague followed behind her, doing the same.

"We Ukrainians are so resourceful, we will think of something. We do not lose our spirit," Luchkina said. "We work, live in the rhythm of survival or something, as much as possible. We do not lose hope that everything will be fine."

Power, heat and water were gradually coming back elsewhere, too. Regional authorities posted messages on social media updating people on the progress of repairs but also saying they needed time.

Mindful of the hardships — both now and ahead, as winter progresses — authorities are opening thousands of so-called "points of invincibility" — heated and powered spaces offering hot meals, electricity and internet connections. More than 3,700 were open across the country of Thursday morning, said a senior official in the presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko.

Israeli-Palestinian conflict catches up with Qatar World Cup

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — It was uncharted territory for the Israeli journalist. Wandering through the rustic outdoor marketplace in Doha before the start of the World Cup, he zeroed in on a Qatari man in his tra-

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ditional headdress and white flowing robe and asked for an interview.

"Which channel?" the Qatari asked. The journalist replied he was from Kan, Israel's public broadcaster. The Qatari was stunned. "Where?"

"Israel," the journalist repeated. A split-second later, the interview was over.

The exchange ricocheted around social media, reflecting the latest political flash point at the first World Cup in the Arab world — never mind that neither Israeli nor Palestinian national teams are competing in the tournament.

Controversy has followed Israelis and Palestinians pouring into Doha, revealing just how entrenched and emotive their violent century-old conflict remains, including Israel's open-ended occupation of lands Palestinians want for a future state.

Palestinians shared footage of the Doha encounter between the Qatari man and the Israeli journalist, along with other clips of Palestinians and Qataris angrily confronting Israeli reporters live on TV. They viewed it as proof that although Qatar has permitted Israelis to fly directly to Doha and receive consular support for the first time in history, the conservative Muslim emirate has no intention of cozying up to Israel.

Israel's Channel 13 sports reporter, Tal Shorrer, said he has been shoved, insulted and accosted by Palestinians and other Arab fans during his live reports from the tournament.

"You are killing babies!" a few Arab fans yelled as they rammed into him during a broadcast this week.

Qatari media meanwhile has published some such videos with the caption: "No to normalization." Officials in Qatar, with their history of public support to Palestinians, have insisted the temporary opening to Israelis was purely to comply with FIFA hosting requirements — not a step to normalizing ties like neighboring Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates did in 2020. Qatar has warned a spike in violence in the occupied West Bank or Gaza Strip would derail the arrangement.

Nonetheless, thousands of Israeli soccer fans are expected to descend on Doha for the World Cup, diplomats say, including some on 10 direct flights planned over the next month.

Many Israeli fans marvel over the intriguing novelty of being in a country that has no diplomatic relations with Israel. Security-minded citizens remark how safe they feel.

"My friends and family thought it could be dangerous but it's fine," said Eli Agami, an aviation executive who lives near Tel Aviv. "I don't go around telling people but I think no one cares if you're Israeli or you're Jewish. Everyone just cares about the game."

Six Israeli diplomats have set up shop at a travel agency office in Doha, ready to respond to crises large and small. To limit potential problems, the Foreign Ministry has launched a campaign urging Israelis to lie low.

"We want to avoid any friction with other fans and local authorities," said Alon Lavie, a member of the delegation, citing legions of fans from Iran, Saudi Arabia and other countries either hostile or frosty toward Israel now flooding Qatar. "We want to remind (Israelis) ... you don't need to shove your fingers in other people's eyes."

Israelis have made themselves at home among Doha's glittering skyscrapers. Qatar's first kosher kitchen set up near the airport, supplying hotels and fan zones with the classic eggy Jewish challah bread and olive and hummus sandwiches. They plan to cook other food for the Jewish Sabbath that starts Friday at sundown, with all ingredients conforming to kosher dietary laws.

"We have received many, many questions and requests," said Rabbi Mendy Chitrik, who oversees the effort.

Israel's main channels have been allowed to broadcast from Doha, providing Israeli viewers with continuous coverage of the matches. But unlike other major foreign networks centrally located in downtown Doha, the Israelis roam around without a formal studio.

Shorrer said that while interactions with Qatari officials had been perfectly pleasant, the streets were a different story. He said he advises Israeli fans to hide their Jewish kippas and ditch their Stars of David so as not to provoke hostility. When a cellphone salesman noticed his friend's settings in Hebrew, he exploded with anger, screaming at the Israeli to get out of Doha.

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"I was so excited to come in with an Israeli passport, thinking it was going to be something positive," he said. "It's sad, it's unpleasant. People were cursing and threatening us."

Palestinian fans from across the Arab world — including descendants of those who fled or were forced from their homes in the 1948 war over Israel's creation — traipsed through the streets of Doha this week draped in Palestinian flags. Some also sported Palestinian armbands.

A group of young Palestinians who live in Doha chanted, "Free Palestine!" while marching through Doha's historic Souq Waqif market on Sunday.

"We want everyone to know about the occupation and what people experience in Palestine so that more people support us," said 26-year-old marcher Sarah Shadid.

She laughed awkwardly when asked about the influx of Israeli fans.

"I'm a little bit upset," she said, adding she was sure their presence was not Qatar's choice. Doha mediates between Israel and the Hamas militant group and sends cash for the salaries of civil servants in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

When FIFA announced the unprecedented direct flights from Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv to Doha, Qatari authorities promised the travel arrangement also would apply to Palestinians in both the occupied West Bank and Gaza, which has been under a crippling Israeli-Egyptian blockade for 15 years, ever since Hamas seized control there.

But five days into the tournament, it remained unclear how officials would carry out that promise.

A senior Israeli diplomat, Lior Haiat, said all Palestinian fans seeking to fly out of Israel's airport must get Israeli security approval to leave and return — an often-grueling and unpredictable process. "It takes a while," he acknowledged.

Imad Qaraqra, spokesman of the Palestinian General Authority for Civil Affairs, said he hadn't heard of any Palestinians requesting Israeli permission to leave from Ben Gurion. Palestinians from the West Bank traveled to Qatar this week from Jordan's airport, while Palestinians in Gaza exited into Egypt through the enclave's Rafah border crossing.

Palestinian fans who made the long journey said they felt their attendance at the world's biggest sporting event served a political purpose.

"I am here as a reminder that in 2022, our land is still occupied," said Moawya Maher, a 31-year-old businessman from Hebron, a particularly tense West Bank city. He was dancing at a concert at the FIFA Fan Festival, wearing a Palestinian flag as a cape. "I suppose it's a miserable situation. But I'm also proud."

Russian Duma gives LGBTQ 'propaganda' bill final approval

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian lawmakers on Thursday gave their final approval to a bill that significantly expands restrictions on activities seen as promoting gay rights in the country, another step in a years-long crackdown on the country's embattled LGBTQ community.

The new bill expands a ban on what authorities call "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" to minors, established by legislation dubbed the "gay propaganda" law. It was adopted by the Kremlin in 2013 in an effort to promote "traditional values" in Russia.

This year, the lawmakers moved to ban spreading such information to people aged 18 and older.

The bill was approved in the third and final reading on Thursday by the State Duma, the lower house of parliament. It will go next to the upper house, the Federation Council, and then to President Vladimir Putin, whose signature will give it legal force.

The new bill outlaws all advertising, media and online resources books, films and theater productions deemed to contain such "propaganda," a concept loosely defined in the bill. The 2013 ban was often enacted against any depictions of same-sex unions and used as a tool to crack down on LGBTQ rights groups and activists.

Violations are punishable by fines. If committed by non-residents, they can lead to their expulsion from Russia. The fines range from 100,000 to 2 million rubles (\$1,660-\$33,000). For some violations, foreigners could face 15 days' detention prior to expulsion.

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The bill does not make violations a criminal offense. Russian law stipulates that the criminal code can be amended only through an independent bill. Some lawmakers have suggested they favor such a measure.

Russia explicitly outlawed same-sex marriages in 2020 by adopting amendments to the country's Constitution that, among other things, stipulated that the "institution of marriage is a union between a man and a woman."

Peltola, 1st Alaska Native in Congress, wins full term

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola has been elected to a full term in the House, months after the Alaska Democrat won a special election to the seat following the death earlier this year of longtime Republican Rep. Don Young.

Peltola defeated Republicans Sarah Palin and Nick Begich, as well as Libertarian Chris Bye in the Nov. 8 election. Results of the ranked choice election were announced Wednesday. Palin and Begich also were candidates in the special election.

"It's a two-year contract," Peltola told the Anchorage Daily News after her victory — a 55%-45% margin over Palin in the final tabulation round — was announced. "I will be happy to work for Alaskans again, as long as they'll have me."

Peltola, who is Yup'ik, with her win in August became the first Alaska Native to serve in Congress and the first woman to hold Alaska's House seat. The win also buoyed her fundraising, outpacing those of her rivals in the lead-up to this month's election.

Messages were sent to Palin's campaign Wednesday.

Begich congratulated Peltola in a statement, adding: "Our nation faces a number of challenges in the coming years, and our representatives will need wisdom and discernment as they work to put America on a more sound path. My message to Alaskans is to continue to be involved and engaged."

Peltola embraced Young's legacy as she sought the two-year term and was endorsed by his daughters, one of whom presented her with a bolo tie of Young's at an Alaska Federation of Natives conference where Peltola was treated like a rock star. Young held the seat for 49 years.

"Now, I'm a real congressman for all Alaska," she said. Young often referred to himself that way. Peltola has described his legacy as one of bipartisanship and building support for Alaska interests in Congress.

Peltola was a state lawmaker from the small rural hub community of Bethel for 10 years, ending in 2009. She surprised many with her fourth place finish in the June special primary, in which she emerged from a field of 48 candidates that included current state and local officeholders. That finish was enough to send her to the special election.

During the campaign, she cast herself as a coalition builder, emphasized a desire for more civility in politics and sought to stay out of the sniping between Palin and Begich. Peltola, who most recently worked for a commission whose goal is to rebuild salmon in Alaska's Kuskokwim River, raised concerns with ocean productivity and cited a need to preserve struggling fisheries.

She also stressed her support of abortion rights.

During a speech in October, she talked about the need for unity and lamented what she said have become pervasive messages in politics "about hate and fear and self-pity. And yes, those resonate, those are compelling motivators. But they're destructive, they're acidic, they tear us down."

She said her priorities for the new term included committee assignments and "working very hard on getting our inflation rates down, our shipping costs down, getting costs down for working families and all Alaskan households."

Long-time reformist leader Anwar sworn in as Malaysian PM

By EILEEN NG Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Long-time opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was sworn in as Malay-

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sia's prime minister Thursday in a victory for political reformers who were locked in a battle with Malay nationalists for days after a divisive general election produced a hung Parliament.

Anwar took his oath of office in a simple ceremony at the national palace that was broadcast on national television.

Malaysia's king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, named Anwar, 75, as the nation's 10th leader after saying he was satisfied that Anwar is the candidate who is likely to have majority support.

"I will take on this responsibility entrusted to me with humility and responsibility," Anwar tweeted later.

Anwar's Alliance of Hope led Saturday's election with 82 seats, short of the 112 needed for a majority. An unexpected surge of ethnic Malay support propelled Former Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's right-leaning National Alliance to win 73 seats, with its ally Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party emerging as the biggest single party with 49 seats.

The stalemate was resolved after the long-ruling bloc led by the United Malays National Organization agreed to support a unity government under Anwar. Such a tieup was once unthinkable in Malaysian politics, long dominated by rivalry between the two parties. Other influential groups in Borneo island have said they will follow the king's decision.

"His Royal Highness reminds all parties that the winners do not win all and the losers do not lose everything," a palace statement said. The monarch urged Anwar and his new government to be humble and said all opposing parties should reconcile to ensure a stable government and end Malaysia's political turmoil, which has led to three prime ministers since 2018 polls.

The statement gave no details on the government that will be formed. The stock market and the Malaysian currency rose strongly following news of Anwar's appointment.

Muhyiddin, 75, has refused to concede defeat. At a news conference, he challenged Anwar to prove he has the majority support of lawmakers to deflect doubts over his leadership.

Police have tightened security nationwide as social media posts warned of racial troubles if Anwar's multiethnic bloc won. Anwar's party has urged supporters to refrain from celebratory gatherings or issuing sensitive statements to avoid risk of provocation.

Anwar's rise to the top caps his roller-coaster political journey and will ease fears over greater Islamization. But he faces a tall task in bridging racial divides that deepened after Saturday's poll, as well as reviving an economy struggling with rising inflation and a currency that has fallen to its weakest point. Malays form two-thirds of Malaysia's 33 million people, which include large ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities.

"He will have to make compromises with other actors in the government that means that the reform process will be a more inclusive one," said Bridget Welsh, a Southeast Asia political expert at the University of Nottingham Asia Research Institute Malaysia. "Anwar is a globalist, which will assure international investors. He has been seen to be a bridge builder across communities, which will test his leadership moving forward but at the same juncture offers a reassuring hand for the challenges that Malaysia will face."

Anwar was a former deputy prime minister whose sacking and imprisonment in the 1990s led to massive street protests and a reform movement that became a major political force. Thursday marked his reformist bloc's second victory — its first being historic 2018 polls that led to the first regime change since Malaysia's independence from Britain in 1957.

Anwar was in prison at the time on a sodomy charge he said was politically motivated. He was pardoned and was due to take over from Mahathir Mohamad. But the government collapsed after Muhyiddin defected and joined hands with UMNO to form a new government. Muhyiddin's government was beset by internal rivalries and he resigned after 17 months. UMNO leader Ismail Sabri Yaakob was then picked by the king as the prime minister.

Many rural Malays fear they may lose their privileges with greater pluralism under Anwar. Fed up with corruption and infighting in UMNO, many opted for Muhyiddin's bloc in Saturday's vote.

Empty streets, cranes: the city built for Qatar's World Cup

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

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LUSAIL, Qatar (AP) — Less than a month before it is set to host the World Cup final, Lusail City is oddly quiet.

Wide empty streets, idle lobbies and construction cranes are everywhere in the sleek district 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of the capital, Doha, built to accommodate World Cup fans and hundreds of thousands of host nation Qatar's residents.

But with soccer's biggest event underway, the empty futuristic city is raising questions about how much use the infrastructure Qatar built for the event will get after more than a million soccer fans leave the small Gulf Arab nation after the tournament.

Elias Garcia, a 50-year old business owner from San Francisco, visited Lusail City from Doha with a friend on a day when there wasn't a soccer game in the city's bowl-shaped, golden stadium.

"We came to check it out but there's not much here," Garcia said, looking up at a huge crescent-shaped skyscraper behind him designed to look like the curved swords on Qatar's national emblem.

Across the street, a building site was concealed by a low fence illustrated with desert scenes. "Everything looks like it's under construction," Garcia said. "It's just empty lots with little walls they put up to make you think it's up and running."

Driving north from Doha, Lusail City's glittering skyline and marina are hard to miss. Pastel-colored towers that look like crates stacked on each other rise from the desert. Wide avenues give way to zigzagging buildings, glass domes and clusters of neoclassical housing blocks. It's unclear if anyone lives in them. Most are advertised as luxury hotels, apartments or commercial office space. Cranes hang above many buildings.

Plans for Lusail City had been around since 2005 but construction was fast-tracked after Qatar won the rights to host the World Cup five years later. Backed by Qatar's \$450 billion sovereign wealth fund, the city was designed to be compact and pedestrian friendly and is connected by Doha's new metro and a light rail.

Fahad Al Jahamri, who manages projects at Qatari Diar, the real estate company behind the city that's backed by Qatar's Investment Authority, has called Lusail City a self-contained "extension of Doha."

Officials have also said the city is part of broader plans that natural gas-rich Qatar has to build its knowledge economy — an admission of the type of white-collar professionals the country hopes to attract to the city long-term.

But reaching its goal of housing 400,000 people in Lusail City could be tough in a country where only 300,000 people are citizens, and many of the 2.9 million residents are poor migrants who live in camps, not luxury towers.

