

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### 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.; 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.

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



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.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Tacos, refried beans.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

James Valley Telco Open House in Groton, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

UMC: Bible Study, 10 a.m.; Conde Advent Bible Study.

JH GBB hosts Redfield (7th at 6:15 p.m. followed by 8th grade game)

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

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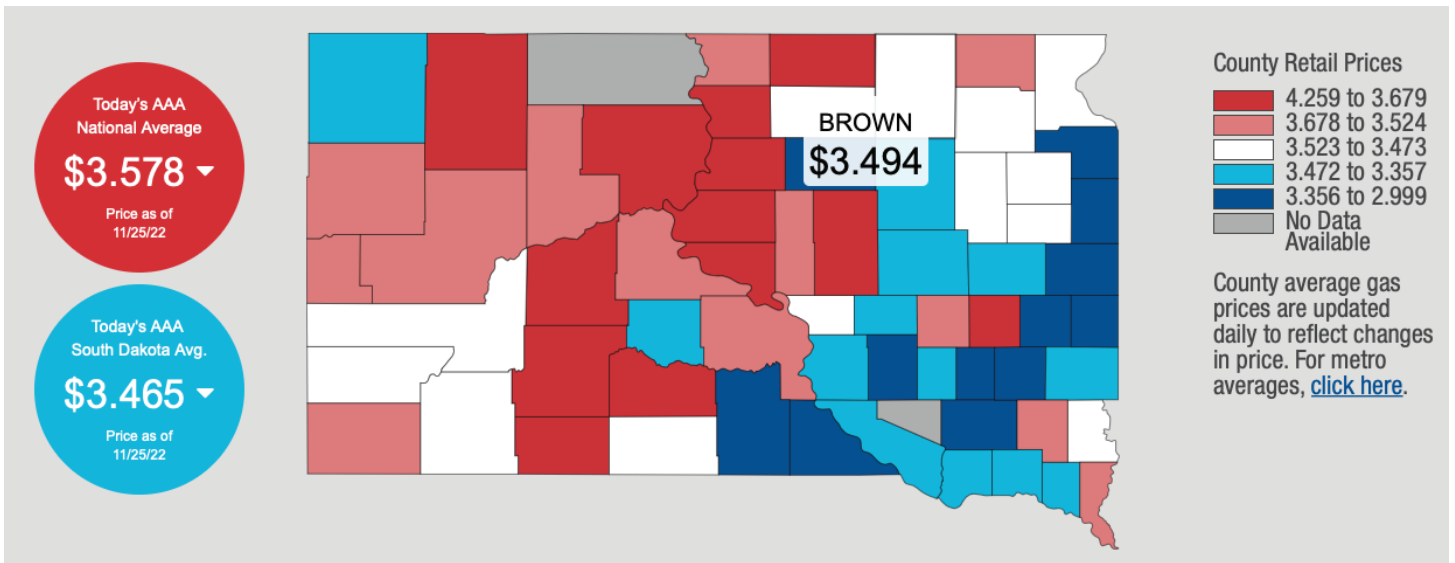
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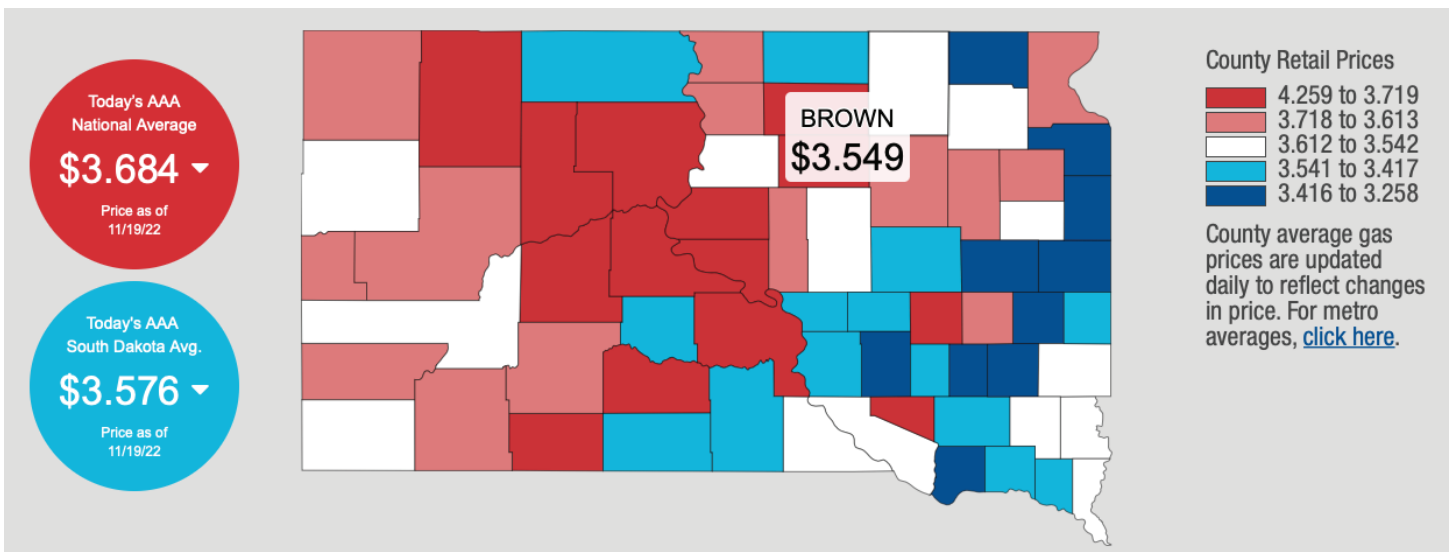
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.465	\$3.656	\$4.129	\$4.954
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.490	\$3.671	\$4.144	\$4.968
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.591	\$3.759	\$4.242	\$5.111
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.708	\$3.880	\$4.351	\$5.260
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.292	\$3.393	\$3.755	\$3.529

### This Week



### Last Week



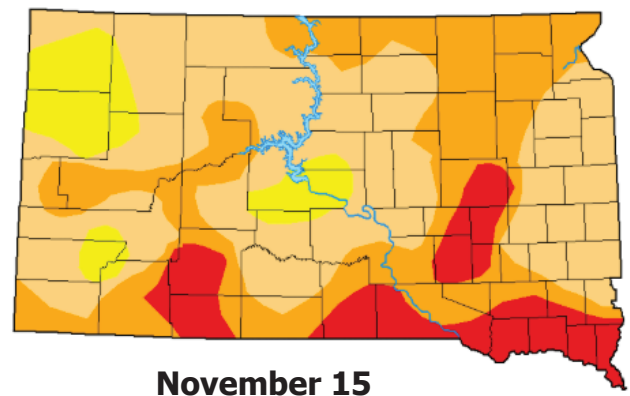
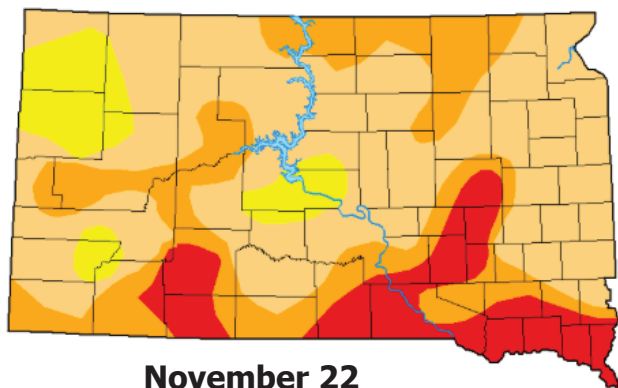
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## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



Following the previous week's storm, snow and ice remained on the ground in parts of Montana and the Dakotas. In Bismarck, North Dakota, where the snow depth peaked at 17 inches on November 11, nine inches remained on the ground 10 days later. The freezing and frozen precipitation provided beneficial moisture for rangeland, pastures, and winter grains. Still, drought concerns persisted, especially in drier areas across the southern half of the region. On November 20, the U.S. Department of Agriculture noted topsoil moisture ranging from 63% very short to short in North Dakota to 87% in Nebraska. On the same date, at least 40% of the winter wheat was rated in very poor to poor condition in Colorado (52%), Kansas (40%), and Nebraska (40%). Although any changes in the drought depiction were relatively minor, worsening conditions were noted in a few areas. Drought stress on vegetation was aggravated by very cold weather, which led to several record lows. In Kansas, for example, record-setting lows for November 19 plunged to 8°F in Garden City and 11°F in Medicine Lodge.

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## Wolves Use Fourth Quarter Run to Earn Victory Over Saints

Daytona Beach, Fla. – The Northern State women's basketball team used a 17-3 run to open the fourth quarter en route to a 76-65 victory over Flagler on Friday afternoon. Kailee Oliverson set a new season-high mark of 23 points in the win, while Rianna Fillipi and Laurie Rogers scored 16 and 13 points respectively to round out double figure scorers for the Wolves.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 76, FC 65

Records: NSU 5-1 (1-0 NSIC), FC 1-5 (0-0 PBC)

Attendance: 89

### HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State jumped out to an early 9-4 lead to start the game as Rianna Fillipi scored the first five points for the Wolves and Kailee Oliverson added the next four points

Flagler led by as many as six points midway through the second quarter with a 27-21 lead, however, Northern used a 7-0 run to briefly regain the lead before the teams entered the halftime break tied at 31

Fillipi and Oliverson were once again in control of the game in the second half, scoring the first ten points of the third quarter for Northern State to build a 41-36 lead with 5:52 remaining in the period

After Fillipi and Oliverson scored the first ten of the second half, Jordyn Hilgemann scored the next six points for the Wolves to push the lead to 47-41

Opening the fourth quarter with the ball, Northern broke the 52-52 tie with a 3-pointer by Alayna Benike; Benike's 3-pointer was only the second made basket from beyond the arc in the game for NSU

The Wolves opened the fourth quarter with a 17-3 run to build their largest lead of the game at 69-55; Northern led by as many as 16 points late in the game

NSU out-rebounded the Saints 48-36, and turned 13 offensive rebounds into 17 second chance points

Northern shot 17-34 (50.0%) from the field and 10-11 (90.9%) from the free throw line in the second half

Northern State shot 18-22 from the free throw line for 81.8 percent in the game; Brynn Alfson (3-3) and Alayna Benike (2-2) were each perfect from the charity stripe

Laurie Rogers earned her second double-double of the season, and has recorded a blocked shot in all six games to start the season

The Wolves recorded a season-low six turnovers in today's victory, and marked the fourth time this season with fewer than ten turnovers in a game

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Kailee Oliverson: 23 points, 8 rebounds

Rianna Fillipi: 16 points, 5 rebounds, 5 assists, 2 steals

Laurie Rogers: 13 points, 12 rebounds, 4 assists, 1 block, 1 steal

### UP NEXT

Northern State will close out the Bahama House Shootout by taking on the hosts of Embry-Riddle Saturday afternoon. Tip-off between the Wolves and Eagles is scheduled for 2 p.m. (CST).

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## Reede and Belka Hit Career Milestones in Win over the Javelinas

Aberdeen, S.D. – Career moments for the (RV) Northern State University men's basketball team propelled the Wolves to victory on Friday evening over Texas A&M – Kingsville. Augustin Reede scored a career high 31 points and Jordan Belka became the 59th member of the Northern State 1000th point.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 95, TAMK 88

Records: NSU 4-2, TAMK 3-2

Attendance: 1857

### HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern trailed 39-38 at the half and out-scored Kingsville 57-49 in the second en route to their fourth victory of the season
- The Wolves led by double figures for a majority of the second half, with a spread as high as 16 with just under six minutes to play
- Kingsville cut Northern's lead down to just four with under a minute to go, however efficient defense by the Wolves and going 6-of-6 from the foul line led NSU to victory
- Four starters scored in double figures for the Wolves, as the team shot 63.0% from the floor and 45.8% from the 3-point line
- NSU recorded a game high 33 rebounds, 19 assists, and 11 made 3-pointers
- They added three blocks and two steals, scoring 30 points in the paint, 17 fast break points, and 14 points off turnovers
- All four double figure scorers shot 54.0% or better from the floor, led by Jordan Belka who knocked 7-of-8

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Augustin Reede: 31 points (career high), 75.0 field goal%, 5 rebounds
- Jordan Belka: 20 points, 87.5 field goal%, 3 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 block
- Jacksen Moni: 18 points, 54.5 field goal%, 4 rebounds, 3 assists
- Sam Masten: 15 points, 100.0 field goal%, 9 rebounds (career high), 9 assists, 2 steals

### UP NEXT

Northern State closes out the Dacotah Bank Classic this evening versus Presentation College. Tip-off is set for 6 p.m. between the Wolves and Saints.

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## Community Thanksgiving Dinner

The annual Groton Community Thanksgiving Day dinner was held at the Groton Community Center.

(Photos Courtesy Bruce Babcock)



## Rix Quinn – Christmas trees

Christmas trees are like a distant cousin. They come to your house, surround themselves with presents, and stay a month. Then they begin to shed, and need somebody to drive them off.

People often do strange things with cut trees. One of my neighbors pulled out a chain saw and widened his front door three feet. That allowed him to bring in the tree without bending it, and it made a great spectacle the neighbors could video.

Once inside the home, some people say you should cut a couple inches off the base of a live tree trunk, and immerse it in a tree stand filled with water.

If your tree's artificial, it doesn't need water. And if you cut anything off its trunk, you'll have a shorter tree next year.

Do not use flammable decorations on a tree. The new smaller, safer tree lights seem better. I even saw one guy try to wear these lights to a party, but his extension cord kept coming out.

Some people surround the tree with a decorative tree skirt. I have never worn a tree skirt to a party, because I do not shave my legs.

After the holidays, dispose of your tree properly. Many cities will remove it from your lawn, and recycle it into mulch.

Therefore, do not dispose of your artificial tree. Plastic mulch will not grow anything.

Rix's new Amazon Kindle e-book is now available for 99 cents. It's a Thanksgiving-related humor title called Turkey's Viewpoint. I hope you'll buy it and read it...and then leave a review.

**'TIS THE  
SEASON TO  
SHOP LOCAL**

**GROTON**  
Chamber Of Commerce



## We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

### Near v. Minnesota: Bulwark of Press Freedom

At this juncture in American history, when the citizenry seems to require frequent reminders of the landmark decisions and actions that poured and preserved the foundation of our constitutional democracy, we would do well to recall the transformative importance of *Near v. Minnesota* (1931), in which the Supreme Court delivered a ruling that built a wall of protection for freedom of the press against governmental censorship.

The virtues of *Near v. Minnesota* are exhausting to recount. The Court's decision defined freedom of the press. It trumpeted the indispensable function of the nation's newspapers in informing the citizenry. It infused editors with the courage to report the misdeeds of governmental actors and agencies and defend themselves in the face of intimidation and efforts to bring the watchdog to heel. Just as importantly, if not more so, *Near* was the first decision to firmly adopt the Incorporation doctrine, making the First Amendment Free Press Clause applicable to states through the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment.

*Near v. Minnesota* arose from a state law—the Minnesota Gag Law—enacted in 1925, that aimed to shutter scandalous publications that attacked legislators and other office holders. The law permitted a judge to halt the publication of a newspaper upon a finding that the paper was “obscene, lewd and lascivious,” or “malicious, scandalous and defamatory.” The statute was widely praised as a useful remedy for the evils of such publications.

Jay Near, publisher of “The Saturday Press,” an aggressive weekly newspaper, was an unsavory character. He was a flaming bigot: anti-Semitic, anti-black, anti-labor and anti-Catholic. His newspaper, with some evidence, had accused Minneapolis officials, including the mayor and the police chief, of engaging in widespread corruption, racketeering, neglect of duty and graft. These stories, among others, made the newspaper the first target of the gag law. After publishing just nine issues, the newspaper was shut down by court order.

Near appealed to the Minnesota Supreme Court, which took a dim view of his brand of journalism. “Our constitution,” the court declared, “was never intended to protect malice, scandal and defamation when untrue or published with bad motives or without justifiable ends. It is a shield for the honest, careful and conscientious press.”

The American Civil Liberties Union and the conservative publisher of the Chicago Tribune, Col. Robert R. McCormick, perceived in the law a grave threat to freedom of the press and the First Amendment's prohibition on prior restraint. The ACLU offered to fund the appeal, but McCormick quickly assembled his legal staff and took the lead in taking the case to the Supreme Court, asserting the right of the journalistic world to inform the citizenry. McCormick rightly understood that leaving to judges the right to determine who was a nice publisher, and who was not, would spell the end of freedom of the press.

Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, writing for a 5-4 majority, held the law unconstitutional in a ruling that firmly established freedom of the press against governmental censorship. The law violated the First Amendment, as applied to the states by the 14th Amendment. Hughes wrote, “This statute raises questions of grave importance, transcending the local interests involved in the particular action.” In a historic sentence, Hughes added, “It is no longer open to doubt that the liberty of the press is within the liberty safeguarded by the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment from invasion by state action.”

The Hughes Court well understood the consequences for the nation if prior restraint could be easily implemented, and because of the decision it became very difficult to persuade a judge to issue a prior restraint on the press. “The impairment of the fundamental security of life and property by criminal alli-



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ances and official neglect," Hughes observed, "emphasizes the primary need of a vigilant and courageous press, especially in great cities." Col. McCormick was so moved by those words that he decided to inscribe them in the lobby of his new building in Chicago, The Tribune Tower.

Prior restraint and censorship strike at the very core of the First Amendment, Hughes explained. Prior restraint is the exception, but the prohibition on censorship is not absolute. It could not be, of course, for no right, including press liberty, is without limits. The Chief Justice listed as exceptions wartime obstruction of recruitment, publication of military secrets, obscenity, incitements to riot or forcible overthrow of the government, and words that "may have all the effect of force."

The Court's concern to protect criticisms of public officials was not shared by the dissenters, the so-called "Four Horsemen," led by the Minnesota native Justice Pierce Butler. But five years later, in a case—Grosjean v. American Press Co. (1936)—that involved a Louisiana tax on newspapers, designed to punish critics of Gov. Huey Long, the conservative Horsemen embraced Chief Justice Hughes' reasoning in defense of freedom of the press, as set forth in Near v. Minnesota. In Grosjean, Justice George Sutherland wrote for the Court: The people are entitled to "full information in respect of the doings or misdoings of their government; informed public opinion is the most potent of all restraints upon misgovernment."

*David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota Newspaper Association and this newspaper.*



*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**

**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!**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

# Declining use of mobile crisis team is good and bad news for Sioux Falls area

More officers handling calls, but more calls too serious for talk therapy

BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 25, 2022 2:35 PM

Just over a decade ago, police in Sioux Falls began a partnership with Southeastern Behavioral Health that allowed counselors to take over for officers during mental health crisis calls.

The goal of that mobile crisis team (MCT) was to de-escalate situations where a caller had expressed thoughts of suicide or self-harm by working through the crisis at hand, then working out a care plan that would keep the person at home.

To date, the team has diverted more than 5,000 people in the Sioux Falls metropolitan area from a mental health hold after a police-initiated crisis call. Area officials of all stripes frequently praise the MCT's role in talking 90% of callers out of an involuntary committal.

Minnehaha County Commissioner Dean Karsky called out the team's work a few weeks ago as the commission folded the most recent report from Southeastern into the commission's public record.

"That's 184 out of 211 people who stayed home," Karsky said of the group's work so far in 2022. "And a lot of those people would have been taken to the jail or put in a hospital bed."

In recent years, however, the number of calls to the MCT has dropped precipitously – nearly 50% between 2017 and 2021. The year-to-date numbers are on track to maintain that reduced rate.

The trendline flies in the face of the narrative surrounding mental health in the COVID-19 era. Depression, anxiety and other mental health problems have increased nationwide and in South Dakota, as people struggled with remote school, remote work and a host of other stressors.

That story even tracks at Southeastern's brick-and-mortar locations in Sioux Falls.

"We saw 500 more enrollments into the community mental health side of things than we normally would've seen over the course of those two years," said Kim Hansen, a counselor at Southeastern who's led the MCT since its inception.

What's happened with the MCT, however, is less about a drop in mental health needs and more about a



**Southeastern Behavioral Health's downtown Sioux Falls facility, pictured on Nov. 25, 2022. Southeastern is the partner for the mobile crisis team, whose counselors assist law enforcement with certain mental health calls.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

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spike in situations too serious for talk therapy. More people are attempting suicide or threatening to do so while armed.

A wider range of options for crisis calls has also emerged. Officers are more skilled in de-escalation than they were 10 years ago, and the 988 suicide prevention line is handling more situations that may have sparked a 911 call in the past.

## Serious calls more common

There were 202 suicides in South Dakota in 2021, a 50% jump from 2012 and the highest number ever recorded for the state. The number of suicides per 100,000 people in the state is the seventh-highest in the nation.

