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Groton Community Calendar

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)

Wednesday, Nov. 30

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, au gratin potatoes, carrots, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Garlic cheese, bread, cooked carrots.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.

UMC: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 1

School Breakfast: Muffins

School Lunch: Spaghetti

Emmanuel Lutheran Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

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

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

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*Olive Grove's
6th Annual*

*Christmas
Tour of Homes
& Holiday
Party*

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

**SATURDAY,
DEC. 3, 2022**

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

**HOLIDAY
PARTY**

4-CLOSE

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

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

**\$15 tickets available at
Lori's Pharmacy, Groton
Groton Ford
Hair & Company, Aberdeen
Olive Grove Golf Clubhouse**

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

Groton students building a Tiny Home

by Dorene Nelson

Teaching real-life skills is one of the goals Don Donley has for his shop classes. Their current project is the construction of a "tiny home."

The average cost of a tiny house is approximately \$30,000 – \$60,000, although they can cost as little as \$8,000 or up to \$150,000, depending upon the amenities that are included. Most tiny homes range between 100-400 square feet.

"We started working on this house in the spring of 2021," he said. "The boys had the floor as well as the frames for walls and trusses completed by the time school was out last spring."

"The trusses and wall frames were built inside the shop, allowing the students to work on them regardless of the weather



This is the exterior view of tiny House under construction by the Groton Area shop students. (Photo by

Dorene Nelson)

**JVT/NVC HOLIDAY
OPEN HOUSES**

Groton - Tuesday, Nov. 29th 10am-4pm
Redfield - Wednesday, Nov. 30th 11am-2pm
Aberdeen - Thursday, Dec. 1st 10am-4pm

Door Prizes - Christmas Treats

Plus, register in stores or online at
nvc.net for the
12 Days of Christmas!

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outside," Donley explained. "However due to the size of the floor, that work had to be done outside where the boys started working on it again this school year."

"Currently the outside walls are done and covered with house wrap. Metal roofing was used for easy maintenance," he stated. "We plan to put metal siding on as well, probably in a slightly lighter color. The shop class would like to thank the FACS class for the help in selecting colors for the roof and siding."

"Our tiny home is 13' x 36' or 468 square feet, approximately the size of a small one bedroom apartment," Donley said. "It has one door and four windows with a small one for the bathroom already installed."



Floor joists take a lot of time. (Photo by Dorene)



Students using scaffolding to make the job easier. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)

**'TIS THE
SEASON TO
SHOP LOCAL**

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce



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"Austin Blocker showed the class how to properly install the windows and an outside entrance door, a skill he had learned from his father," he explained. "The boys should be able to install the rest of the windows by themselves."

"I talked to Greg Milbrandt and Stephan Wright about how easy or difficult it might be to move this building from the school to the owner's lot," he smiled. "Milbrandt said it would not be problem to lift it up and move it with his stack mover."

"When this building project is completed, we'll need to find a buyer," Donley said. "We plan to sell it either by holding an auction at the end of the school year or seeking sealed bids. Moving expenses will be included in the total cost of the home. The money the kids earn will mainly be used to cover building expenses with any extra being invested in the shop program."

"We'd like to thank and are very grateful for the help, assistance, advice, and supplies from S&S Lumber, Jim Lane, Joe Foertsch, Scepaniak Plumbing, Blocker Construction, and Locke Electric," Donley listed. "This big project became a reality with all of the help from these experts."



The walls are going up. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)



Construction continues. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)



Students working on the flooring. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)



Chief Engineers and Planners: R to L Cameron Johnson, Danny Feist, Caleb Hanten, Tyson Parrow, and Kaleb Antonsen. (Photo by

Dorene Nelson)

Lung Cancer Screening Saves Lives

This year nearly 250,000 patients will be diagnosed with lung cancer and 130,000 will die from it. In SD, 660 people will be diagnosed and over 400 will die from the disease. Lung cancer accounts for the most cancer deaths in both the US and in SD.



Based on Science, Built on Trust



Daniel G Petereit, MD, FABS, FASTRO

Smoking is the most important risk factor for lung cancer and accounts for 80% of lung cancer deaths. Although smoking rates continue to decline in the US, in SD there are many rural and tribal communities where the smoking rates are still 20-40%. These patients continue to be at risk for developing and dying from lung cancer. The Lakota Sioux have the highest lung cancer death rates in the nation at 95%.

Lung cancer screening with low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) has been demonstrated to reduce lung cancer death rates by detecting earlier stages of cancer with relatively high cure rates – similar to other screen detectable cancers such as cervical, prostate, breast and colorectal. An LDCT is a five-minute, outpatient CT scan performed without IV contrast and has minimal radiation exposure. The current recommendations are for healthy adults ages 50-80 with a 20 pack year smoking history or who have quit within the last 15 years.

Unfortunately, many SD patients are at risk, and are unaware of the value of an LDCT. In SD, there are at least 30,000 patients who are eligible for this test.

If patients are diagnosed with early stage lung cancer, surgery is the standard treatment with high cure rates. If patients are not surgical candidates, they can be safely treated with 4 to 5 radiation doses, called stereotactic ablative radio-surgery, with essentially no side effects and also very high cure rates. This specialized form of radiation is offered at most cancer centers in SD.

To address the high lung cancer death rates among the Lakota Sioux, we implemented a lung cancer screening navigation program on the west river reservations in an attempt to lower these death rates as part of an ongoing program called Walking Forward that has been in existence since 2002. This is a community-based program based in Rapid City with staff who live and work in their communities of Pine Ridge and Rosebud. The overarching program goal is to lower cancer death rates for Lakota Sioux, through patient navigation, access to cancer screening and early detection and state of the art cancer treatments. To date we have referred over 420 patients for an LDCT with over 335 completed scans.

So, if you are a smoker: 1) try to quit; 2) if you are a candidate for lung cancer screening talk to your primary care provider about an LDCT, and 3) for the younger generation – don't start smoking!

Bottom Line: lung cancer can be successfully treated if caught early – get screened if you are eligible.

Daniel G Petereit, MD, FABS, FASTRO is a Radiation Oncologist at the Monument Health Cancer Care Institute in Rapid City, SD. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show based on science, built on trust for 21 seasons, streaming live on Facebook and SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

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That's Life by Tony Bender

For writers only

You know how after a vacation or even a holiday, you feel like you need time to recover from your time off? That's me this morning. And I didn't even eat that much turkey, so I can't blame it on a tryptophan hangover.

Usually, I have a list in my head of topics ready to spew onto the page. Today, not so much, but more than 30 years ago, I committed to writing a column every week, and aside from a few worthy reruns, I've kept the weekly pace.

Today, I'm winging it. Hang on. And let me tell you how I got here.

It's been a while, but when I've done book-signings or writing seminars, inevitably, someone will tell me, "I'm going to write a book, too!" I smile politely because I know most of the time it doesn't happen, because writing a book is hard! A writer told me once, "Writing even a bad book is a college education in itself." Now, that's the hard truth.

No one can teach you to write a book. It's a journey. A discovery. Detours.

I was like most aspiring writers. I was going to write the great American novel, and I suppose I wrote a pretty good one (or two), but when I started writing on that pitiful MS-DOS computer more than three decades ago, I discovered quickly that I was woefully unprepared.

I quickly deduced that in order to get better I had to force myself to write creatively at least once a week. So, I wrote a column. My hometown newspaper, the Brown County News in Frederick, SD, published it with the promise of another the following week, and away we went.

The columns were wildly uneven, some of them just awful, but lo and behold, that first year my column won first place in the South Dakota Newspaper Contest. Proof that I was legit. More newspapers signed on, and then tragedy struck. My favorite columnist, the revered Wayne Lubenow, died. He was funny and poetic and heartfelt. I aspired to be that good.

Since my column filled the void his absence left in many papers, people naturally made comparisons, almost always nice ones, but I didn't want to be the next Wayne Lubenow, I wanted to be the first me. More importantly, I wanted to be worthy.

I have framed picture of Wayne in my office. I never met him, but through his columns and through stories I've heard, I feel like I know him. I suppose just like some of my readers feel they know me. As a writer, sometimes it aches a bit to reveal things, but it's that ache that connects.