Even during the World Cup, Lusail City is noticeably quieter than Doha, itself the site of jaw-dropping amounts of construction over the past decade in preparation for the event.

At the Place Vendome, a luxury mall named for the grand Parisian square, many stores are not yet open. A few tourists snapped pictures of Lusail City's skyline on a recent afternoon from the mall while cashiers talked among themselves. At a building downtown housing the Ministry of Culture and other government offices, a security guard said almost everyone had left by 11 a.m.

"Even on the metro, if you go on a day when there's not a match, there are like five to 10 people on it besides you," Garcia said.

On the man-made Al Maha Island, a crowd of World Cup fans and locals lounged at an upscale beach club, pulling on shisha tobacco pipes and dipping into a swimming pool.

Timothe Burt-Riley directed workers at an art gallery opening later that night. The French gallery director said Lusail City — or at least Al Maha Island with its amusement park, high-end boutiques, restaurants and lounges, would be a place where locals come to meet.

"This is a totally man-made island," Burt-Riley said, "it's pretty crazy what they can do."

He said Qatar could find a way to make use of the infrastructure it's built for the World Cup, including seven new soccer stadiums, but admitted, "it might take time."

Foxconn apologizes for pay dispute at China factory

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writers

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BEIJING (AP) — The company that assembles Apple Inc.'s iPhones apologized Thursday for a pay dispute that triggered employee protests at a factory where anti-virus controls have slowed production.

Employees complained Foxconn Technology Group changed the terms of wages offered to attract them to the factory in the central city of Zhengzhou. Foxconn is trying to rebuild the workforce after employees walked out last month over complaints about unsafe conditions.

Videos on social media showed police in white protective suits kicking and clubbing workers during the protest that erupted Tuesday and lasted into the next day.

Foxconn, the biggest contract assembler of smartphones and other electronics for Apple and other global brands, blamed a "technical error" in the process of adding new employees and said they would be paid what they were promised.

"We apologize for an input error in the computer system and guarantee that the actual pay is the same as agreed and the official recruitment posters," said a company statement. It promised to "try its best to actively solve the concerns and reasonable demands of employees."

The dispute comes as the ruling Communist Party tries to contain a surge in coronavirus cases without shutting down factories, as it did in 2020 at the start of the pandemic. Its tactics include "closed-loop management," or having employees live at their workplaces without outside contact.

Authorities promised last month to reduce economic disruption by cutting quarantine times and making other changes to China's "zero-COVID" strategy, which aims to isolate every case. Despite that, the infection surge has prompted authorities to suspend access to neighborhoods and factories and to close office buildings, shops and restaurants in parts of many cities.

On Thursday, people in eight districts of Zhengzhou with a total of 6.6 million residents were told to stay home for five days. Daily mass testing was ordered for a "war of annihilation" against the virus.

Apple earlier warned iPhone 14 deliveries would be delayed after employees walked out of the Zhengzhou factory and access to the industrial zone around the facility was suspended following outbreaks.

To attract new workers, Foxconn offered 25,000 yuan (\$3,500) for two months of work, according to employees, or almost 50% more than news reports say its highest wages usually are.

Employees complained that after they arrived, they were told they had to work an additional two months at lower pay to receive the higher wage, according to an employee, Li Sanshan.

Foxconn offered up to 10,000 yuan (\$1,400) to new hires who choose to leave, the finance news outlet Cailianshe reported, citing unidentified recruiting agents.

Foxconn's statement Thursday said employees who leave will receive unspecified "care subsidies" but gave no details. It promised "comprehensive support" for those who stay.

The protests in Zhengzhou come amid public frustration over restrictions that have confined millions of people to their homes. Videos on social media show residents in some areas tearing down barricades set up to enforce neighborhood closures.

Foxconn, headquartered in New Taipei City, Taiwan, earlier denied what it said were comments online that employees with the virus lived in factory dormitories.

China expands lockdowns as COVID-19 cases hit daily record

BEIJING (AP) — Pandemic lockdowns are expanding across China, including in a city where factory workers clashed this week with police, as the number of COVID-19 cases hits a daily record.

Residents of eight districts of Zhengzhou, home to 6.6 million people, were told to stay home for five days beginning Thursday except to buy food or get medical treatment. Daily mass testing was ordered in what the city government called a "war of annihilation" against the virus.

During clashes Tuesday and Wednesday, Zhengzhou police beat workers protesting over a pay dispute at the biggest factory for Apple's iPhone, located in an industrial zone near the city. Foxconn, the Taiwan-based owner of the factory, apologized Thursday for what it called "an input error in the computer system" and said it would guarantee that the pay is the same as agreed to and in official recruitment posters.

In the previous 24 hours, the number of new COVID cases rose by 31,444, the National Health Commis-

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sion said Thursday. That's the highest daily figure since the coronavirus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.

The daily caseload has been steadily increasing. This week, authorities reported China's first COVID-19 deaths in six months, bringing the total to 5,232.

While the number of cases and deaths is relatively low compared to the U.S. and other countries, China's ruling Communist Party remains committed to a "zero-COVID" strategy that aims to isolate every case and eliminate the virus entirely. Most other governments have ended anti-virus controls and now rely on vaccinations and immunity from past infections to help prevent deaths and serious illness.

Businesses and residential communities from the manufacturing center of Guangzhou in the south to Beijing in the north are in various forms of lockdowns, measures that particularly affects blue-collar migrant workers. In many cases, residents say the restrictions go beyond what the national government allows.

Guangzhou suspended access Monday to its Baiyun district of 3.7 million residents, while residents of some areas of Shijiazhuang, a city of 11 million people southwest of Beijing, were told to stay home while mass testing is conducted.

Beijing opened a hospital in an exhibition center. It suspended access to the Beijing International Studies University after a virus case was found there. Some shopping malls, and office buildings were closed and access was blocked to some apartment compounds.

Suggesting some of those measures might be at least semi-permanent, workers were erecting a 2-meter (7-foot)-high fence around the aging, low-rise brick apartment buildings in Beijing's Hongmiao Beili community.

A half dozen people in hazmat suits manned the entrance to a lane running through the community, standing behind waist-high steel barriers usually used for crowd control.

Authorities had announced measures to try to reduce disruptions from pandemic controls by shortening quarantines and making other changes. Some Chinese have expressed frustration and confusion about the apparent policy flip-flops on social media.

While China's borders remain largely closed, the government has been "optimizing and facilitating the exit and entry process for executives and specialized personnel of multinational companies and foreign businesses and their family members in China," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily news conference Thursday.

Mao said China would continue to improve various COVID protocols "according to the science-based and targeted principles" to help facilitate travel and cooperation and exchanges with other countries.

A key issue is concern about how vulnerable people are to the virus. Few Chinese have caught COVID or even been exposed to the virus, so only a small percentage are thought to have built up effective levels of virus-fighting antibodies.

China has an overall coronavirus vaccination rate of more than 92%, with most people having received at least one dose. But far fewer older Chinese — particularly those over age 80 — have gotten the shots.

The government is trying to contain the latest wave of outbreaks without shutting down factories and the rest of its economy as it did in early 2020. One tactic is using "closed-loop management," under which workers live in their factories with no outside contacts.

Foxconn, the world's biggest contract assembler of smartphones and other electronics, is struggling to fill orders for the iPhone 14 after thousands of employees walked away from the factory in Zhengzhou last month following complaints about unsafe working conditions.

The protests on Tuesday and Wednesday were driven by disagreements over payment of workers who were recruited to replace those who left. Workers scuffled with police and some were beaten. Some were arrested.

Foxconn denied what it said were comments online that employees with the virus lived in dormitories at the Zhengzhou factory. It said facilities were disinfected and passed government checks before employees moved in.

After Russian retreat, Ukrainian military plans next move

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP) — The Ukrainian sniper adjusted his scope and fired a .50-caliber bullet at a Russian soldier across the Dnieper River. Earlier, another Ukrainian used a drone to scan for Russian troops.

Two weeks after retreating from the southern city of Kherson, Russia is pounding the town with artillery as it digs in across the Dnieper River.

Ukraine is striking back at Russian troops with its own long-distance weapons, and Ukrainian officers say they want to capitalize on their momentum.

The Russian withdrawal from the only provincial capital it gained in nine months of war was one of Moscow's most significant battlefield losses. Now that its troops hold a new front line, the army is planning its next move, the Ukrainian military said through a spokesman.

Ukrainian forces can now strike deeper into the Russian-controlled territories and possibly push their counteroffensive closer to Crimea, which Russia illegally captured in 2014.

Russian troops continue to establish fortifications, including trench systems near the Crimean border and some areas between the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the east.

In some locations, new fortifications are up to 60 kilometers (37 miles) behind the current front lines, suggesting that Russia is preparing for more Ukrainian breakthroughs, according to the British Ministry of Defense.

"The armed forces of Ukraine seized the initiative in this war some time ago," said Mick Ryan, military strategist and retired Australian army major general. "They have momentum. There is no way that they will want to waste that."

Crossing the river and pushing the Russians further back would require complicated logistical planning. Both sides have blown up bridges across the Dnieper.

"This is what cut Russians' supply lines and this is also what will make any further Ukrainian advance beyond the left bank of the river more difficult," said Mario Bikarski, an analyst with the Economist Intelligence Unit.

In a key battlefield development this week, Kyiv's forces attacked Russian positions on the Kinburn Spit, a gateway to the Black Sea basin, as well as parts of the southern Kherson region still under Russian control. Recapturing the area could help Ukrainian forces push into Russian-held territory in the Kherson region "under significantly less Russian artillery fire" than if they directly crossed the Dnieper River, said the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank. Control of the area would help Kyiv alleviate Russian strikes on Ukraine's southern seaports and allow it to increase its naval activity in the Black Sea, the think tank added.

Some military experts say there's a possibility the weather might disproportionately harm poorly-equipped Russian forces and allow Ukraine to take advantage of frozen terrain and move more easily than during the muddy autumn months, ISW said.

Russia's main task, meanwhile, is to prevent any further retreats from the broader Kherson region and to strengthen its defense systems over Crimea, said Bikarski, the analyst. Ryan, the military strategist, said Russia will use the winter to plan its 2023 offensives, stockpile ammunition and continue its campaign targeting critical infrastructure including power and water plants.

Russia's daily attacks are already intensifying. Last week a fuel depot was struck in Kherson, the first time since Russia withdrew. This week at least one person was killed and three wounded by Russian shelling, according to the Ukrainian president's office. Russian airstrikes damaged key infrastructure before Russia left, creating a dire humanitarian crisis. Coupled with the threat of attack, that is adding a layer of stress, say many who weathered Russia's occupation and are leaving, or considering it.

Ukrainian authorities this week began evacuating civilians from recently liberated parts of Kherson and Mykolaiv regions, fearing lack of heat, power and water due to Russian shelling will make winter unlivable.

Boarding a train on Monday, Tetyana Stadnik has decided to go after waiting for the liberation of Kherson. "We are leaving now because it's scary to sleep at night. Shells are flying over our heads and exploding. It's too much," she said. "We will wait until the situation gets better. And then we will come back home."

Others in the Kherson region have decided to stay despite living in fear. "I'm scared," said Ludmilla Bonder a resident of the small village of Kyselivka. "I still sleep fully clothed in the basement."

Walmart manager kills 6 in Virginia in another mass slaying

By ALEX BRANDON and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE, Va. (AP) — A Walmart manager pulled out a handgun before a routine employee meeting and began firing wildly around the break room of a Virginia store, killing six people in the nation's second high-profile mass shooting in four days, police and witnesses said.

The gunman was dead when officers arrived late Tuesday at the store in Chesapeake, Virginia's second-largest city. Authorities said he apparently shot himself. Police were trying to determine a motive. One employee described watching "bodies drop" as the assailant fired haphazardly, without saying a word.

"He was just shooting all throughout the room. It didn't matter who he hit. He didn't say anything. He didn't look at anybody in any specific type of way," Briana Tyler, a Walmart employee, said Wednesday.

Six people were wounded in the shooting, which happened just after 10 p.m. as shoppers were stocking up ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday. Police said they believe about 50 people were in the store at the time.

The gunman was identified as Andre Bing, 31, an overnight team leader who had been a Walmart employee since 2010. Police said he had one handgun and several magazines of ammunition.

Tyler said the overnight stocking team of 15 to 20 people had just gathered in the break room to go over the morning plan. She said the meeting was about to start, and one team leader said: "All right guys, we have a light night ahead of us." Then Bing turned around and opened fire on the staff.

At first, Tyler doubted the shooting was real, thinking that it was an active shooter drill.

"It was all happening so fast," she said, adding: "It is by the grace of God that a bullet missed me. I saw the smoke leaving the gun, and I literally watched bodies drop. It was crazy."

Police said three of the dead, including Bing, were found in the break room. One of the slain victims was found near the front of the store. Three others were taken to hospitals where they died.

Tyler, who started working at Walmart two months ago and had worked with Bing just a night earlier, said she never had a negative encounter with him, but others told her he was "the manager to look out for." She said Bing had a history of writing people up for no reason.

"He just liked to pick, honestly. I think he just looked for little things ... because he had the authority. That's just the type of person that he was. That's what a lot of people said about him," she said.

Employee Jessie Wilczewski told Norfolk television station WAVY that she hid under a table, and Bing looked and pointed his gun at her. He told her to go home, and she left.

Police said the dead included a 16-year-old boy whose name was being withheld because of his age. The other victims were identified as Brian Pendleton, 38; Kellie Pyle, 52; Lorenzo Gamble, 43; and Randy Blevins, 70, who were all from Chesapeake; and Tyneka Johnson, 22, of nearby Portsmouth.

It was not immediately clear whether they were workers or shoppers.

Pyle was a "lovely, generous and kind person," said Gwendolyn Bowe Baker Spencer, who said that her son and Pyle had plans to marry next year. Pyle had adult children in Kentucky who will be traveling to Virginia, Spencer said.

"We love her," Spencer said, adding: "She was an awesome, kind individual."

The attack was the second time in a little more than a week that Virginia has experienced a major shooting. Three University of Virginia football players were fatally shot on a charter bus as they returned to campus from a field trip on Nov. 13. Two other students were wounded.

The assault at the Walmart came days after a person opened fire at a gay nightclub in Colorado Springs, killing five people and wounding 17. Last spring, the country was shaken by the deaths of 21 when a gunman stormed an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Tuesday night's shooting also brought back memories of another attack at a Walmart in 2019, when a gunman who targeted Mexicans opened fire at a store in El Paso, Texas, and killed 23 people.

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A database run by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University that tracks every mass killing in America going back to 2006 shows that the U.S. has now had 40 mass killings so far in 2022. That compares with 45 for all of 2019, the highest year in the database, which defines a mass killing as at least four people killed, not including the killer.

According to the database, more than a quarter of the mass killings have occurred since Oct. 21, spanning eight states and claiming 51 lives. Nine of those 11 incidents were shootings.

President Joe Biden tweeted that he and the first lady were grieving, adding: "We mourn for those who will have empty seats at their Thanksgiving table because of these tragic events."

Kimberly Shupe, mother of Walmart employee Jalon Jones, told reporters her 24-year-old son was shot in the back. She said he was in good condition and talking Wednesday, after initially being placed on a ventilator.

Shupe said she learned of the shooting from a friend, who went to a family reunification center to learn Jones' whereabouts.

"If he's not answering his phone, he's not answering text messages and there's a shooting at his job, you just kind of put two and two together," Shupe said. "It was shock at first, but ultimately, I just kept thinking, 'he's going to be all right.'"

Walmart said in a statement that it was working with law enforcement and "focused on doing everything we can to support our associates and their families."

In the aftermath of the El Paso shooting, the company made a decision in September 2019 to discontinue sales of certain kinds of ammunition and asked that customers no longer openly carry firearms in stores.

It stopped selling handgun ammunition as well as short-barrel rifle ammunition, such as the .223 caliber and 5.56 caliber used in military style weapons.