If a call to 988 or 911 comes from a person who's pushed well past the point of just talking about self-harm, Hansen and her fellow counselors are unlikely to get a call.

"If they have a firearm and a note written, they've just been fired from their job ... we would recommend that they not use mobile crisis because of the severity of the situation," Hansen said.

Calls for service in Sioux Falls don't point to a drop in mental health needs.

At the same time the team's numbers were dropping, from 2017 to 2021, the total number of mental health calls to the Sioux Falls Police Department (SFPD) jumped 70% – and that's only for calls that originate with that classification, such as suicide attempts, overdoses and mental health wellness checks. An officer responding to a disorderly conduct call may discover a mental health problem, according to SFPD spokesman Sam Clemens.

"These numbers can give a general idea but there is no way to determine every call that has a mental illness component," Clemens said.

Sgt. Tarah Walton earned a master's degree in counseling and practiced as a therapist before her career in law enforcement. She serves as the liaison for the MCT and other community mental health providers in the metro area, and said the launch of the national 988 suicide prevention hotline and the expansion of the 211 Helpline Center's operations have factored into the drop in MCT calls in less severe situations.

Helpline Center operators handle 988 calls in South Dakota. In the past, around 80% of mental health calls that started with the Helpline Center ended without an operator placing a mental health call to law enforcement.

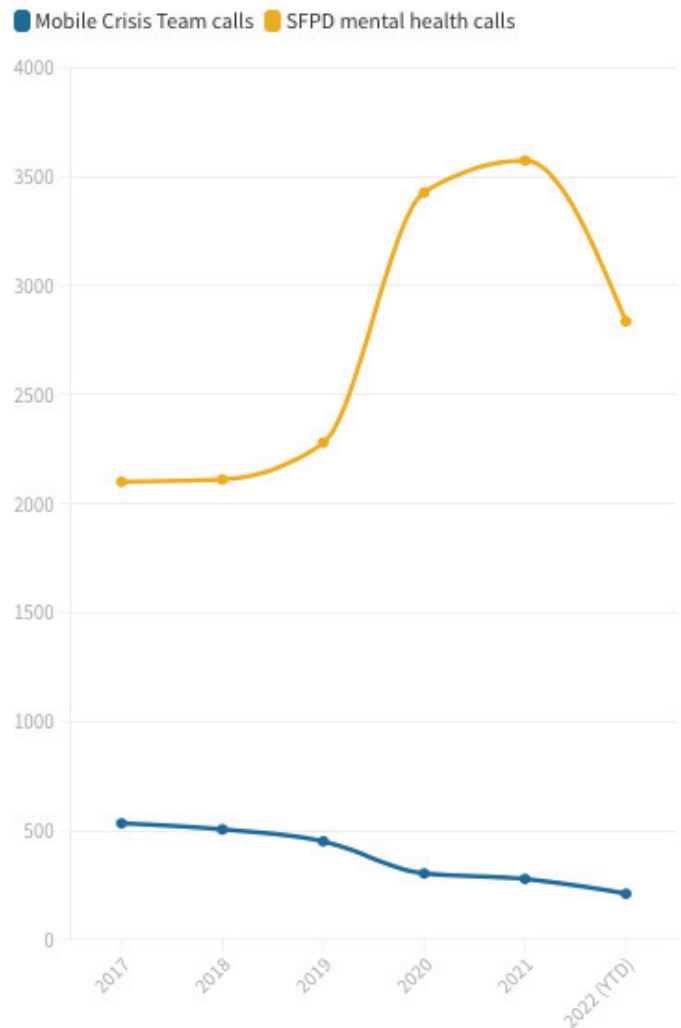
"Now, with 988, they handle 10% more of the calls than they used to," Walton said.

## More officers handling situations

Improved officer training is also a factor, according to Hansen and Walton.

More than 40% of SFPD officers have completed Walton's 40-hour crisis intervention team (CIT) training. That training, as well as the decade of focus on de-escalation techniques and a push to see involuntary commitment as a last resort, translates to more officers helping those in crisis without the help of the MCT, Walton said.

"We've got officers gaining more confidence on these calls," Walton said. "We are getting better at it and



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more comfortable with it in those social situations.”

Every school resource officer is CIT trained, she said, which has helped those officers handle issues in the school system. Walton also opens her twice-yearly trainings to officers from nearby jurisdictions. She’s also traveled to teach in Brookings and led coursework for trainees at the Law Enforcement Academy in Pierre.

Even so, Walton said, the mobile crisis team continues to serve a critical role for the area. Officers from Tea, Harrisburg, Brandon and other nearby communities lean on the MCT, though 173 of the team’s 211 calls through October originated in Sioux Falls.

“Our officers love mobile crisis,” she said. “Any time they can avoid a hold, that’s a win for everybody. The county’s not looking at a bill, they’re not filling a bed, and we’re not taking people away.”

The notion that mental illness ought not be dealt with by jailers has gained significant traction statewide in the decade since Sioux Falls began sending counselors out with officers. Former South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard championed diversions and mental health programs as alternatives to detention in his successful overhauls of the adult criminal justice system in 2013 and the juvenile justice system in 2015. Officers in training in Pierre hear far more about mental illness and deescalation than they did in 2002, when Walton attended the academy.

Telehealth diversions have gained traction in both Sioux Falls and Rapid City, the latter of which maintains a crisis care center that serves between 1,500 and 2,000 people each year. The Rapid City Council voted to devote half a million dollars to a crisis stabilization unit last year, which would offer five-day stays, as opposed to the 24 hours a person can stay at the crisis care center.

Back in Sioux Falls, Commissioner Karsky’s comments lauding the work of the MCT came on the heels of a trip by commissioners to Tucson, Arizona, where they toured triage centers that could serve as models for an intermediate care facility in Sioux Falls.

For Hansen, the 5,000 diversions figure is strong evidence that diversion and de-escalation offer real-world evidence that such discussions pay off.

“The important thing to focus on is that we have touched over 5,000 lives,” she said. “We’ve been able to successfully leave people at home so they can go to work the next day, go to school, and just be with their families.”



**A sign outside the Sioux Falls location of the Helpline Center, one of three call centers across the state that connects callers to a range of services.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

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**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.

## Avera receives \$2.5 million in federal money for rural nurse shortage

Health system will use funds for education and preparing nurses for rural care

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 25, 2022 11:49 AM

South Dakota-based Avera Health recently received over \$2.5 million to address nursing and health care workforce shortages in rural South Dakota through virtual nursing and education.

The funding comes from the Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

South Dakota's nursing shortage is years in the making, but was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many nurses chose to leave the profession or retired early because of the influx of patients and increased stress.

Registered nursing is the most in-demand South Dakota occupation advertised online as of mid-November on the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation job board. There are about 1,000 more job



**Avera St. Mary's Hospital in Pierre.** (Courtesy of Avera Health)

postings for the occupation than the second most-common posting: physicians. Nursing assistants and licensed practical and vocational nurses closely follow in third and fourth.

The pipeline for attracting more people to the nursing field, especially in rural areas, is tapped out. Health care systems like Avera are turning to alternative solutions including educational partnerships, virtual health care and nursing support — all of which is covered through the recent funding.

Outside of the grant funding, Avera recently implemented an internal travel nursing program to address nursing recruitment and retention. The health care system will also soon hire nurses internationally.

Rural areas and critical access hospitals are South Dakota's "most acute health workforce need," said Karna Pfeffer, director of clinical excellence and education at Avera St. Mary's Hospital in Pierre.

"The more rural facilities feel it a lot harder and faster when they lose one nurse," Pfeffer said. "At a larger facility you can absorb that loss and can pick up that shift. But when your pool of nurses is six wide, that one loss is a significant portion of your workforce."

### Virtual care supports rural nurses, won't replace them

The first grant covered in the federal funding is Project NEXT, a \$1.5 million grant to support a three-year training program for rural health professionals on how to use telehealth and health information technology.

Cross-training professionals in virtual nursing will allow rural nurses to handle in-person patient care while virtual nurses will help with docu-



**Karna Pfeffer, director of clinical excellence and education at Avera St. Mary's Hospital in Pierre.** (Courtesy Avera

Health)

mentation and offer support.

“(Virtual care) isn’t going to replace rural care. It’s not ever going to replace rural nurses,” Pfeffer said. “As a new grad coming into a facility, sometimes you’re only one nurse on the floor for a 12-hour night shift. Having the ability and support of another nurse virtually will hopefully reduce anxieties that a new grad nurse will have and allow them to start their practice at a rural facility more confidently.”

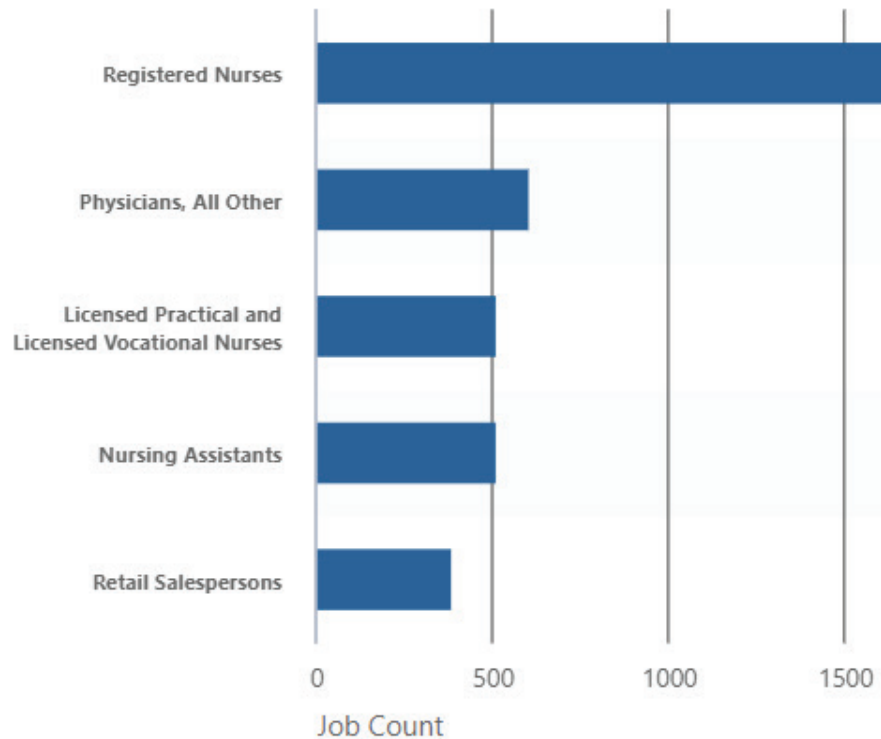
The move to virtual care is exploring what the “right path” is for health care after the COVID pandemic. Health care systems are choosing to look at what patients need, the delivery of care, and how to give care as close to the patient’s home as possible.

“Project NEXT offers Avera an opportunity to support nursing staff, not simply by hiring more RNs, but also by leveraging the capacity of its health IT workforce to intervene in ways that are new and cutting-edge,” said Rachael Sherard, senior vice president for rural health at Avera, in a news release.

South Dakota was a priority state for the NEXT grant due to low projection of available nurses compared to surrounding states.



**A virtual camera is installed in an ICU at an Avera Health facility. The technology is used to assist staff in responding to patient needs.** (Courtesy Avera Health)



Source: Online advertised jobs data

The most in-demand jobs as of mid-November in South Dakota were registered nurses, physicians, nursing assistants and licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses. (SD Department of Labor)

## University partnerships to make future nurses more comfortable with rural care

Thirty percent of new RN graduates at South Dakota universities leave the state after graduation.

It’s imperative to find ways to retain those recent graduates in South Dakota, Pfeffer said.

“We all know if you go somewhere and get comfortable with your job, then you stay,” she said. “If we can make these future nurses comfortable with (rural health care) while in nursing school, then they’ll choose to work at critical access hospitals and possibly stay there for the next 15 years.”

The second grant, part of the Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention Registered Nurse Training Program, provides \$1 million in funding over three years. The project will partner with South Dakota State University’s nursing program to prepare future nurses for careers in rural acute-care critical access hospitals.

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The grant provides education in cultural awareness, social determinants of health, health equity and health literacy. The grant aims to remove barriers and perceptions about practicing in a rural acute-care setting.

Avera Health will also expand its training for college nurse clinicals and precursors to rural settings and practice outside of Sioux Falls, which will expose them to work in rural hospitals. Urban hospital care is significantly different from rural nursing, Pfeffer said.

"In more urban areas there are more resources for students to divert patients to, whereas in smaller areas it comes down to nurses to understand and find solutions to those problems," Pfeffer said. "Getting a better understanding and awareness of that difference will set them up for success."



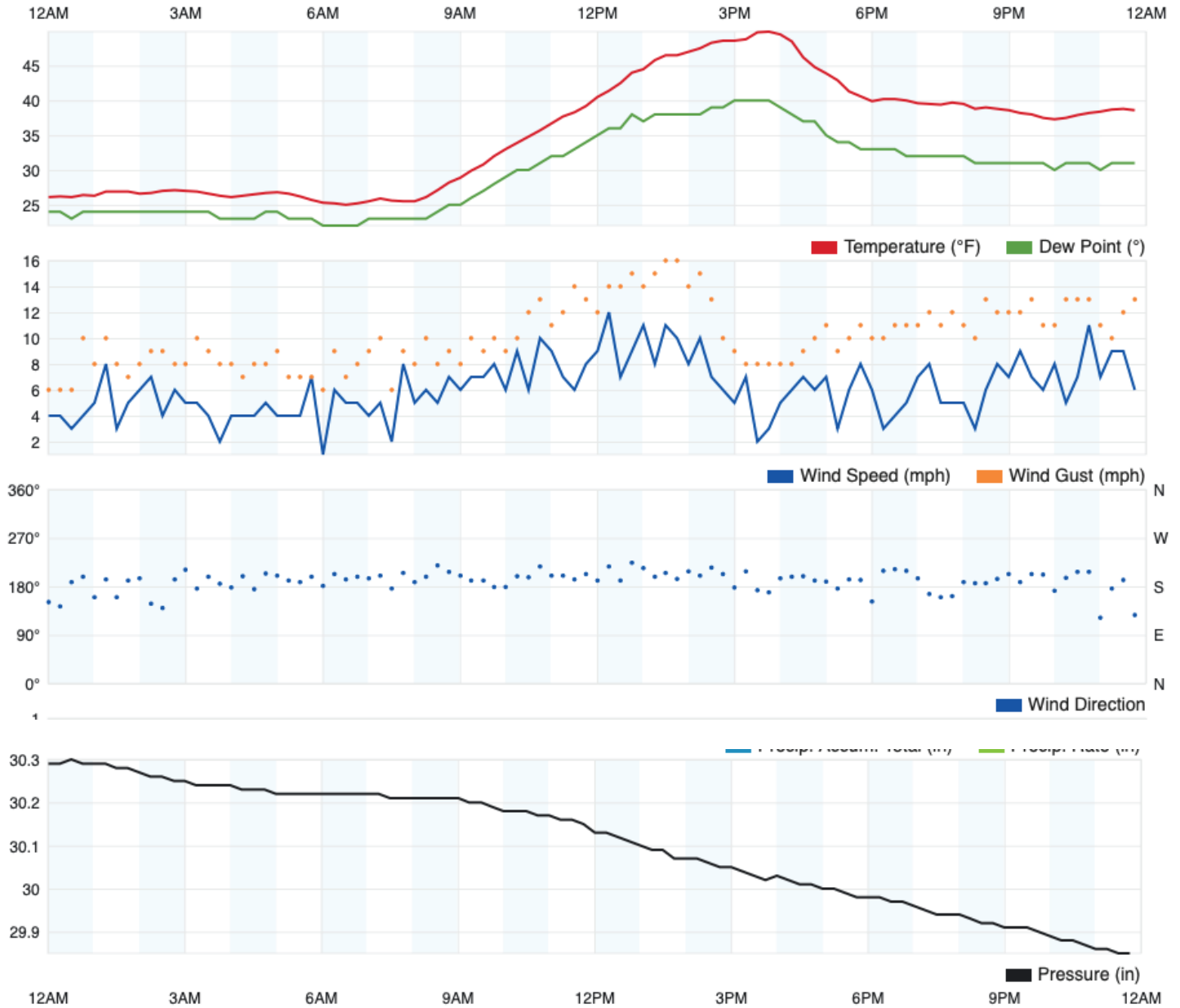
**MAKENZIE HUBER**  

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





# Groton Daily Independent

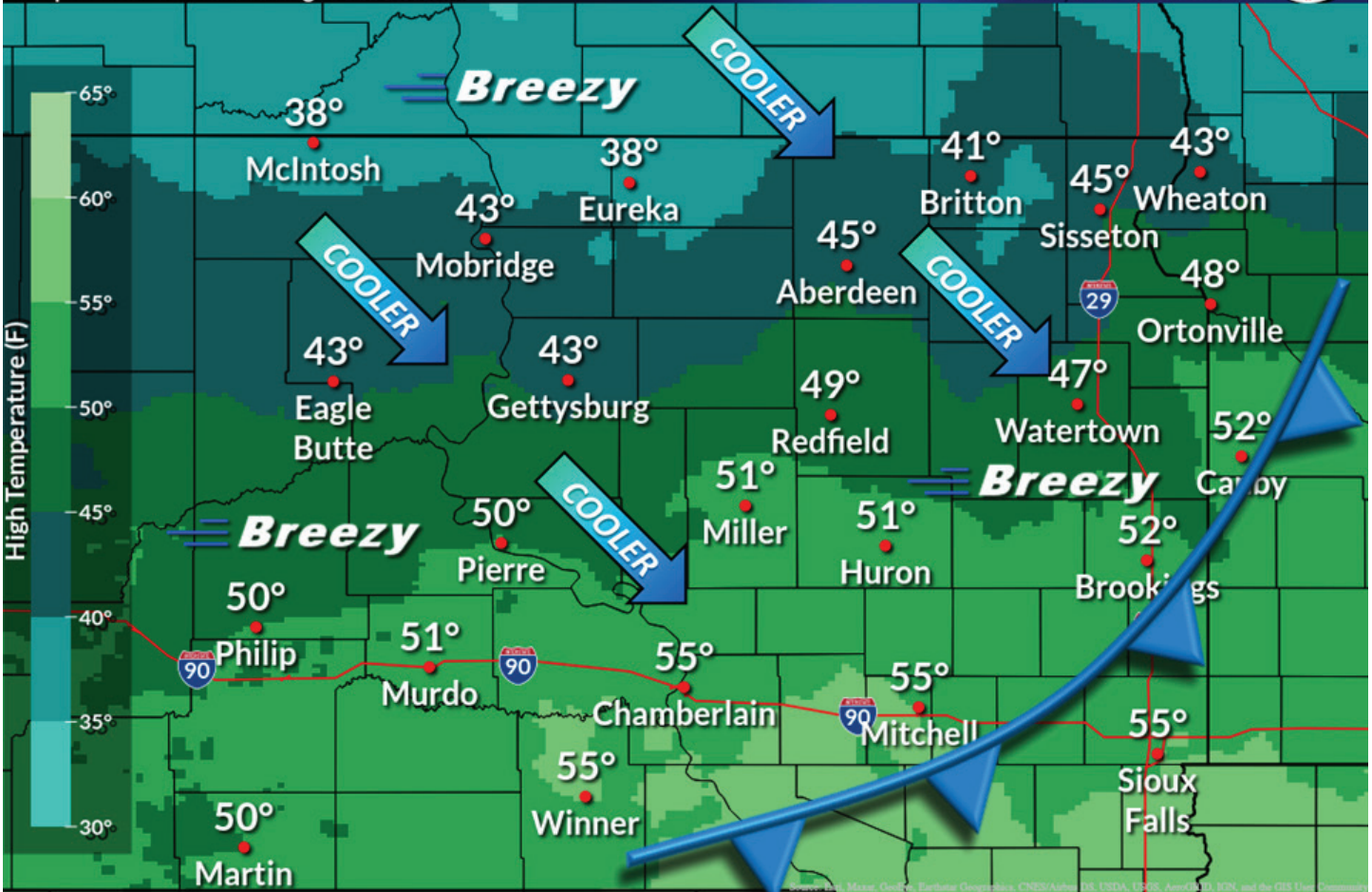
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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Increasing Clouds	Decreasing Clouds	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow	Slight Chance Snow
High: 43 °F	Low: 18 °F	High: 37 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 24 °F