I'm not sure I'll ever need to write my memoirs. They're on the pages of quite a few newspapers, bound, filed, and dusty, but the words are always retrievable. Funny stories, friends, the births, the deaths, even a divorce. In my life, my readers saw theirs, scars, warts, laughs, aches, and all.

One thing about column writing, everyone's got one or two good columns in them. After that, it can be like watching a drowning man. Drowning in ink.

Me? Today, I'm just treading water.

I think writers primarily write for themselves, and if others are entertained by it along the way, all the better. There's a dichotomy involving writers. Most of us are solitary things, but it's people who inspire my stories, so when I have to go out for a family or business commitment, I almost always return energized with a head full of ideas.

Funny, I've had to force myself, kicking and screaming, to do something I love and couldn't do without. Let the shrinks sort that one out.

"What does this inkblot look like, Tony?"

"A deadline!"

When aspiring writers tell me about their plans to write, I ask, "So, what do you read?" Sometimes they'll say, "Oh, I don't have time to read—I just write." They are the lost causes.

The formula is hard, but it's simple.

Read.

Write.

South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Thanking Emergency Responders

For most of us, we hope to never need help from emergency responders. But when our darkest moments come, we depend on them to be there for us. And they answer the call. They put their lives on the line to help others every day. Wherever you live – whatever and wherever your emergency may be – every South Dakotan can be taken care of in an emergency.

I have taken action to support our emergency responders by making it easier to do their job and providing funding when necessary.

We have equipped our emergency responders with telehealth capabilities that will allow patients to get better treatment faster. We just recently announced a new partnership with Avel eCare to put these new services into practice, and we are excited about the possibilities. Together with Avel eCare, we are calling the new initiative “Telemedicine in Motion.”

This initiative will connect patients with physician and nurse professionals who can assist in assessment, treatment, and transfer to an appropriate facility. And the strong level of connectivity means that these services will help South Dakotans in even the most remote corners of our state.

Last year, we funded new LIFEPAKs for emergency responders across the state, providing \$11.6 million to purchase state-of-the-art equipment that will literally save lives in a time of crisis. We are also providing training, distribution, implementation, and installation of this equipment to make sure that our first responders can put it to good use when they help folks in their communities. And we were able to secure these life-saving devices at a savings of \$9.7 million to taxpayers. We always find ways to be responsible stewards of taxpayer money, even when we need to make important purchases.

We are also working on a comprehensive analysis of our state’s EMS resources so that we can plan for where our needs will be in the future. My Department of Health will have more to announce about that in the near future.

We will continue to support South Dakota’s firefighters. We have helped provide crucial training resources that will keep them well-prepared to serve our communities. And we have provided new equipment to South Dakota Wildland Fire to handle some of the bigger wildfires that can pose a threat, particularly in the Black Hills. If you are looking to give this holiday season, your local volunteer fire department is always a good investment.

We will also continue to emphasize our support and respect for law enforcement. I am proud to live in a state that places such a high priority on defending law enforcement officers – not defunding them. And we will continue to set that example for the rest of the nation.

We will continue to thank our emergency responders for everything they do to keep us safe. Give thanks for their service this holiday season – and try not to do anything that will require them to come save you!



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Democrats recommend Duffy as federal judge Suggestion forwarded to White House after two years of speculation

BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 28, 2022 5:55 PM

The South Dakota Democratic Party has recommended a judge for a lifetime appointment to the federal bench in Rapid City.

Veronica Duffy, 58, has served as a U.S. magistrate judge since 2007, initially in the Western Division of the U.S. District Court of South Dakota. Duffy currently works in the Southern Division, which is headquartered in Sioux Falls.

Magistrate judges handle pretrial motions and hearings, but district judges typically preside over trials. Magistrates are also appointed to four-year terms, whereas district appointments are for life.

State Democratic Party Chair Randy Seiler confirmed on Monday that Duffy's name was initially forwarded to the White House earlier this year, and that her name was sent once again after the general election.

Discussions about a replacement for retiring U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Viken had been influenced by the prospect of a potential Republican majority in the U.S. Senate – a majority that may have made it more difficult to secure a vote on President Joe Biden's judicial nominees.

Senate Democrats maintained their razor-thin majority on Election Day, though, meaning the party went into the lame duck session on Monday without the urgency to confirm judicial nominees that would have come with a looming Republican majority when the new Congress convenes in January.

Duffy's recommendation is not an assurance of success, but Seiler said the party is confident in her credentials and qualifications. Duffy graduated from Creighton Law School in 1992, clerked for U.S. District Judge Richard Battey, and worked in private practice prior to 2007.

"She's incredibly qualified, she's been a United States magistrate judge for years, she's a huge intellect, and we think she's an excellent choice," Seiler said. "Based on the vetting process, this is one of the top prospects in our state to replace Judge Viken in terms of her knowledge and experience of the federal judicial system."

Duffy's name was not the first to appear publicly in discussions about the open judgeship.

The appointment process for any lifetime seat on the federal bench often begins with recommendations from senators in states with vacancies – provided those senators are from the same party as the president.

In South Dakota, as in other states with no Democratic senators, the state Democratic Party has traditionally passed along the names of potential nominees to the White House for consideration when the sitting president is a Democrat.

Viken, for example, was the first appointee by then-President Barack Obama in 2009 after a recommendation by the party. In October 2020, he announced his intent to retire in 2023.



The federal courthouse in Sioux Falls. (John

Hult/SD Searchlight)

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Seiler confirmed in early 2021 that his party had submitted names, but had not confirmed any specific name until Duffy's.

Meanwhile, the open seat has been the subject of public discussion.

The Biden administration has prioritized the appointment of women and people of color to federal judge-ships, to improve diversity on the federal bench.

Former U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin was among those rumored to have been recommended for the federal judgeship, but the president of Augustana University announced that she wouldn't be leaving her post at the school in April 2021.

At least two other nominees spoke publicly about the seat in 2021: Tracy Zephier, the attorney general for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and Sarah Collins, an assistant U.S. attorney who is a member of the Oglala Lakota Tribe.

Both told reporter Tom Lawrence in early April 2021, prior to Herseth Sandlin's announcement that she would not seek a federal position, that they were interested in the job. Native Sun News endorsed Collins in April 2021.

In October, Collins said she did not wish to comment on the nomination; Zephier did not return calls and emails seeking comment.

The wait for a new judge to fill Viken's seat at the top of the Western Division has been long, and has forced some shuffling of work across the federal docket, according to Clerk of Courts Matt Thelen.

Since Viken's announcement, all but one of his civil cases have been reassigned to other judges, Thelen said. Those judges include the district's Chief Judge Roberto Lange and Judge Karen Schreier, who oversees the Southern Division, as well as Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Jonathan Kobes.

Viken, 70, is still handling criminal cases. Thelen said the changes have yet to create scheduling troubles, but told South Dakota Searchlight in October that a nomination would be a welcome development.

"We are working to administer timely and proper justice to the full extent possible," Thelen said. "We are grateful that Judge Viken is continuing to hear criminal cases, at least for now. We look forward to the nomination of a capable replacement judge when the administration does so. We very much hope that nomination comes soon."

Viken said he plans to stay and assist at the federal courthouse in Rapid City until Oct. 1, 2023, regardless of whether his replacement earns an appointment in the U.S. Senate.

"The second floor is all set up," Viken said. "Visiting judges come in and use that space and the courtroom. I would simply move down there and continue working until October 1."



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.

Group resubmits proposed ballot measure to repeal grocery tax, clarifies wording

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 28, 2022 3:24 PM

After weeks of controversy surrounding the wording of a proposed ballot measure to repeal the state sales tax on food, the organization leading the charge has resubmitted the proposal with clarifying language.

Dakotans for Health, a grassroots policy change organization, submitted proposals in July for an initiated measure and a constitutional amendment that would prevent the state from taxing "anything sold for eating or drinking by humans, except alcoholic beverages, tobacco or prepared food." If the group collects enough petition signatures, voters would consider the proposals in 2024.

The Legislative Research Council, which provides statutory and legal guidance for proposed ballot initiatives, reviewed the proposed measure and stated that "municipalities could continue to tax anything sold for eating or drinking."