The company stopped selling handguns in the mid-1990s in every state but Alaska, where sales continued until 2019. The changes marked a complete exit from that business and allowed Walmart to focus on hunting rifles and related ammunition only.

Many of its stores are in rural areas where hunters depend on Walmart to get their equipment.

Tyler's grandfather, Richard Tate, said he dropped his granddaughter off for her 10 p.m. shift, then parked the car and went in to buy some dish soap.

When he first heard the shots, he thought it could be balloons popping. But he soon saw other customers and employees fleeing, and he ran too.

Tate reached his car and called his granddaughter.

"I could tell that she was upset," he said. "But I could also tell that she was alive."

Writer who accused Trump of 1990s rape files new lawsuit

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A writer who accused former President Donald Trump of rape filed an upgraded lawsuit against him Thursday in New York, minutes after a new state law took effect allowing victims of sexual violence to sue over attacks that occurred decades ago.

E. Jean Carroll's lawyer filed the legal papers electronically as the Adult Survivor's Act temporarily lifted the state's usual deadlines for suing over sexual assault. She sought unspecified compensatory and punitive damages for pain and suffering, psychological harms, dignity loss and reputation damage.

Carroll, a longtime advice columnist for Elle magazine, first made the claim in a 2019 book, saying Trump raped her in the dressing room of a Manhattan luxury department store in 1995 or 1996.

Trump responded to the book's allegations by saying it could never have happened because Carroll was "not my type."

His remarks led Carroll to file a defamation lawsuit against him, but that lawsuit has been tied up in appeals courts as judges decide whether he is protected from legal claims for comments made while he was president.

Previously, Carroll had been barred by state law from suing over the alleged rape because too many

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years had passed since the incident.

New York's new law, however, gives sex crime victims who missed deadlines associated with statute of limitations a second chance to file a lawsuit. A window for such suits will open for one year, after which the usual time limits will be reinstated.

At least hundreds of lawsuits are expected, including many filed by women who say they were assaulted by co-workers, prison guards, medical providers or others.

In her new claims, Carroll maintains that Trump committed battery "when he forcibly raped and groped her" and that he defamed her when he denied raping her last month.

Trump said in his statement that Carroll "completely made up a story that I met her at the doors of this crowded New York City Department Store and, within minutes, 'swooned' her. It is a Hoax and a lie, just like all the other Hoaxes that have been played on me for the past seven years."

Carroll's new ability to sue Trump for rape could help her sidestep a potentially fatal legal flaw in her original defamation case.

If the courts ultimately hold that Trump's original disparaging comments about Carroll's rape allegation were part of his job duties, as president, she would be barred from suing him over those remarks, as federal employees are protected from defamation claims. No such protection would cover things he did prior to becoming president.

Judge Lewis A. Kaplan, who presides over the defamation lawsuit Carroll filed three years ago, may decide to include the new claims in a trial likely to occur in the spring.

Trump's current lawyers said this week that they do not yet know whether they will represent him against the new allegations.

Carroll's attorney, Roberta Kaplan, who is not related to the judge, said at a court hearing this week that the new claims should not require much additional gathering of evidence. She already put a copy of the new claims in the original case file last week. Trump and Carroll also have already been deposed.

In a statement regarding the new lawsuit, Kaplan said her client "intends to hold Donald Trump accountable not only for defaming her, but also for sexually assaulting her, which he did years ago in a dressing room at Bergdorf Goodman."

"Thanksgiving Day was the very first day Ms. Carroll could file under New York law so our complaint was filed with the court shortly after midnight," she added.

Attorney Michael Madaio, a lawyer for Trump, said at the hearing that the new allegations are significantly different than the original defamation lawsuit and would require "an entirely new set" of evidence gathering.

A lawyer for Trump did not respond to a message seeking comment on Wednesday. Another message seeking comment was sent to the lawyer after the lawsuit was filed less than 10 minutes into the new day.

Brazil election agency rejects Bolsonaro push to void votes

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — The head of Brazil's electoral authority has rejected the request from President Jair Bolsonaro's political party to annul ballots cast on most electronic voting machines, which would have overturned the Oct. 30 election.

Alexandre de Moraes had issued a prior ruling that implicitly raised the possibility that Bolsonaro's Liberal Party could suffer from such a challenge. He conditioned analysis of the request on the presentation of an amended report to include results from the first electoral round, on Oct. 2, in which the party won more seats in both congressional houses than any other, and he established a 24-hour deadline.

Earlier Wednesday, party president Valdemar Costa and lawyer Marcelo de Bessa held a press conference and said there would be no amended report.

"The complete bad faith of the plaintiff's bizarre and illicit request ... was proven, both by the refusal to add to the initial petition and the total absence of any evidence of irregularities and the existence of a totally fraudulent narrative of the facts," de Moraes wrote in his decision hours later.

He also ordered the suspension of government funds for the Liberal Party's coalition until a fine of 23

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million reais (\$4.3 million) for bad faith litigation is paid.

On Tuesday, de Bessa filed a 33-page request on behalf of Bolsonaro and Costa citing a software bug in the majority of Brazil's machines — they lack individual identification numbers in their internal logs — to argue all votes they recorded should be nullified. De Bessa said that doing so would leave Bolsonaro with 51% of the remaining valid votes.

Neither Costa nor de Bessa have explained how the bug might have affected election results. Independent experts consulted by The Associated Press said that, while newly discovered, it doesn't affect reliability and each voting machine is still readily identifiable through other means. In his ruling, de Moraes noted the same.

He also wrote that the challenge to the vote appeared aimed at incentivizing anti-democratic protest movements and creating tumult, and ordered the investigation of Costa and the consultant hired to conduct an evaluation.

"De Moraes' message to the political establishment is: the game is over. Questioning the result of the elections is not fair play, and people and institutions who do that will be punished harshly," said Maurício Santoro, a political science professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro.

In the press conference on Wednesday, Costa said his intention is merely to prevent the results of the 2022 vote from haunting Brazil into the future.

The electoral authority on Oct. 30 ratified the victory of Bolsonaro's nemesis, leftist former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and even many of the president's allies quickly accepted the results. Protesters in cities across the country have steadfastly refused to do the same, particularly with Bolsonaro declining to concede.

Bolsonaro spent more than a year claiming Brazil's electronic voting system is prone to fraud, without ever presenting evidence.

The South American nation began using an electronic voting system in 1996 and election security experts consider such systems less secure than hand-marked paper ballots, because they leave no auditable paper trail. But Brazil's system has been closely scrutinized by domestic and international experts who have never found evidence of it being exploited to commit fraud.

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GOP's Lisa Murkowski wins reelection in Alaska Senate race

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Alaska Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski has won reelection, defeating Donald Trump-endorsed GOP rival Kelly Tshibaka.

Murkowski beat Tshibaka in the Nov. 8 ranked choice election. The results were announced Wednesday, when elections officials tabulated the ranked choice results after neither candidate won more than 50% of first-choice votes. Murkowski wound up with 54% of the vote after ranked choice voting, picking up a majority of the votes cast for Democrat Pat Chesbro after she was eliminated.

"I am honored that Alaskans — of all regions, backgrounds and party affiliations — have once again granted me their confidence to continue working with them and on their behalf in the U.S. Senate," Murkowski said in a statement. "I look forward to continuing the important work ahead of us."

Tshibaka in a statement posted on her website congratulated Murkowski but took fault with ranked choice voting.

"The new election system has been frustrating to many Alaskans, because it was indisputably designed as an incumbent-protection program, and it clearly worked as intended," she said.

The race also included Republican Buzz Kelley, who suspended his campaign after the August primary and endorsed Tshibaka.

Murkowski was the only Senate Republican who voted to convict Trump at his impeachment trial last year who was on the ballot this year. Trump was not convicted. But her vote was a sore point for the former president, who vowed to campaign against her.

In 2020, before that year's election and far before Tshibaka jumped into the Senate race, Trump announced plans to campaign against Murkowski after she criticized him: "Get any candidate ready, good or bad, I don't care, I'm endorsing. If you have a pulse, I'm with you!"

He appeared at a rally in Anchorage in July for Tshibaka and Sarah Palin, whose run for Alaska's lone U.S. House seat he endorsed. He more recently participated in a tele-rally for Tshibaka in late October. Tshibaka, who worked in federal inspectors general offices before leading the Alaska Department of Administration for two years, credited Trump with helping to raise her name recognition and give her candidacy a boost.

Murkowski, who was censured by state Republican party leaders last year for offenses that included her impeachment vote, paid little attention to Trump during a campaign in which she emphasized a willingness to work across party lines and focused on her record and seniority. Murkowski, a moderate who has been in the Senate since 2002, is the most senior member of Alaska's congressional delegation following the death in March of Republican Rep. Don Young, who held Alaska's House seat for 49 years.

Murkowski is no stranger to tough reelection fights. She won a general election write-in campaign in 2010 after losing her party primary that year to a tea party Republican. Coming into this race, she had never won a general election with more than 50% of the vote.

This year's elections were held under a new system approved by voters in 2020 that replaced party primaries with open primaries and instituted ranked voting in general elections. Under the open primary system, the top four vote-getters, regardless of party affiliation, advance to the general election. "Our Alaska U.S. Senate election turned out to be another victory for the Washington, D.C. insiders who rarely have our best interests at heart," Tshibaka said in her post-election statement.

Tshibaka criticized a super PAC aligned with Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell for running ads against her when she said those resources could have been used to help Republicans in other states.

She said she "ranked the red," or the Republican candidates, on her ballot — but not in the Senate race. She said she did not consider Murkowski a "red" candidate.

"I didn't vote her either," Murkowski said on Election Day.

'Missing my baby': Six killed in Virginia Walmart shooting

By BEN FINLEY and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE, Va. (AP) — A custodian and father of two. A mother with wedding plans. A happy-go-lucky guy.

That's how friends and family described some of the six people killed at a Walmart in Chesapeake, Virginia, when a manager opened fire with a handgun right before an employee meeting. Five adults have been identified, while authorities have not released the name of the sixth person killed, a 16-year-old boy.

Here are some details about those who were lost:

Kellie Pyle, 52, of Chesapeake

Pyle was remembered as a generous and kind person, a mother who had wedding plans in the near future.

"We love her," said Gwendolyn Bowe Baker Spencer. "She was going to marry my son next year. She was an awesome, kind individual — yes she was."

Pyle had adult children in Kentucky who will be traveling to Virginia in the wake of the tragedy, Spencer said.

Brian Pendleton, 38, of Chesapeake

Pendleton made sure to be punctual. Although his shift as a custodian started at 10:30 p.m., he was in the break room when the shooting started just after 10, according to his mother, Michelle Johnson.

"He always came to work early so he would be on time for work," she told The Associated Press Wednesday. "He liked his coworkers."

Pendleton had recently celebrated his 10-year anniversary working at the store.

His mother said he didn't have any problems at work, except with a supervisor, Andre Bing, who was identified as the gunman.

"He just didn't like my son," Johnson said. "He would tell me that he (Bing) would give him a hard time."

Pendleton was born with a congenital brain disorder and grew up in Chesapeake, his mother said.

"He called me yesterday before he was going to work," Johnson said. "I always tell him to call me when gets off work."

As she was getting ready for bed, Johnson got a call from a family friend telling her there was a shoot-

ing at the Walmart.

"Brian was a happy-go-lucky guy. Brian loved family. Brian loved friends. He loved to tell jokes," his mother said. "We're going to miss him."

Lorenzo Gamble, 43, of Chesapeake

Gamble was a custodian on the overnight shift and had worked at Walmart for 15 years, The Washington Post reported.

His parents Linda and Alonzo Gamble said he loved spending time with his two sons.

"He just kept to himself and did his job," Linda Gamble said. "He was the quiet one of the family."

His mother said Gamble enjoyed going to his 19-year-old's football games and cheering for the Washington Commanders NFL team.

She posted on Facebook that she's having trouble saying goodbye.

"Missing my baby right now, life is not same without my son," she wrote.

Randy Blevins, 70, of Chesapeake

Blevins was a longtime member of the store's team that set prices and arranged merchandise, The New York Times reported.

Former co-worker Shaundrayia Reese, who said she worked at the store from around 2015 to 2018, spoke fondly of Blevins as "Mr. Randy."

She said the overnight crew at the store was "a family" and that employees relied on one another.

Tyneka Johnson, 22, of Portsmouth

A makeshift memorial to Johnson was placed in a grassy area outside the Walmart, with the words "Our Hearts are with you" and a basket of flowers.

The remembrance included a cluster of blue, white and gold balloons tied to a tree, alongside a stark yellow line of police tape.

'Bodies drop' as Walmart manager kills 6 in Virginia attack

By ALEX BRANDON and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE, Va. (AP) — A Walmart manager pulled out a handgun before a routine employee meeting and began firing wildly around the break room of a Virginia store, killing six people in the nation's second high-profile mass shooting in four days, police and witnesses said Wednesday.

The gunman was dead when officers arrived late Tuesday at the store in Chesapeake, Virginia's second-largest city. Authorities said he apparently shot himself. Police were trying to determine a motive. One employee described watching "bodies drop" as the assailant fired haphazardly, without saying a word.

"He was just shooting all throughout the room. It didn't matter who he hit. He didn't say anything. He didn't look at anybody in any specific type of way," said Briana Tyler, a Walmart employee.

Six people were wounded in the shooting, which happened just after 10 p.m. as shoppers were stocking up ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday. Police said they believe about 50 people were in the store at the time.

The gunman was identified as Andre Bing, 31, an overnight team leader who had been a Walmart employee since 2010. Police said he had one handgun and several magazines of ammunition.

Tyler said the overnight stocking team of 15 to 20 people had just gathered in the break room to go over the morning plan. She said the meeting was about to start, and one team leader said: "All right guys, we have a light night ahead of us." Then Bing turned around and opened fire on the staff.

At first, Tyler doubted the shooting was real, thinking that it was an active shooter drill.

"It was all happening so fast," she said, adding: "It is by the grace of God that a bullet missed me. I saw the smoke leaving the gun, and I literally watched bodies drop. It was crazy."

Police said three of the dead, including Bing, were found in the break room. One of the slain victims was found near the front of the store. Three others were taken to hospitals where they died.

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Tyler, who started working at Walmart two months ago and had worked with Bing just a night earlier, said she never had a negative encounter with him, but others told her he was "the manager to look out for." She said Bing had a history of writing people up for no reason.

"He just liked to pick, honestly. I think he just looked for little things ... because he had the authority. That's just the type of person that he was. That's what a lot of people said about him," she said.

Employee Jessie Wilczewski told Norfolk television station WAVY that she hid under a table, and Bing looked and pointed his gun at her. He told her to go home, and she left.

Police said the dead included a 16-year-old boy whose name was being withheld because of his age. The other victims were identified as Brian Pendleton, 38; Kellie Pyle, 52; Lorenzo Gamble, 43; and Randy Blevins, 70, who were all from Chesapeake; and Tyneka Johnson, 22, of nearby Portsmouth.

It was not immediately clear whether they were workers or shoppers.

Pyle was a "lovely, generous and kind person," said Gwendolyn Bowe Baker Spencer, who said that her son and Pyle had plans to marry next year. Pyle had adult children in Kentucky who will be traveling to Virginia, Spencer said.

"We love her," Spencer said, adding: "She was an awesome, kind individual."

The attack was the second time in a little more than a week that Virginia has experienced a major shooting. Three University of Virginia football players were fatally shot on a charter bus as they returned to campus from a field trip on Nov. 13. Two other students were wounded.

The assault at the Walmart came days after a person opened fire at a gay nightclub in Colorado Springs, killing five people and wounding 17. Last spring, the country was shaken by the deaths of 21 when a gunman stormed an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Tuesday night's shooting also brought back memories of another attack at a Walmart in 2019, when a gunman who targeted Mexicans opened fire at a store in El Paso, Texas, and killed 23 people.