## Cooler and Becoming Breezy Today

Temperatures still remaining above normal

Weather Forecast Office  
Aberdeen, SD  
Issued Nov 26, 2022 3:29 AM CST



[f](#) [t](#) [v](#) NWSAberdeen

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

A cold front will move southeast across the region this morning, bringing breezy northwest winds and temperatures that will be a bit cooler compared to Friday. Although, these temperatures will still be above normal for this time of year, as most areas rise into the 40s and 50s. There may be some areas stuck in the upper 30s along the ND/SD border.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 49.9 °F at 3:45 PM**

**Low Temp: 25.0 °F at 6:30 AM**

**Wind: 16 mph at 1:30 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 9 hours, 10 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 63 in 1914

Record Low: -24 in 1996

Average High: 37°F

Average Low: 15°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.66

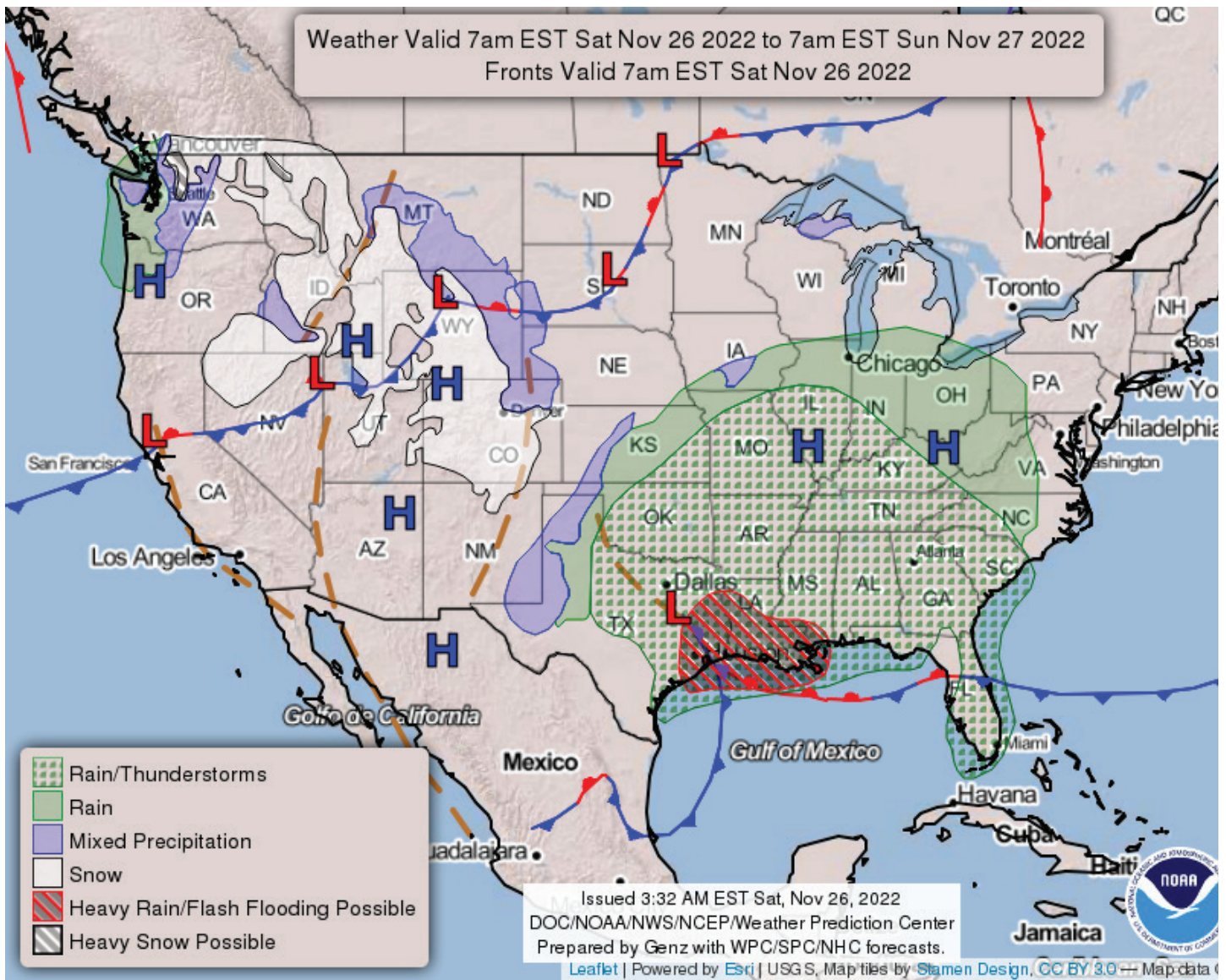
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.13

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 4:55:03 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:45:41 AM



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## Today in Weather History

November 26, 1989: Snow began falling in western South Dakota during the early evening of the 26th and swept across the state and into west central Minnesota that night and through much of the 27th. Almost two feet of snow fell in parts of the Black Hills, while one to two inches fell in the southeast part of South Dakota. Icy roads caused by rain that preceded the snow in central and eastern parts of the state combined with strong northerly winds on the 27th to make for dangerous traveling conditions. Numerous accidents were reported, and many cars went into ditches. Some of the heavier snow amount in central, north central, and northeast South Dakota were reported at Leola with 6 inches; Mellette and Onida with 5 inches; and Eureka, Faulkton, and Aberdeen with 4 inches.

November 26, 2001: Heavy snow of 6 to 12 inches, along with strong north winds of 20 to 40 mph, caused near-blizzard conditions and challenging travel conditions across most of central and northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Snowfall amounts were 6 to 12 inches in South Dakota and 10 to 14 inches in west central Minnesota. Most schools were closed or started late on both the 26th and 27th and some businesses were also closed. Many flights were also delayed or canceled. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Eagle Butte, Fort Thompson and Webster; 7 inches at Eureka, Onida, Doland, and Watertown; 8 inches at Highmore, Miller, Onaka, Castlewood, and Selby; 9 inches at Sisseton and Peever; 10 inches at Ortonville, Faulkton, Blunt, Murdo, Kennebec, and Stephan; 11 inches at Victor and Gettysburg; 12 inches at Milbank, White Rock, and Clear Lake; 13 inches at Wheaton; and 14 inches at Browns Valley.

1888 - A late season hurricane brushed the East Coast with heavy rain and gale force winds. The hurricane passed inside Nantucket and over Cape Cod, then crossed Nova Scotia. (David Ludlum)

1896 - Snow and high winds hit the Northern Plains and the Upper Mississippi Valley, with a Thanksgiving Day blizzard across North Dakota. The storm was followed by a severe cold wave in the Upper Midwest. The temperature at Pokegama Dam MI plunged to 45 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A Thanksgiving Day storm in the northeastern U.S. produced heavy snow in northern New England and upstate New York. Snowfall totals in Maine ranged up to twenty inches at Flagstaff Lake. Totals in New Hampshire ranged up to 18 inches at Errol. Gales lashed the coast of Maine and New Hampshire. A second storm, over the Southern and Central Rockies, produced nine inches of snow at Kanosh UT, and 13 inches at Divide CO, with five inches reported at Denver CO. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather over the Central Gulf Coast States during the late morning and afternoon hours. Five tornadoes were reported in Mississippi, with the tornadoes causing a million dollars damage at Ruleville, and in Warren County. In Utah, the town of Alta was blanketed with 15 inches of snow overnight, and during the day was buried under another 16.5 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A massive storm over the western U.S. produced heavy snow in Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. The storm produced more than two feet of snow in the higher elevations of northern and central Utah, bringing more than sixty inches of snow to the Alta Ski Resort in the Wasatch Mountains. Winds in Utah gusted to 60 mph at Bullfrog. The storm brought much needed snow to the ski resorts of Colorado, with 19 inches reported at Beaver Creek. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

November 26, 2007: Lightning and heavy rain delay the start of the Monday Night Football game at Pittsburgh's Heinz Field between the Miami Dolphins and the Pittsburgh Steelers by 25 minutes. The muddy field conditions contribute to one of the lowest scoring NFL games won by the Steelers, 3-0. The teams combined 375 yards, and the winning field goal occurred with 17 seconds left in the game.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### OUR GOD IS A GOOD GOD!

Mary Jo spent part of her spring vacation with her Grandmother. When she returned home, her mother asked, "Were you a good girl?"

"Mom, I was so good that I could hardly stand it," she replied. "It's a wonder I had any fun I was so good."

The word "good" is difficult to measure. There is no "good-er" or "good-est." Why? Because the word good is only applicable to God. And we must never forget that it is not possible for God to improve on anything He does or do anything any "good-er."

On one occasion when Jesus was starting on a trip, a man came running up to Him and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to get into heaven?"

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good!"

His reply did not disclaim that He, too, was good. On the contrary! He claimed and proclaimed His goodness when He confessed that He was God!

Unfortunately, the young man regarded Jesus as a human teacher only. For him to attach the word "good" to a mere human being was a bad thing. So, it was necessary for him to understand that only God is good and that no one other than God is, in fact, good. Jesus is good because He is God.

Whenever we think of ourselves, we must always remember who we are, how we think, and that we are human. When we think of God, however, we must shout with the Psalmist, "Give thanks to God for He is good!"

Prayer: Thank you, Father, that You are good and, in that goodness, we see Your love, grace, and salvation. When we look at You, we see Your goodness and our need. Help us to be more like you. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Psalm 107:1



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

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## 2022-23 Community Events

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

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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Friday:

Mega Millions

29-31-46-54-67, Mega Ball: 18, Megaplier: 2

(twenty-nine, thirty-one, forty-six, fifty-four, sixty-seven; Mega Ball: eighteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$305,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 48,000,000

### Kyle scores 17, South Dakota State beats Valparaiso 61-50

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — William Kyle III had 17 points in South Dakota State's 61-50 win against Valparaiso in the Hostilo Community Classic on Friday.

Kyle also contributed six rebounds for the Jackrabbits (3-3). Zeke Mayo finished with 11 points and 13 rebounds. Alex Arians scored 10.

Kobe King finished with 18 points for the Beacons (2-4). Ben Krikke added 12 points, nine rebounds and two steals. Maximus Nelson had eight points and six rebounds.

South Dakota State entered halftime tied with Valparaiso 23-23. Kyle scored 13 after intermission.

### Iran leader praises force tasked with quashing protests

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iran's supreme leader praised paramilitary volunteers tasked with quashing dissent on Saturday in a televised address as dozens of eye doctors warned that a rising number of demonstrators have been blinded by security forces during anti-government protests.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei addressed members of the Basij, the volunteer paramilitary wing of the elite Revolutionary Guard, and reiterated unsupported claims that protesters demonstrating countrywide are "tools" of the U.S. and its "mercenaries."

"(The) Basij should not forget that the main clash is with global arrogance, or the U.S.," Khamenei said in the address marking Basij week in Iran, echoing previous statements lambasting the protests as a foreign plot to destabilize Iran.

Extolling the military and social virtues of the Basij over the decades, Khamenei said the forces "sacrificed themselves in order to save people from a bunch of rioters and mercenaries," referring to the recent country-wide unrest. "They sacrificed themselves in order to confront oppression."

The Basij have taken a leading role in clamping down on demonstrations that began Sept. 17, ignited by the death of a young woman while in the custody of Iran's morality police. Her death sparked months of protests over the country's mandatory headscarf but quickly morphed into one of the greatest challenges to Iran's theocracy since the chaotic years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Protests continued Saturday at some universities in the capital Tehran and other cities, according to social media. Because of a severe country-wide crackdown by Iranian security forces, demonstrations have become more scattered. Protesters have also called for commercial strikes.

Khamenei's comments came a day after Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi met with a group of Basij members and praised their efforts to maintain security, according to the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

Iran's ferocious crackdown on dissent has drawn criticism, with at least 448 people killed and more than 18,000 arrested in the protests and the violent security force response that followed, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group monitoring the demonstrations. Iran has not offered a death toll or a number of those arrested.

In a letter, 140 ophthalmologists raised concerns about a rising number of patients with severe eye injuries resulting from being shot with metal pellets and rubber bullets, according to pro-reform Iranian news site Sobhema and Iran International as well as other sites on social media. "Unfortunately in many cases the hit caused the loss of sight in one or both eyes," the letter, addressed to the head of the country's ophthalmologists association, said.

The doctors requested that the head of Iran's Ophthalmology Association pass on their concerns about the irreparable damage caused by security forces to the relevant authorities.

It was the second letter from eye doctors expressing concerns about police brutality and the shooting of pellets and rubber bullets into the eyes of demonstrators and others. A previous letter was signed by over 200 ophthalmologists.

Last week, videos circulated on social media of law student Ghazal Ranjkesh in the southern city of Banda Abbas who lost an eye after being shot with a metal pellet on her way home from work.

## Ukraine works to restore water, power after Russian strikes

By JAMEY KEATEN and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian authorities endeavored Saturday to restore electricity and water services after recent pummeling by Russian military strikes that vastly damaged infrastructure, with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy saying millions have seen their power restored since blackouts swept the war-battered country days earlier.

Skirmishes continued in the east and residents from the southern city of Kherson headed north and west to flee after punishing, deadly bombardments by Russian forces in recent days. The strikes have been seen as attempts at Russian retribution against Ukraine's beleaguered but defiant people after Ukrainian troops over two week ago liberated the city that had been in Russian hands for many months.

"The key task of today, as well as other days of this week, is energy," Zelenskyy said in his nightly televised address late Friday. "From Wednesday to today we have managed to halve the number of people whose electricity is cut off, to stabilize the system."

He said, however, that blackouts continued in most regions, including Kyiv, the capital.

"In total, more than 6 million subscribers are affected. On Wednesday evening, almost 12 million subscribers were cut off," Zelenskyy added.

He allowed himself a rare show of pique about how Kyiv authorities were faring, alluding to "many complaints" with the rollouts of "points of invincibility" — public centers where residents can stock up on food, water, battery power and other essentials — in the capital.

"Please pay attention: Kyiv residents need more protection," he said. "As of this evening, 600,000 subscribers have been disconnected in the city. Many Kyiv residents were without electricity for more than 20 or even 30 hours."

"I expect quality work from the mayor's office," he said, alluding to the administration of Mayor Vitali Klitschko.

The president and the mayor have sporadically sparred since Zelenskyy took office in 2019. Zelenskyy has accused Klitschko and officials around him of corruption, while Klitschko contends the president's office has put him under political pressure.

Early Saturday, the Kyiv municipal administration said water connections had been restored throughout the city, but that about 130,000 residents remain without electricity.

City authorities said Saturday morning that all power, water, heating and communication services would be restored within 24 hours.

The scramble to restore power came as Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo met Saturday with Zelenskyy in Kyiv. De Croo tweeted that Belgium was "releasing new humanitarian and military aid," but gave no immediate details.

Meanwhile, Ukrainians were marking the 90th anniversary of the start of the "Holodomor," or Great Famine, that killed more than 3 million people over two years as the Soviet government under Josef Stalin



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confiscated food and grain supplies and deported many Ukrainians.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz marked the commemoration by drawing parallels with the impact of the war on Ukraine — a key supplier of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other foodstuffs — on world markets. Exports from Ukraine have resumed under a U.N.-brokered deal but have still been far short of pre-war levels, driving up global prices.

“Today, we stand united in stating that hunger must never again be used as a weapon,” Scholz said in a video message. “That is why we cannot tolerate what we are witnessing: The worst global food crisis in years with abhorrent consequences for millions of people – from Afghanistan to Madagascar, from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa.”

He said a World Food Program ship was in the process of delivering Ukrainian grain to Ethiopia, and Germany was adding another 10 million euros to efforts to help expedite grain shipments from Ukraine.

In Kherson, residents continued to flee — or try to. A salvo of missiles struck the recently liberated city for a second day on Friday.

“I have no money, I can’t even buy gas for the car,” said Iryna Rusanovska, standing on the street near the bodies of three people who died from a strike on Thursday. She said wants to take her family to western Ukraine or out of the country.

Some 100 Kherson residents hopped aboard a government-chartered train in a first organized evacuation on Friday, and buses were expected to ferry others to shelters in the cities of Odesa, Mykolaiv and Kryvyi Rih, the Ministry of Reintegration said.

## Energy-rich Qatar faces fast-rising climate risks at home

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

AL RAYYAN, Qatar (AP) — At a suburban park near Doha, the capital city of Qatar, cool air from vents in the ground blasted joggers on a November day that reached almost 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit).

The small park with air-conditioned paths is an apt illustration of World Cup host Qatar’s answers, so far, to the rising temperatures its people face. The wealthy Gulf Arab nation has been able to pay for extreme adaptive measures like this thanks to the natural gas it exports to the world.

A small peninsula that juts out into the Persian Gulf, Qatar sits in a region that, outside the Arctic, is warming faster than anyplace else on earth.

“It’s already bad. And it’s getting worse,” said Jos Lelieveld, an atmospheric chemist at Germany’s Max Planck Institute. Part of the reason is the warming waters of the Persian Gulf, a shallow, narrow sea that contributes to stifling humidity in Qatar during some months.

“It’s a pretty difficult environment. It’s quite hostile,” said Karim Elgendy, an associate fellow at the London-based Chatham House think tank. Without its ability to pay for imported food, heavy air-conditioning and desalinated ocean water, he said, the contemporary country couldn’t exist.

Already, Qatar has faced a significant rise in temperatures compared to pre-industrial times. Scientists and others concerned about climate change are trying to keep the Earth as a whole from warming by more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) on average because research shows it will be profoundly disruptive, making many people homeless, inundating coastlines and destroying ecosystems.

“Qatar has an enormous amount to lose in terms of the effects of climate change,” said Mohammed Ayoub, a professor at the Environment and Energy Research Institute at Qatar’s Hamad bin Khalifa University. It is one of the world’s hottest countries and will experience even more heat extremes, floods, droughts and sand and dust storms.

### CLIMATE PLEDGES

If Qatar is one of the world’s wealthiest nations per capita, it is also one of the most polluting per person. Around this country slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Connecticut, large SUVs are a common sight, filled with cheap gasoline. Air-conditioning blasts the insides of buildings year-round. Even the country’s drinking water is energy intensive, with nearly all of it coming from desalination plants that burn fossil fuel

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for the force needed to press ocean water through tiny filters to make it consumable.

In recent years, Qatar has inched forward making climate pledges. At the 2015 Paris climate talks, it did not commit to reducing emissions, but set a goal six years later to cut emissions 25% by 2030. One way would be to use carbon capture and storage at gas production facilities, a much-discussed technology that has yet to be deployed at scale.

Recently, the country also connected a solar power plant to its electric grid that could power 10% of the nation's energy needs at full capacity.

In Doha, there is a new metro system, more green spaces and parks, and the upscale Msheireb district which was designed to take advantage of natural wind flows.

But it's not clear that Qatar can reach its reduction goal in seven years. At the recent U.N. climate conference in Egypt, Qatar's environment minister Sheikh Faleh bin Nasser bin Ahmed bin Ali Al Thani said the country was "working to translate these ambitions to facts."

The ministry of environment and climate change did not respond to multiple requests from The Associated Press for comment on its emissions reduction plan.

In the past, it has said that one key effort will be to diversify Qatar's economy.

Many observers say hosting the World Cup is part of branching out from oil and gas to become an entertainment and events destination. But to hold the event, Qatar built enormous amounts of infrastructure over a 12-year period — with a massive carbon footprint, despite its claims otherwise.

"They can't diversify without spending money," said Elgendy. "And that money will come from oil and gas. It's a bit of a conundrum."

## GLOBAL DEMAND FOR GAS

Qatari officials and some academics argue that exporting liquefied natural gas to the world can help the transition to clean energy because the fossil fuel is less polluting than oil and coal. That view is increasingly unsupported by science as the extent of leaks from natural gas infrastructure becomes clear. Leaking natural gas is far more harmful for the climate than carbon dioxide, ton for ton.

Earlier this year, state-owned gas giant Qatar Energy joined an industry-led pledge to reduce nearly all methane emissions from operations by 2030. Methane is the principal constituent of natural gas.

But a real turn away from fossil fuels has yet to begin here.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Europe's race to replace gas from that country left Qatar — among the world's top natural gas producers and exporters — in pole position to benefit.

Qatar inked new deals with several energy companies, including a recent 27-year agreement to provide liquefied natural gas to Chinese oil and gas company Sinopec.

"Since the war in Ukraine, everyone is talking to the Qataris now to see if they can get that gas," Elgendy said.

## Taiwan votes on lower voting age, mayors, city councils

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Lingered concerns about the threat posed by its giant neighbor China took a backseat in Taiwan's closely watched local elections on Saturday as voters focused on other pressing issues closer to home such as air pollution and bad traffic.

Taiwanese were picking their mayors, city council members and other local leaders in all 13 counties and in nine cities. There's also a referendum to lower the voting age from 20 to 18.

While international observers and the ruling party have attempted to link the elections to the long-term existential threat that is Taiwan's neighbor, many local experts do not think China has a large role to play this time around.