But Attorney General Mark Vargo released an official ballot explanation on Nov. 9, which states that the measure "prohibits the state, or municipalities, from collecting sales or use tax on anything sold for eating or drinking by humans."

That definition would keep cities from collecting their own tax on groceries, which is typically 2% on top of the state tax rate of 4.5%.

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

The rewritten measure announced Monday says municipalities "could continue to tax anything sold for eating or drinking."

"It doesn't make any sense to circulate a food tax repeal ballot measure with contradictory state information, so we are resubmitting and are asking the LRC and the Attorney General to expedite their review, explanation, and fiscal note," said Dakotans for Health co-founder Rick Weiland in a news release.

The process for the LRC and attorney general to review the proposals normally takes several months.

South Dakota is one of three states that fully taxes food without offering credits or rebates for the poor, according to the nonpartisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Some state legislators have proposed legislation to repeal South Dakota's food sales tax for years, but those bills have never been adopted.

Gov. Kristi Noem pledged during her reelection campaign this year to repeal the sales tax on food during the 2023 legislative session, before any proposed ballot measures are considered by voters in 2024. Noem may have more to say about that in her annual budget address Dec. 6. Legislators will consider her proposal when they convene in January.



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.

Fed survey finds more cash filling farmers' pockets, and land values soaring

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 28, 2022 12:21 PM

Good crops and higher commodity prices are putting more money in farmers' pockets while agricultural land values are soaring, according to a new multi-state survey by the Minneapolis Federal Reserve.

The survey compares agricultural credit conditions from July to September of this year with the same period last year in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Montana.

Seventy-three percent of agricultural lenders surveyed said farm incomes increased during the period compared to a year earlier, while another 19 percent reported no change.

The report said increased incomes are helping farmers pay off their loans at a faster pace, even as interest rates rise. Almost half of the ag lenders in the survey are reporting lower demand for loans relative to a year ago, although 27 percent noted increased loan demand.

Spending on farm equipment and household purchases also increased.

Land values continued to increase despite interest rates on loans for land increasing substantially. Non-irrigated cropland values increased by 20 percent on average from the third quarter of 2021, the report says. Values for irrigated land increased by 15 percent, while rangeland and pastureland values increased almost 20 percent.

Land rents followed suit. The average cash rent for cropland increased by about 12 percent from a year ago, while rangeland rents jumped 4 percent.

Despite impacts of ongoing drought, the outlook for the fourth quarter is moderately optimistic, according to the Minneapolis Fed, with lenders in the district mostly expecting farm incomes to continue increasing.

The Fed points to the strong cash position and the moderate spending of operators. However, respondents continued to report concerns about soaring input costs.

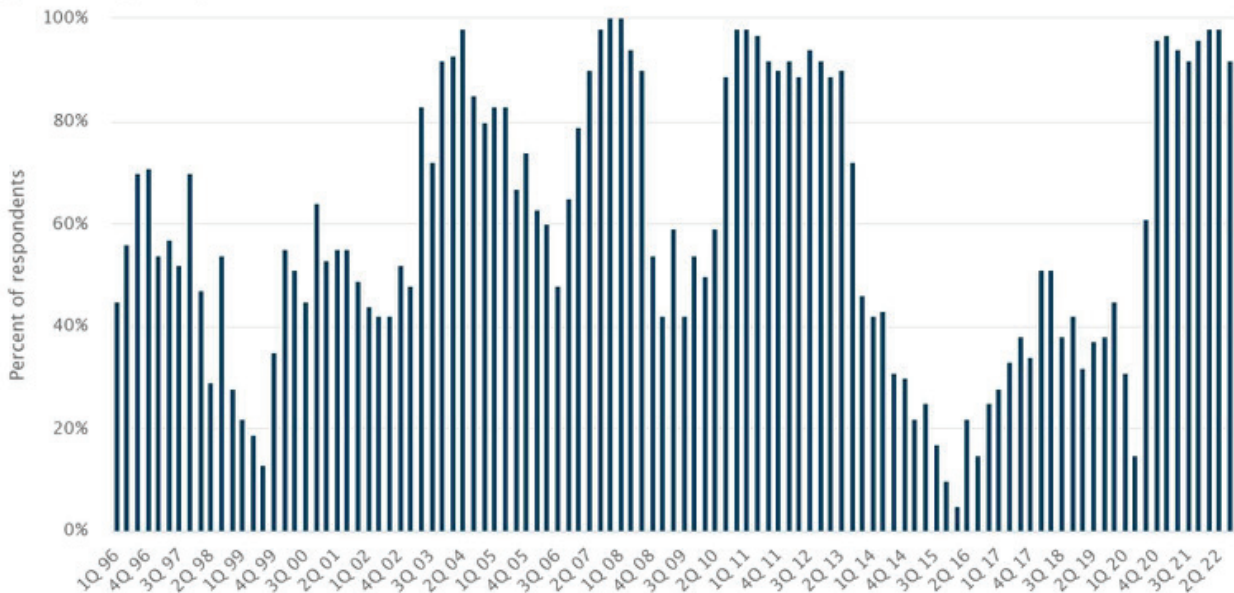


JOSHUA HAIAR  

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Increased or unchanged agricultural income

(Q1 1996 - Q2 2022)