A database run by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University that tracks every mass killing in America going back to 2006 shows that the U.S. has now had 40 mass killings so far in 2022. That compares with 45 for all of 2019, the highest year in the database, which defines a mass killing as at least four people killed, not including the killer.

According to the database, more than a quarter of the mass killings have occurred since Oct. 21, spanning eight states and claiming 51 lives. Nine of those 11 incidents were shootings.

President Joe Biden tweeted that he and the first lady were grieving, adding: "We mourn for those who will have empty seats at their Thanksgiving table because of these tragic events."

Kimberly Shupe, mother of Walmart employee Jalon Jones, told reporters her 24-year-old son was shot in the back. She said he was in good condition and talking Wednesday, after initially being placed on a ventilator.

Shupe said she learned of the shooting from a friend, who went to a family reunification center to learn Jones' whereabouts.

"If he's not answering his phone, he's not answering text messages and there's a shooting at his job, you just kind of put two and two together," Shupe said. "It was shock at first, but ultimately, I just kept thinking, 'he's going to be all right.'"

Walmart said in a statement that it was working with law enforcement and "focused on doing everything we can to support our associates and their families."

In the aftermath of the El Paso shooting, the company made a decision in September 2019 to discontinue sales of certain kinds of ammunition and asked that customers no longer openly carry firearms in stores.

It stopped selling handgun ammunition as well as short-barrel rifle ammunition, such as the .223 caliber and 5.56 caliber used in military style weapons.

The company stopped selling handguns in the mid-1990s in every state but Alaska, where sales continued until 2019. The changes marked a complete exit from that business and allowed Walmart to focus on hunting rifles and related ammunition only.

Many of its stores are in rural areas where hunters depend on Walmart to get their equipment.

Tyler's grandfather, Richard Tate, said he dropped his granddaughter off for her 10 p.m. shift, then parked

the car and went in to buy some dish soap.

When he first heard the shots, he thought it could be balloons popping. But he soon saw other customers and employees fleeing, and he ran too.

Tate reached his car and called his granddaughter.

"I could tell that she was upset," he said. "But I could also tell that she was alive."

Suspect in killing of 5 at Colorado club held without bail

By COLLEEN SLEVIN, THOMAS PEIPERT, JESSE BEDAYN and BRITTANY PETERSON Associated Press COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The alleged shooter facing possible hate crime charges in the fatal shooting of five people at a Colorado Springs gay nightclub was ordered held without bail in an initial court appearance Wednesday as the suspect sat slumped over in a chair.

Anderson Lee Aldrich, 22, could be seen with injuries visible on their face and head in a brief video appearance from jail. Aldrich appeared to need prompting by defense attorneys and offered a slurred response when asked to state their name by El Paso County Court Judge Charlotte Ankeny.

The suspect was beaten into submission by patrons during Saturday night's shooting at Club Q and released from the hospital Tuesday. The motive in the shooting was still under investigation, but authorities said Aldrich faces possible murder and hate crime charges.

Hate crime charges would require proving that the shooter was motivated by bias, such as against the victims' actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The charges against Aldrich are preliminary, and prosecutors have not yet filed formal charges.

Defense attorneys said late Tuesday that the suspect is nonbinary and in court filings referred to the suspect as "Mx. Aldrich." The attorneys' footnotes assert that Aldrich is nonbinary and uses they/them pronouns.

Prosecutor Michael Allen repeatedly referred to the suspect as "he" during a press briefing after the hearing and said the suspect's gender status would not change anything about the case in his opinion. Allen said Aldrich was "physically competent" to stand charges.

Ankeny set the next hearing for Dec. 6.

Of 17 people injured by gunshots in the attack, 11 remained hospitalized late Wednesday, officials said.

Aldrich's name was changed more than six years ago as a teenager, after filing a legal petition in Texas seeking to "protect himself" from a father with a criminal history including domestic violence against Aldrich's mother.

Aldrich was known as Nicholas Franklin Brink until 2016. Weeks before turning 16, Aldrich successfully petitioned a Texas court for a name change, court records show. A petition for the name change was submitted on Brink's behalf by his legal guardians at the time.

"Minor wishes to protect himself and his future from any connections to birth father and his criminal history. Father has had no contact with minor for several years," said the petition filed in Bexar County, Texas.

The suspect's father, Aaron Brink, is a mixed martial arts fighter and pornography performer with an extensive criminal history, including convictions for battery against the alleged shooter's mother, Laura Voepel, both before and after the suspect was born, state and federal court records show. A 2002 misdemeanor battery conviction in California resulted in a protective order that initially barred Aaron Brink from contacting the suspect or Voepel except through an attorney, but was later modified to allow monitored visits with the child.

Aaron Brink told the San Diego CBS affiliate, KFMB-TV, that he was shocked to learn about Aldrich's alleged involvement. He said his first reaction was to question why Aldrich was at a gay bar. Brink said he hadn't had much contact with his child but had taught them to fight, "praising" Aldrich for violent behavior at an early age. He added that he's sorry he let Aldrich down. Brink said "there's no excuse for going and killing people. If you're killing people, there's something wrong. It's not the answer."

One of the suspect's grandfathers is Randy Voepel, an outgoing lawmaker in the California state Assembly. The suspect's mother, Laura Voepel, identified Randy Voepel as her father on her Facebook page

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in a 2020 post about his time in the state Legislature.

Voepel, a Republican, had a mixed voting record on LGBTQ bills. He compared the Jan. 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol to the Revolutionary War, calling it the "first shots fired against tyranny." In response to criticism, he later said he didn't "condone or support the violence and lawlessness that took place."

Randy Voepel didn't return phone calls seeking comment. It's unclear how close he was with the suspect.

Aldrich's request for a name change came months after Aldrich was apparently targeted by online bullying. A website posting from June 2015 that attacked a teen named Nick Brink suggests they may have been bullied in high school. The post included photos similar to ones of the shooting suspect and ridiculed Brink over their weight, lack of money and what it said was an interest in Chinese cartoons.

Additionally, a YouTube account was opened in Brink's name that included an animation titled "Asian homosexual gets molested."

Local and federal authorities have declined to say why hate crime charges were being considered. District Attorney Michael Allen noted that the murder charges would carry the harshest penalty — life in prison — whereas bias crimes are eligible for probation. He also said it was important to show the community that bias motivated crimes are not tolerated.

Aldrich was arrested last year after their mother reported her child threatened her with a homemade bomb and other weapons, according to police. Ring doorbell video obtained by The Associated Press shows Aldrich arriving at their mother's front door with a big black bag the day of the 2021 bomb threat, telling her the police were nearby and adding, "This is where I stand. Today I die."

Authorities at the time said no explosives were found, but gun-control advocates have asked why police didn't use Colorado's "red flag" laws to seize the weapons Aldrich allegedly had.

Allen declined to answer questions related to the 2021 bomb threat following Wednesday's court hearing.

The weekend assault took place at a nightclub known as a sanctuary for the LGBTQ community in this mostly conservative city of about 480,000 about 70 miles (110 kilometers) south of Denver.

A longtime Club Q patron who was shot said the club's reputation made it a target. In a video statement, Ed Sanders said he thought about what he would do in a mass shooting after the 2016 massacre of 49 people at the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

"I think this incident underlines the fact that LGBT people need to be loved," said Sanders, 63. "I want to be resilient. I'm a survivor. I'm not going to be taken out by some sick person."

Authorities said Aldrich used a long rifle and was halted by two club patrons including Richard Fierro, who told reporters that he took a handgun from Aldrich, hit them with it and pinned them down with help from another person until police arrived.

The victims were Raymond Green Vance, 22, a Colorado Springs native who was saving money to get his own apartment; Ashley Paugh, 35, a mother who helped find homes for foster children; Daniel Aston, 28, who had worked at the club as a bartender and entertainer; Kelly Loving, 40, whose sister described her as "caring and sweet"; and Derrick Rump, 38, another club bartender known for his wit.

Thanksgiving travel rush is back with some new habits

By DAVID KOENIG and ALEXANDRA OLSON Associated Press

The Thanksgiving travel rush was back on this year, as people caught planes in numbers not seen in years, setting aside inflation concerns to reunite with loved ones and enjoy some normalcy after two holiday seasons marked by COVID-19 restrictions.

Changing habits around work and play, however, might spread out the crowds and reduce the usual amount of holiday travel stress. Experts say many people will start holiday trips early or return home later than normal because they will spend a few days working remotely — or at least tell the boss they're working remotely.

The busiest travel days during Thanksgiving week are usually Tuesday, Wednesday and the Sunday after the holiday. This year, the Federal Aviation Administration expects Tuesday to be the busiest travel day with roughly 48,000 scheduled flights.

Chris Williams, of Raleigh, North Carolina, flew Tuesday morning with his wife and two kids to Atlanta,

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Georgia, to spend the holiday with extended family.

"Of course it's a stressful and expensive time to fly," said Williams, 44, who works in finance. "But after a couple years of not getting to spend Thanksgiving with our extended family, I'd say we're feeling thankful that the world's gotten to a safe enough place where we can be with loved ones again."

Although Williams said the family's budget has been tight this year, he's capitalized on the opportunity to teach his kids some personal finance basics. His youngest, 11, has been learning how to budget her allowance money since March and is excited to buy small gifts for her friends on Black Friday or Cyber Monday. "Probably slime," she said, "with glitter."

The Transportation Security Administration screened nearly 2.3 million travelers on Tuesday, down from more than 2.4 million screened the Tuesday before Thanksgiving in 2019. On Monday, the numbers were up versus 2019 — more than 2.6 million travelers compared with 2.5 million. That same trend occurred Sunday, marking the first year that the number of people catching planes on Thanksgiving week surpassed pre-pandemic levels.

"People are traveling on different days. Not everyone is traveling on that Wednesday night," says Sharon Pinkerton, senior vice president at the trade group Airlines for America. "People are spreading their travel out throughout the week, which I also think will help ensure smoother operations."

AAA predicts that 54.6 million people will travel at least 50 miles from home in the U.S. this week, a 1.5% bump over Thanksgiving last year and only 2% less than in 2019. The auto club and insurance seller says nearly 49 million of those will travel by car, and 4.5 million will fly between Wednesday and Sunday.

U.S. airlines struggled to keep up as the number of passengers surged this year.

"We did have a challenging summer," said Pinkerton, whose group speaks for members including American, United and Delta. She said that airlines have pared their schedules and hired thousands of workers — they now have more pilots than before the pandemic. "As a result, we're confident that the week is going to go well."

U.S. airlines plan to operate 13% fewer flights this week than during Thanksgiving week in 2019. However, by using larger planes on average, the number of seats will drop only 2%, according to data from travel-researcher Cirium.

Airlines continue to blame flight disruptions on shortages of air traffic controllers, especially in Florida, a major holiday destination.

Controllers, who work for the Federal Aviation Administration, "get tested around the holidays. That seems to be when we have challenges," Frontier Airlines CEO Barry Biffle said a few days ago. "The FAA is adding another 10% to headcount, hopefully that's enough."

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has disputed such claims, saying that the vast majority of delays and cancellations are caused by the airlines themselves.

TSA expects airports to be busier than last year and probably about on par with 2019. The busiest day in TSA's history came on the Sunday after Thanksgiving in 2019, when nearly 2.9 million people were screened at airport checkpoints.

Stephanie Escutia, traveling with four children, her husband and her mother, said it took the family four hours to get through checking and security at the Orlando airport early Tuesday. The family was returning to Kansas City in time for Thanksgiving after a birthday trip to Disney World.

"We were surprised at how full the park was," said Escutia, 32. "We thought it might be down some but it was packed."

She welcomed the sense of normalcy, and said her family would be gathering for Thanksgiving without worrying about keeping their distance this year. "Now we are back to normal and looking forward to a nice holiday," she said.

People getting behind the wheel or boarding a plane don't seem fazed by higher gasoline and airfare prices than last year or the widespread concern about inflation and the economy. That is already leading to predictions of strong travel over Christmas and New Year's.

"This pent-up demand for travel is still a real thing. It doesn't feel like it's going away," says Tom Hall, a vice president and longtime writer for Lonely Planet, the publisher of travel guides. "That's keeping planes

full, that's keeping prices high."

Most Ukrainians left without power after new Russian strikes

By JOHN LEICESTER and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia unleashed a new missile onslaught on Ukraine's battered energy grid Wednesday, robbing cities of power and some of water and public transport, too, compounding the hardship of winter for millions. The aerial mauling of power supplies also took nuclear plants and internet links offline and spilled blackouts into neighbor Moldova.

Multiple regions reported attacks in quick succession and cascading outages. Ukraine's Energy Ministry said supplies were cut to "the vast majority of electricity consumers." Lviv's trams and trolleybuses stopped running as the city in western Ukraine lost both power and water, the mayor said. All of Kyiv lost water, the capital's mayor said. Power also went out and public transport stopped in Kharkiv, the mayor of that northeastern city, Ukraine's second largest, said.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy instructed Ukraine's ambassador to the United Nations to request an urgent Security Council meeting.

Addressing it later on Wednesday, Zelenskyy said that Ukraine will put forward a resolution condemning "any forms of energy terror." Referring to Russia's likely veto, he said, "it's nonsense that the veto right is secured for the party that wages this war, this criminal war."

"We cannot be hostage to one international terrorist," Zelenskyy said, saying the council must act.

He also invited the U.N. to send experts to examine and evaluate Ukraine's critical infrastructure.

Three people were killed and 11 wounded in a strike in Kyiv, city authorities said. Another four people were killed and 35 wounded in the wider Kyiv region, its governor said.

"I was going up the escalator, I heard an explosion. Then the electricity suddenly disappeared," said Kyiv subway passenger Oleksii Kolpachov. "When I got out of the subway, there was a column of smoke."

Russia has been pounding the power grid and other facilities with missiles and exploding drones for weeks, wreaking damage faster than it can be repaired. Strikes had already damaged around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, Zelenskyy said before the latest barrage, and rolling power outages had become the horrid new normal for millions.

Ukrainian officials believe Russian President Vladimir Putin is hoping that the misery of unheated and unlit homes in winter's cold and dark will turn public opinion against a continuation of the war — but say it's instead strengthening Ukrainian resolve.

Ukraine's Air Force said Russia launched around 70 cruise missiles and 51 were shot down, as were five exploding drones. The afternoon timing of the barrage — as was also the case last week — left workers toiling into the winter darkness to restore supplies.

Russian U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told the Security Council that Moscow is carrying out "strikes against infrastructure in response to the unbridled flow of weapons to Ukraine and the reckless appeals of Kyiv to defeat Russia."

In Kyiv, a city of 3 million, the administration said water and heating would only return to residential buildings on Thursday morning.

Late Wednesday and well after dark, the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office said that Kyiv and over a dozen regions, including Lviv and Odesa in the south, had been reconnected to the power grid.

Moldova, with Soviet-era energy systems interconnected with Ukraine, also reported massive power outages — for the second time this month. President Maia Sandu accused Moscow of plunging the country of 2.6 million into darkness and the foreign minister summoned Russia's ambassador for explanations.

"We cannot trust a regime that leaves us in the dark and cold, that intentionally kills people, out of a simple desire to keep other peoples in poverty and humiliation," Sandu said.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called Russia's waves of strikes in recent weeks "intolerable" and said: "This bombing terror against the civilian population must stop, and immediately."

U.N. political chief Rosemary DiCarlo said at the Security Council meeting on Wednesday the U.N. de-

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mands that Russia immediately stop the attacks, which violate international humanitarian law, stressing "there must be accountability for an violations of the laws of war."

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that Putin is "weaponizing winter to inflict intense suffering on the Ukraine people."

"He has decided that if he can't seize Ukraine by force, he will try to freeze the country into submission," she said.

Ukraine's state-owned nuclear operator, Energoatom, said the country's last three fully functioning nuclear power stations were all disconnected from the power grid in an "emergency protection" measure. It said radiation levels were unchanged at the sites and "all indicators are normal."

The Energy Ministry said the attacks also caused a temporary blackout of most thermal and hydroelectric power plants, and also affected transmission facilities. Repair teams were working "but given the extent of the damage, we will need time," it said on Facebook.