"The international community has raised the stakes too high. They've raised a local election to this international level, and Taiwan's survival," said Yeh-lih Wang, a political science professor at National Taiwan University.

During campaigning, there were few mentions of the large-scale military exercises targeting Taiwan that

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China held in August in reaction to U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit.

"So I think if you can't even raise this issue in Taipei," Wang said. "You don't even need to consider it in cities in the south."

Instead, campaigns resolutely focused on the local: air pollution in the central city of Taichung, traffic snarls in Taipei's tech hub Nangang, and the island's COVID-19 vaccine purchasing strategies, which had left the island in short supply during an outbreak last year.

At an elementary school in New Taipei City, the city that surrounds the capital Taipei, voters young and old came early despite the rain to cast their ballots.

Yu Mei-zhu, 60, said she came to cast her ballot for the incumbent Mayor Hou You-yi, running for reelection. "I think he has done well, so I want to continue to support him. I believe in him, and that he can improve our environment in New Taipei City and our transportation infrastructure."

President Tsai Ing-wen also came out early Saturday morning to cast her ballot, catching many voters by surprise as her security and entourage swept through the school. She then urged people across Taiwan to vote.

Tsai, who also chairs the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, has spoken out many times about "opposing China and defending Taiwan" in the course of campaigning. But the DPP's candidate Chen Shih-chung, who was running for mayor in Taipei, only raised the issue of the Communist Party's threat a few times before he quickly switched back to local issues as there was little interest, experts said.

Candidates spent the last week before the elections in a packed public schedule. On Sunday, the DPP's Chen marched through Taipei with a large parade filled with dancers in dinosaur suits and performers from different countries. Chiang Wan-an, the Nationalist party's mayoral candidate, canvassed at a hardware market, while Vivian Huang, an independent candidate, visited lunch stalls at a market. All three made stops at Taipei's famous night markets.

The question is how the island's two major political parties — the Nationalist and the incumbent DPP — will fare. Because both Tsai and the Nationalist's chair Eric Chu handpicked candidates, the performance will impact their own standings within their party, as well as the party's strength in the coming two years.

"If the DPP loses many county seats, then their ability to rule will face a very strong challenge," said You Ying-lung, chair at the Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation that regularly conducts public surveys on political issues.

The election results will in some ways also reflect the public's attitude towards the ruling party's performance in the last two years, You said.

Observers are also watching to see if outgoing Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je's Taiwan People's Party's candidates will pick up a mayoral seat. A 2024 presidential bid for Ko will be impacted by his party's political performance Saturday, analysts say. Ko has been campaigning with his deputy, the independent mayoral candidate Huang, for the past several weeks.

Food stall owner Hsian Fuh Mei said he was supporting Huang.

"We want to see someone international," he said. "If you look at Singapore, before we were better than Singapore, but we've fallen behind. I hope we can change direction."

Others were more apathetic to the local race. "It feels as if everyone is almost the same, from the policy standpoint," said 26-year-old Sean Tai, an employee at a hardware store.

Tai declined to say who he was voting for, but wants someone who will raise Taipei's profile and bring better economic prospects while keeping the status quo with China. "We don't want to be completely sealed off. I really hope that Taiwan can be seen internationally," he said.

## Sober or bright? Europe faces holidays during energy crunch

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VERONA, Italy (AP) — Early season merrymakers sipping mulled wine and shopping for holiday decorations packed the Verona Christmas market for its inaugural weekend. But beyond the wooden market stalls, the Italian city still has not decked out its granite-clad pedestrian streets with twinkling holiday lights as

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officials debate how bright to make the season during an energy crisis.

In cities across Europe, officials are wrestling with a choice as energy prices have gone up because of Russia's war in Ukraine: Dim Christmas lighting to send a message of energy conservation and solidarity with citizens squeezed by higher utility bills and inflation, while protecting public coffers. Or let the lights blaze in a message of defiance after two years of pandemic-suppressed Christmas seasons, illuminating cities with holiday cheer that retailers hope will loosen people's purse strings.

"If they take away the lights, they might as well turn off Christmas," said Estrella Puerto, who sells traditional Spanish mantillas, or women's veils, in a small store in Granada, Spain, and says Christmas decorations draw business.

Fewer lights are sparkling from the centerpiece tree at the famed Strasbourg Christmas market, which attracts 2 million people every year, as the French city seeks to reduce public energy consumption by 10% this year.

From Paris to London, city officials are limiting hours of holiday illumination, and many have switched to more energy-efficient LED lights or renewable energy sources. London's Oxford Street shopping district hopes to cut energy consumption by two-thirds by limiting the illumination of its lights to 3-11 p.m. and installing LED bulbs.

"Ecologically speaking, it's the only real solution," said Paris resident Marie Breguet, 26, as she strolled the Champs-Elysees, which is being lit up only until 11:45 p.m., instead of 2 a.m. as in Christmases past. "The war and energy squeeze is a reality. No one will be hurt with a little less of the illuminations this year."

It's lights out along Budapest's Andrassy Avenue, often referred to as Hungary's Champs-Elysees, which officials decided would not be bathed in more than 2 kilometers (1.5 miles) of white lights as in years past. Lighting also is being cut back on city landmarks, including bridges over the Danube River.

"Saving on decorative lighting is about the fact that we are living in times when we need every drop of energy," said Budapest's deputy mayor, Ambrus Kiss.

He doesn't think economizing on lighting will dissuade tourists from coming to the city, which holds two Christmas markets that attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

"I think it's an overblown debate," he said.

Festive lights, composed of LEDs this year, also will be dimmed from 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. in the old city center of Brasov in central Romania and switched off elsewhere, officials said.

The crisis, largely spurred by Russia cutting off most natural gas to Europe, is sparking innovation. In the Italian mountain town of Borno, in Lombardy, cyclists will provide power to the town's Christmas tree by fueling batteries with kinetic energy. Anyone can hop on, and the faster they pedal, the brighter the lights. No holiday lighting will be put up elsewhere in town to raise awareness about energy conservation, officials said.

In Italy, many cities traditionally light Christmas trees in public squares on Dec. 8, the Assumption holiday, still allowing time to come up with plans for festive street displays. Officials in the northern city of Verona are discussing limiting lighting to just a few key shopping streets and using the savings to help needy families.

"In Verona, the atmosphere is there anyway," said Giancarlo Peschiera, whose shop selling fur coats overlooks Verona's Piazza Bra, where officials on Saturday will light a huge shooting star arching from the Roman-era Arena amphitheater into the square.

The city also will put up a Christmas tree in the main piazza and a holiday cake maker has erected light-festooned trees in three other spots.

"We can do without the lights. There are the Christmas stalls, and shop windows are decked for the holidays," Peschiera said.

After two Christmases under COVID-19 restrictions, some are calling "bah humbug" on conservation efforts.

"It's not Christmas all year round," said Parisian Alice Betout, 39. "Why can't we just enjoy the festive season as normal, and do the (energy) savings the rest of the year?"

The holiday will shine brightly in Germany, where the year-end season is a major boost to retailers and

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restaurants. Emergency cutbacks announced this fall specifically exempted religious lighting, "in particular Christmas," even as environmental activists called for restraint.

"Many yards look like something out of an American Christmas film," grumbled Environmental Action Germany.

In Spain, the northwestern port city of Vigo is not letting the energy crisis get in the way of its tradition of staging the country's most extravagant Christmas light display. Ahead of other cities, Vigo switched on the light show Nov. 19 in what has become a significant tourist attraction.

Despite the central government urging cities to reduce illuminations, this year's installation is made up of 11 million LED lights across more than 400 streets — 30 more than last year and far more than any other Spanish city. In a small contribution to energy savings, they will remain on for one hour less each day.

The lights are Mayor Abel Caballero's pet project. "If we didn't celebrate Christmas, (Russian President Vladimir) Putin would win," he said.

Caballero says the economic return is vital, both for commerce and for businesses in Vigo. Hotels in the city and the surrounding area were completely full for the launch of the lighting and are expected to be close to 100% every week.

Germany's Christmas markets have crunched numbers that could make any lighting Grinch's heart grow at least three sizes.

The market exhibitor's association said a family Christmas market visit consumes less energy than staying home. A family of four spending an hour to cook dinner on an electric stove, streaming a two-hour film, running a video console and lighting the kids' rooms would use 0.711 kilowatt-hour per person vs. 0.1 to 0.2 kilowatt-hour per person to stroll a Christmas market.

"If people stay at home, they don't sit in the corner in the dark," said Frank Hakelberg, managing director of the German Showmen's Association. "The couch potatoes use more energy than when they are out at a Christmas market."

## Flashes of Arab unity at World Cup after years of discontent

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — For a brief moment after Saudi Arabia's Salem Aldawsari fired a ball from just inside the penalty box into the back of the net to seal a World Cup win against Argentina, Arabs across the divided Middle East found something to celebrate.

Such Arab unity is hard to come by and fleeting when it arrives. But Qatar's hosting of the World Cup has provided a moment where many in the Arab world have rallied by Doha and the Saudi team's win.

Whether that momentum continues will be tested on Saturday as Saudi Arabia faces Poland — and as regional tensions, religious differences and renewed economic competition between countries resume.

"All Arabic countries are celebrating because one Arab team won," said 27-year-old Saudi Rakan Yousef after Arab fans congratulated him in Doha, Qatar, on the Green Falcons' win. "Even the emir of Qatar attended our match. ... There's this feeling now that we are all brothers. That's why I'm speechless."

The Arab world's division start even with the Arabic language.

Spoken Arabic changes regionally, with the Berber-infused Arabic of North Africa, the rapid-fire Egyptian heard in movies and television comedies, the soft Levantine drawl and the guttural dialect of the Gulf Arabs.

Religion is another differentiator — there are Muslims, both Sunni and Shiite with subgroups within, and minority Christians, Druze, Baha'i and others. Different views on religion and regional rivalries bleed into conflicts, such as the ongoing war in Yemen.

But despite an attempt by al-Qaida to stir up extremists, the monthlong World Cup in energy-rich Qatar so far has seen unity among the Gulf Arab nations. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, the heads of state in two countries that only some two years ago had boycotted Qatar, attended the tournament's opening match.

Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, called Qatar's hosting of the tournament "a milestone for all Arabs" and also attended the opening. That feeling was shared by others as well.

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"We are proud to be here for the first World Cup in an Arabic country," Morocco coach Walid Regragui said. Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi similarly praised Qatar while dismissing the criticisms of journalists — and by extension, rights groups.

"Qatar did a tremendous job organizing a World Cup. ... Qatar never claimed it was perfect," Safadi said. "We have differences in opinion, we have differences in views but that should not take away from the fact that Qatar has really put together a World Cup that is unique in every sense of the word."

But the biggest surprise came two days later as Saudi Arabia stunned Argentina by winning their opener in the tournament, with Aldawsari doing a cartwheel and a flip. Qatar's ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, attended the match and wore a Saudi flag around his shoulders.

One veteran Saudi sports journalist, Majed al-Tuwaijri, even wept on air after the match.

"This is the most beautiful and important moment in my life and my 30-year media career," he said, his voice choking up. "I find myself failing to express myself because of the complexity of my feelings toward this great historical victory."

Saudi Arabia's King Salman declared Wednesday a public holiday to commemorate the win. In the kingdom and outside of it, people cheered and waved the country's green and white flag to celebrate.

The Saudi flag itself carries two images that show its complicated place in the wider Arab world. It bears a white sword and the Arabic inscription of the shahada, a Muslim declaration of faith: "There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." After the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 A.D., Islam spread from the austere desert reaches of the Arabian Peninsula that later would become Saudi Arabia.

Today, Saudi Arabia maintains beheading as a form of execution and is one of the world's top enforcers of the death penalty. The kingdom also has used its oil money since the 1980s to export an ultraconservative view of Islam called Wahhabism into mosques around the world. Extremists have exploited Wahhabi organizations receiving Saudi funding as well.

That history, as well as regional politics, make a wholehearted embrace of Saudi Arabia more complicated for Arabs in the Mideast. While some celebrated Saudi Arabia's win in the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian enclave blockaded by Egypt and Israel is ruled by the militant group Hamas. The kingdom, while not diplomatically recognizing Israel, now allows Israeli airlines overflight rights.

The limits also can be seen in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia has been fighting the country's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels since 2015. Houthi Information Minister Daifallah al-Shami on Twitter offered "a thousand congratulations" to Saudi Arabia for placing "Arab football back on the map." He later deleted the tweet and apologized.

"There are red lines that no party or person should cross," al-Shami wrote.

The Saudi win, which the daily newspaper Okaz described as "restoring the glories" of the kingdom, also fits into the new, more nationalistic Saudi Arabia forming under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

As the prince has risen to power, the kingdom has socially liberalized by allowing women to drive, reopening movie theaters and curtailing its morality police. His comments to the team ahead of the tournament, urging them to "enjoy" the matches, have been repeated constantly in Saudi Arabia's tightly controlled press.

But Prince Mohammed also led a self-described corruption crackdown targeting anyone with power in the kingdom. U.S. intelligence agencies believe the brutal slaying of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul came at his orders, something denied by the kingdom.

Meanwhile, economic competition between the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia has been increasing as Riyadh tries to draw international business from Dubai. Qatar, which faced a Saudi-led boycott only two years earlier, has embraced the kingdom while solidifying ties with the United States as hedge. The inconclusive war in Yemen still rages.

Soccer provides a respite, but no panacea for those woes.

"You'd have to have a historical lobotomy to think this is a stable region," said David B. Roberts, an associate professor at King's College London who long has studied Gulf Arab nations.

**Wildlife conference boosts protection for sharks, turtles**

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By KATHIA MARTÍNEZ Associated Press

PANAMA CITY (AP) — An international wildlife conference moved to enact some of the most significant protection for shark species targeted in the fin trade and scores of turtles, lizards and frogs whose numbers are being decimated by the pet trade.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, known by its initials as CITES, ended Friday in Panama. Along with protections for over 500 species, delegates at the United Nations wildlife conference rejected a proposal to reopen the ivory trade. An ivory ban was enacted in 1989.

“Good news from CITES is good news for wildlife as this treaty is one of the pillars of international conservation, imperative at ensuring countries unite at combatting the global interrelated crises of biodiversity collapse, climate change, and pandemics,” said Susan Lieberman, the vice president of international policy at Wildlife Conservation Society.

“Many of the proposals adopted here reflect there is ongoing over-exploitation and unsustainable trade, and escalating illegal trade, and some are due to complex interactions of other threats reducing species populations in the wild, including climate change, disease, infrastructure development, and habitat loss,” she added.

The international wildlife trade treaty, which was adopted 49 years ago in Washington, D.C., has been praised for helping stem the illegal and unsustainable trade in ivory and rhino horns as well as in whales and sea turtles.

But it has come under fire for its limitations, including its reliance on cash-strapped developing countries to combat illegal trade that’s become a lucrative \$10 billion-a-year business.

One of the biggest achievement this year was increasing or providing protection for more than 90 shark species, including 54 species of requiem sharks, the bonnethead shark, three species of hammerhead shark and 37 species of guitarfish. Many had never before had trade protection and now, under Appendix II, the commercial trade will be regulated.

Global shark populations are declining, with annual deaths due to fisheries reaching about 100 million. The sharks are sought mostly for their fins, which are used in shark fin soup, a popular delicacy in China and elsewhere in Asia.

“These species are threatened by the unsustainable and unregulated fisheries that supply the international trade in their meat and fins, which has driven extensive population declines,” Rebecca Regnery, senior director for wildlife at Humane Society International, said in a statement. “With Appendix II listing, CITES Parties can allow trade only if it is not detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild, giving these species help they need to recover from over-exploitation.”

The conference also enacted protections for dozens of species of turtle, lizard and frogs including glass frogs whose translucent skin made them a favorite in the pet trade. Several species of song birds also got trade protection.

“Already under immense ecological pressure resulting from habitat loss, climate change and disease, the unmanaged and growing trade in glass frogs is exacerbating the already existing threats to the species,” Danielle Kessler, the U.S. country director for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, said in a statement. “This trade must be regulated and limited to sustainable levels to avoid compounding the multiple threats they already face.”

But some of the more controversial proposals weren’t approved.

Some African countries and conservation groups had hoped to ban the trade in hippos. But it was opposed by the European Union, some African countries and several conservation groups, who argue many countries have healthy hippo populations and that trade isn’t a factor in their decline.

“Globally cherished mammals such as rhinos, hippos, elephants and leopards didn’t receive increased protections at this meeting while a bunch of wonderful weirdos won conservation victories,” Tanya Sanerib, international legal director at the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement. “In the midst of a heart-wrenching extinction crisis, we need global agreement to fight for all species, even when it’s contentious.”

## US earns respect at World Cup, but wins remain elusive

By RONALD BLUM AP Sports Writer

AL KHOR, Qatar (AP) — Respect achieved. Wins await.

American players wanted more than a 0-0 draw with England on Friday night, likely the most-watched match of their lives.

The U.S. shut out a European opponent in the World Cup for the first time since 1950 yet left the tent-like stadium in the Arabian desert knowing a win in Tuesday's politically charged matchup with Iran is a must to reach the knockout stage.

"We dominated the game. We had the more clear-cut chances. Obviously, it sucks that we couldn't put the ball in the back of the net," said midfielder Weston McKennie, standing out with red, white and blue streaks in his hair. "There's a lot of people that obviously thought we were going to get blown out."

The British tabloid The Sun ran a headline calling the result "Yawn in the USA." England supporters booed loudly at the final whistle and American fans cheered.

"I guess that's a positive sign," U.S. star Christian Pulisic said. "Back home watching, I hope we made a lot of people proud."

Playing before what figured to be a huge Black Friday television audience, the former Colonies remained unbeaten in three World Cup matches against Ye Olde Country, a run that includes the famous 1-0 upset at Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in 1950 and the 1-1 draw at Rustenberg, South Africa, in 2010. The U.S. had conceded goals in 19 consecutive Cup matches against European opponents until Matt Turner matched Frank Borghi's clean sheet of 72 years earlier.

American fans outcheered England supporters, too, including a cheeky serenade of "It's called soccer!" in the 40th minute.

"Now I'll go back and I don't think my Leeds teammates can say anything with all the banter they were saying before," midfielder Brenden Aaronson said. "I think it does show that we're going to get respect out of this game."

In 2010, England dominated 14-10 in shots and 6-4 in corner kicks. This time the U.S., using five starters from Premier League clubs, led 10-8 in shots and 7-3 in corners.

McKennie had the best U.S. chance, putting an open 9-yard attempt wide from Tim Weah's cross in the 26th minute. Seven minutes later, Pulisic bent a shot with his weaker left foot around Kieran Trippier and Bukayo Saka, and the ball glanced off a fingertip of goalkeeper Jordan Pickford and against the crossbar.

England's best opportunity came in second-half stoppage time, when Harry Kane sliced a header wide from Luke Shaw's free kick.

The U.S. wore blue tie-dyed uniforms in Bayt Stadium, which has a tent-shaped roof with an underside in a red-and-black carpet pattern. The interior is filled with the sadu pattern of the Bedouin.

Coach Gregg Berhalter made just one change from the 1-1 draw against Wales, replacing forward Josh Sargent with Haji Wright in just his fifth international appearance. Usually wedded to a 4-3-3 formation, Berhalter switched to a 4-4-2 that was first practiced Wednesday, according to Aaronson, who referred to it as an "amoeba."

"Regarding changing the way the world views American soccer, we're chipping away at it, and you need games like tonight to be able to do that," Berhalter said. "I talked before the World Cup about how seriously the team is taking, the staff is taking this responsibility to gain momentum in this sport in America, and good performances will do that. We want to capture the public's attention. We want to perform at a high level. We want to give them something to be proud of, and a night like tonight helps, but there has to be more to come."

Still, the U.S. has five losses and five draws against European teams at the World Cup since beating Portugal in 2002. Looking ahead to the Iran match likely will be the huge topic of Saturday's Thanksgiving dinner with players, family and friends.

Iran upset the U.S. 2-1 at Lyon, France, in the second game of the 1998 World Cup, eliminating the



Americans. Team Melli is coming off Friday's 2-0 upset of Wales and would advance with a win, or with a tie if Wales fails to beat England.

"All we can ask for is to have destiny in our own hands," Turner said, "and we have that."

## **Biden, family attend Christmas tree lighting on Nantucket**

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

NANTUCKET, Mass. (AP) — The Biden family's tradition of eating lunch, shopping and watching a Christmas tree lighting in downtown Nantucket on Friday became mostly about keeping the president's 2-year-old grandson from having a meltdown.

There was President Joe Biden's daughter, Ashley, dancing and clapping with nephew Beau to "Jingle Bell Rock" to keep him entertained as they waited with the crowd that had gathered for the 48th annual tree lighting ceremony on Main St.