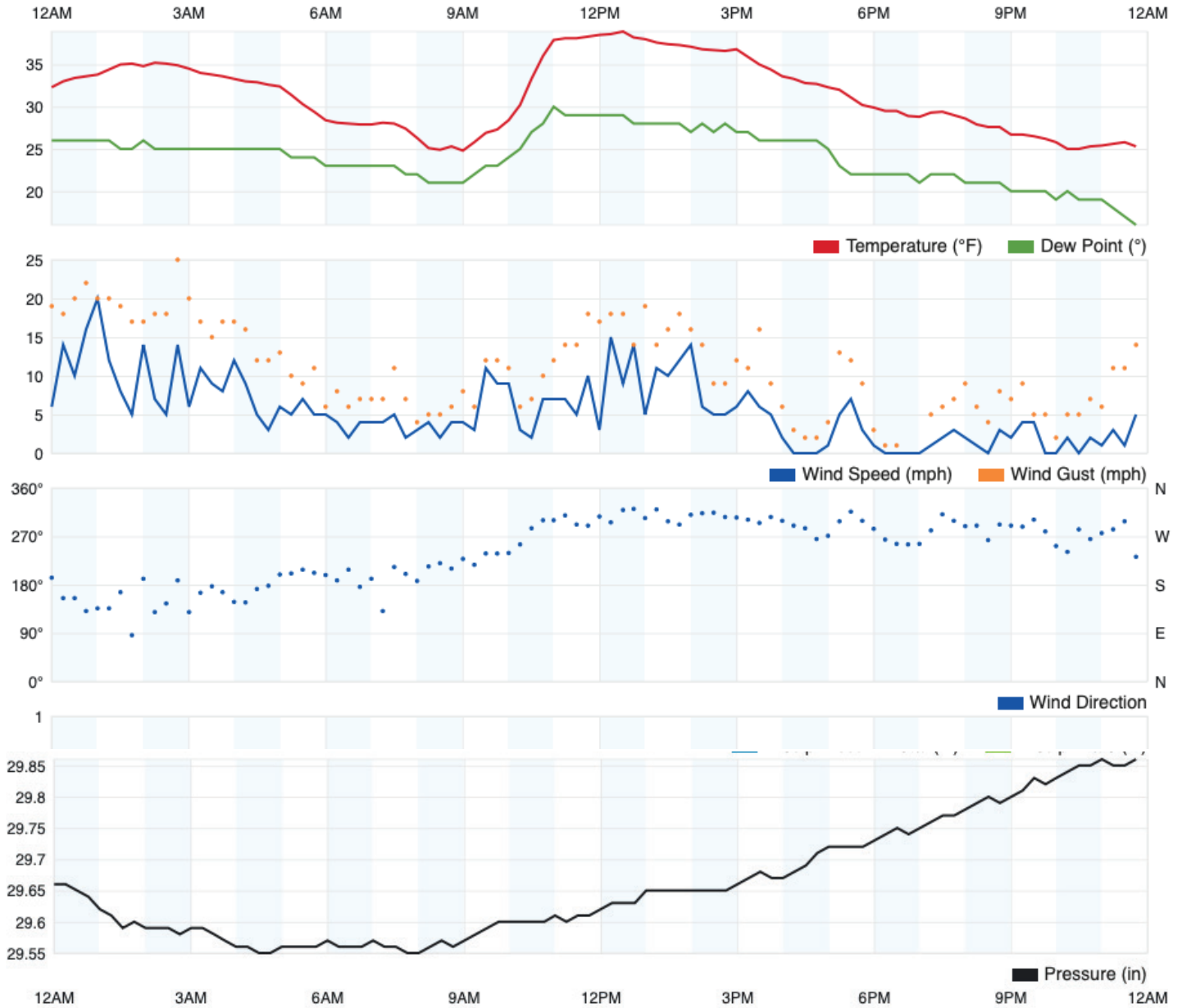


Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

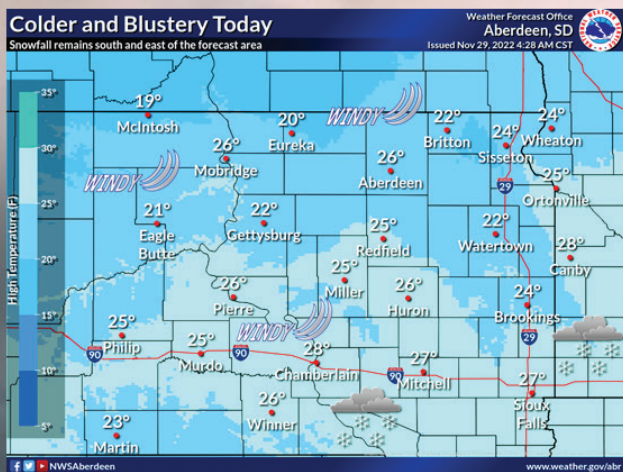


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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
High: 24 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 21 °F	Low: 7 °F	High: 36 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 32 °F

Cold and Wind Moving In Today



	11/29						11/30						
	Tue		Wed				Tue		Wed				
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	21	29	32	33	30	31	33	32	29	31	29	22	8
Britton	21	26	31	32	31	32	32	32	31	32	31	26	12
Eagle Butte	31	33	37	37	35	35	35	35	33	30	23	14	22
Eureka	25	33	39	39	35	33	35	35	33	33	29	21	10
Gettysburg	24	33	37	37	32	32	35	35	33	33	29	20	16
Kennebec	26	33	37	37	32	31	31	32	31	30	28	18	17
McIntosh	32	38	43	44	37	37	36	36	32	30	24	15	21
Milbank	18	23	26	29	29	32	33	33	33	33	31	28	14
Miller	21	29	32	33	28	31	31	33	31	31	26	21	9
Mobridge	28	30	35	35	32	33	32	31	30	28	23	16	15
Murdo	26	33	37	36	32	32	32	33	31	29	23	15	21
Pierre	31	29	32	35	30	29	29	29	28	26	21	14	15
Redfield	21	29	32	35	28	30	31	32	30	30	28	22	8
Sisseton	21	26	30	32	32	33	36	37	36	37	33	30	15
Watertown	21	26	31	33	32	32	35	35	35	35	32	28	13
Webster	24	29	33	37	35	35	36	37	37	37	35	30	14
Wheaton	18	23	24	26	28	30	32	33	33	33	31	26	17

Table values in mph
 **Created: 4 am CST Tue 11/29/2022
 ***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

- Highs in the 20s for most areas.
- Sub-zero wind chills this morning over north central SD.
- Windy conditions remaining in the area until Wednesday.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created
11/29/2022 4:49 AM

Blustery northwest winds will be felt today as cold temperatures move in. Highs will be in the 20s across the region, with sub-zero wind chills across north central South Dakota during the morning hours. Windy conditions will remain in place all the way through late Wednesday afternoon and evening. Snowfall from a passing storm system will affect southeast South Dakota into Minnesota, leaving our forecast area largely unaffected.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 38.9 °F at 12:31 PM

Low Temp: 24.8 °F at 9:00 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 2:45 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 5 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 2021

Record Low: -26 in 1964

Average High: 36°F

Average Low: 14°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.72

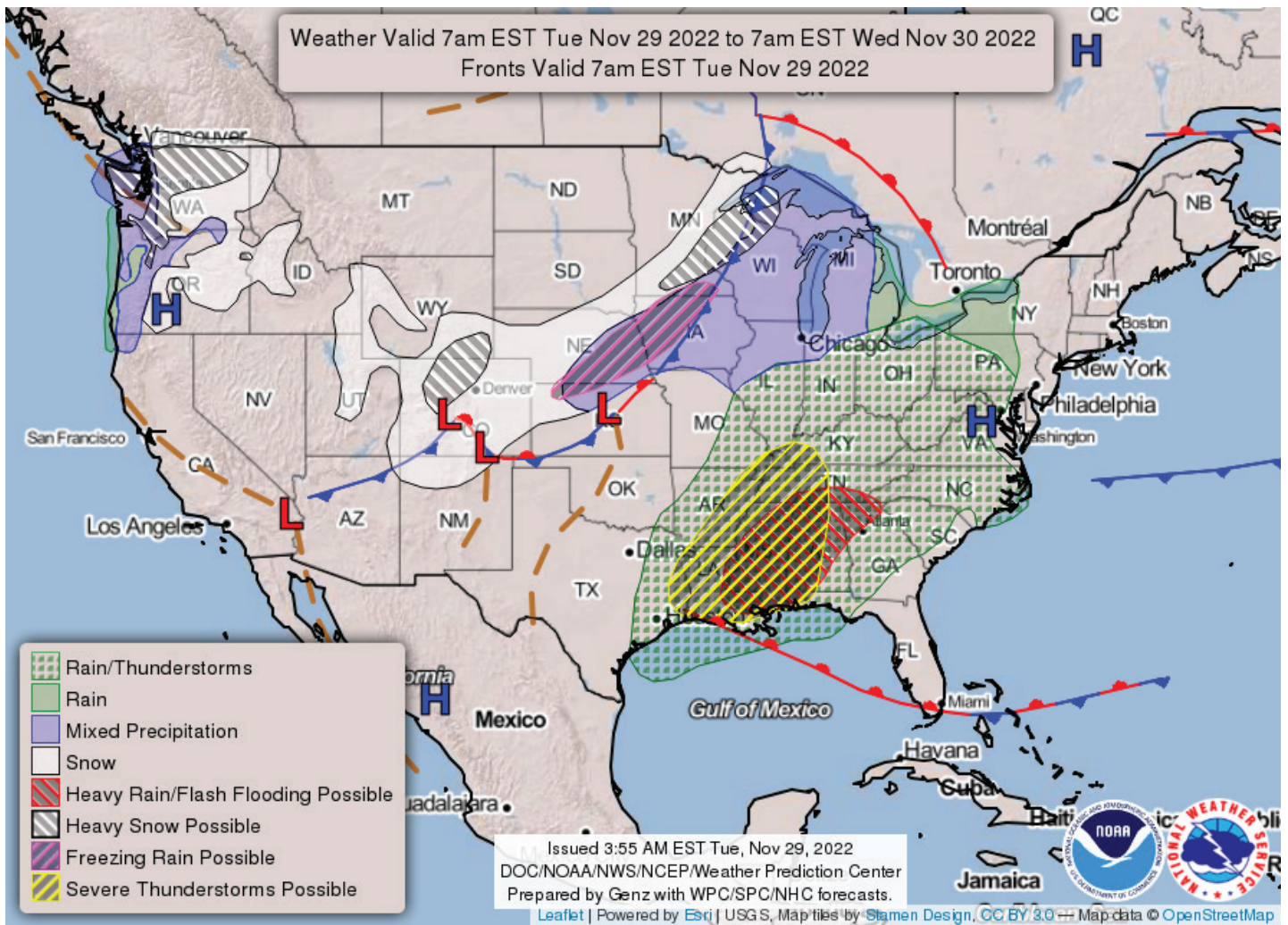
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.19

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 4 :53:27 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:49:16 AM



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Today in Weather History

November 29, 1896: The mercury plunged to 51 degrees below zero at Havre Montana. It marked the culmination of a two week long cold wave. A stagnate high-pressure area similar to those over Siberia during the winter was the cause. During the month of November temperatures across Montana and the Dakotas averaged 15 to 25 degrees below normal. Aberdeen's low temperature on this day was 25 degrees below zero. The average temperature for the month was 9.7 degrees, or 19.6 degrees below normal.