Wednesday's blackouts also caused "the largest internet outage in Ukraine in months and the first to affect neighboring Moldova, which has since partially recovered," said Doug Madory, director of internet analysis at network-monitoring Kentik Inc.

The onslaught followed an overnight Russian rocket attack in the town of Vilniansk, close to the city of Zaporizhzhia in southern Ukraine, that destroyed a hospital maternity ward, killing a 2-day-old newborn boy and critically injuring a doctor.

"The first S300 rocket hit the road. The second rocket hit this place, the main general hospital, at the maternity wing," said Mayor Nataliya Usienko. "One woman gave birth two days ago. She delivered a boy. Unfortunately this rocket took the life of this child who lived only two days."

On Twitter, Ukraine's First Lady Olena Zelenska wrote: "Horrible pain. We will never forget and never forgive."

The strike adds to the gruesome toll suffered by hospitals and other medical facilities — and their patients and staff — in the Russian invasion that will enter its tenth month this week.

They have been in the firing line from the outset, including a March 9 airstrike that destroyed a maternity hospital in the now-occupied port city of Mariupol.

In the southern city of Kherson, which Ukraine recaptured two weeks ago, many doctors are working without power in the dark, unable to use elevators to transport patients to surgery and operating with headlamps, cell phones and flashlights. In some hospitals, key equipment no longer works.

"Breathing machines don't work, X-ray machines don't work ... There is only one portable ultrasound machine and we carry it constantly," said Volodymyr Malishchuk, head of surgery at a Kherson children's hospital.

On Tuesday, after strikes on Kherson seriously wounded 13-year-old Artur Voblikov, a team of health staff carefully maneuvered the sedated boy up six narrow flights of stairs to an operating room to amputate his left arm.

Malischchuk said three children wounded by Russian strikes have come to the hospital this week. Picking up a piece of shrapnel found in a 14-year-old boy's stomach, he said children are arriving with severe head injuries and ruptured organs.

Artur's mother, Natalia Voblikova, sat in the dark hospital with her daughter, waiting for his surgery to end. "You can't even call (Russians) animals, because animals take care of their own," said Voblikova wiping tears from her eyes. "But the children ... Why kill children?"

10 days in, no suspect, no weapon in Idaho student slayings

MOSCOW, Idaho (AP) — Ten days after four University of Idaho students were stabbed to death in their rooms, police said Wednesday they still have not identified a suspect or found a murder weapon, and they continued asking for tips and surveillance video.

Moscow Police Capt. Roger Lanier told a news conference his department is putting all of its resources into solving the case and that investigators are prepared to work through the Thanksgiving holiday.

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Authorities gave no indication that they're any closer to making an arrest, but they did stress that they continue processing forensic evidence gathered from the home where the students were killed. Additional surveillance video could be just as helpful for what it doesn't show as what it does, said Police Chief James Fry.

"We continue moving forward to understand why this occurred in our community," Fry said.

The killings stunned bucolic Moscow, a college town and agricultural center that got its first Target store last year. The city, population of 26,000, is surrounded by rolling wheat and bean fields and had not seen a homicide since 2015.

The victims were housemates Madison Mogen, 21, of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Xana Kernodle, 20, of Post Falls, Idaho; Kaylee Goncalves, 21, of Rathdrum, Idaho; and Kernodle's boyfriend, Ethan Chapin, 20, of Mount Vernon, Washington.

Police said Tuesday they had pursued tips that Goncalves had a stalker, but they hadn't been able to identify one. They also have knocked down rumors about other incidents — including a car break-in and a dog's slaying — being potentially related to the case, as well as a rumor that the victims had been tied up or gagged.

According to investigators, Mogen and Goncalves had been out at a bar and a food truck before returning home at about 1:45 a.m. that Sunday. Kernodle and Chapin had been at a fraternity house and returned home about the same time. Two other housemates, whose names haven't been released, got back about 45 minutes earlier.

Just before noon, a 911 call from the house reported an unconscious person; it had been placed from the phone of one of the housemates. Officers found the four students dead, two on the second story and two on the third. At least some appeared to have been attacked in their sleep, and some had defensive wounds, police said. There were no signs of sexual assault.

Police initially called the killings "targeted" and said there was no general threat to the public, but they later walked that back, conceding they could not say there wasn't a threat. Many of the university's 11,000 students fled the campus in advance of the Thanksgiving break.

Faculty have been asked to prepare remote learning options for those students who don't want to return to in-person classes after the break, University of Idaho President Scott Green said. The school has boosted security in dorms and students can request security escorts around campus.

Dozens of agents, investigators and patrol officers from the FBI and Idaho State Patrol have been supporting the Moscow Police Department's efforts.

"Even with these extra resources, it is unclear how long this investigation will take," Green said in a video message Wednesday. "That is deeply frustrating for all of us."

A candlelight vigil to honor the victims is set for Nov. 30 on campus.

\$740M in crypto assets recovered in FTX bankruptcy so far

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The company tasked with locking down the assets of the failed cryptocurrency exchange FTX says it has managed to recover and secure \$740 million in assets so far, a fraction of the potentially billions of dollars likely missing from the company's coffers.

The numbers were disclosed on Wednesday in court filings by FTX, which hired the cryptocurrency custodial company BitGo hours after FTX filed for bankruptcy on Nov. 11.

The biggest worry for many of FTX's customers is they'll never see their money again. FTX failed because its founder and former CEO Sam Bankman-Fried and his lieutenants used customer assets to make bets in FTX's closely related trading firm, Alameda Research. Bankman-Fried was reportedly looking for upwards of \$8 billion from new investors to repair the company's balance sheet.

Bankman-Fried "proved that there is no such thing as a 'safe' conflict of interest," BitGo CEO Mike Belshe said in an email.

The \$740 million figure is from Nov. 16. BitGo estimates that the amount of recovered and secured as-

sets has likely risen above \$1 billion since that date.

The assets recovered by BitGo are now locked in South Dakota in what is known as "cold storage," which means they're cryptocurrencies stored on hard drives not connected to the internet. BitGo provides what is known as "qualified custodian" services under South Dakota law. It's basically the crypto equivalent of financial fiduciary, offering segregated accounts and other security services to lock down digital assets.

Several crypto companies have failed this year as bitcoin and other digital currencies have collapsed in value. FTX failed when it experienced the crypto equivalent of a bank run, and early investigations have found that FTX employees intermingled assets held for customers with assets they were investing.

"Trading, financing, and custody need to be different," Belshe said.

The assets recovered include not only bitcoin and ethereum, but also a collection of minor cryptocurrencies that vary in popularity and value, such as the shiba inu coin.

California-based BitGo has a history of recovering and securing assets. The company was tasked with securing assets after the cryptocurrency exchange Mt. Gox failed in 2014. It is also the custodian for the assets held by the government of El Salvador as part of that country's experiment in using bitcoin as legal tender.

FTX is paying BitGo a \$5 million retainer and \$100,000 a month for its services.

Witness: Shooter at gay club showed 'no hesitation'

By JESSE BEDAYN and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — Deanne VanScyoc said she dropped to the floor behind a pool table at Club Q and called 911 as the first shots rang out just before midnight, hitting people at the bar.

VanScyoc was facing the entrance from behind a glass wall when the shooter came in, she said. The shooter turned right and fired a single shot toward the bar, then three more in rapid succession, then a flurry of shots. As pop music pounded and a strobe light flashed, VanScyoc saw the shooter, in body armor, move in a crouch down a ramp, rifle at eye level, and head toward the dance floor.

"There was no hesitation," VanScyoc told The Associated Press in an interview.

Patrons at the gay club that night were celebrating a drag queen's birthday and the atmosphere had been festive. When the shooting started, much of the crowd already had left the dance floor and was gathered in an enclosed patio just off the dance floor.

Five people were killed and 17 wounded by gunfire in an attack that unfolded over just minutes, according to authorities.

As the shooter moved deeper into the club, VanScyoc heard another volley of shots. The shooter, who police identified as Anderson Lee Aldrich, 22, sprayed bullets across the dance hall. Partygoers along the walls flipped over tables and ducked behind them, according to VanScyoc and a friend who was there, A.J. Bridgewater. The two recounted what happened during the shooting while standing beside the growing memorial of flowers outside the club on Tuesday night.

VanScyoc didn't see the victims get shot, she said, "but I heard screams."

Another patron, James Slaugh, said he had been getting ready to leave for the night when, "all of a sudden we just hear, 'pop, pop, pop.' As I turn, I took a bullet in my arm from the back."

Slaugh, who spoke from his hospital bed, said he watched others around him fall, including his boyfriend, who was shot in the leg, and his sister, who survived with bullet wounds in 13 places. The scariest part of the shooting, he said, was not knowing whether the assailant would fire again.

As she saw the shooter move toward the patio — viewable from the dance hall through a glass door — VanScyoc took her chance and jumped up from behind the pool table to run for an exit.

Out on the patio, Bridgewater said he started to flee as the first volleys rang out, but panicked and tripped over a stool. He regained his footing and rushed with a group of about 20 people toward a closed garage door that led to a fenced-in area. "It was flight or die," he said.

Neither VanScyoc nor Bridgewater saw Aldrich subdued, but believed it happened as the attacker moved toward the patio. Aldrich was pulled to the ground by two club patrons — Thomas James and Richard

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Fierro — and beaten.

To those who frequented Club Q, the violence also desecrated one of the few places the Colorado Springs LGBTQ community could fully embrace their authentic selves.

The motive for the attack is still being investigated. A judge ordered Aldrich to be held without bail during an initial court appearance Wednesday on preliminary charges of murder and hate crimes. Officials say Aldrich was armed with a semi-automatic rifle and at least one other gun was recovered at the scene.

Once VanScyoc had made it outside, she moved to the front entrance of the club, where she said James had collapsed with a bullet wound in his chest after helping subdue the suspect. She held pressure on the wound with one hand and spoke to police on her phone until paramedics arrived.

Meanwhile, Bridgewater and the crowd on the patio had opened the door open with some difficulty, scaled the fence, and ran toward a nearby Walgreens, pounding on the door to no response. The group moved next to a 7-Eleven, where they found another clubgoer, Barrett Hudson, lying face down with seven bullet wounds in his back as people on the scene tried to stop the bleeding.

In the early morning hours after the shooting, Bridgewater and others gathered in a friend's apartment, watching the story unfold in the media. He kept trying to call Club Q bartender Derrick Rump, one of Bridgewater's closest friends, then learned he was among those killed.

"We all lost it," said Bridgewater.

The days since, he said, have been a blur of "silence, tears, a moment of laughter, chaos."

Germany players cover mouths at World Cup in FIFA protest

By CIARÁN FAHEY AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Germany's players covered their mouths for the team photo before their opening World Cup match on Wednesday to protest against FIFA following the governing body's clampdown on the "One Love" armband.

The Germany team lined up in the traditional formation before its game against Japan and all 11 players covered their mouths with their right hands in a coordinated gesture.

"It was a sign from the team, from us, that FIFA is muzzling us," Germany coach Hansi Flick said after the match, which his team lost 2-1.

The gesture was a response to FIFA's effective nixing of seven European teams' plans to wear armbands that were seen as a rebuke to host nation Qatar and its human rights record.

Team captains, including Germany captain Manuel Neuer, had planned to wear the armband with the heart-shaped, multicolored logo, a symbol for inclusion and diversity. But the seven federations backed down after FIFA made it clear they would face consequences if they did not.

"We may have our bands taken away from us, but we'll never let our voices be taken from us," Neuer said. "We stand for human rights. That's what we wanted to show. We may have been silenced by FIFA regarding the captain's armbands, but we always stand for our values."

Neuer said the idea for the mouth-covering gesture came from the team.

"We really wanted to do something and we thought about what we could do," Neuer said. "It was clear that we wanted to send a signal."

FIFA said Germany will not face disciplinary action for the gesture.

Against Japan, Neuer wore an armband with the FIFA-approved "No Discrimination" slogan, though it was hard to see under the sleeve of his jersey. Neuer said it was too loose and that it kept slipping.

The German soccer federation posted a statement on Twitter during Wednesday's game stating its position.

"With our captain's armband, we wanted to send a signal for values that we live in the national team: diversity and mutual respect. Being loud together with other nations.

"It's not a political message: human rights are nonnegotiable. That should be obvious. Unfortunately it still isn't. That's why this message is so important to us," the federation said. "Denying us the armband is like muzzling us. Our stance stands."

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Qatar has been under scrutiny for its human rights record and laws criminalizing homosexuality. FIFA issued its warning to the federations on Monday, hours before England and the Netherlands were set to play with their captains wearing the "One Love" armbands. The governing body said the players would immediately be shown a yellow card and could face further consequences.

German soccer federation president Bernd Neuendorf called the warning "another low blow" from FIFA. German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, who is also responsible for sports, wore a "One Love" armband in the stands at the Germany game, where she was sitting beside FIFA president Gianni Infantino. Faeser posted a photo of herself on Twitter wearing it with the hashtag #OneLove.

News agency DPA reported that Faeser had the armband on under a pink blazer that she took off during the first half.

Earlier, Faeser criticized Qatar for forcing a German fan to remove a rainbow-colored armband and headband at another game.

"This is not in line with my understanding of the security guarantees that I was given by the (Qatari) interior minister," Faeser said. "Security must apply to all people. I'm very disappointed about this."

The rainbow flag is a widely used as a symbol of tolerance with regard to sexual diversity.

Faeser said "such symbols should be openly shown."

At a later match, Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib wore the "One Love" armband when she met with Infantino at her country's game against Canada. She also posted a photo of herself on Twitter wearing the band.

Georgia high court reinstates ban on abortions after 6 weeks

By SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The Georgia Supreme Court on Wednesday reinstated the state's ban on abortions after roughly six weeks of pregnancy, abruptly ending access to later abortions that had resumed days earlier.

In a one-page order, the justices put a lower court ruling overturning the ban on hold while they consider an appeal. Doctors who had resumed providing abortions after six weeks had to immediately stop.

Abortion advocates blasted the order, saying it will traumatize women who must now arrange travel to other states for an abortion or keep their pregnancies. Women waiting for an abortion at providers' offices were turned away, according to the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, which represents abortion providers challenging the ban.

"It is outrageous that this extreme law is back in effect, just days after being rightfully blocked," said Alice Wang, an attorney with the Center for Reproductive Rights, which also represents plaintiffs in the case. "This legal ping pong is causing chaos for medical providers trying to do their jobs and for patients who are now left frantically searching for the abortion services they need."

The state attorney general's office in a court filing said "untold numbers of unborn children" would "suffer the permanent consequences" if the state Supreme Court did not issue a stay and halt the Nov. 15 decision by Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney.

McBurney ruled the state's abortion ban was invalid because when it was signed into law in 2019, U.S. Supreme Court precedent that was established by *Roe v. Wade* and another ruling had allowed abortion well past six weeks.

The decision immediately prohibited enforcement of the abortion ban statewide. The state appealed and asked the Georgia Supreme Court to put the decision on hold while the appeal moved forward.

Although abortions past six weeks had resumed, some abortion providers said they were proceeding cautiously over concerns the ban could be quickly reinstated.

Georgia's ban first took effect in July, after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. It prohibits most abortions once a "detectable human heartbeat" is present.

Cardiac activity can be detected by ultrasound in cells within an embryo that will eventually become the heart around six weeks into a pregnancy. That means most abortions in Georgia are effectively banned at a point before many people know they are pregnant.

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The measure was passed by the state Legislature and signed into law by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp in 2019. In his ruling, McBurney said the timing — before the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* — made the law immediately invalid. Legislatures exceed their authority when they enact laws that violate a constitutional right declared by the judicial branch. To enact the law, the state Legislature would have to pass it again, he wrote.

The state attorney general's office in a filing with the Georgia Supreme Court blasted McBurney's reasoning as having "no basis in law, precedent, or common sense."