There was Beau perched on the shoulders of his dad, Hunter Biden.

There was Beau being carried by his father, then not being carried by his father, then appearing to say things that suggested he wanted to get out of the cold and intermittent heavy rain.

Beau's grandfather walked with him at various points.

Every member of the family seemed to be doing whatever they could to keep blond-haired Beau, who is named after his late uncle, happy for a few hours until the tree was lit.

The Bidens have a more than 40-year tradition of spending Thanksgiving on Nantucket, an island off the coast of Massachusetts.

The day after, they go out to lunch — this year, they dined at the Brotherhood of Thieves restaurant. Afterward, they hit Nantucket Bookworks, a nearby bookstore. The president emerged carrying his purchases in a reusable tote bag.

They meandered along downtown Nantucket's cobblestone streets, going into some stores and window shopping at others. The first lady and Ashley had gotten some of their shopping done earlier Friday, so the spree after lunch was mostly for the president.

Biden spent time inside a leather goods store and a pet store, among other businesses. At one point, he looked through the window of a lingerie store but did not go inside.

"We're thankful for you," someone yelled to the president.

The tree lighting ceremony went off with a bit of a hitch. The red, green and blue lights on the tree failed to come on following a countdown from 10.

The high school's a capella chorus came out to sing until the problem was solved and the tree was illuminated, ushering in the Christmas season in Nantucket.

## **Colorado Springs reckons with past after gay club shooting**

By SAM METZ and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — When officials unfurled a 25-foot rainbow flag in front of Colorado Springs City Hall this week, people gathered to mourn the victims of a mass shooting at a popular gay club couldn't help but reflect on how such a display of support would have been unthinkable just days earlier.

With a growing and diversifying population, the city nestled at the foothills of the Rockies is a patchwork of disparate social and cultural fabrics. It's a place full of art shops and breweries; megachurches and military bases; a liberal arts college and the Air Force Academy. For years it's marketed itself as an outdoorsy boomtown with a population set to top Denver's by 2050.

But last weekend's shooting has raised uneasy questions about the lasting legacy of cultural conflicts that caught fire decades ago and gave Colorado Springs a reputation as a cauldron of religion-infused conservatism, where LGBTQ people didn't fit in with the most vocal community leaders' idea of family values.

For some, merely seeing police being careful to refer to the victims using their correct pronouns this week signaled a seismic change. For others, the shocking act of violence in a space considered an LGBTQ

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refuge shattered a sense of optimism pervading everywhere from the city's revitalized downtown to the sprawling subdivisions on its outskirts.

"It feels like the city is kind of at this tipping point," said Candace Woods, a queer minister and chaplain who has called Colorado Springs home for 18 years. "It feels interesting and strange, like there's this tension: How are we going to decide how we want to move forward as a community?"

Five people were killed in the attack last weekend. Eight victims remained hospitalized Friday, officials said.

In recent decades the population has almost doubled to 480,000 people. More than one-third of residents are nonwhite — twice as many as in 1980. The median age is 35. Politics here lean more conservative than in comparable-size cities. City council debates revolve around issues familiar throughout the Mountain West, such as water, housing and the threat of wildfires.

Residents take pride in describing Colorado Springs as a place defined by reinvention. In the early 20th century, newcomers sought to establish a resort town in the shadow of Pikes Peak. In the 1940s, military bases arrived. In the 1990s it became known as a home base for evangelical nonprofits and Christian ministries including broadcast ministry Focus on the Family and the Fellowship of Christian Cowboys.

"I have been thinking for years, we're in the middle of a transition about what Colorado Springs is, who we are, and what we've become," said Matt Mayberry, a historian at Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum.

The idea of latching onto a city with a bright future is partly what drew Michael Anderson, a Club Q bartender who survived last weekend's shooting.

Two friends, Derrick Rump and Daniel Aston, helped Anderson land the Club Q job and find his "queer family" in his new hometown. It was more welcoming than rural Florida where he grew up.

Still, he noted signs the city was more culturally conservative than others of similar size and much of Colorado: "Colorado Springs is kind of an outlier," he said.

Now he's grieving the deaths of Rump and Aston in the club shooting.

Leslie Herod followed an opposite trajectory. After growing up in Colorado Springs in a military family — like many others in the city — she left to study at the University of Colorado in liberal Boulder. In 2016 she became the first openly LGBTQ and Black person elected to Colorado's General Assembly, representing part of Denver. She is now running to become Denver's mayor.

"Colorado Springs is a community that is full of love. But I will also acknowledge that I chose to leave the Springs because I felt like when it came to ... the elected leadership, the vocal leadership in this community, it wasn't supportive of all people, wasn't supportive of Black people, wasn't supportive of immigrants, not supportive of LGBTQ people," Herod said at a memorial event downtown.

She said she found community at Club Q when she would return from college. But she didn't forget people and groups with a history of anti-LGBTQ stances and rhetoric maintained influence in city politics.

"This community, just like any other community in the country, is complex," she said.

Club Q's co-owner, Nic Grzecka, told The Associated Press he's hoping to use the tragedy to rebuild a "loving culture" in the city. Even though general acceptance the LGBTQ community has grown, Grzecka said false assertions that members of the community are "grooming" children has incited hatred.

Those who have been around long enough are remembering this week how in the 1990s, at the height of the religious right's influence, the Colorado Springs-based group Colorado for Family Values spearheaded a statewide push to pass Amendment 2 and make it illegal for communities to pass ordinances protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination.

Colorado Springs voted 3 to 1 in favor of Amendment 2, helping make its narrow statewide victory possible. Though it was later ruled unconstitutional, the campaign cemented the city's reputation, drawing more like-minded groups and galvanizing progressive activists in response.

The influx of evangelical groups decades ago was at least in part spurred by efforts from the city's economic development arm to offer financial incentives to lure nonprofits. Newcomers began lobbying for policies like getting rid of school Halloween celebrations due to suspicions about the holiday's pagan origins.

Yemi Mobolade, an entrepreneur running for mayor as an independent, didn't understand how strong Colorado Springs' stigma as a "hate city" was until he moved here 12 years ago. But since then, he said,

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it has risen from recession-era struggles and become culturally and economically vibrant for all kinds of people.

There has been a concerted push to shed the city's reputation as "Jesus Springs" and remake it yet again, highlighting its elite Olympic Training Center and branding itself as Olympic City USA.

Much like in the 1990s, Focus on the Family and New Life Church remain prominent in town. After the shooting, Focus on the Family's president, Jim Daly, said that like the rest of the community he was mourning the tragedy. With the city under the national spotlight, he said the organization wanted to make it clear it stands against hate.

Daly noted a generational shift among Christian leaders away from the rhetorical style of his predecessor, Dr. James Dobson. Whereas Focus on the Family published literature in decades past assailing what it called the "Homosexual Agenda," its messaging now emphasizes tolerance, ensuring those who believe marriage should be between one man and one woman have the right to act accordingly.

"I think in a pluralistic culture now, the idea is: How do we all live without treading on each other?" Daly said.

After a sign in front of the group's headquarters was vandalized with graffiti reading "their blood is on your hands" and "five lives taken," Daly said in a statement Friday it was time for "prayer, grieving and healing, not vandalism and the spreading of hate."

The memorials this week attracted a wave of visitors: crowds of mourners clutching flowers, throngs of television crews and a church group whose volunteers set up a tent and passed out cookies, coffee and water. To some in the LGBTQ community, the scene was less about solidarity and more a cause for consternation.

Colorado Springs native Ashlyn May, who grew up in a Christian church but left when it didn't accept her queer identity, said one woman from the group in the tent asked if she could pray for her and a friend who accompanied her to the memorial.

She said yes. It reminded May of her beloved great-grandparents, who were religious. But as the praying carried on and the woman urged May and her friend to turn to God, she felt as if praying had turned into preying. It unearthed memories of hearing things about LGBTQ people she saw as hateful and inciting.

"It felt very conflicting," May said.

## **Inflation hovers over shoppers seeking deals on Black Friday**

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO, HALELUYA HADERO and ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Retail Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Cautious shoppers hunted for the best deals at stores and online as retailers offered new Black Friday discounts to entice consumers eager to start buying holiday gifts but weighed down by inflation.

Due to elevated prices for food, rent, gasoline and other essentials, many people were being more selective, reluctant to spend unless there was a big sale. Some were dipping more into savings, turning to "buy now, pay later" services that allow payment in installments, or running up their credit cards at a time when the Federal Reserve is hiking rates to cool the U.S. economy.

Sheila Diggs, 55, went to a Walmart in Mount Airy, Maryland early Friday looking for a deal on a coffee maker. To save money this year, she said the adults in her family are drawing names and selecting one person to shop for.

"Everything's going up but your paycheck," said Diggs, who manages medical records at a local hospital.

This year's trends are a contrast from a year ago when consumers were buying early for fear of not getting what they needed amid supply-network clogs. Stores didn't have to discount much because they were struggling to bring in items.

Early shopping turned out to be a fleeting trend, said Rob Garf, vice president and general manager of retail at Salesforce, which tracks online sales. People this year are holding out for the best bargains, and retailers responded this week with more attractive online deals after offering mostly lackluster discounts earlier in the season.

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The average discount rate in the U.S. across all categories online was 31% on Thanksgiving, up from 27% the previous year, according to Salesforce data. The steepest discounts were in home appliances, general apparel, makeup and luxury handbags.

Macy's Herald Square in Manhattan, where discounts included 60% off fashion jewelry and 50% off select shoes, was bustling with shoppers early Friday.

The traffic was "significantly larger" on Black Friday compared to the previous two years because shoppers feel more comfortable in crowds, Macy's CEO Jeff Gennette said.

He said that bestsellers from Macy's online sale, which started last weekend, included 50% off beauty sets. Last year Macy's, like many other stores, had supply chain issues and some of the gifts didn't arrive until after Christmas.

"Right now we are set and ready to go," he said.

Sophia Rose, 40, a respiratory specialist visiting Manhattan from Albany, New York, was heading into Macy's with big plans to splurge after scrimping last year when she was still in school. She put herself on a budget for food and gas to cope with inflation but had already spent \$2,000 for holiday gifts, and plans to spend a total of \$6,000.

"I am going to touch every floor," she said. "That's the plan."

Customer traffic was also higher than last year at Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, according to Jill Renslow, executive vice president of business development of the shopping center. She said 10,000 people were at the sprawling mall during the first hour after the 7 a.m. opening, though inflation prompted many shoppers to figure out what to buy before showing up.

"With the economy, people are planning a little more," she said.

Delmarie Quinones, 30, went to a Best Buy in Manhattan to pick up a laptop and printer she ordered online at \$179, down from \$379. Quinones, a health home aide, said that higher prices on food and other expenses are making her reduce her spending from a year ago, when she had money from government child tax-credit payments.

"I can't get what I used to get," said the mother of five children, ages 1 to 13. "Even when it was back to school, getting them essentials was difficult."

Major retailers including Walmart and Target stuck with their pandemic-era decision to close stores on Thanksgiving Day, moving away from doorbusters and instead pushing discounts on their websites.

But people are still shopping on Thanksgiving — online. Garf said Salesforce data showed online sales spiked in the evening during the holiday this year, suggesting people went from feasting to phone shopping. And with holiday travel up, he said a greater share of online shopping occurred on mobile devices this year.

"The mobile phone has become the remote control of our daily lives, and this led to an increase in shopping on the couch as consumers settled in after Thanksgiving dinner," Garf said.

But with more shoppers visiting stores this year, growth in online sales slowed.

Shoppers spent \$5.3 billion online on Thanksgiving Day, up 2.9% from the holiday last year, according to Adobe Analytics, which monitors spending across websites. Adobe expects that online buying on Black Friday will hit \$9 billion, up just 1% from a year ago.

Black Friday saw some of the labor unrest that has rippled through the retail industry over the past year. A coalition of trade unions and advocacy organizations are coordinating strikes and walkouts at Amazon facilities in more than 30 countries under a campaign called "Make Amazon Pay." Among other places, hundreds of workers at a facility near the German city of Leipzig staged a protest Friday, calling for better working conditions and higher pay.

And at Walmart stores, some employees had Wednesday's deadly shooting at a company store in Virginia in the back of their minds.

Jude Anani, a 35-year-old who works at a Walmart store in Columbia, Maryland, said the company offers training on how to react in such circumstances but he would like to see more protection. He was happy to see a police officer standing outside the store, as is typical on Black Friday, and wished that was the case "most of the time during the year."

Against today's economic backdrop, the National Retail Federation — the largest retail trade group —

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expects holiday sales growth will slow to a range of 6% to 8%, from the blistering 13.5% growth of a year ago. However, these figures, which include online spending, aren't adjusted for inflation, so real spending could even be down from a year ago.

Analysts consider the five-day Black Friday weekend, which includes Cyber Monday, a key barometer of shoppers' willingness to spend. The two-month period between Thanksgiving and Christmas represents about 20% of the retail industry's annual sales.

## Lake seeks election records in suit against Arizona county

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Kari Lake, the defeated Republican candidate for Arizona governor, has filed a public records lawsuit demanding Maricopa County hand over a variety of documents related to the election.

Lake has refused to acknowledge that she lost to Democrat Katie Hobbs and has for weeks drawn attention to voters who said they experienced long lines and other difficulties while voting on Election Day in Arizona's largest county.

Her lawyer, Tim LaSota, says in the suit filed Wednesday that the county has not fulfilled public records requests filed on Nov. 15 and 16. The requests seek to identify voters who may have had trouble casting a ballot, such as people who checked in at more than one vote center or those who returned a mail ballot and also checked in at a polling place.

Lake is also asking for information about counted and uncounted ballots that were accidentally mixed. County officials have acknowledged the problem occurred at a handful of vote centers but say it happens in most elections and can be reconciled.

Lake and her allies have bombarded Maricopa County with complaints about Election Day problems, which stem largely from a problem with printers at some vote centers that led them to print ballots with markings that were too light to be read by the on-site tabulators. All ballots were counted, but Lake says some of her supporters may have been unable to cast a ballot amid the chaos.

Lake wants the county to produce the records before certifying the election. The Board of Supervisors, controlled 4-1 by Republicans, votes to certify the election on Monday, the deadline under state law. Certification votes are also scheduled for Monday in five other counties, including two where Republican supervisors voted earlier to delay certifying the election.

The statewide canvass is scheduled for Dec. 5.

County officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday. Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Gates, a Republican, has said the county takes responsibility for the printer issue but blamed prominent Republicans including state GOP Chair Kelli Ward for exacerbating the problem by telling voters not to allow their ballots to be counted at the elections headquarters in downtown Phoenix.

## US frustrates England again at a World Cup in 0-0 draw

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

AL KHOR, Qatar (AP) — Loud jeers rang around the stadium. England's fans were not happy. The United States had frustrated them yet again at a World Cup.

That's three times and counting that the teams have met on soccer's biggest stage and England is still waiting for its first win against the Americans after a 0-0 draw on Friday.

Coach Gareth Southgate had reminded his players of that record beforehand, with the U.S. famously winning 1-0 in 1950 and playing out a 1-1 draw in 2010. They didn't seem to heed his warning and didn't respond to Gregg Berhalter's young and energetic team.

England beat Iran 6-2 in its opening game in Qatar to justify its status as one of the tournament favorites. But it could consider itself fortunate not to have dropped another match to the U.S., after Christian Pulisic hit the crossbar with a first-half strike and Weston McKinnie lifted a shot over from eight yards out.

The England fans had turned up at the Al Bayt Stadium in anticipation of celebrating a win and qualifica-

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tion to the knockout stages with a game to play.

"I want our fans at home to have a smile on their faces and we haven't quite managed to achieve that," Southgate said. "But people are going to react how they react and I can't let that affect how I feel about the team or how the team feels.

"The objective is to qualify and we have three games to do it."

Frustrating England is one thing. But Berhalter's job is to advance to the knockout stages.

The draw sets up a match for the U.S. against Iran on Tuesday for a spot in the round of 16. Iran beat Wales 2-0 earlier and sits second in Group B with three points, one more than the Americans.

"It sets up our first knockout game of the World Cup," Berhalter said. "We win or we're out of the World Cup. That's going to be the focus for us while we are preparing the team for the next game.

"But most importantly, understanding the intensity Iran is going to bring. They played an excellent game today. Played with ton of spirit will have to be up for it if we want a chance to advance."

Southgate, meanwhile, will try to lift his players. He described them as dejected following the elating win against Iran.

And despite the boos, England is still top of the group with four points.

"It wasn't the best performance, for sure," said Harry Kane, who came close to scoring with a stoppage-time header. "Good spells with the ball, but we didn't quite have the final product.

"We had two or three opportunities and didn't put it away."

KANE WAIT

Kane, Golden Boot winner from the 2018 World Cup, is still looking for his first goal at this tournament.

MUSAH MISS

Yunus Musah, who chose to represent the U.S. over England, showed exactly what Southgate is missing out on with a dominant midfield performance.

## Walmart shooter left 'death note,' bought gun day of killing

By BEN FINLEY and MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE, Va. (AP) — The Walmart supervisor who fatally shot six co-workers at a store in Virginia bought the gun just hours before the killings and left a note on his phone accusing colleagues of mocking him, authorities said Friday.

"Sorry everyone but I did not plan this I promise things just fell in place like I was led by the Satan," Andre Bing wrote on a note that was left on his phone, the Chesapeake Police Department said Friday.

Police said the 9 mm handgun used in the Tuesday night shooting was legally purchased that morning and that Bing had no criminal record. They released a copy of the note found on his phone that appeared to redact the names of specific people he mentioned.

It was not clear when the note was written, but in it Bing claimed he was harassed and said he was pushed to the brink by a perception his phone was hacked.

He wrote, "My only wish would have been to start over from scratch and that my parents would have paid closer attention to my social deficits." Bing died at the scene of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Coworkers of Bing who survived the shooting said he was difficult and known for being hostile with employees. One survivor said Bing seemed to target people and fired at some victims after they were already hit.

Jessica Wilczewski said workers were gathered in a store break room to begin their overnight shift late Tuesday when Bing, a team leader, entered and opened fire. While another witness has described Bing as shooting wildly, Wilczewski said she observed him target certain people.

"The way he was acting — he was going hunting," Wilczewski told The Associated Press on Thursday. "The way he was looking at people's faces and the way he did what he did, he was picking people out."

Wilczewski said she had only worked at the store for five days and being a new employee may have been the reason she was spared.

She said she was hiding under a table after the shooting started and that at one point, Bing told her to

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get out from under the table. But when he saw who she was, he told her, "Jessie, go home."

Former coworkers and residents of Chesapeake, a city of about 250,000 people near Virginia's coast, have been struggling to make sense of the rampage.

Bing's death note rambles at times through 11 paragraphs, with references to nontraditional cancer treatments and songwriting. He says people unfairly compared him to serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, and wrote: "I would have never killed anyone who entered my home."

And he wished for a wife but wrote he didn't deserve one.

Some who worked with Bing, 31, said he had a reputation for being an aggressive, if not hostile, supervisor who once admitted to having "anger issues." But he also could make people laugh and seemed to be dealing with the typical stresses at work that many people endure.

"I don't think he had many people to fall back on in his personal life," said Nathan Sinclair, who worked at the Walmart for nearly a year before leaving earlier this month.

During chats among coworkers, "We would be like 'work is consuming my life.' And (Bing) would be like, 'Yeah, I don't have a social life anyway,'" Sinclair recalled Thursday.

Sinclair said he and Bing did not get along. Bing was known for being "verbally hostile" to employees and wasn't particularly well-liked. But Sinclair also said there were times when Bing was made fun of.

Police have identified the victims as Brian Pendleton, 38; Kellie Pyle, 52; Lorenzo Gamble, 43; Randy Blevins, 70, and Fernando Chavez-Barron, 16, who were all from Chesapeake; and Tyneka Johnson, 22, of nearby Portsmouth. Chavez-Barron's name was released Friday; it had been withheld previously because of his age.

Two others who were shot remained hospitalized, police said Friday. One is still in critical condition, and the other is in fair to improving condition.

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.

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

Walmart employee Briana Tyler said the overnight stocking team of 15 to 20 people had just gathered in the break room to go over the morning plan. Another team leader had begun speaking when Bing entered the room and opened fire, Tyler and Wiczewski said.

The attack was the second major shooting in Virginia this month. Three University of Virginia football players were fatally shot on a bus Nov. 13 as they returned from a field trip. Two other students were wounded.

The Walmart shooting also comes days after a person opened fire at a gay nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado — killing five and wounding 17. Tuesday night's shooting brought back memories of another attack at a Walmart in 2019, when a gunman killed 23 at a store in El Paso, Texas.

Also on Friday, a person suffered injuries not considered life-threatening after being shot at a Walmart in Lumberton, North Carolina, police said. Investigators described it as an isolated altercation between two people who knew each other.