November 29, 1996: Widespread freezing rain laid down a thick layer of ice across a large part of north-east South Dakota and west central Minnesota on the 29th and 30th, making driving on area highways and Interstate 29 treacherous. Later on the 29th, the freezing rain changed over to snow. Snowfall amounts ranged from 2 to 4 inches across the area. Numerous accidents occurred throughout the weekend with mainly minor injuries. Many cars and trucks also went into ditches. The South Dakota Highway Patrol reported in, one three hour period that along I-29, from the Clear Lake exit to the Codington County line 40 to 45 vehicles were in the ditch. Many activities and sporting events were also postponed or cancelled.

November 29, 2002: High winds of 30 to 50 mph, gusting to near 70 mph, occurred much of the afternoon across central and north central South Dakota. A tractor-trailer, carrying a load of livestock, was overturned on Highway 12 about three miles east of Mobridge. The tractor was totaled, four cattle were killed, and the driver suffered minor injuries. High winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts to near 60 mph, also occurred across Roberts and Grant counties in the late afternoon hours.

November 29, 1991: A tornado struck southeast Springfield, Missouri, causing F4 damage. Shortly after touchdown, the tornado reached F3 intensity, approximately 3 miles north of the town of Nixa. While crossing Highway 65, the tornado picked up a truck and dropped it onto a frontage road, killing one passenger and injuring ten others. The tornado intensified to F4 strength as it moved through the Woodbridge and Natural Bridge Estates subdivisions where 15 homes were destroyed. Altogether, two people were killed and 64 others were injured.

1896 - The mercury plunged to 51 degrees below zero at Havre, MT. It marked the culmination of a two week long cold wave caused by a stagnate high pressure area similar to those over Siberia during the winter. During the month of November temperatures across Montana and the Dakotas averaged 15 to 25 degrees below normal. (David Ludlum)

1969 - Dense fog along the Jersey Turnpike resulted in a chain reaction of vehicle collisions during the morning rush hour. A propane truck jackknifed and was struck by a trailer truck, and other vehicles piled into the fiery mass. (David Ludlum)

1975 - Red River was buried under 34 inches of snow in 24 hours, establishing a record for the state of New Mexico. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - The temperature at Bismarck, ND, plunged to 30 degrees below zero to establish their record low for the month of November. The high that day was 4 degrees below zero. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Snow blanketed the Upper Mississippi Valley, with heavy snow reported near Lake Superior. Up to ten inches of snow was reported in Douglas County and Bayfield County of Wisconsin. Brule WI received nine inches of snow. Heavy rain soaked the Middle Atlantic Coast States, while gale force winds lashed the coastline. Flooding was reported in Maryland and Virginia. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Nine inches of snow at Alta UT brought their total for the month to 164 inches, surpassing their previous November record of 144 inches. Snowbird UT, also in the Little Cottonwood Valley, surpassed their November record of 118 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong Santa Ana winds diminished over southern California, but record cold was reported in some of the California valleys, with readings of 27 degrees at Redding and 31 degrees at Bakersfield. Gale force winds, gusting to 44 mph at Milwaukee WI, produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region. Sault Ste Marie MI finished the month of November with a record 46.8 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

RIGHT WAY – WRONG WAY

God created us to follow Him - not to forsake Him. He chooses for us triumph over temptation - not struggle with guilt for surrendering to sin. He wants us to walk with Him and not stray from Him because of our self-centeredness. He waits to help us achieve the potential He has given us and not be satisfied with less than what is possible. He is willing and able to share His wisdom and give His insights whenever we need to make any decision- if only we ask Him.

There are many wrong ways but only one "best" way - His way. And only God can reveal that way, His way, to us. We may search one way and then another, try this route, or another until it comes to a dead end. However, only when we allow God to lead us will we be in the center of His will.

Israel's experience during the Exodus gives us a great example of God's guidance and guardianship.

The Psalmist gives us a vivid picture of what can happen when people "try to make it on their own" and do not follow God: "Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. Some were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away." How sad. How true. Without God's guidance, we are all wanderers!

"Then they cried out to the Lord!" And listen to what happened. "He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle."

No one will ever find a "straight way" to a "safe place" in life unless they surrender their life to God and follow Him. Life without God is a "wasteland," and unless we accept His salvation, our lives will "ebb away."

Prayer: Lord, we come to You and ask You to save us from our sins and then lead us safely into Your presence. Thank you for guarding us as You guide us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. Psalm 107:7



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)
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The Groton Independent

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Lotto America

05-06-29-34-49, Star Ball: 4, ASB: 4

(five, six, twenty-nine, thirty-four, forty-nine; Star Ball: four; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$30,640,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 305,000,000

Powerball

29-30-32-48-50, Powerball: 20, Power Play: 2

(twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-two, forty-eight, fifty; Powerball: twenty; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$65,000,000

Carcoana scores 19 as South Dakota defeats Mount Marty 97-58

By The Associated Press undefined

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Mihai Carcoana had 19 points in South Dakota's 97-58 win against Mount Marty on Monday night.

Carcoana added six rebounds for the Coyotes (4-4). Tasos Kamateros added 18 points while shooting 7 for 10, including 4 for 5 from beyond the arc, and he also had seven rebounds. Paul Bruns recorded 13 points and shot 5 for 8, including 3 for 5 from beyond the arc.

The Lancer were led in scoring by Tash Lunday, who finished with 11 points. Kade Stearns added seven points for Mount Marty. In addition, Hunter Kotrous finished with six points.

Braun, protester of Dakota Access pipeline, dies at 53

EAGLE BUTTE, S.D. (AP) — Joye Braun, a fierce advocate for Native American rights and an organizer of protests against the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines, has died.

Braun, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux, died Nov. 13 at age 53 at her home in Eagle Butte, South Dakota, according to an online obituary from the Charlie Rooks Funeral Home.

Indian Country Today reported that Braun worked as a national pipeline organizer for the Indigenous Environmental Network. She was also the organization's representative in People vs. Fossil Fuels, a coalition of more than 1,200 groups that is calling on the federal government to declare a climate emergency.

At the Dakota Access protest, Braun's teepee was the first to go up at what became Oceti Sakowin camp at Standing Rock.

Braun's daughter, Morgan Brings Plenty, said that seeing the Keystone XL pipeline blocked was one of her mother's proudest achievements.

The 1,200-mile (1,930-kilometer) pipeline that was to carry crude oil from western Canada to Steel City, Nebraska, was nixed after President Joe Biden canceled the pipeline's border crossing permit last year.

"She had this thing called 'General Joye,' which when she gets into a zone, she's unstoppable and she'll kind of be bossy and making sure things get done in a certain timeframe, so everything can run smoothly," Brings Plenty said.

Indigenous Environmental Network's program director, Kandi White, said in a news release that Braun was the type of person who would "give her last meal or pair of moccasins to those in need."

"Her advice and counsel was sought by many, she could always be counted on to speak the truth and she pulled no punches. For this, and so much more, she was respected by colleagues and adversaries

alike," White said.

Paul Swain, former bishop of Sioux Falls Diocese, dies at 79

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Bishop Emeritus Paul Swain, who gained a reputation as a humble, prayerful leader when he was oversaw the Diocese of Sioux Falls for 14 years, has died.

Swain died Saturday at Avera Dougherty Hospice, according to an obituary from Miller Funeral Home. He was 79. The diocese announced his death Sunday on Facebook.

Swain became bishop in 2006, and before that he was a priest in Madison, Wisconsin, the Argus Leader reported. As bishop, he oversaw the closing or consolidation of several smaller parishes, a process that the Rev. Charles Cimpl said went smoothly.

"Everybody likes to have the church in their hometown, and he was very sensitive to that. But also sensitive to the fact that we had to use our power to the best of our abilities," Cimpl said.

Swain also addressed the child sex abuse allegations that have plagued the Catholic church. In March 2019, the diocese released the names of 11 priests with substantiated claims of abuse against them dating from 1958 to 1992. Swain encouraged other victims to come forward.