Plaintiffs' attorneys defended it in a reply and warned of "irreparable harm" to women if it were put on hold. They also asked the high court for 24 hours notice before issuing any stay to "avoid the potential chaos" from resuming the ban while women waited for an abortion or were in the middle of getting one.

The state Supreme Court did not conduct a hearing before issuing its order, and plaintiffs' attorneys said it denied their request for 24 hours notice.

The high court's order said seven of the nine justices agreed with the decision. It said one was disqualified and another did not participate.

Japan gets 2 late goals to upset Germany 2-1 at World Cup

By CIARÁN FAHEY AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Another World Cup day, another World Cup shock.

Substitutes Ritsu Doan and Takuma Asano scored late goals Wednesday to help Japan come from behind and upset Germany 2-1.

Both Doan and Asano play for German clubs.

"I believe it's a historic moment, a historic victory. If I think about the development of Japanese soccer, thinking of players, for them this was a big surprise," said Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu, who had five Germany-based players in his starting lineup and three, including the scorers, on the bench.

"They're fighting in a very strong, tough, prestigious league. They've been building up their strength. In that context we believe that those divisions (Bundesliga and second division) have been contributing to the development of Japanese players," Moriyasu said. "I'm very grateful for that."

Ilkay Gündogan had given four-time champion Germany the lead with a first-half penalty. But Doan, who plays for Freiburg, pounced on a rebound to equalize in the 76th minute after Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer blocked a shot from Takumi Minamino.

Then Asano, who plays for Bochum, sprinted clear of Nico Schlotterbeck and beat Neuer from a narrow angle in the 83rd minute.

It was the first competitive meeting between the two nations. They played two friendlies in the past, with Germany winning 3-0 in 2004 before a 2-2 draw in 2006.

Germany outplayed Japan for much of Wednesday's match and had 24 attempts on goal compared to Japan's 11. The Japanese had only 24% possession.

"It's brutally disappointing, not only for the players, but also the coaching team," Germany coach Hansi Flick said. "We deserved to go in front. It was more than deserved. Then you have to say that Japan gave us a lesson in efficiency."

The match was played a day after Argentina's 2-1 upset loss to Saudi Arabia.

Before their game, Germany's players covered their mouths during the team photo to protest against FIFA following its decision to stop plans to wear armbands that were seen as protesting discrimination in host nation Qatar.

Nancy Faeser, Germany's sports minister, attended the match at the Khalifa International Stadium and was sitting beside FIFA president Gianni Infantino while wearing the same "One Love" armband that FIFA had outlawed with its threats of consequences.

It was only the third time Germany had lost its tournament-opening game after defeats against Algeria in 1982 and Mexico in 2018. In the other World Cup openers for Germany, the team had won 13 matches and drawn four.

Despite giving away the penalty for a clumsy challenge on left back David Raum, Japan goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda made a string of saves and was player of the game.

"We fought as a team," Gonda said. "We have to make sure we never stop."

Japan will next play Costa Rica on Sunday, while Germany will face Spain. The Spanish routed Costa Rica 7-0 in the other Group E match.

Germany's buildup was fraught by protests and political statements because of Qatar's human rights record and its treatment of migrant workers and members of the LGBTQ community.

Germany midfielder Joshua Kimmich complained Tuesday that he had the feeling he wasn't able to fully enjoy playing at the tournament because of all the negative coverage.

Germany was playing at the World Cup for the first time since its surprising group-stage exit as defending champion in 2018, while Japan is appearing in its seventh straight World Cup and is looking to reach the quarterfinals for the first time.

Teen Gavi leads Spain to 7-0 rout of Costa Rica at World Cup

By TALES AZZONI AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Not since Pelé in 1958 had someone as young as Gavi scored a goal at the World Cup.

The 18-year-old midfielder led the way Wednesday as Spain pulled off the biggest World Cup victory in its history, routing Costa Rica 7-0.

"I could never have imagined it," said Gavi, who was named the game's most valuable player. "I know I'm the youngest in the team and I respect everyone, but on the field it's different and I bring out my best."

Pelé scored two goals in the 1958 final, when Brazil won its first World Cup by beating Sweden 5-2.

"I'm proud to be in that podium," he said. "Not even in my dreams I had imagined this."

Gavi only managed to score one goal on Wednesday, but his teammates added plenty of others.

Not long after Japan surprised Germany 2-1 in the other Group E match, Spain's young squad avoided any chance of an upset with Dani Olmo, Marco Asensio and Ferran Torres scoring a goal each in the first half. Torres, Gavi, Carlos Soler and Alvaro Morata added to the lead in the second half.

In addition to Gavi's mark, Olmo's goal was the 100th at World Cups for "La Roja," which became the sixth nation to score more than 100 times in the tournament.

It was the first time Spain scored seven goals in a World Cup match, and the first time a team completed 1,000 passes in a 90-minute game at the tournament.

"Our only goal is to control the game continuously, and to do that you need to have the ball," Spain coach Luis Enrique said.

With Gavi and 19-year-old Pedri starting, Spain also became the first European nation with two teenagers in the starting lineup of a World Cup match in 60 years, according to statistics platform Opta.

Gavi and Pedri were among the many youngsters picked by Luis Enrique in a revamped squad in Qatar — the third-youngest team among the 32 nations, after the United States and Ghana.

The young duo helped Spain control the pace of the match from the start at Al Thumama Stadium. The 22-year-old Torres, who is dating the daughter of coach Luis Enrique, scored his first World Cup goal from the penalty spot in the 31st minute. The others came during the run of play.

"When things go your way like this, soccer becomes wonderful," Luis Enrique said. "We played exceptionally well with and without the ball."

Costa Rica looked overwhelmed throughout the game in its third straight World Cup campaign, failing to even get a single attempt on goal. The team came to Qatar hoping to repeat its surprise run to the quarterfinals in 2014 in Brazil, and avoid a repeat of its winless showing four years ago in Russia.

"We didn't hold on to the possession as we should have done it," Costa Rica coach Luis Fernando Suárez said. "We couldn't complete three or four passes."

Spanish players made it look easy with the ball on their feet, finishing the match with 72% of possession.

Spain, which didn't get past the round of 16 in Russia, is trying to break through with a major title after

making it to the final of the Nations League and the semifinals of last year's European Championship. This year the team also qualified for the Final Four of the Nations League for a second straight time. Spain's last major triumph came at Euro 2012, two years after it won its lone World Cup title in South Africa.

Only five countries have scored more goals than Spain at the World Cup — Brazil, Germany, Argentina, Italy and France.

Spain next faces four-time World Cup champion Germany on Sunday in one of the most anticipated matches of the World Cup.

UN: Children in Haiti hit by cholera as malnutrition rises

By EVENS SANON and DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — A cholera outbreak sweeping through Haiti is claiming a growing number of children amid a surge in malnutrition, UNICEF announced Wednesday.

The deadly combination means that about 40% of cholera cases in the impoverished country of more than 11 million inhabitants now involve children, with 9 out of 10 cases reported in areas where people are starving, according to the United Nations agency.

"We have to plan for the worst," Manuel Fontaine, director of UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programs, told The Associated Press on Tuesday during a visit to Haiti.

Cholera has killed at least 216 people and sickened more than 12,000 since the first deaths were announced in early October, according to the Haitian Health Ministry and Pan American Health Organization. They say about 9,300 people are currently hospitalized with the disease. Experts believe the number is much higher due to underreporting.

UNICEF and Haiti's government are seeking at least \$28 million to help feed, hydrate and care for 1.4 million people affected by the crisis, with that number expected to increase as malnutrition worsens, especially in urban areas such as the Cite Soleil slum in the capital of Port-au-Prince, something that hasn't been seen before.

"Cholera and malnutrition are a lethal combination, one leading to the other," Fontaine said.

On a recent morning at the Gheskio medical clinic in Port-au-Prince, nurses, doctors and social workers tended to malnourished children who also were fighting cholera.

"This is a challenge for us," said Dr. Karine Sévère, who runs the clinic's cholera department. "When the children are malnourished, it takes more time for them to recover."

She estimates that malnutrition cases have increased by at least 40% in recent weeks, with nurses feeding children soup in the morning and rice, beans, meat and vegetables in the afternoon to help them gain weight.

It's food that not many parents can afford in a country where about 60% of the population earns less than \$2 a day.

Roselord David, 40, says she and her five children had to flee Cite Soleil after warring gangs set her house on fire. They temporarily lived in a public park and then moved in with her sister as she continues to struggle to find food for her children.

A social worker who spotted her emaciated 5-year-old daughter at the park urged David to take her to the clinic.

"They told me she was suffering from malnutrition," David said in a quiet voice, embarrassed to confide her family's problems in the clinic packed with patients.

Nearby, a 15-year-old teenage boy was sleeping, an IV in his thin arm.

His friend, Island Meus, said she was taking turns with his mother to care for him.

"He sometimes goes without food," she confided, adding that he occasionally eats a bowl of rice with plantains when his family can afford it.

Haiti's government recently requested cholera vaccines, but there's a worldwide shortage of them and 31 countries are reporting outbreaks, so it's unclear if and when they will arrive. However, Fontaine said Haiti would be given priority.

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The country's first brush with cholera occurred in 2010 after U.N. peacekeepers from Nepal introduced the bacteria into the country's largest river by sewage. Nearly 10,000 people died, and more than 850,000 became ill.

This time, the situation is more complicated, said Bobby Sander, Haiti director for Food for the Hungry. Nearly half of those sick with cholera are now younger than 15, and they are struggling to survive given the deepening malnutrition crisis, he said in a phone interview.

The situation also is worsening because gang violence has spiked, preventing aid groups from reaching those who need it the most.

"It's really complex," he said. "We have to act right now."

Remote desert camps house World Cup fans on a budget

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

AL KHOR, Qatar (AP) — For scores of foreign soccer fans, the road to the World Cup in Doha starts every morning at a barren campsite in the middle of the desert.

Visitors who found hotels in central Doha booked up or far beyond their budget have settled for the faraway, dust-blown tent village in Al Khor, where there are no locks on tents nor beers on draft.

Others simply wanted an adventure. On Wednesday a DJ blasted electronic dance music around a fire pit as a smattering of fans lounged on beanbags, sipped sodas and gazed up at big screens roughly an hour from Doha.

"I'm here because I couldn't find anywhere else," said Haidar Haji, a 27-year-old architectural engineer from Kuwait. He said it was a pain to trek into Doha every morning from the tent village, but he had no other option. "The hotels were just too expensive. It was crazy."

Even so, Al Khor fan village is not cheap. Haji said he's paying \$450 a night for his sparse makeshift shelter, which authorities advertise as a "perfect destination for a truly enjoyable and lavish stay." The tents are equipped with plumbing and basic furniture. The site has a swimming pool and upscale Arabic restaurant.

From the moment that Qatar was named host of the World Cup, fears mounted over how the tiny country would find rooms for the massive influx of 1.2 million fans — equal to almost one-third of the population.

Qatar's frenzied building program delivered tens of thousands of rooms through new hotels, rented apartments and even three giant cruise ships. But soaring prices have forced many thrifty fans into remote desert campsites and giant fan villages in Doha's outer reaches, including one near the airport consisting of corrugated box rooms.

At Al Khor Village, many fans complained about the isolation, and lack of alcohol.

"Honestly, you can find more alcohol in Tehran," said Parisa, a 42-year-old Iranian oil worker who declined to give her last name, citing the political situation in Iran. She was gazing into space in the campsite common area, and said she had little idea how to fill her time. Doha's swanky hotel bars were miles away. "We thought they would open up more for the foreigners to have fun."

Paola Bernal from Tabasco, southern Mexico, wasn't sure what to expect from the first World Cup in the Middle East. But she said she's been surprised by how long it takes to traverse the world's tiniest host country. The buses from the campsite are a "mess," she said, and stop running at 10 p.m., forcing fans to fork out large sums for Uber rides.

"There are such long distances, I don't know how," she said. Although some stadiums are linked to Doha's gleaming new metro network, they often require a 2.5 kilometer (1.5 mile) walk from the stations. Other grounds can only be reached by bus, with some drop-off points a trek from stadium gates — and desirable bars and restaurants even further afield.

Al Khor's arid grounds are no selfie-taker's paradise. But Nathan Thomas, a site designer, said he was very pleased with the "authentic Arabian" result. The only major worry, he said, is security. Not every tent is in eyeshot of a guard post. Tents have no locks. Their flaps easily untie.

"We keep telling people it's a safe country, don't worry," he said.

From the Free Zone Fan Village, in the desert south of Doha, fans were lugging suitcases across large

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swaths of artificial turf under the glare of stadium lights. The manufactured cabins are some of the cheapest available accommodation, starting at roughly \$200 a night. Every few minutes, low-flying planes roar over the village to the old airport, which has been reopened to handle daily shuttle flights to the tournament. Banners plastered on the trailers urge fans to "Cheer up."

Just days before the tournament, social media filled with images of toilets that had yet to be installed and wires still coiled on the dirt to hook up water and electricity.

Many complained of excessively long waits to check in. A crowd of guests waiting in line Wednesday night said they couldn't get their rooms because the reception desk wasn't sure who had already checked out. "We wanted good vibes, good energy, to be with other people," said Mouman Alani from Morocco. "This is very disorganized."

One camper on Twitter lambasted the site as "Fyre Festival 2.0," referring to an infamous music festival billed as a luxury getaway that left fans scrambling for makeshift shelters on a dark beach.

"When we went to our room, it was all messed up," said Aman Mohammed, a 23-year-old from Kolkata, India, at the common area on Wednesday. He said he waited two hours under the searing sun for a cleaner to arrive the day before. "It was stinking so bad, like a bad bathroom. It was pathetic."

But, he insisted, there was no false advertising. The website shows scores of colorful metal boxes side by side in a vast dusty lot. And despite his disappointment, he said, the World Cup was ultimately about the soccer.

"(Cristiano) Ronaldo is playing his last World Cup, I'm here just to see him," Mohammed said, referring to the superstar competing for Portugal in the tournament. "To attend this is a dream for me since I was a child."

Twin blasts shake Jerusalem, killing teen and wounding 18

By ALON BERNSTEIN and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Two blasts went off near bus stops in Jerusalem at the height of morning rush hour on Wednesday, killing a Canadian-Israeli teenager and injuring at least 18, in what police said were attacks by Palestinians.

The first explosion occurred near a typically crowded bus stop on the edge of the city. The second went off about half an hour later in Ramot, a settlement in the city's north. Police said one person died from their wounds and at least three were seriously wounded in the blasts.

The victim was identified as Aryeh Schupak, 15, who was heading to a Jewish seminary when the blast went off, according to a notice announcing his death. Schupak was also a Canadian citizen, according to Canada's Ambassador to Israel Lisa Stadelbauer.

Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians have been surging for months, amid nightly Israeli raids in the occupied West Bank prompted by a spate of deadly attacks against Israelis that killed 19 people in the spring.

There has also been an uptick in recent weeks in Palestinian attacks. Israeli troops shot dead two Palestinians after what Israel said was an armed attack in the occupied West Bank.

The violence occurred hours after Palestinian militants stormed a West Bank hospital and carried out an Israeli citizen seeking treatment there after a car accident, according to the young man's father. That incident could further ratchet up tensions.

Outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid said Israel would track down the attackers.

"They can run, they can hide — it won't help them," he said in a statement. "We will punish them to the fullest extent of the law."

The developments took place as former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is holding coalition talks after national elections and is likely to return to power as head of what's expected to be Israel's most right-wing government ever.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, an extremist lawmaker who has called for the death penalty for Palestinian attackers and who is set to become the minister in charge of police under Netanyahu, said the attack meant Israel

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needed to take a tougher stance on Palestinian violence.

"We must exact a price from terror," he said at the scene of the first explosion. "We must return to be in control of Israel, to restore deterrence against terror."

Police, who were searching for the suspected attackers, said their initial findings showed that shrapnel-laden explosive devices were placed at the two sites. The police said it deployed additional officers to the city in the aftermath of the blasts.