## Netflix nights still come wrapped in red-and-white envelopes

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. (AP) — Netflix's trailblazing DVD-by-mail rental service has been relegated as a relic in the age of video streaming, but there is still a steady — albeit shrinking — audience of diehards like Amanda Konkle who are happily paying to receive those discs in the iconic red-and-white envelopes.

"When you open your mailbox, it's still something you actually want instead of just bills," said Konkle, a resident of Savannah, Georgia, who has been subscribing to Netflix's DVD-by-mail service since 2005.

It's a small pleasure that Konkle and other still-dedicated DVD subscribers enjoy but it's not clear for how much longer. Netflix declined to comment for this story but during a 2018 media event, co-founder and co-CEO of Netflix Reed Hastings suggested the DVD-by-mail service might close around 2023.

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When — not if — it happens, Netflix will shut down a service that has shipped more than 5 billion discs across the U.S. since its inception nearly a quarter century ago. And it will echo the downfall of the thousands of Blockbuster video rental stores that closed because they couldn't counter the threat posed by Netflix's DVD-by-mail alternative.

The eventual demise of its DVD-by-mail service has been inevitable since Hastings decided to spin it off from a then-nascent video streaming service in 2011. Back then, Hastings floated the idea of renaming the service as Qwikster — a bungled idea that was so widely ridiculed that it was satirized on "Saturday Night Live." It finally settled on its current, more prosaic handle, DVD.com. The operation is now based in non-descript office in Fremont, California, located about 20 miles from Netflix's sleek campus in Los Gatos, California.

Shortly before breakup from video streaming, the DVD-by-mail service boasted more than 16 million subscribers, a number that has now dwindled to an estimated 1.5 million subscribers, all in the U.S., based on calculations drawn from Netflix's limited disclosures of the service in its quarterly reports. Netflix's video streaming service now boasts 223 million worldwide subscribers, including 74 million in the U.S. and Canada.

"The DVD-by-mail business has bequeathed the Netflix that everyone now knows and watches today," Marc Randolph, Netflix's original CEO, said during an interview at a coffee shop located across the street from the post office in Santa Cruz, California.

The 110-year-old post office has become a landmark in Silicon Valley history because it's where Randolph mailed a Patsy Cline CD to Hastings in 1997 to test whether a disc could be delivered through the U.S. Postal Service without being damaged.

The disc arrived at Hastings' home unblemished, prompting the duo in 1998 to launch a DVD-by-mail rental website that they always knew would be supplanted by even more convenient technology.

"It was planned obsolescence, but our bet was that it would take longer for it to happen than most people thought at the time," Randolph said.

With Netflix's successful streaming service, it might be easy to assume that anyone still paying to receive DVDs through the mail is a technophobe or someone living in a remote part of the U.S. without reliable internet access. But subscribers say they stick with the service so they can rent movies that are otherwise difficult to find on streaming services.

For Michael Fusco, 35, that includes the 1986 film "Power" starring a then-youthful Richard Gere and Denzel Washington, and 1980's "The Big Red One" starring Lee Marvin. That's among the main reasons he has been subscribing to the DVD-by-service since 2006 when he was just a freshman in college, and he has no plans to cancel it now.

"I have been getting it for almost half my life, and it has been a big part," Fusco said. "When I was young, it helped me discover voices I probably wouldn't have heard. I still have memories of getting movies and having them blow my mind."

Tabetha Neumann is among the subscribers who rediscovered the DVD service during the throes of the pandemic lockdowns in 2020 after running out of things to watch on her video streaming service. So she and her husband signed up again for the first time since canceling in 2011. Now they like it so much that they get the a plan that allows them to keep up to three discs at a time, an option that currently costs \$20 per month (compared to \$10 per month for the one-disc plan).

"When we started going through all the movies we wanted to see, we realized it was cheaper than paying \$5 per movie on some streaming services," Neumann said. "Plus we have found a lot of old horror movies, and that genre is not really big on streaming."

Konkle, who has written a book about Marilyn Monroe's films, says she still finds movies on the DVD service — such as the 1954 film "Cattle Queen of Montana," featuring future U.S. President Ronald Reagan alongside Barbara Stanwyck and the 1983 French film "Sugar Cane Alley" — that help her teach her film studies classes as an associate professor at Georgia Southern University. It's a viewing habit she doesn't usually share with her classes because "most of my students don't know what a DVD is," said Konkle, 40, laughing.

But for all the DVD service's attractions, subscribers are starting to notice signs of deterioration as the



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business has shrunk from producing more than \$1 billion in annual revenue a year ago to an amount likely to fall below \$200 million in revenue this year.

Katie Cardinale, a subscriber who lives in Hopedale, Massachusetts, says she now has to wait an additional two to four days for discs to arrive in the mail than she used to because they are shipped from a distribution center in New Jersey instead of Boston. (Netflix doesn't disclose how many DVD distribution centers still operate, but there were once about 50 of them in the U.S.).

Konkle says more discs now come with cracks or other defects in them and it takes "forever" to get them replaced. And almost all subscribers have noticed the selection of DVD titles has shrunk dramatically from the service's peak years when Netflix boasted it had more than 100,000 different movies and TV shows on disc.

Netflix no longer discloses the size of its DVD library, but the subscribers interviewed by the AP all reported the narrowing selection is making it more difficult to find famous films and popular TV series that once were routinely available on the service. Instead, Netflix now sorts requests for titles such as the first season of the award-winning "Ted Lasso" series — a release that can be purchased on DVD — into a "saved" queue, signaling it may decide to stock it in the future, depending on demand.

Knowing the end is in sight, Randolph said he will lament the death of the DVD service he brought to life while taking comfort its legacy will survive.

"Netflix's DVD business was part-and-parcel of who Netflix was and still is," he said. "It's embedded in the company's DNA."

## Show's over already for host Qatar's World Cup team

By GERALD IMRAY AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — The show is over already for the Qatar team, which was eliminated Friday from the World Cup less than a week after it opened the tournament and launched the first version of soccer's biggest event in the Middle East.

Qatar lost 3-1 to Senegal for its second straight defeat at the World Cup and its exit was confirmed a few hours later, when Netherlands and Ecuador drew 1-1 in the other Group A game.

Becoming the quickest host nation team to depart the tournament in the 92-year history of the World Cup, Qatar can't qualify for the last 16 no matter what happens in its last game against Netherlands.

South Africa had been the only other home team to fail to make it out the group stage in 2010 — but it at least managed a win and a draw.

"If you expected us to go very far in this tournament, then it will be a disappointment," Qatar coach Félix Sánchez said before his team was officially out. "Our goal was to be competitive."

The writing was on the wall from the very start for Qatar. The team may be the 2019 Asian champion, but looked nervous and was overwhelmed in the 2-0 loss to Ecuador last Sunday straight after a glittering opening ceremony put on by the wealthy Gulf emirate and meant to showcase it to the world.

Friday's performance by Qatar was a little, but not much better for a squad that all plays in the local league and is missing the kind of top talent that is present in almost every World Cup team now.

Qatar at least scored this time, a second-half header by substitute Mohammed Muntari, a Ghanaian-born striker who is one of many in the squad born outside Qatar but brought in to boost its chances at the World Cup. At 2-1, Qatar threatened a comeback against the African champion for just six minutes before Bamba Dieng responded to hit home Senegal's third goal and reestablish a two-goal cushion.

Senegal got its campaign back on track after losing its opener to Netherlands. Coach Aliou Cissé was also pleased that three forwards, Boulaye Dia, Famara Diedhiou and Dieng, got on the scoresheet as Senegal has its own challenge at this World Cup: Filling the chasm left by the pre-tournament injury to Sadio Mané.

Cissé had instructed his remaining forwards to step it up before playing the host at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha. They responded.

"Yes, we understood the message loud and clear," Dia said. "Efficiency efficiency, efficiency. You need to get in front of the goal and you need to score."

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Qatar had never qualified for the World Cup before FIFA's highly-contentious decision in 2010 to give it the tournament. That gave its team automatic entry. But although the oil- and gas-rich nation spent around \$220 billion of its vast riches on building stadiums, roads and even a new city for the World Cup, it couldn't put together a solid defense for the team.

Qatar fell behind against Senegal after an amateurish mistake by central defender Boualem Khoukhi, who tried to make a clearance under no pressure, didn't connect properly and landed on his backside. The ball dribbled away from Khoukhi and Dia lashed it in for his first World Cup goal.

Diedhiou made it 2-0 at the start of the second half with a header from a corner while two Qatar defenders failed to stop him.

Qatar did get a stroke of bad luck when it was denied a penalty and the chance of the lead before Dia's goal. Akram Afif, who was born in Doha, was knocked over by a charging Ismaila Sarr but referee Antonio Mateu of Spain didn't award a penalty even though replays suggested that contact was made.

"We have to forget about today, move on and play the Netherlands," Sánchez said.

A WAVE (GOODBYE?) FOR QATAR

As Qatar rallied for a little while in the second half, the white-robed Qatar supporters did try and get behind their team.

Thousands of home fans walked out halfway through Qatar's first loss to Ecuador, but they stayed against Senegal and even broke out into the wave around the stadium. It turned out to be more of a wave farewell from the World Cup.

WITHOUT MANÉ

Senegal came closer to adjusting to life in Qatar without Mané, with those three forwards on the scoresheet.

"It's very difficult to replace a player like Sadio Mane but football is a team sport," Senegal coach Cissé said.

Also important for Senegal, goalkeeper Edouard Mendy made two world-class saves to suggest a return to some form after he was blamed for both goals in the 2-0 loss to the Dutch.

WHAT'S NEXT

Qatar bows out against Netherlands on Tuesday. Senegal isn't out of trouble yet and will face Ecuador on the same day with both playing for a place in the last 16.

## Brazilian protests intensify; Bolsonaro stays silent

By DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — The two men were sitting at a bar on Nov. 21, sipping drinks for relief from the scorching heat of Brazil's Mato Grosso state, when police officers barged in and arrested them for allegedly torching trucks and an ambulance with Molotov cocktails.

One man attempted to flee and ditch his illegal firearm. Inside their pickup truck, officers found jugs of gasoline, knives, a pistol, slingshots and hundreds of stones — as well as 9,999 reais (nearly \$1,900) in cash.

A federal judge ordered their preventive detention, noting that their apparent motive for the violence was "dissatisfaction with the result of the last presidential election and pursuit of its undemocratic reversal," according to court documents reviewed by The Associated Press.

For more than three weeks, supporters of incumbent President Jair Bolsonaro who refuse to accept his narrow defeat in October's election have blocked roads and camped outside military buildings in Mato Grosso, Brazil's soy-producing powerhouse. They also have protested in other states across the nation, while pleading for intervention from the armed forces or marching orders from their commander in chief.

Since his election loss, Bolsonaro has only addressed the nation twice, to say that the protests are legitimate and encourage them to continue, as long as they don't prevent people from coming and going.

Bolsonaro has not disavowed the recent emergence of violence, either. He has, however, challenged the election results — which the electoral authority's president said appears aimed at stoking protests.

While most demonstrations are peaceful, tactics deployed by hardcore participants have begun concern-

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ing authorities. José Antônio Borges, chief state prosecutor in Mato Grosso, compared their actions to that of guerrilla fighters, militia groups and domestic terrorists.

Mato Grosso is one of the nation's hotbeds for unrest. The chief targets, Borges says, are soy trucks from Grupo Maggi, owned by a tycoon who declared support for President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. There are also indications that people and companies from the state may be fueling protests elsewhere.

Road blockades and acts of violence have been reported in the states of Rondonia, Para, Parana and Santa Catarina. In the latter, federal highway police said protesters blocking highways have employed "terrorist" methods including homemade bombs, fireworks, nails, stones and barricades made of burnt tires.

Police also noted that roadblocks over the weekend were different from those carried out immediately after the Oct. 30 runoff election, when truckers blocked more than 1,000 roads and highways across the country, with only isolated incidents.

Now, most acts of resistance are taking place at night, carried out by "extremely violent and coordinated hooded men," acting in different regions of the state at the same time, federal highway police said.

"The situation is getting very critical" in Mato Grosso state, chief state prosecutor Borges told the AP. Among other examples, he noted that protesters in Sinop, the state's second most populous city, this week ordered shops and businesses to close in support of the movement. "Whoever doesn't shut down suffers reprisals," he said.

Since the vote, Bolsonaro has dropped out of public view and his daily agenda has been largely vacant, prompting speculation as to whether he is stewing or scheming.

Government transition duties have been led by his chief of staff, while Vice President Hamilton Mourão has stepped in to preside over official ceremonies. In an interview with newspaper O Globo, Mourão chalked up Bolsonaro's absence to erysipelas, a skin infection on his legs that he said prevents the president from wearing pants.

But even Bolsonaro's social media accounts have gone silent – aside from generic posts about his administration, apparently from his communications team. And the live social media broadcasts that, with rare exception, he conducted every Thursday night during his administration have ceased. The silence marks an abrupt about-face for the bombastic Brazilian leader whose legions of supporters hang on his every word.

Still, demonstrators, who have camped outside military barracks across Brazil for weeks, are certain they have his tacit support.

"We understand perfectly well why he doesn't want to talk: They (the news media) distort his words," said a 49-year-old woman who identified herself only as Joelma during a protest outside the monumental regional military command center in Rio de Janeiro. She declined to give her full name, claiming the protest had been infiltrated by informants.

Joelma and others say they are outraged with Bolsonaro's loss and claim the election was rigged, echoing the incumbent president's claims — made without evidence — that the electronic voting system is prone to fraud.

Scenes of large barbecues with free food and portable bathrooms at several protests, plus reports of free bus rides bringing demonstrators to the capital, Brasilia, have prompted investigations into the people and companies financing and organizing the gatherings and roadblocks.

The Supreme Court has frozen at least 43 bank accounts for suspicion of involvement, news site G1 reported, saying most are from Mato Grosso. Borges cited the involvement of agribusiness players in the protests, many of whom support Bolsonaro's push for development of the Amazon rainforest and his authorization of previously banned pesticides. By contrast, President-elect da Silva has pledged to rebuild environmental protections.

Most recently, protesters have been emboldened by the president's decision to officially contest the election results.

On Tuesday, Bolsonaro and his party filed a request for the electoral authority to annul votes cast on nearly 60% of electronic voting machines, citing a software bug in older models. Independent experts have said the bug, while newly discovered, doesn't affect the results and the electoral authority's president, Alexandre de Moraes swiftly rejected the "bizarre and illicit" request.

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De Moraes, who is also a Supreme Court justice, called it "an attack on the Democratic Rule of Law ... with the purpose of encouraging criminal and anti-democratic movements."

On Nov. 21, Prosecutor-general Augusto Aras summoned federal prosecutors from states where road-blocks and violence have become more intense for a crisis meeting. Aras, who is widely seen as a Bolsonaro stalwart, said he received intelligence reports from local prosecutors and instructed Mato Grosso's governor to request federal backup to clear its blocked highways.

Ultimately that wasn't necessary, as local law enforcement managed to break up demonstrations and, by Monday night, roads in Mato Grosso and elsewhere were all liberated, according to the federal highway police. It was unclear how long this would last, however, amid Bolsonaro's continued silence, said Guilherme Casarões, a political science professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation university.

"With his silence, he keeps people in the streets," Casarões said. "This is the great advantage he has today: a very mobilized, and very radical base."

## **Emboldened Biden, Dems push ban on so-called assault weapons**

By COLLEEN LONG, MARY CLARE JALONICK and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Joe Biden speaks about the "scourge" of gun violence, his go-to answer is to zero in on so-called assault weapons.

America has heard it hundreds of times, including this week after shootings in Colorado and Virginia: The president wants to sign into law a ban on high-powered guns that have the capacity to kill many people very quickly.

"The idea we still allow semi-automatic weapons to be purchased is sick. Just sick," Biden said on Thanksgiving Day. "I'm going to try to get rid of assault weapons."

After the mass killing last Saturday at a gay nightclub in Colorado Springs, he said in a statement: "When will we decide we've had enough? ... We need to enact an assault weapons ban to get weapons of war off America's streets."

When Biden and other lawmakers talk about "assault weapons," they are using an inexact term to describe a group of high-powered guns or semi-automatic long rifles, like an AR-15, that can fire 30 rounds fast without reloading. By comparison, New York Police Department officers carry a handgun that shoots about half that much.

A weapons ban is far off in a closely divided Congress. But Biden and the Democrats have become increasingly emboldened in pushing for stronger gun controls — and doing so with no clear electoral consequences.

The Democratic-led House passed legislation in July to revive a 1990s-era ban on "assault weapons," with Biden's vocal support. And the president pushed a ban nearly everywhere that he campaigned this year.

Still, in the midterm elections, Democrats kept control of the Senate and Republicans were only able to claim the slimmest House majority in two decades.

The tough talk follows passage in June of a landmark bipartisan bill on gun laws, and it reflects steady progress that gun control advocates have been making in recent years.

"I think the American public has been waiting for this message," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., who has been the Senate's leading advocate for stronger gun control since the massacre of 20 children at a school in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012. "There has been a thirst from voters, especially swing voters, young voters, parents, to hear candidates talk about gun violence, and I think Democrats are finally sort of catching up with where the public has been."

Just over half of voters want to see nationwide gun policy made more strict, according to AP VoteCast, an extensive survey of more than 94,000 voters nationwide conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago. About 3 in 10 want gun policy kept as is. Only 14% prefer looser gun laws.

There are clear partisan divides. About 9 in 10 Democrats want stricter gun laws, compared with about 3 in 10 Republicans. About half of Republicans want gun laws left as they are and only one-quarter want to see gun laws be made less strict.

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Once banned in the United States, the high-powered firearms are now the weapon of choice among young men responsible for many of the most devastating mass shootings. Congress allowed the restrictions first put in place in 1994 on the manufacture and sales of the weapons to expire a decade later, unable to muster the political support to counter the powerful gun lobby and reinstate the weapons ban.

When he was governor of Florida, current Republican Sen. Rick Scott signed gun control laws in the wake of mass shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and a night club in Orlando. But he has consistently opposed weapons bans, arguing like many of his Republican colleagues that most gun owners use them lawfully.

"People are doing the right thing, why would we take away their weapons?" Scott asked as the Senate was negotiating gun legislation last summer. "It doesn't make any sense."

He said more mental health counseling, assessments of troubled students and law enforcement on campus make more sense.

"Let's focus on things that actually would change something," Scott said.

Law enforcement officials have long called for stricter gun laws, arguing that the availability of these weapons makes people less safe and makes their jobs more dangerous.

Mike Moore, chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, the country's third-largest, said it just makes sense to talk about guns when gun violence is rising nationwide, and consider what the government can do to make the streets safer. He is grateful Biden is bringing it up so much.

"This isn't a one-and-done," Moore said of the shooting in Colorado Springs. "These things are evolving all the time, in other cities, at any moment another incident happens. It's crying out for the federal government, for our legislators, to go out and make this change," he said.

On Tuesday, six people were shot dead at a Walmart in Virginia. Over the past six months there has been a supermarket shooting in Buffalo, New York; a massacre of school children in Uvalde, Texas; and the July Fourth killing of revelers in Highland Park, Illinois.

The legislation that Biden signed in June will, among other things, help states put in place "red flag" laws that make it easier for authorities to take weapons from people judged to be dangerous.

But a ban was never on the table.

A 60-vote threshold in the Senate means some Republicans must be on board. Most are steadfastly opposed, arguing it would be too complicated, especially as sales and varieties of the firearms have proliferated. There are many more types of these high-powered guns today than in 1994, when the ban was signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

"I'd rather not try to define a whole group of guns as being no longer available to the American public," said Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota, who is a hunter and owns several guns, some of them passed down through his family. "For those of us who have grown up with guns as part of our culture, and we use them as tools — there's millions of us, there's hundreds of millions of us — that use them lawfully."

In many states where the bans have been enacted, the restrictions are being challenged in court, gaining strength from a Supreme Court ruling in June expanding gun rights.

"We feel pretty confident, even despite the arguments made by the other side, that history and tradition as well as the text of the Second Amendment are on our side," said David Warrington, chairman and general counsel for the National Association for Gun Rights.

Biden was instrumental in helping secure the 1990s ban as a senator. The White House said that while it was in place, mass shootings declined, and when it expired in 2004, shootings tripled.

The reality is complicated. The data on the effectiveness is mixed and there is a sense that other measures that are not as politically fraught might actually be more effective, said Robert Spitzer, a political science professor at the State University of New York-Cortland and author of "The Politics of Gun Control."

Politically, the ban sparked a backlash, even though the final law was a compromise version of the initial bill, he said.

"The gun community was furious," Spitzer said.