"It's important for victims to feel that they've been listened to, and to feel that they have credibility," Swain said, adding that he wanted to support them "and hopefully some healing can come as a result."

Students sent home, police on patrol as China curbs protests

By JOE McDONALD, DAKE KANG, and HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese universities sent students home and police fanned out in Beijing and Shanghai to prevent more protests Tuesday after crowds angered by severe anti-virus restrictions called for leader Xi Jinping to resign in the biggest show of public dissent in decades.

Authorities have eased some controls after demonstrations in at least eight mainland cities and Hong Kong — but showed no sign of backing off their larger "zero-COVID" strategy that has confined millions of people to their homes for months at a time. Security forces have detained an unknown number of people and stepped up surveillance.

With police out in force, there was no word of protests Tuesday in Beijing, Shanghai or other major mainland cities that saw crowds rally over the weekend. Those widespread demonstrations were unprecedented since the army crushed the 1989 student-led pro-democracy movement centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

A far smaller group did gather at a university in Hong Kong on Tuesday to protest virus restrictions.

Meanwhile, Beijing's Tsinghua University, where students rallied over the weekend, and other schools in the capital and the southern province of Guangdong said they were protecting students from COVID-19 by sending them home.

But dispersing them to far-flung hometowns also reduces the likelihood of more demonstrations. Chinese leaders are especially wary of universities, which have been hotbeds of activism including the Tiananmen protests.

On Sunday, Tsinghua students were told they could go home early for the semester and that the school would arrange buses to take them to the train station or airport.

Nine student dorms at Tsinghua were closed Monday after some students positive for COVID-19, according to one who noted the closure would make it hard for crowds to gather. The student gave only his surname, Chen, for fear of retribution from authorities.

Beijing Forestry University also said it would arrange for students to return home. It said its faculty and students all tested negative for the virus.

Universities said classes and final exams would be conducted online.

Authorities hope to "defuse the situation" by clearing out campuses, said Dali Yang, an expert on Chinese politics at the University of Chicago.

Depending on how tough a position the government takes, protests could continue on a "rotational"

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basis, with new groups taking turns, he said.

But many people are nervous after police detained some protesters and warned them against demonstrating again.

In Shanghai, police stopped pedestrians and checked their phones Monday night, according to a witness, possibly looking for apps such as Twitter that are banned in China or images of protests. The witness, who insisted on anonymity for fear of arrest, said he was on his way to a protest but found no crowd there when he arrived.

Images viewed by The Associated Press of photos from a weekend protest showed police shoving the people into their cars. Some people were also swept up in police raids after demonstrations ended.

One such person, who lived near the site of a protest in Shanghai, was detained Sunday and held until Tuesday morning, according to two friends who also insisted on anonymity for fear of retribution from authorities.

In Beijing, police on Monday visited a resident who attended a protest the previous night, according to a friend who refused to be identified for fear of retaliation. He said the police questioned the resident and warned him not to go more protests.

On Tuesday, about a dozen people gathered at the University of Hong Kong, chanting against virus restrictions and holding up sheets of paper with critical slogans. Most were from the mainland, which has a separate legal system from the Chinese territory of Hong Kong, and some spectators joined in their chants.

The protesters held signs that read, "Say no to COVID panic" and "No dictatorship but democracy."

One chanted: "We're not foreign forces but your classmates." That's a reference to the fact that Chinese authorities often accuse foreign powers of fomenting dissent.

China's "zero-COVID" policy has helped keep case numbers lower than those of the United States and other major countries, but global health experts have increasingly criticized the methods as unsustainable.

The policy means that few Chinese have been exposed to the virus. Meanwhile, elderly vaccination rates lag other countries as seniors decline the shots, and China's domestically developed vaccines are also less effective than those used abroad.

Public tolerance of the onerous restrictions has eroded as some people confined at home said they struggled to get access to food and medicine.

The Chinese Communist Party promised last month to reduce disruptions, but a spike in infections has prompted cities to tighten controls.

The protests over the weekend were sparked by anger over the deaths of at least 10 people in a fire in China's far west last week that prompted angry questions online about whether firefighters or victims trying to escape were blocked by anti-virus controls.

Most protesters over the weekend complained about excessive restrictions, but some turned their anger at Xi, China's most powerful leader since at least the 1980s.

In a video that was verified by The Associated Press, a crowd in Shanghai on Saturday chanted, "Xi Jinping! Step down! CCP! Step down!" Such direct criticism of Xi is unprecedented.

Sympathy protests were held overseas, and foreign governments have called on Beijing for restraint.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters that the American position on the protests in China was the same as it was for demonstrations anywhere.

"We support the right of people everywhere to peacefully protest, to make known their views, their concerns, their frustrations," he said while in Bucharest, Romania, on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the British government summoned China's ambassador as a protest over the arrest and beating of a BBC cameraman in Shanghai.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said that "it is incredibly important that we protect media freedom. It is something very, very much at the heart of the U.K.'s belief system."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian disputed the U.K. version of events, saying Edward Lawrence failed to identify himself as a journalist and accusing the BBC of twisting the story.

Asked about criticism of the crackdown, Zhao defended Beijing's anti-virus strategy and said the public's

legal rights were protected by law.

The government is trying to "provide maximum protection to people's lives and health while minimizing the COVID impact on social and economic development," he said.

Wang Dan, a former student leader of the 1989 demonstrations who now lives in exile, said the protest "symbolizes the beginning of a new era in China ... in which Chinese civil society has decided not to be silent and to confront tyranny."

But he warned at a Taipei news conference that authorities were likely to respond with "stronger force to violently suppress protesters." _____

Kang reported from Shanghai and Wu from Taipei, Taiwan. Associated Press writers Kanis Leung in Hong Kong, Jill Lawless in London and Ellen Knickmeyer in Bucharest, Romania, contributed.

NATO commits to future Ukraine membership, drums up aid

By STEPHEN McGRATH, LORNE COOK and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg reaffirmed the military alliance's commitment to Ukraine on Tuesday, saying that the war-torn nation will one day become a member of the world's largest security organization.

Stoltenberg's remarks came as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his NATO counterparts gathered in Romania to drum up urgently needed support for Ukraine aimed at ensuring that Moscow fails to defeat the country as it bombards energy infrastructure.

"NATO's door is open," Stoltenberg said. "Russia does not have a veto" on countries joining, he said in reference to the recent entry of North Macedonia and Montenegro into the security alliance. He said that Russian President Vladimir Putin "will get Finland and Sweden as NATO members" soon. The Nordic neighbors applied for membership in April, concerned that Russia might target them next.

"We stand by that, too, on membership for Ukraine," the former Norwegian prime minister said.

In essence, Stoltenberg repeated a vow made by NATO leaders in Bucharest in 2008 — in the same sprawling Palace of the Parliament where the foreign ministers are meeting this week — that Ukraine, and also Georgia, would join the alliance one day.

Some officials and analysts believe this move — pressed on the NATO allies by former U.S. President George W. Bush — was partly responsible for the war that Russia launched on Ukraine in February. Stoltenberg disagreed.

"President Putin cannot deny sovereign nations to make their own sovereign decisions that are not a threat to Russia," he said. "I think what he's afraid of is democracy and freedom, and that's the main challenge for him."

Even so, Ukraine will not join NATO anytime soon. With the Crimean Peninsula annexed, and Russian troops and pro-Moscow separatists holding parts of the south and east, it's not clear what Ukraine's borders would even look like.

Many of NATO's 30 allies believe the focus now must solely be on defeating Russia, and Stoltenberg stressed that any attempt to move ahead on membership could divide them.

"We are in the midst of a war and therefore we should do nothing that can undermine the unity of allies to provide military, humanitarian, financial support to Ukraine, because we must prevent President Putin from winning," he said.

During the two-day meeting, Blinken will announce substantial U.S. aid for Ukraine's energy grid, U.S. officials said. Ukraine's network has been battered countrywide since early October by targeted Russian strikes, in what U.S. officials call a Russian campaign to weaponize the coming winter cold.

"We are all paying a price for Russia's war against Ukraine. But the price we pay is in money," Stoltenberg said Tuesday, "while the price Ukrainians pay is a price paid in blood."