The twin blasts occurred amid the buzz of rush hour traffic and police briefly closed part of a main highway leading out of the city, where the first explosion went off. Video from shortly after the initial blast showed debris strewn along the sidewalk as the wail of ambulances blared. A bus in Ramot was pocked with what looked like shrapnel marks.

"It was a crazy explosion," Yosef Haim Gabay, a medic who was at the scene when the first blast occurred, told Israeli Army Radio. "I saw people with wounds bleeding all over the place."

While Palestinians have carried out stabbings, car rammings and shootings in recent years, bombing attacks have become very rare since the end of a Palestinian uprising nearly two decades ago.

The U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem condemned the violence, as did EU Ambassador to Israel Dimiter Tzantchev.

The Islamic militant Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip and once carried out suicide bombings against Israelis, praised the perpetrators of the attacks, calling it a heroic operation, but stopped short of claiming responsibility.

"The occupation is reaping the price of its crimes and aggression against our people," Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua said.

Israel said that in response to the blasts, it was closing two West Bank crossings to Palestinians near the West Bank city of Jenin, a militant stronghold.

In Jenin late Tuesday, militants entered a hospital and removed the Israeli teen wounded in a car accident. The young man, 17, was from Israel's Druze minority. His father, who was in the hospital room with him, said the militants disconnected him from hospital equipment and took him while still alive. The Israeli military said the young man was already dead when he was taken.

"It was something horrendous. It was something that was inhumane," Husam Ferro, the teen's father, told Israeli news site YNet. "He was still alive and they took him in front of my eyes and I couldn't do anything."

A Druze community leader told YNet talks were underway on the body's return to the family. Palestinian militants have in the past carried out kidnappings to seek concessions from Israel. Lapid said the militants would "pay a heavy price" if the body was not returned.

Palestinian officials either declined to comment or did not respond to requests for comment.

More than 130 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli-Palestinian fighting in the West Bank and east Jerusalem this year, making 2022 the deadliest year since 2006. The Israeli army says most of the Palestinians killed have been militants. But stone-throwing youths protesting Israeli army incursions and others not involved in confrontations have also been killed.

At least eight Israelis have been killed in the most recent wave of Palestinian attacks.

The Israeli military said Wednesday that Palestinian gunmen opened fire on forces escorting worshippers to a flashpoint shrine in the West Bank city of Nablus overnight. The troops fired back and the Palestinian Health Ministry said a 16-year-old was killed in the incident, and hours later, it said Muhammed Abu Kishkek, 22, also died from a gunshot wound to the stomach.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war, along with east Jerusalem and Gaza. The Palestinians seek the territories for their hoped-for independent state.

Prayers go on, sometimes out of sight, in prep football

By LARRY LAGE AP Sports Writer

WEST BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — Surrounded by a slew of players with their arms draped over shoulders, West Bloomfield High School assistant coach Justin Ibe bowed his head and led a Christian prayer before a recent Friday night game.

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Forty yards down the sideline, three Muslim young men were having a quiet moment of their own. "Ameen," the players quietly said, using the Arabic word for amen.

Across America, most high school football seasons are winding down. Thousands of games, the first since the Supreme Court in June ruled it was OK for a public school coach near Seattle to pray on the field. The decision prompted speculation that prayer would become an even bigger part of the game-day fabric, though that hasn't seemed to be the case.

Fouad Zaban, the head coach at Fordson High in Dearborn, calls the area just outside Detroit the "Middle East of America" and it is indeed home to thousands of people of Arab descent. After the court ruling, Zaban said, he was flooded with requests to use his platform and constitutional right to pray publicly. After thinking about it, he chose to keep his team's prayers behind closed doors to avoid potential anti-Islamic jeers from fans in other communities.

"That was a concern that they were going to get backlash," Zaban said.

With the nation's culture wars spilling into education, it is challenging to have teachable moments about big news — like a precedent-setting court ruling — and coaches such as Zaban would rather punt than pray publicly.

"It's harder, whether you're a coach, librarian, teacher or counselor," said Lara Schwartz, an American University professor whose specialties include campus speech and constitutional law. "There are activist groups targeting books and ideas, saying you can lose your license if you have these conversations. That to me is a threat to people having good constructive dialogue in classrooms, or with coaches."

In Michigan, some teams with multiple religions represented on their rosters have found ways for everyone who wants to participate to do so if they wish.

"We don't force anybody to do that," said Ibe, the defensive line coach in West Bloomfield. "We just take that moment to really just come together and give glory to God at that moment."

At Crestwood High School in Dearborn Heights, where most of the football team is Muslim, the entire team gathers before practices and games to pray on one knee. First, most of the players recite Al-Fatiha. Then, a player says a Christian prayer to the attentive group.

"Between those two prayers, they're pretty much all the same," said Adam Berry, a senior and a team captain. "Asking God for protection, asking God for forgiveness, and asking God for any way to help us through our game."

According to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, a majority of Americans think a coach leading a team in prayer (60%), a player leading a team in prayer (64%) and a coach praying on the field without asking the team to join in (71%) should all be allowed in public high school sports.

Still, the team plays it safe at Fordson High, where coaches clear the locker room and leave players to pray if they wish.

"No one can ever say that we were involved in it," Zaban said, adding he just wants to coach instead of drawing attention.

Hassan Shinawah, a senior and team captain at Fordson, said players supported keeping their prayers in the locker room and away from the public. The only exception this season came when Senior Day festivities and pregame messages from coaches ran long and players gathered quickly on the field to pray before kickoff.

"We don't know if people are comfortable," he said. "We don't know what their opinions are about it. We just don't want any conflict with anybody else."

In the South, at least three high schools, two in Alabama and another in North Carolina, received letters in recent months from the Freedom From Religion Foundation. The nonprofit that advocates for atheists and agnostics said it fielded complaints about the promotion of religion surrounding football games. Jefferson County (Ala.) officials were asked to "ensure that its schools are no longer scheduling prayer at school-sponsored events, including football games."

The Associated Press left multiple messages for athletic directors and principals at the schools in both

North Carolina and Alabama that were not returned.

Outside Detroit, coaches gave time and space for their players to pray, showing the teenagers that accommodations can be made for different faiths as well as the right to decline.

At West Bloomfield High, an assistant football coach once walked miles with a Jewish player — whose faith would not allow him to ride in a car one particular day — to make sure he got to his hotel after a road game. The unique nature of having Christians, Muslims and Jews playing on the same team was not lost on one of the players who participates in a pregame Islamic prayer.

“Some other teams, they probably don’t have the same thing,” said Mohamed Menisy, a 16-year-old junior offensive tackle. “We’re one team, one family. We just respect each other.”

WHO, CDC: A record 40 million kids miss measles vaccine dose

LONDON (AP) — The World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say measles immunization has dropped significantly since the coronavirus pandemic began, resulting in a record high of nearly 40 million children missing a vaccine dose last year.

In a report issued Wednesday, the WHO and the CDC said millions of children were now susceptible to measles, among the world’s most contagious diseases. In 2021, officials said there were about 9 million measles infections and 128,000 deaths worldwide.

The WHO and CDC said continued drops in vaccination, weak disease surveillance and delayed response plans due to COVID-19, in addition to ongoing outbreaks in more than 20 countries, mean that “measles is an imminent threat in every region of the world.”

Scientists estimate that at least 95% of a population needs to be immunized to protect against epidemics; the WHO and the CDC reported that only about 81% of children receive their first dose of measles vaccine while 71% get their second dose, marking the lowest global coverage rates of the first measles dose since 2008.

“The record number of children under-immunized and susceptible to measles shows the profound damage immunization systems have sustained during the COVID-19 pandemic,” CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said in a statement.

Measles is mostly spread through direct contact or in the air and causes symptoms including fever, muscle pain and a skin rash on the face and upper neck. Most measles-related deaths are caused by complications including swelling of the brain and dehydration. The WHO says serious complications are most serious in children under five and adults over 30.

More than 95% of measles deaths occur in developing countries, mostly in Africa and Asia. There is no specific treatment for measles, but the two-dose vaccine against it is about 97% effective in preventing severe illness and death.

In July, the U.N. said 25 million children have missed out on routine immunizations against diseases including diphtheria, largely because the coronavirus disrupted routine health services or triggered vaccine misinformation.

Dominican sugar imports tied to forced labor rejected by US

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — The U.S. government announced Wednesday that it will detain all imports of sugar and related products made in the Dominican Republic by Central Romana Corporation, Ltd. amid allegations that it uses forced labor.

A U.S. Customs and Border Protection investigation found that the company allegedly isolated workers, withheld wages, fostered abusive working and living conditions and pushed for excessive overtime, the agency said in a news release.

“Manufacturers like Central Romana, who fail to abide by our laws, will face consequences as we root out these inhumane practices from U.S. supply chains,” said AnnMarie Highsmith with the CBP’s Office of Trade.

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Central Romana said in a written response to The Associated Press that it received the news about the import ban with "great astonishment."

"In recent decades we have invested millions of dollars to improve the working and living conditions of our employees in agricultural areas, guaranteeing decent wages and increased benefits, training and education workshops, as well as training in human rights and duties of our workers," it said.

Central Romana, which has long faced those types of accusations, is the Dominican Republic's largest sugar producer in an industry that exports more than \$100 million worth of products to the U.S. every year.

One of Central Romana's owners is the Florida-based Fanjul Corp.

The announcement was cheered by activists who have long decried the treatment of tens of thousands of workers who live and work on sprawling sugarcane fields, many of them Haitian migrants or descendants of them.

"This is needed to improve their situation," Roudy Joseph, a labor rights activist in the Dominican Republic, said in a phone interview. "We've been asking for improvements for decades."

The Associated Press last year visited several sugarcane fields owned by Central Romana where workers complained about a lack of wages, being forced to live in cramped housing that lacked water and restrictive rules including not being allowed to grow a garden to feed their families since transportation to the nearest grocery store miles away was too costly.

Joseph noted that at least 6,000 workers also are demanding pensions for which they paid dues but that were suspended by Dominican President Luis Abinader.

Sugarcane workers also have organized several protests this year to demand permanent residencies after working for decades in the Dominican Republic, which is now cracking down on Haitian migrants under Abinader in a move that has drawn heavy international criticism.

Central Romana produced nearly 400,000 tons (363,000 metric tons) of sugar in the harvest period that ended last year after grinding more than 3.4 million tons (3 million metric tons) of cane, according to the company.

Wednesday's announcement comes after the U.S. Department of Labor in September placed sugarcane from the Dominican Republic on its list of goods produced by children or via forced labor. The U.S. State Department also has cited the Dominican Republic in its report on human trafficking.

A group of U.S. legislators who visited the country issued a statement in July saying workers lived in settlements, or bateyes, "under harsh and substandard conditions" and that some "described being directed to stay quiet and not speak to anyone about their conditions before our visit."

The congressional delegation also noted that Central Romana had started to make improvements, but that "despite this, a culture of fear appears to permeate the industry, where company supervisors, armed guards, and officials from an unrepresentative union monitor workers both in the fields and in the bateyes."

Review: 'Strange World' explores big themes in bold colors

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

Is Searcher Clade the most millennial dad in all of animated moviedom? He has that telltale hipster beard. A sensitive voice sorta like Jake Gyllenhaal. And he feeds his kid avocado toast, with an egg on top.

Oh wait, that IS Gyllenhaal in "Strange World," Disney's pleasantly entertaining, gorgeously rendered but slightly heavy-handed meditation on climate change and father-son dynamics. The actor charmingly voices a character drawn to look so much like him, you almost expect an animated Swiftie to come around, asking for that infamous scarf back. (Sorry, but it's been a Taylor Swift kind of month.)

The very name "Searcher" sounds vaguely millennial, too, but actually it's a reference to both the blessing and the curse of the Clade family, a storied clan of explorers. In a prologue, we see the young Searcher set out on a family expedition led by his dad, burly Jaeger Clade, whose life goal is to find what's beyond the forbidding mountains that ring their homeland, Avalonia. But before they get there, young Searcher discovers something shocking.

It's a group of plants that seem to be lit up, glowing from an unseen energy. What is this magical crop?

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Searcher argues that they need to bring it back to Avalonia, where it could serve many uses. But Jaeger (voiced with appropriate gruffness by Dennis Quaid) refuses to turn back. He tosses his young son his compass and continues by himself. Twenty-five years go by.

Wait, what? Dad stays away for 25 years? This is truly deficient parenting, and it's no wonder that when grownup Searcher has his own son, Ethan (an adorable character sweetly voiced by Jaboukie Young-White), he's a helicopter parent, dotting on the boy a bit too much. Grandpa is still lionized in town with a large statue attesting to his exploits. But Searcher tells Ethan that despite his fame, Grandpa was a majorly absentee dad.

Let's pause to consider the themes at play. We have climate change issues in the form of "pando," the crucial energy source that Searcher now farms and has modernized Avalonia. And we have three generations of men: the very different Jaeger and Searcher, a boomer and a millennial if you will, and then young Ethan, trying to find his way. There's much dialogue here about breaking from expectations to forge your own path.

There's also the not-insignificant fact that Ethan has a same-sex crush. This has led some to call the film the first Disney animated gay teen romance. That's a bit of a stretch, because this budding romance is a side plot, referred to by a number of characters, but by no means a major topic of discussion.

But maybe that's the point — if it's not a major plot point, nor is it a sneeze-and-you-miss it moment like, for example, that quick glance in "Beauty and the Beast" in 2017 that was heralded as the first Disney "gay moment." It's just a given that when Ethan talks about his crush, he's talking about Diazo, a boy, and nobody, not his parents nor his crusty old granddad, bats an eyelid. It's also refreshing that the Clades are a biracial family, and that too, is not discussed.

The movie, it must be said, is definitely about men, despite the welcome but underused presences of Gabrielle Union as Searcher's wife, Meridian — a fearless pilot — and Lucy Liu as Callisto, president of Avalonia. It is Callisto who gets things moving, plot-wise, when she arrives at Searcher's front door in her pando-powered airship with a stark warning: the pando crop is failing. Everywhere. Searcher must come help. Now.

Reluctantly, the homebody Searcher hops aboard. Someone on the ship asks him immediately if he can, like, forge an autograph from his more-famous dad. Aargh. In any case, the ship travels down to the roots that power pando. Meanwhile, Searcher soon discovers that Ethan has stowed away on the ship, eager for his own adventure (and more Jaeger-like than Searcher would want to admit). Meridian has followed, and now they're on a family trip.

And who should turn up but Jaeger himself? He has some explaining to do. Turns out he got stuck in a stunning, scary, strange underworld. And it's beautiful. Directors Don Hall and Qui Nguyen have created a stunning universe of psychedelic colors and creatures, most memorably in hues of deep pinks and purples. Wondrous creatures emerge, and also one of the cutest little blobs you've ever seen, the aptly named Splat, who befriends Ethan.

Will the family discover what's imperiling pando, and fix it in time to save Avalonia? Will Jaeger and Searcher come to a better understanding of each other? Will Ethan follow his own path?

Well, there's not a lot of mystery here, nor nuance to the plot. Energies have been focused on the visuals, and they make the experience worthwhile. That, and an appealing collection of human characters that look a lot more like the real world than usually seen in these films. And that's not strange at all. That's progress.

"Strange World," a Walt Disney Studios release, has been rated PG by the Motion Picture Association of America "for action/peril and some thematic elements." Running time: 102 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

MPAA definition of PG: Parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

UK top court rules against Scottish independence vote plan

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that Scotland does not have the power to

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hold a new referendum on independence without the consent of the British government. The judgment is a setback for the Scottish government's campaign to break away from the United Kingdom.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said she would respect the ruling but continue the fight for independence, saying Scotland's "democratic right to choose our own future" was at stake.

The top court ruled that the Scottish Parliament "does not have the power to legislate for a referendum on Scottish independence."

Supreme Court President Robert Reed said the five justices were unanimous in the verdict, delivered six weeks after lawyers for the pro-independence Scottish administration and the Conservative U.K. government argued their cases at hearings in London.