The ban has been blamed in some circles for the Democrats losing control of Congress in 1994, though

subsequent research has shown that the loss was likely more about strong, well-funded conservative candidates and district boundaries, Spitzer said.

Still, after Democrat Al Gore, who supported stricter gun laws, lost the 2000 White House race to Republican George W. Bush, Democrats largely backed off the issue until the Sandy Hook shooting in 2012. Even after that, it was not a campaign topic until the 2018 midterms.

Now, gun control advocates see progress.

"The fact that the American people elected a president who has long been a vocal and steadfast supporter of bold gun safety laws — and recently reelected a gun sense majority to the Senate — says everything you need to know about how dramatically the politics on this issue have shifted," said John Feinblatt, president of Everytown for Gun Safety.

## Murkowski withstands another conservative GOP challenger

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, a moderate Republican, has twice withstood challenges from more conservative factions of her party; more than a decade ago, she mounted a historical write-in campaign to beat a tea party favorite, and this year she won reelection after inflaming the ire of former President Donald Trump.

On Wednesday, Murkowski defeated fellow Republican Kelly Tshibaka, who was backed by Trump, to win her fourth term in office. Murkowski won the ranked choice election with 54% of the vote with help from independents and Democrats.

Murkowski didn't make Trump a focus of her campaign, emphasizing instead her seniority, record of delivering projects and funding for Alaska, and willingness to work across party lines as she sought to build a coalition of support.

"Thank you, Alaska. 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. I look forward to continuing the important work ahead of us," she said in a short statement after she won the race.

Trump figured prominently in the race, especially after Murkowski both called on him to resign and then voted to impeach him after the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol riot. In 2020, before that year's election and before Tshibaka jumped into the Senate race, Trump announced plans to campaign against Murkowski following her criticism of him: "Get any candidate ready, good or bad, I don't care, I'm endorsing. If you have a pulse, I'm with you!"

Trump later endorsed Tshibaka, which she credited with helping elevate her candidacy and name recognition. Murkowski's impeachment vote and criticism of Trump were among the reasons state Republican party leaders cited last year in censuring her, further highlighting the moderate's at-times fraught relationship with her own party.

Of the ten House members who voted to impeach Trump, six were up for reelection. Four decided to not seek reelection, and only two won their races. Of the seven Senate Republicans who voted to convict Trump at his impeachment trial, Murkowski was the only one on the ballot this year. Trump was not convicted in the Senate trial.

Murkowski is no stranger to tough races.

She eked out a win in 2004, winning the seat she was appointed to in late 2002 by her father, then-Gov. Frank Murkowski, who had held the Senate seat for two decades before that. She won the 2010 general election with a historic write-in campaign after losing her party primary to a tea party favorite Joe Miller.

This year's elections in Alaska, though, was held under a new system approved by voters in 2020 that implemented open primaries and ranked vote in general elections. Under the new system, the top four vote-getters in a primary, regardless of party affiliation, advance to the general election.

Many saw the new system as favorable to a candidate like Murkowski, who referred to coalition building in a campaign as "kind of my strong suit." The largest segment of registered voters in Alaska is independents.

The race also included Democrat Pat Chesbro, who ran a low-profile campaign, and Republican Buzz

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Kelley, who suspended his campaign after his fourth-place primary finish and endorsed Tshibaka.

Chip Wagoner, an independent voter, said he disagrees with Murkowski on issues like abortion; Murkowski supports abortion rights. But Wagoner said she listens, something that he said he doesn't see a lot of in either major party.

"I think it's critical that we elect people who are not so partisan that they don't listen to the other side," he said. He said that he was also "impressed that she stood up to Trump."

Before the 2020 election Trump said that he would campaign against Murkowski after she'd levied criticism against him. Her impeachment vote was a point of contention raised by Trump in campaigning for Tshibaka.

"She voted to impeach me, and I did more for this state than any president in history," Trump said to applause during a summer rally in Anchorage with Tshibaka and Republican Sarah Palin, whose House bid Trump endorsed. Palin also lost her race. Trump carried Alaska in 2016 and 2020.

Trump cited as accomplishments efforts that had been pushed for years by Alaska's congressional delegation, including Murkowski, such as oil and gas lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and support for a road through a wildlife refuge to provide access to an all-weather airport for residents of an isolated community. The lease sales and potential land swap that could lead to a road have been mired in litigation.

Democrat John Hartle said that on his ballot he ranked Chesbro first and Murkowski second, ultimately expecting his vote to go to Murkowski. Kelley was the first candidate eliminated in the tabulation rounds of ranked voting conducted by state elections officials Wednesday. Chesbro was next, and more than 20,500 of her 29,078 votes went to Murkowski.

Hartle said that he wanted to send a message to Murkowski that there are "a lot of Democratic voters in the state" and to "encourage her to listen to what they have to say."

A major concern for Hartle this election cycle was the nation's democracy. Hartle, who is from Juneau, said that he found it "scary" that so many people promoted the falsehood that the 2020 presidential election won by Democrat Joe Biden was "stolen."

Tshibaka acknowledged that Biden was president but said in a questionnaire from media outlets that there were "unresolved questions about what happened" in that election.

Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, a Democrat who did not seek reelection to the state House this year, said he ranked Murkowski first. He said he disagrees with her on some fiscal, tax and other issues. But he said something shifted for him "in the last six years, in the sort of Trump-era of the country and in this era where ... truth and objectivity are being contested effectively as a political game.

"These are like very fundamental things," he said. "And I think the luxury of disagreeing over certain issue areas or being an absolutist about political party, it's like, we're not in that time."

## Iran government supporters confront protesters at World Cup

By ISABEL DEBRE and CIARÁN FAHEY Associated Press

AL RAYYAN, Qatar (AP) — Tensions ran high at Iran's second match at the World Cup on Friday as fans supporting the Iranian government harassed those protesting against it and stadium security seized flags, T-shirts and other items expressing support for the protest movement that has gripped the Islamic Republic.

Some fans were stopped by security guards from bringing in Persian pre-revolutionary flags to the match against Wales at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium. Others carrying such flags had them ripped from their hands by pro-government Iran fans, who also shouted insults at fans wearing T-shirts with the slogan of the protest movement gripping the country, "Woman, Life, Freedom."

Unlike in their first match against England, the Iran players sang along to their national anthem before the match as some fans in the stadium wept, whistled and booed.

The national team has come under close scrutiny for any statements or gestures about the nationwide protests that have wracked Iran for weeks.

Shouting matches erupted in lines outside the stadium between fans screaming "Women, Life, Freedom" and others shouting back "The Islamic Republic!"

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Mobs of men surrounded three different women giving interviews about the protests to foreign media outside the stadium, disrupting broadcasts as they angrily chanted, "The Islamic Republic of Iran!" Many female fans appeared shaken as Iranian government supporters shouted at them in Farsi and filmed them up close on their phones.

After Iran's 2-0 triumph, crowds of Iranian fans wildly waving national flags streamed out of the stadium. They thronged a group of protesters who held up photos of Mahsa Amini, the 22-year-old whose Sept. 16 death in the custody of the morality police first unleashed the protests, yelling "Victory!" to drown out chants of Amini's name.

One 35-year-old woman named Maryam, who like other Iran fans declined to give her last name for fear of government reprisals, started to cry as shouting men blowing horns encircled her and filmed her face. She had the words "Woman Life Freedom" painted on her face.

"I'm not here to fight with anyone, but people have been attacking me and calling me a terrorist," said Maryam, who lives in London but is originally from Tehran. "All I'm here to say is that football doesn't matter if people are getting killed in the streets."

Maryam and her friends had worn hats emblazoned with the name of an outspoken Iranian former soccer player Voria Ghafouri, who had criticized Iranian authorities and was arrested in Iran on Thursday on accusations of spreading propaganda against the government. She said Iranian government supporters had taken the hats from their heads.

Ghafouri, who is Kurdish, was a star member of Iran's 2018 World Cup team, but was surprisingly not named in the squad for this year in Qatar.

"It's obvious that the match had become very politicized this week. You can see people from the same country who hate each other," said Mustafa, a 40-year-old Iran fan who also declined to give his last name. "I think the arrest of Voria has also affected society in Iran a lot."

Furious protesters in Iran have been venting their anger over social and political repression and the state-mandated headscarf, or hijab, for women. The demonstrations have quickly grown into calls for the downfall of the Islamic Republic itself. At least 419 people have been killed since the protests erupted, according to monitoring group Human Rights Activists in Iran.

The turmoil has overshadowed the start of Iran's World Cup campaign, including the opening match against England on Monday. Iran's players remained silent as their national anthem played before the game and didn't celebrate their two goals in the 6-2 defeat. On Friday, they sang along to the anthem and celebrated wildly when they scored twice against Wales.

Ayeh Shams, an Iranian from the United States, said security guards confiscated her flag because it had the word "women" written on it.

"We're just here to enjoy the games and give a platform for the Iranian people who are fighting against the Islamic regime," Shams said.

Zeinab Arwa, a security guard at the stadium, confirmed that authorities had been given orders to confiscate anything but the flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"Whether you're talking about Iran or Qatar or any country, you are only allowed to bring in the normal flag," she said.

An angry group of Iranian government supporters shouted at Elyas Doerr, a 16-year-old Iranian boy living in Arizona who was wearing the Persian flag as a cape, until he took it off and put it in his bag.

"They're not liking that it's a political statement," he said, adding that other Iranian fans had approached him to say they appreciated the gesture.

A 32-year-old Iranian woman living in southern Spain, who declined to give her name for fear of reprisals, scrambled after the match to retrieve her hat and flag that had been confiscated by stadium security. She said Qatari police ordered her to scrub off the names of Iranian protesters killed and arrested by security forces that she had written on her arms and chest, at the behest of Iranian government supporters. At the game, just traces of ink remained on her skin that was rubbed raw.

"Today's football experience was the most intimidating I've ever been in, before and after the match," she



said. She described dozens of men who surrounded her and tried to smother her face with their Iranian flags, snatching her signs as Qatari security stood by.

"I don't care about the win, to be honest. That's not my priority."

After the game, Iranian state television broadcast patriotic songs and showed footage of people bursting out into cheers across the country. Even as many Iranians celebrated the victory, protests continued across the country. Videos circulating on social media appeared to show protests and gunfire in the eastern city of Zahedan. The Associated Press was unable to confirm reports that protesters had been wounded there.

## Musk plans to relaunch Twitter premium service, again

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Elon Musk said Friday that Twitter plans to relaunch its premium service that will offer different colored check marks to accounts next week, in a fresh move to revamp the service after a previous attempt backfired.

It's the latest change to the social media platform that the billionaire Tesla CEO bought last month for \$44 billion, coming a day after Musk said he would grant "amnesty" for suspended accounts and causing yet more uncertainty for users.

Twitter previously suspended the premium service, which under Musk granted blue-check labels to anyone paying \$8 a month, because of a wave of imposter accounts. Originally, the blue check was given to government entities, corporations, celebrities and journalists verified by the platform to prevent impersonation.

In the latest version, companies will get a gold check, governments will get a gray check, and individuals who pay for the service, whether or not they're celebrities, will get a blue check, Musk said Friday.

"All verified accounts will be manually authenticated before check activates," he said, adding it was "Painful, but necessary" and promising a "longer explanation" next week. He said the service was "tentatively launching" Dec. 2.

Twitter had put the revamped premium service on hold days after its launch earlier this month after accounts impersonated companies including pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly & Co., Nintendo, Lockheed Martin, and even Musk's own businesses Tesla and SpaceX, along with various professional sports and political figures.

It was just one change in the past two days. On Thursday, Musk said he would grant "amnesty" for suspended accounts, following the results of an online poll he conducted on whether accounts that have not "broken the law or engaged in egregious spam" should be reinstated.

The yes vote was 72%. Such online polls are anything but scientific and can easily be influenced by bots. Musk also used one before restoring former U.S. President Donald Trump's account.

"The people have spoken. Amnesty begins next week. Vox Populi, Vox Dei," Musk tweeted Thursday using a Latin phrase meaning "the voice of the people, the voice of God."

The move is likely to put the company on a crash course with European regulators seeking to clamp down on harmful online content with tough new rules, which helped cement Europe's reputation as the global leader in efforts to rein in the power of social media companies and other digital platforms.

Zach Meyers, senior research fellow at the Centre for European Reform think tank, said giving blanket amnesty based on an online poll is an "arbitrary approach" that's "hard to reconcile with the Digital Services Act," a new EU law that will start applying to the biggest online platforms by mid-2023.

The law is aimed at protecting internet users from illegal content and reducing the spread of harmful but legal content. It requires big social media platforms to be "diligent and objective" in enforcing restrictions, which must be spelled out clearly in the fine print for users when signing up, Meyers said.

Britain also is working on its own online safety law.

"Unless Musk quickly moves from a 'move fast and break things' approach to a more sober management style, he will be on a collision course with Brussels and London regulators," Meyers said.

European Union officials took to social media to highlight their worries. The 27-nation bloc's executive Commission published a report Thursday that found Twitter took longer to review hateful content and

removed less of it this year compared with 2021.

The report was based on data collected over the spring — before Musk acquired Twitter — as part of an annual evaluation of online platforms' compliance with the bloc's voluntary code of conduct on disinformation. It found that Twitter assessed just over half of the notifications it received about illegal hate speech within 24 hours, down from 82% in 2021.

The numbers may yet worsen. Since taking over, Musk has laid off half the company's 7,500-person workforce along with an untold number of contractors responsible for content moderation. Many others have resigned, including the company's head of trust and safety.

Recent layoffs at Twitter and results of the EU's review "are a source of concern," the bloc's commissioner for justice, Didier Reynders tweeted Thursday evening after meeting with Twitter executives at the company's European headquarters in Dublin.

In the meeting, Reynders said he "underlined that we expect Twitter to deliver on their voluntary commitments and comply with EU rules," including the Digital Services Act and the bloc's strict privacy regulations known as General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR.

Vera Jourova, the European Commission's vice president for values and transparency, tweeted Thursday evening that she was concerned about news reports that a "vast amount" of Twitter's European staff were fired.

"If you want to effectively detect and take action against #disinformation & propaganda, this requires resources," Jourova said. "Especially in the context of Russian disinformation warfare."

## Russia steps up missile barrage of recaptured Ukrainian city

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP) — Natalia Kristenko's dead body lay covered in a blanket in the doorway of her apartment building for hours overnight. City workers were at first too overwhelmed to retrieve her as they responded to a deadly barrage of attacks that shook Ukraine's southern city of Kherson.

The 62-year-old had walked outside her home with her husband Thursday evening after drinking tea when the building was struck. Kristenko was killed instantly from a wound to the head. Her husband died hours later in the hospital from internal bleeding.

"Russians took the two most precious people from me," their bereft daughter, Lilia Kristenko, 38, said, clutching her cat inside her coat as she watched on in horror Friday as responders finally arrived to transport her mother to the morgue.

"They lived so well, they lived differently," she told The Associated Press. "But they died in one day."

A salvo of missiles struck the recently liberated city of Kherson for the second day Friday in a marked escalation of attacks since Russia withdrew from the city two weeks ago following an eight-month occupation. It comes as Russia has stepped up bombardment of Ukraine's power grid and other critical civilian infrastructure in a bid to tighten the screw on Kyiv. Officials estimate that around 50% of Ukraine's energy facilities have been damaged in the recent strikes.

The Ukrainian governor of Kherson, Yaroslav Yanushevych, said Friday that Russian shelling attacks killed 10 civilians and wounded 54 others the previous day, with two neighborhoods in the city of Kherson coming "under massive artillery fire."

The Russian shelling of parts of the Kherson region recently recaptured by Kyiv compelled authorities to transfer hospital patients to other areas, Yanushevych said.

Some children were taken to the southern city of Mykolayiv, and some psychiatric patients went to the Black Sea port of Odesa, which is also under Ukrainian control, Yanushevych wrote on Telegram.

"I remind you that all residents of Kherson who wish to evacuate to safer regions of Ukraine can contact the regional authorities," he said.

Soldiers in the region had warned that Kherson would face intensified strikes as Russian troops dig in across the Dnieper River.

Scores of people were injured in the strikes that hit residential and commercial buildings, lighting some

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on fire, blowing ash into the air and littering the streets with shattered glass. The attacks wrought destruction on some residential neighborhoods not previously hit in the war that has just entered its tenth month.

After Kristenko's parents were hit, she tried to call an ambulance but there was no phone network, she said. Her 66-year-old father was clutching his abdominal wound and screaming "it hurts so much I'm doing to die," she said. He eventually was taken by ambulance to the hospital but died during surgery.

On Friday morning people sifted through what little remained of their destroyed houses and shops. Containers of food lined the floor of a shattered meat store, while across the street customers lined up at a coffee shop where residents said four people died the night before.

"I don't even know what to say, it was unexpected," said Diana Samsonova, who works at the coffee shop, which remained open throughout Russia's occupation and has no plans to close despite the attacks.

Later in the day, a woman was killed, likely from a rocket that hit a grassy patch nearby. Her motionless body lay on the side of the road. The violence is compounding what's become a dire humanitarian crisis. As Russians retreated, they destroyed key infrastructure, leaving people with little water and electricity.

People have become so desperate they're finding some salvation amid the wreckage. Outside an apartment building that was badly damaged, residents filled buckets with water that pooled on the ground. Workers at the morgue used puddles to clean their bloody hands.

Valerii Parkhomenko had just parked his car and gone into a coffee shop when a rocket destroyed his vehicle.

"We were all crouching on the floor inside," he said, showing the ash on his hands. "I feel awful, my car is destroyed, I need this car for work to feed my family," he said.

Outside shelled apartment buildings residents picked up debris and frantically searched for relatives while paramedics helped the injured.

"I think it's so bad and I think all countries need to do something about this because it's not normal," said Ivan Mashkarynets, a man in his early 20s who was at home with his mother when the apartment block next to him was struck.

"There's no army, there's no soldiers. There are just people living here and they're (still) firing," he said.

Kherson's population has dwindled to around 80,000 from its prewar level near 300,000. The government has said it will help people evacuate if they want to, but many say they have no place to go.

"There is no work (elsewhere), there is no work here," said Ihor Novak as he stood on a street examining the aftermath of the shelling. "For now, the Ukrainian army is here and with them we hope it will be safer."

## Cricket flourishes among Qatar World Cup migrant laborers

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — As dawn broke Friday in Qatar, the laborers who built this energy-rich country's World Cup soccer stadiums, roads and subway filled empty stretches of asphalt and sandlots to play the sport closest to their hearts — cricket.

The sport that spread across the reaches of the former British empire remains a favorite of the South Asian laborers who power economies across the Arabian Peninsula, including more than 2 million migrant workers in Qatar.

It's a moment of respite for workers, who typically just have Friday off in Qatar and much of the rest of the Gulf Arab nations. And it's one they look forward to all week, batting and bowling before the heat of the day fully takes hold.

"It's in our blood," said laborer Kesavan Pakkirisamy as he coached his team at one sandlot, the skyline of Doha visible in the distance. "We've played cricket since a long time. It's a happy journey for us."

Laborer rights have been a focus of this World Cup since Qatar won the bid for the tournament back in 2010. Workers can face long hours, extortion and low pay. Qatar has overhauled its labor laws to put in a minimum wage and untie visas from employers, though activists have urged more to be done.

On Fridays, however, laborers control their day. Just down the road from the global headquarters of Qatar's satellite news network Al Jazeera, workers gathered in a parking lot and another large desert

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expanse wedged between roads.

Some appeared nervous when Associated Press journalists stopped by their matches, with several asking if they'd be in trouble for playing cricket in vacant lots in his autocratic nation. Others, however, smiled and invited visitors to watch.

Hary R., an Indian from the southern state of Kerala, showed a reporter the mobile phone app he used to keep track of runs and overs. While Friday's match was a friendly, there are tournaments organized among the Indian and Sri Lankan communities in Qatar to vie for supremacy.

"We are working throughout the week and we need to just get relaxed and meet our friends just for time pass and entertainment," he said. His teammates on the Strikers, some of whom wore matching uniforms, shouted at him to keep track of the game.

Pakkirisamy, who shouted encouragement near two discarded couches used by players as a bench, praised his company for helping his colleagues take part in wider competitions.

"From my father and my grandfather, they have been playing in cricket since since a childhood age," he said, describing a lifelong love of the game.

Pakkirisamy and his teammates, while lovers of cricket, still were excited about the World Cup being in Qatar.

"We are here for work, we are here for earning something for our family," he said, adding that being in Qatar means, "It's easy for us to be there, to see the game on ground, not only the TV."

Cricket, with its lush green grass pitches, may seem like an anomaly in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. However, the need for migrant labor has seen Gulf Arab nations draw cricket-playing workers to their shores for decades.