The meeting in Romania — which shares NATO's longest land border with Ukraine — is likely to see NATO make fresh pledges of nonlethal support to Ukraine: fuel, generators, medical supplies, winter equipment and drone-jamming devices.

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Individual allies are also likely to announce fresh supplies of military equipment for Ukraine — chiefly the air defense systems that Kyiv so desperately seeks to protect its skies — but NATO, as an organization, will not, to avoid being dragged into a wider war with nuclear-armed Russia.

The ministers will hold a working dinner with their Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba, on Tuesday evening.

The foreign ministers of NATO candidates Finland and Sweden are joining the talks. NATO is eager to add the two Nordic nations to the defensive forces lined up against Russia. Turkey and Hungary are the holdouts on ratifying their applications. The 28 other member nations have already done so.

On Wednesday, the ministers will also address ways to step up support for partners who officials have said are facing Russian pressure — Bosnia, Georgia, and Moldova.

EXPLAINER: What hazards are posed by Hawaii's Mauna Loa?

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Lava is shooting 100 feet to 200 feet (30 to 60 meters) into the air as Hawaii's Mauna Loa, the world's largest active volcano, erupts for the first time in nearly 40 years.

For now, lava is not threatening any homes or communities and no evacuation orders have been issued. Lava could eventually reach neighborhoods as it flows downhill though it could take a week or more for molten rock to reach populated areas.

Mauna Loa is spewing sulfur dioxide and other volcanic gases. They form volcanic smog, or vog, when they mix with vapor, oxygen and dust in sunlight. As a result, state health officials are urging people to cut back on outdoor exercise and other activities that cause heavy breathing.

Mauna Loa last erupted in 1984. Its smaller, more active neighbor, Kilauea volcano, has been erupting continuously for more than a year since September 2021.

WHERE IS MAUNA LOA?

Mauna Loa is one of five volcanoes that together make up the Big Island of Hawaii, which is the southernmost island in the Hawaiian archipelago. It's not the tallest (that title goes to Mauna Kea) but it's the largest and makes up about half of the island's land mass.

It sits immediately north of Kilauea volcano, which is well-known for a 2018 eruption that destroyed 700 homes and sent rivers of lava spreading across farms and into the ocean.

Mauna Loa last erupted 38 years ago. The current eruption is its 34th since written history began in 1843.

The Big Island is mostly rural and hosts cattle ranches and coffee farms but it is also home to a few small cities, including the county seat of Hilo, which has a population of 45,000.

It's about 200 miles (320 kilometers) south of Hawaii's most populous island, Oahu, where the state capital, Honolulu, and beach resort Waikiki are both located.

Mauna Loa's volume is estimated to be at least 18,000 square miles (75,000 square kilometers), making it the world's largest volcano when measured from the ocean floor to its summit.

WHERE IS MAUNA LOA ERUPTING FROM?

The eruption began Sunday night at its summit after a series of large earthquakes. It then spread to vents that formed in a rift zone where the mountain is splitting apart and it's easier for magma to emerge.

These vents are on the mountain's northeast side and lava emerging there could head toward Hilo, which is on the east side of the island.

Ken Hon, scientist-in-charge at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, said he doesn't expect additional vents to form on the volcano's southwest rift zone during this eruption. That means communities to the west would be spared lava flows this time.

Mauna Loa also erupted from the northeast in 1984. That time, lava headed toward Hilo but stopped a few miles short of the city.

Historically, each Mauna Loa eruption has lasted a few weeks. Hon expects the current eruption to follow this pattern.

IS MAUNA LOA EXPLODING LIKE MOUNT ST. HELENS?

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Mauna Loa is not exploding like Washington state's Mount St. Helens did in 1980, killing 57 people. That eruption sent ash soaring over 80,000 feet (24,384 meters) and raining down as far as 250 miles (400 kilometers) away.

The magma in Mount St. Helens tends to be stickier and traps more gas, making it much more likely to explode when it rises. It's of a variety called composite volcanoes, which form concave cones.

Mauna Loa's magma tends to be hotter, drier and more fluid. That allows the magma's gas to escape and lava to flow down the side the volcano the way it is starting to do now. Mauna Loa is a shield volcano, named because the long, broad flanks built by repeated lava flows give it the appearance of a warrior's shield.

In 1989, Alaska's Redoubt Volcano, another composite volcano, belched an 8-mile cloud of ash that clogged all four engines of a KLM Royal Dutch Airlines jet. The plane fell 13,000 feet before all engines restarted and the plane landed without injury to the 245 people aboard.

Mauna Loa released some ash this time but on a vastly smaller scale than these examples from composite volcanoes.

WHAT HAZARDS ARE POSED BY MAUNA LOA'S ERUPTION?

-Lava: Molten rock could cover houses, farms or neighborhoods, depending on where it flows. But lava from the northeast rift zone will likely take at least a week to reach populated areas, allowing people time to evacuate if needed.

-Volcanic gas: Mauna Loa is releasing volcanic gases, mostly sulfur dioxide. The gases are present in their highest concentrations in the immediate area around the summit crater or vents. But they also combine with other particles to form vog, which can spread across the Big Island and even waft over to the state's other islands.

Vog can give healthy people burning eyes, headaches and sore throats. It can send those with asthma or other respiratory problems to the hospital.

-Glass particles: When hot lava erupts from a fissure and rapidly cools, it forms glass particles named "Pele's hair" and "Pele's tears" after the Hawaiian goddess of volcanoes.

The particles tend not to travel far from volcanic vents — maybe only a few hundred yards or a mile — and won't threaten many people, said Aaron Pietruszka, an associate specialist at the University of Hawaii's Department of Earth Sciences.

"It just literally looks like hair strands. And that's where the fluid lava is stretched by the wind to make long, thin strands," said Pietruszka.

The glass bits — as short as a few millimeters or as long as a few inches — can be sharp.

"You wouldn't want to be digging your hands in it because you could get a cut," Pietruszka said.

An N95 or KF94 mask would protect against these glass particles but not against volcanic gas, said Dr. Libby Char, the director of the state Department of Health.

"Pele's hair" specimens from Kilauea volcano's eruption are visible at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

HOW SIGNIFICANT ARE MAUNA LOA'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS?

Mauna Loa released about 15,000 tons of carbon dioxide per day during its 1984 eruption, according to USGS data.

That's equivalent to the annual emissions from 2,400 sport utility vehicles.

Scientists say all of Earth's volcanoes combined emit less than one percent of the carbon dioxide that humans produce each year.

Uneasy calm grips Ukraine as West prepares winter aid

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — An uneasy calm hung over Kyiv on Tuesday as residents of the Ukrainian capital did what they could to prepare for anticipated Russian missile attacks aiming to take out more energy infrastructure as winter sets in.

To ease that pain, NATO allies were making plans to boost provisions of anything from blankets to gen-

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erators to ensure the 43 million Ukrainians can maintain their resolve in the 10th month of fighting against Russia's invasion.

Ukraine's first lady implored the West to show the same kind of steadfastness that Ukrainians had shown against Russian President Vladimir Putin's military campaign.

"Ukrainians are very tired of this war, but we have no choice in the matter," said Olena Zelenska, the wife of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in a BBC interview during a visit to Britain.

"We do hope that the approaching season of Christmas doesn't make you forget about our tragedy and get used to our suffering," she said.

A two-day meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Bucharest, Romania, was likely to see the 30-nation alliance make fresh pledges of nonlethal support to Ukraine: fuel, generators, medical supplies and winter equipment, on top of new military support. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was to announce substantial U.S. aid for Ukraine's energy grid, U.S. officials said

Ukraine's grid has been battered countrywide since early October by targeted Russian strikes, in what Western officials call a Russian campaign to weaponize the coming winter cold.

Ukrainians are putting up defenses — both for troops and for civilians. The government has rolled out hundreds of help stations, christened Points of Invincibility, where residents facing outages of power, heating and water can warm up, charge their phones, enjoy snacks and hot drinks, and even be entertained.

"I had no electricity for two days. Now there's only some electricity, and no gas," said Vanda Bronyslavavina, who took a breather inside one such help center in Kyiv's Obolon neighborhood.