Independence supporters plan to rally outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and at other sites later Wednesday.

The semi-autonomous Scottish government wants to hold a referendum next October with the question "Should Scotland be an independent country?"

The U.K. government in London refuses to approve a vote, saying the question was settled in a 2014 referendum that saw Scottish voters reject independence by a margin of 55% to 45%.

The pro-independence government in Edinburgh wants to revisit the decision, though, arguing that Britain's departure from the European Union — which a majority of Scottish voters opposed — has radically changed the political and economic landscape.

Sturgeon argues that she has a democratic mandate from the Scottish people to hold a new secession vote because there is an independence-supporting majority in the Scottish Parliament.

During Supreme Court hearings last month, Dorothy Bain, the Scottish government's top law officer, said the majority of Scottish lawmakers had been elected on commitments to hold a fresh independence referendum. She also said a referendum would be advisory, rather than legally binding — though a "yes" vote would create strong momentum for Scotland to break away.

U.K. government lawyer James Eadie argued that power to hold a referendum rests with the U.K. Parliament in London, because "it's of critical importance to the United Kingdom as a whole," not just Scotland.

The Supreme Court justices agreed. They said it is clear that "a Bill which makes provision for a referendum on independence — on ending the sovereignty of the Parliament of the United Kingdom over Scotland — has more than a loose or consequential connection with the sovereignty of that Parliament."

Reed stressed that the court was "not asked, and cannot be asked, to express a view on the political question of whether Scotland should become an independent country."

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the court's ruling was "clear and definitive." He urged politicians in Scotland and London to move on and focus on pressing issues such as the U.K.'s cost-of-living crisis.

"The people of Scotland want us to be working on fixing the major challenges that we collectively face, whether that's the economy, supporting the NHS or indeed supporting Ukraine," Sunak said in the House of Commons.

But Sturgeon said the ruling was "a hard pill for any supporter of independence — and surely indeed for any supporter of democracy — to swallow."

"A so-called partnership in which one partner is denied the right to choose a different future ... cannot be described in any way as voluntary or even a partnership at all," she said. She ruled out holding an unauthorized referendum, saying "the route we take must be lawful and democratic for independence to be achieved."

Sturgeon said she would make the next U.K. national election, due within two years, a de-facto plebiscite on ending Scotland's three-century-old union with England. She said the governing Scottish National Party would hold a special conference next year to work out details of that plan.

Polls suggest Scots are about evenly split on independence — and also that a majority of voters do not want a new referendum anytime soon.

Scotland and England have been politically united since 1707. Scotland has had its own parliament and government since 1999 and makes its own policies on public health, education and other matters. The U.K.-wide government in London controls matters such as defense and fiscal policy.

Monsoon rains force halt in Indonesia quake rescue efforts

By ANDI JATMIKO Associated Press

CIANJUR, Indonesia (AP) — Searchers in Indonesia on Wednesday rescued a 6-year-old boy who was trapped for two days under the rubble of his house, which collapsed in an earthquake that killed at least 271 people, as heavy monsoon rains lashed survivors in makeshift shelters and forced a suspension of rescue efforts.

The death toll was likely to rise with many people still missing, some remote devastated areas still unreachable and more than 2,000 people injured in Monday's 5.6 magnitude quake. Hospitals near the epicenter on densely populated Java island were already overwhelmed, with patients hooked up to IV drips lying on stretchers and cots in tents set up outside awaiting further treatment.

It was the most deadly earthquake in Indonesia since a 2018 earthquake and tsunami in Sulawesi killed about 4,340 people.

Many of the dead in this week's earthquake were public school students who had finished their classes for the day and were taking extra lessons at Islamic schools when the buildings collapsed, West Java Gov. Ridwan Kamil said.

More than 12,000 army personnel were deployed Wednesday to bolster search efforts by police, the search and rescue agency and volunteers, said Suharyanto, chief of the National Disaster Mitigation Agency.

Suharyanto, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, said aid was reaching thousands of people left homeless who fled to temporary shelters, where supplies were being taken by foot over the rough terrain.

He said rescuers recovered three more bodies Wednesday and rescued a 6-year-old boy, who was found alive next to the dead body of his grandmother under the rubble of his house.

Police, soldiers and other rescue personnel used jackhammers, circular saws, farm tools and their bare hands to desperately dig in the worst-hit area of Cijendil village, where a landslide left tons of mud, rocks and trees.

The government appeared to be focused on finding bodies, and wherever possible, survivors. Authorities struggled to bring tractors and other heavy equipment over washed-out roads to villages hit by landslides.

Residents, however, complained the government was too slow.

Muhammad Tohir, 48, was sitting in his living room with his family in Cijendil when the catastrophe struck. He and his family managed to escape, but his sister and her two children were crushed by a landslide a few kilometers (miles) from his house.

"When I came to my sister's house, I was devastated by what I saw," Tohir said. "Dozens of houses had been buried by landslides. ... It felt like doomsday." He said at least 45 people had been buried alive under tons of mud.

Tohir and other residents searched for the missing using farm tools and managed to pull out two bodies. Two days later, rescue personnel arrived to help in the search.

"The government was too slow in responding to this disaster," Tohir said.

He said he would not give up until they could pull his sister and nieces out of the mud.

In several hard-hit areas, water, food and medical supplies were being distributed from trucks, and authorities deployed military personnel carrying food, medicine, blankets and field tents.

Volunteers and rescue personnel erected temporary shelters for those left homeless in several villages in Cianjur district.

About 6,000 police, soldiers and volunteers dug through the debris with their bare hands, shovels and hoes as heavy rain hindered their efforts.

Arif Yulianto, a search and rescue coordinator, said they were forced to halt their efforts Wednesday afternoon because the rain made the landslide areas unstable. He said the search would resume early Thursday.

Suharyanto said 2,043 people were injured, including more than 600 who were still receiving treatment

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for serious injuries, and that nearly 62,000 survivors had been moved to shelters.

Most sought protection under makeshift shelters that were lashed by the downpours. Only a few were lucky to be protected by tarpaulin-covered tents. They said they were running low on food, blankets and other aid, as emergency supplies were rushed to the region.

About 40 people remained missing, Suharyanto said at a news conference. Rescue operations were focused on about a dozen villages in Cianjur where people were believed trapped.

More than 56,230 houses in Cianjur were damaged and more than 170 public buildings were destroyed, including 31 schools, he said.

About 100 of the 271 confirmed deaths were children, Suharyanto said.

"We are saddened by this earthquake, especially because children have been disproportionately affected," said Yacobus Runtuwene of Wahana Visi Indonesia, a Christian humanitarian group concerned with child welfare.

The magnitude of Monday's earthquake, 5.6, would not typically be expected to cause serious damage. But the area is densely populated, and experts said the shallowness of the quake and the lack of earthquake-resistant infrastructure contributed to the damage.

More than 2.5 million people live in rural, mountainous Cianjur district, including about 175,000 in its main town, which has the same name.

President Joko Widodo visited Cianjur on Tuesday and pledged to rebuild its infrastructure and provide assistance of up to 50 million rupiah (\$3,180) to each resident whose house was damaged.

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."

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

Holiday cornucopia: NY produce market supplies the goods

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It was the wee hours of the morning, and the docks at New York's largest produce market were bustling in the cold. Thanksgiving was inching closer, and sacks of onions, potatoes and carrots were flying off the shelves.

Amidst the whir, buyers and sellers were finalizing deals on tomatoes, mangoes and lettuce. Trucks stood ready to haul away the bounty — a cornucopia of fruits and vegetables destined for supermarket produce aisles, household refrigerators and, eventually, millions of mouths across the Northeast during the gluttonous holidays.

"This time of year is our busiest. We have Thanksgiving, we have Christmas and New Year's. All of these are very big family and big-eating holidays," said Stefanie Katzman, the executive vice president of S. Katzman Produce, one of the country's largest and oldest produce dealers, which operates at the Hunts Point Produce Market.

The market is a sprawling collection of wholesalers that make it the nation's busiest distribution center for fruits and vegetables, responsible for more than 60% of the daily stock for New York City and feeds over 30 million customers, according to another Hunts Point wholesaler, E. Armata Inc.

Thanksgiving is especially busy time of year because the quintessentially American feast is widely celebrated across the United States.

"Our market as a whole does about three times as much business as normal on a day like today," Katzman said while leading a tour Tuesday morning of her company's cavernous warehouse, which extends a quarter mile (0.4 kilometers) and room for produce across nearly two football fields.

In one huge room, the whiff of onions filled the cold air. In another, the scent of berries wafted through the room — although Katzman's biggest seller, strawberries, were in short supply because of inclement weather that wreaked havoc on the growing season.

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"Our market is really unique. It's kind of like the stock market, but a little bit more intense. Because our 'stocks' are perishable, we can't hold on to them for too long hoping they go up in value," Katzman said.

Not only can the place be likened as a stock market, but it is also a Grand Central station of sorts with delivery trucks in and out of the Bronx facility.

In all, Hunts Point's wholesalers distribute 2.5 billion pounds of produce a year, with about 30 million pounds having moved on Tuesday alone. The produce ends up at places like Whole Foods, high-end grocers and specialty markets, as well smaller mom-and-pop outlets.

Michael Rubinsky, a buyer from Market Basket, a gourmet grocery, makes the hour's drive from Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, three times a week to inspect the goods.

"I come for the basics — everything like celery, lettuce, strawberries and potatoes — but quality is No. 1," he said. "I check the quality and load everything on the truck."

Charlie Mule, one of Katzman's produce salesmen, said consumers don't realize where their produce comes from.

"You've eaten our stuff without you even knowing you've eaten our stuff," said Mule. "If you go to a restaurant or store you probably don't realize the whole scope of how it got there before you put it in your refrigerator or on your plate."

Unemployment claims rise to 240,000, highest since August

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits rose to the highest level since August but still remains low by historic standards.

The Labor Department reported Wednesday that 240,000 people applied for jobless aid last week, up by 17,000 from the week before. The four-week moving average of claims, which smooths out week-to-week volatility, rose by 5,500 to 226,750.

Applications for unemployment benefits are a proxy for layoffs and the current low levels shows that American workers enjoy extraordinary job security.

But it may not last.

To combat inflation that hit four-decade highs earlier this year, the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate six times since March. The housing market has buckled under the strain of mortgage rates that have more than doubled from a year ago. And many economists expect the United States to slip into a recession next year as higher borrowing costs slow economic activity.

But the job market has remained strong. Employers added 261,000 jobs last month and are creating an average of nearly 407,000 a month this year. — on pace to make 2022 the second-best year for hiring (after 2021) in government records going back to 1940. There are nearly two job openings for every unemployed American. The unemployment rate is 3.7%, a couple of ticks above a half-century low.

New weekly applications for unemployment benefits were extremely low early this year -- staying below 200,000 for much of February, March and April. They began to tick up in late spring and hit 261,000 in mid-July before trending lower again.

"We expect layoffs to rise as demand softens in response to higher interest rates," Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, said in a research report. "However, the move is likely to be gradual given businesses are still struggling with labor shortages and will be reluctant to cut their workforce."

The Labor Department said Wednesday that 1.55 million people were receiving jobless aid the week that ended Nov. 12, up by 48,000 from the week before.

Today in History: November 24, Ruby shoots Oswald

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Nov. 24, the 328th day of 2022. There are 37 days left in the year. Today is Thanks-

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giving.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 24, 1963, Jack Ruby shot and mortally wounded Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, in a scene captured on live television.

On this date:

In 1859, British naturalist Charles Darwin published "On the Origin of Species," which explained his theory of evolution by means of natural selection.

In 1865, Mississippi became the first Southern state to enact laws which came to be known as "Black Codes" aimed at limiting the rights of newly freed Blacks; other states of the former Confederacy soon followed.

In 1941, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Edwards v. California*, unanimously struck down a California law prohibiting people from bringing impoverished non-residents into the state.

In 1947, a group of writers, producers and directors that became known as the "Hollywood Ten" was cited for contempt of Congress for refusing to answer questions about alleged Communist influence in the movie industry. John Steinbeck's novel "The Pearl" was first published.

In 1971, a hijacker calling himself "Dan Cooper" (but who became popularly known as "D.B. Cooper") parachuted from a Northwest Orient Airlines 727 over the Pacific Northwest after receiving \$200,000 in ransom; his fate remains unknown.

In 1974, the bone fragments of a 3.2 million-year-old hominid were discovered by scientists in Ethiopia; the skeletal remains were nicknamed "Lucy."

In 1987, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed on terms to scrap shorter- and medium-range missiles. (The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was signed by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev the following month.)

In 1989, Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu (chow-SHES'-koo) was unanimously re-elected Communist Party chief. (Within a month, he was overthrown in a popular uprising and executed along with his wife, Elena, on Christmas Day.)

In 1991, rock singer Freddie Mercury died in London at age 45 of AIDS-related pneumonia.

In 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court stepped into the bitter, overtime struggle for the White House, agreeing to consider George W. Bush's appeal against the hand recounting of ballots in Florida.

In 2014, it was announced that a grand jury in St. Louis County, Missouri, had decided against indicting Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson in the death of Michael Brown; the decision enraged protesters who set fire to buildings and cars and looted businesses in the area where Brown had been fatally shot.

In 2020, Pennsylvania officials certified Joe Biden as the winner of the presidential vote in the state; the Trump campaign had gone to court trying to prevent the certification. The Nevada Supreme Court made Biden's win in the state official. County election workers across Georgia began an official machine recount of the roughly 5 million votes cast in the presidential race in the state; certified results had shown Biden winning in Georgia by 12,670 votes.

Ten years ago: Fire raced through a garment factory in Bangladesh that supplied major retailers in the West, killing 112 people; an official said many of the victims were trapped because the eight-story building lacked emergency exits. Former championship boxer Hector "Macho" Camacho died at a hospital in Puerto Rico after doctors disconnected life support; he'd been shot in his hometown of Bayamon earlier in the week.

Five years ago: Militants attacked a crowded mosque in Egypt with gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades, killing more than 300 people in the deadliest-ever attack by Islamic extremists in the country. Zimbabwe swore in its new leader, Emmerson Mnangagwa, after the resignation of President Robert Mugabe, who had fired his longtime deputy just two and a half weeks earlier. South Africa's Supreme Court of Appeal increased the prison sentence of Olympic athlete Oscar Pistorius to 13 years and five months in the shooting death of girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp, more than doubling the original six-year sentence.

One year ago: Three men were convicted of murder in the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, the Black man who was running through a Georgia subdivision in February 2020 when the white strangers chased him,

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trapped him on a quiet street and blasted him with a shotgun. At least 27 people died when a boat carrying migrants across the English Channel to Britain sank a few miles from the French coast.

Today's Birthdays: Basketball Hall of Famer Oscar Robertson is 84. Country singer Johnny Carver is 82. Former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue (TAG'-lee-uh-boo) is 82. Rock drummer Pete Best is 81. Actor-comedian Billy Connolly is 80. Former White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater is 80. Former congressman and Motion Picture Association of America Chairman Dan Glickman is 78. Singer Lee Michaels is 77. Actor Dwight Schultz is 75. Actor Stanley Livingston is 72. Rock musician Clem Burke (Blondie; The Romantics) is 68. Actor/director Ruben Santiago-Hudson is 66. Actor Denise Crosby is 65. U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas is 63. Actor Shae D'Lyn is 60. Rock musician John Squire (The Stone Roses) is 60. Rock musician Gary Stonadge (Big Audio) is 60. Actor Conleth Hill is 58. Actor-comedian Brad Sherwood is 58. Actor Garret Dillahunt is 58. Actor-comedian Scott Krinsky is 54. Rock musician Chad Taylor (Live) is 52. Actor Lola Gludini is 51. Actor Danielle Nicolet is 49. Actor-writer-director-producer Stephen Merchant is 48. Actor Colin Hanks is 45. Actor Katherine Heigl (HY'-guh) is 44. Actor Sarah Hyland is 32.