The United Arab Emirates has a cricket team that qualified for the International Cricket Council's T20 World Cup in Australia last month.

Dubai in the UAE is even home to the ICC's headquarters and has hosted major cricket events, including the Indian Premier League, the Pakistan Super League and the T20 championships.

But for laborers in the region, any empty patch of ground can be turned into a pitch.

"You can you can be in any road. You can be in any place," Pakkirisamy said. "Any small place, you can play cricket."

## **New this week: Lizzo, 'Criminal Minds' and 'The Woman King'**

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music and video game platforms this week.

### MOVIES

— When the Mars Rover Opportunity, nicknamed Oppy, launched in 2003, it was only supposed to last 90 sols (or Mars days). But 15 years later it was still out there exploring. The documentary "Good Night Oppy," coming to Prime Video on Wednesday, tells the story of not just Oppy and its counterpart Spirit, but the scientists and engineers who cared for the robots and their discoveries on Mars. With shades of some of cinema's most lovable robots, from WALL-E to R2-D2, "Good Night Oppy," directed by Ryan White, is a sentimental and inspiring and a great film to watch with the family over the holiday.

— If you missed Viola Davis's turn as an Agojie warrior in "The Woman King" in theaters, the Gina Prince-Bythewood epic will be available to rent on video on demand starting Tuesday. The \$50 million action epic, set in 1820s West Africa, tells a story about the all-female army of the Kingdom of Dahomey in the vein of films like "Braveheart," "The Last of the Mohicans" and "Gladiator." It was a bit of a miracle that the film even got made at the budget it did, due to antiquated thinking in Hollywood, but Davis told the AP that the success of "Black Panther" was a turning point. And audiences did clearly want "The Woman King," which has grossed over \$91 million worldwide.

— A loner vampire gets a surprise when a teenager shows up claiming to be his daughter in "Blood Relatives," a road trip comedy/horror coming to Shudder on Tuesday. It's the directorial debut of actor

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Noah Segan, a mainstay of Rian Johnson's films, who stars as well alongside Victoria Moroles, as the teenage Jane.

— Filmed over three years, during the "Cuz I Love You" tour, through the height of the pandemic and during the recording of "Special," the new documentary "Love, Lizzo" is an intimate portrait of the superstar musician, with candid talk about bodies, self-love and being a Black woman. "Love, Lizzo" is streaming on HBO Max on Thursday.

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

## MUSIC

— A series of concerts Tom Petty considered a highlight of his career get a new life when "Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers Live at the Fillmore" gets released on Friday. It will feature recordings from the band's 20-concert residency at the Fillmore in San Francisco between Jan. 10 and Feb. 7, 1997. They played dozens of songs during the run and recorded six of the shows. Signature moments included a handful of guest appearances from the likes of Roger McGuinn, Bo Diddley and John Lee Hooker, as well as dozens of covers, including Bob Dylan's "Knockin' On Heaven's Door" and The Rolling Stones' "Time is On My Side." In his review, AP's Scott Bauer says "It's easy to hear the joy in Petty's voice both in the songs and in the breezy on-stage banter."

— Rapper Rakim will bring fans back to the Golden Age of hip-hop Monday as he returns to his album "Paid in Full" during a pay-per-view livestream concert from New York City's Sony Hall on the ICONN Live App. Rakim is the latest artist to sign up for the series, a list that includes Ja Rule, Big Daddy Kane and Raekwon. Released in 1987, "Paid in Full" had Rakim and Eric B. perform "Eric B. Is President," "I Know You Got Soul" and "I Ain't No Joke."

— Josh Groban shows the world how he can fill New York City's famed 6,000-seat Radio City Music Hall with "Great Performances: Josh Groban's Great Big Radio City Show" on PBS on Friday. Recorded in April 2022, it's billed as "Groban's love letter to New York City." Joined by a full orchestra, he'll perform his signature hits including "You Raise Me Up" as well as musical theater favorites "The Impossible Dream" and "Bring Him Home." He is also joined on stage by pop legend Cyndi Lauper, Broadway star Denée Benton and ballet dancer Tiler Peck.

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

## TELEVISION

— The risqué shows at Chippendale's male strip clubs paled in comparison to the backstage melodrama created by the enterprise's founder, Somen "Steve" Banerjee. The events, so steeped in greed and criminality that they've been recounted in movies, miniseries and documentaries, gets another look in Hulu's "Welcome to Chippendales." Kumail Nanjiani leads the cast that includes Murray Bartlett, Juliette Lewis, and Annaleigh Ashford in the series debuting with two episodes on Tuesday.

— "Pitch Perfect" fans of the movies in general and Adam Devine's Bumper in particular are in luck. Peacock's "Pitch Perfect: Bumper in Berlin" finds the singer jumping at a chance to become a star in Germany with the help of Pieter Krämer's Flula (from "Pitch Perfect 2"). Also along for the ride is Sarah Hyland, Devine's castmate in their "Modern Family" days. The series will be out in full Wednesday on Peacock, with NBC viewers getting a taste of it when episode one airs Nov. 28.

— It's almost criminal how much people love crime dramas. But because they do, and because franchises are a solid bet, here comes "Criminal Minds: Evolution" on Paramount+. Joe Mantegna, A.J. Cook, Kirsten Vangsness and Aisha Tyler are among those reprising their original "Criminal Minds" roles in the spinoff. The mission for the FBI elite criminal profilers: track down a network of serial killers formed during the pandemic. The series debuts with two episodes on Thursday as a Thanksgiving chaser.

— AP Television Writer Lynn Elber

## VIDEO GAMES

— Look, you're going to need some way to shake off the stuffing after that Thanksgiving feast. So why not throw an international dance party with friends from around the world? Ubisoft's "Just Dance 2023" promises a new online mode that will let you boogie the pounds away with up to five other friends. This

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year's version includes the usual mix of current hitmakers like BTS, Dua Lipa, Harry Styles and Doja Cat. There's something for the geezers too: The party hasn't started until Grandpa shows off his moves to The Tramps' "Disco Inferno." It's available Tuesday for the Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 5 and Xbox X/S.

— We've all grown up hearing about Wild West outlaws like Jesse James and Billy the Kid, but somehow the storytellers left out the real villains: vampires. Focus Entertainment and Polish studio Flying Wild Hog aim to correct that omission with "Evil West." The varmints here are faster, meaner and thirstier than any gunslinger you'd expect to meet in a dusty saloon. Fortunately, the heroes' weapons — like a flamethrower and an electrified gauntlet — are more powerful than your standard six-shooter. "Evil West" moseys onto the PlayStation 5, PlayStation 4, Xbox X/S, Xbox One and PC on Tuesday.

— Lou Kesten

## Europe scrambles to help Ukraine keep the heat and lights on

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — European officials are scrambling to help Ukraine stay warm and keep functioning through the bitter winter months, pledging Friday to send more support that will mitigate the Russian military's efforts to turn off the heat and lights.

Nine months after Russia invaded its neighbor, the Kremlin's forces have zeroed in on Ukraine's power grid and other critical civilian infrastructure in a bid to tighten the screws on Kyiv. Officials estimate that around 50% of Ukraine's energy facilities have been damaged in the recent strikes.

France is sending 100 high-powered generators to Ukraine to help people get through the coming months, French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said Friday.

She said Russia is "weaponizing" winter and plunging Ukraine's civilian population into hardship.

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, arriving Friday on a visit to Kyiv, said a promised air-defense package, which Britain valued at 50 million pounds (\$60 million), would help Ukraine defend itself against Russia's bombardments.

"Words are not enough. Words won't keep the lights on this winter. Words won't defend against Russian missiles," Cleverly said in a tweet about the military aid.

The package also includes 24 ambulances and 11 other emergency vehicles, some of them armored.

"As winter sets in, Russia is continuing to try and break Ukrainian resolve through its brutal attacks on civilians, hospitals and energy infrastructure," Cleverly said.

Russian officials have claimed they are hitting legitimate targets. But the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights on Friday expressed his shock at the depth of civilian suffering caused by the bombing, amid broader allegations of abuses.

"Millions are being plunged into extreme hardship and appalling conditions of life by these strikes," Volker Türk said in a statement Friday. "Taken as a whole, this raises serious problems under international humanitarian law, which requires a concrete and direct military advantage for each object attacked."

The U.N. humanitarian office also chimed in with its concerns. "Ukraine is turning increasingly cold without power, without steady water supply and without heating," Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the office, said Friday.

He said the global body and its partners were sending hundreds of generators to Ukraine to help the government there in its efforts to keep people warm and maintain essential services, such as health care. The World Health Organization said it is sending generators to hospitals.

Cleverly's visit came a day after European officials launched a scheme called "Generators of Hope," which calls on more than 200 cities across the continent to donate power generators and electricity transformers.

The generators are intended to help provide power to hospitals, schools and water pumping stations, among other infrastructure.

Generators may provide only a tiny amount of the energy that Ukraine will need during the cold and dark winter months.

But the comfort and relief they provide is already evident, as winter begins in earnest and power out-

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ages occur regularly. The whine and rumble of generators is becoming commonplace, allowing stores that have them to stay open and Ukraine's ubiquitous coffee shops to keep serving hot drinks that maintain a semblance of normality.

Despite strong wind, rain, sub-zero temperatures at night, icing and broken power lines, more than 70% of Ukraine's electricity requirements were being met on Friday morning, the country's state power grid operator Ukrenergo said in a statement.

The electricity supply has been at least partially restored in all regions of Ukraine, and the country's energy grid was once again connected to that of the European Union, Ukrenergo CEO Volodymyr Kudrytskyi said on Friday.

Kudrytskyi added that, despite that progress, about half of Ukrainian residents continue to experience disruption. He said all three of Ukraine's nuclear plants located in areas controlled by Kyiv have resumed operation.

"In one to two days, nuclear power plants will reach their normal scheduled capacity, and we expect that it will be possible to transfer our consumers to a planned shutdown (regime) instead of emergency (blackouts)," Kudrytskyi said on Ukrainian TV.

Ukrainian authorities are opening thousands of so-called "points of invincibility" — heated and powered spaces offering hot meals, electricity and internet connections. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy said late Thursday that almost 4,400 such spaces have opened across most of the country.

He scoffed at Moscow's attempts to intimidate Ukrainian civilians, saying that was the Russian military's only option after a string of battlefield setbacks. "Either energy terror, or artillery terror, or missile terror — that's all that Russia has dwindled to under its current leaders," Zelenskyy said.

Elsewhere, Ukrainian officials and energy workers continued their push to restore supplies after a nationwide barrage Wednesday left tens of millions without power and water.

Kyiv's mayor Vitali Klitschko said Friday morning that heating was back on in a third of the capital's households, but that half of its population still lacked electricity.

Writing on Telegram, Klitschko added that authorities hoped to provide all consumers in Kyiv with electricity for a period of three hours on Friday, following a pre-set schedule.

As of Friday morning in Kharkiv, all residents of Ukraine's second-largest city had had their electricity supplies restored, but more than 100,000 in the outlying region continued to see interruptions, the regional governor said.

In the south, authorities in the city of Mykolayiv said that running water was set to start flowing again after supplies were cut off by Russian strikes on Thursday.

## After a year, omicron still driving COVID surges and worries

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

A year after omicron began its assault on humanity, the ever-morphing coronavirus mutant drove COVID-19 case counts higher in many places just as Americans gathered for Thanksgiving. It was a prelude to a wave that experts expect to soon wash over the U.S.

Phoenix-area emergency physician Dr. Nicholas Vasquez said his hospital admitted a growing number of chronically ill people and nursing home residents with severe COVID-19 this month.

"It's been quite a while since we needed to have COVID wards," he said. "It's making a clear comeback."

Nationally, new COVID cases averaged around 39,300 a day as of Tuesday — far lower than last winter but a vast undercount because of reduced testing and reporting. About 28,000 people with COVID were hospitalized daily and about 340 died.

Cases and deaths were up from two weeks earlier. Yet a fifth of the U.S. population hasn't been vaccinated, most Americans haven't gotten the latest boosters and many have stopped wearing masks.

Meanwhile, the virus keeps finding ways to avoid defeat.

The omicron variant arrived in the U.S. just after Thanksgiving last year and caused the pandemic's biggest wave of cases. Since then, it has spawned a large extended family of sub-variants, such as those

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most common in the U.S. now: BQ.1, BQ.1.1 and BA.5. They edged out competitors by getting better at evading immunity from vaccines and previous illness — and sickening millions.

Carey Johnson's family got hit twice. She came down with COVID-19 in January during the first omicron wave, suffering flu-like symptoms and terrible pain that kept her down for a week. Her son Fabian Swain, 16, suffered much milder symptoms in September when the BA.5 variant was dominant.

Fabian recovered quickly, but Johnson had a headache for weeks. Other problems lingered longer.

"I was like, 'I cannot get it together.' I could not get my thoughts together. I couldn't get my energy together" said Johnson, 42, of Germantown, Maryland. "And it went on for months like that."

## HOT SPOTS EMERGE

Some communities are being particularly hard hit right now. Tracking by the Mayo Clinic shows cases trending up in states such as Florida, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico.

In Arizona's Navajo County, the average daily case rate is more than double the state average. Dr. James McAuley said 25 to 50 people a day are testing positive for the coronavirus at the Indian Health Service facility where he works. Before, they saw just a few cases daily.

McAuley, clinical director of the Whiteriver Indian Hospital, which serves the White Mountain Apache Tribe, said they are "essentially back to where we were with our last big peak" in February.

COVID-19 is part of a triple threat that also includes flu and the virus known as RSV.

Dr. Vincent Hsu, who oversees infection control for AdventHealth, said the system's pediatric hospital in Orlando is nearly full with kids sickened by these viruses. Dr. Greg Martin, past president of the Society of Critical Care Medicine, sees a similar trend elsewhere.

Pediatric hospitals' emergency departments and urgent care clinics are busier than ever, said Martin, who practices mostly at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta. "This is a record compared to any month, any week, any day in the past," he said.

Looking to the future, experts see the seeds of a widespread U.S. wave. They point to what's happening internationally — a BA.5 surge in Japan, a combination of variants pushing up cases in South Korea, the start of a new wave in Norway.

Some experts said a U.S. wave could begin during the holidays as people gather indoors. Trevor Bedford, a biologist and genetics expert at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, said it could peak at around 150,000 new cases a day, about what the nation saw in July.

A new wave would be rough, said Dr. Mark Griffiths, medical director of the emergency department of Children's Health Care of Atlanta-Spalding Hospital. "So many systems are on the brink of just being totally overburdened that if we get another COVID surge on top of this, it's going to make some systems crack."

One bright spot? Deaths are likely to be much lower than earlier in the pandemic. About 1 in 2,000 infections lead to death now, compared with about 1 in 200 in the first half of 2020, Bedford said.

## OMICRON'S YEARLONG REIGN

The same widespread immunity that reduced deaths also pushed the coronavirus to mutate. By the end of last year, many people had gotten infected, vaccinated or both. That "created the initial niche for omicron to spread," Bedford said, since the virus had significantly evolved in its ability to escape existing immunity.

Omicron thrived. Mara Aspinall, who teaches biomedical diagnostics at Arizona State University, noted that the first omicron strain represented 7.5% of circulating variants by mid-December and 80% just two weeks later. U.S. cases at one point soared to a million a day. Omicron generally caused less severe disease than previous variants, but hospitalizations and deaths shot up given the sheer numbers of infected people.

The giant wave ebbed by mid-April. The virus mutated quickly into a series of sub-variants adept at evading immunity. A recent study in the journal *Science Immunology* says this ability to escape antibodies is due to more than 30 changes in the spike protein studding the surface of the virus.

Omicron evolved so much in a year, Bedford said, it's now "a meaningless term."

That rapid mutation is likely to continue.

"There's much more pressure for the virus to diversify," said Shishi Luo, head of infectious diseases for Helix, a company that supplies viral sequencing information to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



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Doctors said the best protection against the bubbling stew of sub-variants remains vaccination. And officials said Americans who got the new combination booster targeting omicron and the original coronavirus are currently better protected than others against symptomatic infection.

Dr. Peter Hotez, co-director of the Center for Vaccine Development at Texas Children's Hospital, said getting the booster, if you're eligible, is "the most impactful thing you could do."

Doctors also urge people to continue testing, keep up preventive measures such as masking in crowds, and stay home when sick.

"COVID is still a very significant threat, especially to the most vulnerable," said Dr. Laolu Fayanju of Oak Street Health in Cleveland, which specializes in caring for older adults. "People have to continue to think about one another. We're not completely out of the woods on this yet."

## Today in History: November 26, the NHL is founded

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 26, the 330th day of 2022. There are 35 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 26, 1950, China entered the Korean War, launching a counteroffensive against soldiers from the United Nations, the U.S. and South Korea.

On this date:

In 1825, the first college social fraternity, the Kappa Alpha Society, was formed at Union College in Schenectady, New York.

In 1864, English mathematician and writer Charles Dodgson presented a handwritten and illustrated manuscript, "Alice's Adventures Under Ground," to his 12-year-old friend Alice Pleasance Liddell; the book was later turned into "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," published under Dodgson's pen name, Lewis Carroll.

In 1883, former slave and abolitionist Sojourner Truth died in Battle Creek, Michigan.

In 1917, the National Hockey League was founded in Montreal, succeeding the National Hockey Association.

In 1941, U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull delivered a note to Japan's ambassador to the United States, Kichisaburo Nomura (kee-chee-sah-boor-oh noh-moo-rah), setting forth U.S. demands for "lasting and extensive peace throughout the Pacific area." The same day, a Japanese naval task force consisting of six aircraft carriers left the Kuril Islands, headed toward Hawaii.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered nationwide gasoline rationing, beginning Dec. 1.

In 1943, during World War II, the HMT Rohna, a British transport ship carrying American soldiers, was hit by a German missile off Algeria; 1,138 men were killed.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, told a federal court that she'd accidentally caused part of the 18-1/2-minute gap in a key Watergate tape.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan appointed a commission headed by former Sen. John Tower to investigate his National Security Council staff in the wake of the Iran-Contra affair.

In 2000, Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris certified George W. Bush the winner over Al Gore in the state's presidential balloting by a 537-vote margin.

In 2008, teams of heavily armed Pakistani gunmen stormed luxury hotels, a popular tourist attraction and a crowded train station in Mumbai, India, leaving at least 166 people dead in a rampage lasting some 60 hours.

In 2020, Americans marked the Thanksgiving holiday amid the coronavirus pandemic, with many celebrations canceled or reduced; Zoom and FaceTime calls connected some families with those who didn't want to travel.

Ten years ago: Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak abruptly quit politics, saying in a surprise announcement, "I feel I have exhausted my political activity, which had never been a special object of desire for me." New Jersey Republican Gov. Chris Christie announced that he would be seeking re-election, so he

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could continue to guide the state through a recovery from Superstorm Sandy.

Five years ago: Congressman John Conyers of Michigan gave up his leadership position as the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, while denying allegations that he had sexually harassed female staff members. Amid allegations that he had groped women in the past, Minnesota Democratic Sen. Al Franken said he felt "embarrassed and ashamed," but that he looked forward to gradually regaining the trust of voters. (Franken announced less than two weeks later that he was resigning from Congress.)

One year ago: A World Health Organization panel classified a new COVID-19 variant as a highly transmissible virus of concern, and named it "omicron" under its Greek-letter system. The United States, Canada, Russia and a host of other countries joined the European Union in restricting travel for visitors from southern Africa. Stephen Sondheim, the songwriter who reshaped the American musical theater in the second half of the 20th century, died at his Connecticut home at the age of 91.

Today's Birthdays: Impressionist Rich Little is 84. Singer Tina Turner is 83. Singer Jean Terrell is 78. Pop musician John McVie is 77. Actor Marianne Muellerleile is 74. Actor Scott Jacoby is 66. Actor Jamie Rose is 63. Country singer Linda Davis is 60. Actor Scott Adsit is 57. Blues singer-musician Bernard Allison is 57. Country singer-musician Steve Grisaffe is 57. Actor Kristin Bauer is 56. Actor Peter Facinelli is 49. Actor Tammy Lynn Michaels Etheridge is 48. DJ/record label executive DJ Khaled (KAL'-ehd) is 47. Actor Maia (MY'-ah) Campbell is 46. Country singer Joe Nichols is 46. Contemporary Christian musicians Anthony and Randy Armstrong (Red) are 44. Actor Jessica Bowman is 42. Pop singer Natasha Bedingfield is 41. Actor Jessica Camacho is 40. Rock musician Ben Wysocki (The Fray) is 38. Singer Lil Fizz is 37. MLB All-Star Matt Carpenter is 37. Actor-singer-TV personality Rita Ora is 32. Actor/singer Aubrey Peebles is 29.