The 71-year-old lamented the uncertainty about whether Russia will simply resume its strikes after infrastructure gets fixed, in a frustrating cycle of destruction and repair.

It underscored how the war continues to cast a pall over every aspect of life, even if civilian casualties are relatively low at the moment.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, the presidential office's deputy head, said Russian forces overnight fired on seven regions in Ukraine's south and east, employing missiles, drones and heavy artillery. At least one civilian was killed and two wounded.

Tymoshenko said that as of Tuesday, power had been restored to 24% of residents in the hard-hit southern city of Kherson.

On the battlefields in the eastern Luhansk region, the regional governor said Ukrainian forces were continuing a slow advance, pushing toward Russian defense lines set up between two key cities. Serhiy Haidai acknowledged in televised remarks, though, that the onset of winter was compounding a "difficult" battlefield situation.

The prospect of any peace remained remote. The Kremlin reaffirmed Tuesday that negotiations could only be possible if Ukraine meets Russian demands. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that "it's impossible to hold any talks now because the Ukrainian side strongly rejects them."

He noted that "political will and readiness to discuss the Russian demands" are needed to conduct negotiations.

Russia has demanded that Ukraine recognize Crimea as part of Russia and acknowledge other Russian gains. It also has repeated its earlier demands for "demilitarization" and "denazification," albeit with less vigor than in the past.

Analysis: As Qatar World Cup unfolds, planet keeps spinning

By TAMER FAKAHANY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Soccer — or football, to most of the global billions watching the World Cup this month — is not human society itself, with all its thorny issues. But at times, the game is a reflection of the entire planet — of nations, their disputes, their aspirations and those of a multitude of minority communities.

In early November, just weeks before the most heavily scrutinized World Cup in the tournament's history kicked off in Qatar, top FIFA officials sent a letter urging teams to "let football take center stage."

FIFA president Gianni Infantino followed this up on the eve of the opening match with a one-hour diatribe

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against all who had criticized the host nation's human rights record, the conditions that led to thousands of migrant workers dying building the nation's glittering new stadiums and its stance on LGBTQ issues.

Fans from around the world have a different idea of what that "center stage" should show. Many, but not all, Iranians attending matches in Qatar have wanted to express their support for protesters at home. And they've wanted the team to do the same.

Other political issues have been erupting fast and furious on a near-daily basis. And outside the World Cup bubble, the world itself has kept turning in some of its most fractious events, both unsurprising and surprising: Russia's war in Ukraine, mass shootings in the United States and the sudden eruption of protests in China.

Of the sporting spirit, George Orwell wrote: "I am always amazed when I hear people saying that sport creates goodwill between the nations, and that if only the common peoples of the world could meet one another at football or cricket, they would have no inclination to meet on the battlefield."

His point stands. Russia was banned from this World Cup after hosting the previous one in 2018, mirroring the isolation the country and its leaders face for the Ukraine invasion. Ukraine itself fell at the last hurdle for qualification, with fans at home likely more concerned about bombardment and survival amid electricity and water shortages than watching matches in Qatar.

Decades of enmity between the United States and Iran have been seeping into the buildup before the two nations play a critical World Cup match Tuesday that could see one of the countries progress to the knockout stages. The U.S. Soccer Federation briefly displayed Iran's national flag on social media without the emblem of the Islamic Republic, saying the move supported protesters inside Iran. The Tehran government reacted by accusing America of removing the name of God from its national flag.

The century-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including Israel's occupation of lands Palestinians want for a future state, has also featured in Qatar, though neither national team is competing. The Palestinian flag and pro-Palestinian fans have been prominent, while Israeli media and fans have been less welcome in an Arab nation that has not normalized relations with Israel.

As Morocco completed a famous victory over the highly-ranked stars of Belgium Sunday, unrest broke out in Belgian cities and also in the Netherlands, where the immigrant North African community has long been marginalized. "Those are not fans; they are rioters. Moroccan fans are there to celebrate," the mayor of Brussels said.

LGBTQ rights have been at the fore in Qatar as well, with the country under the microscope for its human rights record and laws criminalizing homosexuality.

Germany's players covered their mouths for the team photo before their opening match to protest against FIFA following the governing body's clampdown on the "One Love" armband. Sporting rainbow colors, a symbol of LGBTQ rights, has been a key contentious issue. Some European officials have brought those colors to the stands.

Qatari soccer fans responded to Germany's protest by holding pictures of former Germany playmaker Mesut Özil while covering their mouths. This referenced Ozil, a German-born descendant of Turkish immigrants, quitting the national team after becoming a target of racist abuse and a scapegoat for Germany's early World Cup exit in 2018. "I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose," Özil said at the time.

Keeping the world out of sport, as this tournament and many World Cups and Olympics before have shown, is well nigh impossible. This is especially true in a hyperconnected world, with each word, each gesture, each celebration or outpouring of dismay magnified for a global audience.

Football may indeed claim center stage when these matches are watched and nations' nervous systems go through the wringer. But day-to-day complex issues are never far from the surface, always ready to burst through and dominate. The rest of the world, it turns out, doesn't end where the soccer pitch begins.

Iran-US World Cup clash rife with political tension

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

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DOHA, Qatar (AP) — The last World Cup clash between the United States and Iran 24 years ago is considered one of the most politically charged matches in soccer history.

This time, the political overtones are just as strong and relations perhaps even more fraught as the U.S. and Iran face off once again on Tuesday in Qatar.

Iran's nationwide protests, its expanding nuclear program and regional and international attacks linked back to Tehran have pushed the match beyond the stadium and into geopolitics.

No matter the outcome, tensions are likely only to worsen in the coming months.

When relations soured between the U.S. and Iran depends on who you ask. Iranians point to the 1953 CIA-backed coup that cemented Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's power. Americans remember the 1979 U.S. Embassy takeover and 444-day hostage crisis during the Iranian Revolution.

In soccer, however, the timeline is much simpler as this will be only the second time Iran and the U.S. have played each other in the World Cup.

The last time was at the 1998 tournament in France — a totally different time in the Islamic Republic. Iran won 2-1 in Lyon, a low point for the U.S. men's team as Iranians celebrated in Tehran.

At the time, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei praised the Iranian team, saying "the strong and arrogant opponent felt the bitter taste of defeat."

But off the pitch, Iran's then-president, Mohammad Khatami, sought to improve ties to the West and the wider world. Inside Iran, Khatami pushed so-called "reformist" policies, seeking to liberalize aspects of its theocracy while maintaining its structure with a supreme leader at the top.

U.S. President Bill Clinton and his administration hoped Khatami's election could be part of a thaw.

The two teams posed for a joint photograph, and the Iranian players handed white flowers to their American opponents. The U.S. gave the Iranians U.S. Soccer Federation pennants. They even exchanged jerseys, though the Iranians didn't put them on. They later played a friendly in Pasadena, California, as well.

Fast-forward 24 years later, and relations are perhaps more tense than they've ever been.

Iran is now governed entirely by hard-liners after the election of President Ebrahim Raisi, a protege of Khamenei, who took part in the 1988 mass execution of thousands of political prisoners at the end of the Iran-Iraq war.

Following the collapse of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, sparked by President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the accord, Tehran is now enriching uranium to 60% purity — a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels. Non-proliferation experts warn the Islamic Republic already has enough uranium to build at least one nuclear bomb.

A shadow war of drone strikes, targeted killings and sabotage has been shaking the wider Middle East for years amid the deal's collapse. Meanwhile, Russia pounds civilian areas and power infrastructure in Ukraine with Iranian-made drones.

For two months, Iran has been convulsed by the mass protests that followed the Sept. 16 death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who had been earlier detained by the country's morality police. The protests have seen at least 451 people killed since they started, as well as over 18,000 arrested, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, an advocacy group following the demonstrations.

At the World Cup in Qatar, Iran's 2-0 win against Wales provided a brief moment of good news for hard-liners. After the match, riot police in Tehran waved Iranian flags in the street, something that angered demonstrators. Khamenei himself acknowledged the win "stirred joy in the country."

However, the supreme leader warned that "when the World Cup is taking place, all eyes are on it. The opponent typically takes advantage of this lax moment to act."

As the demonstrations intensified, Iran has alleged without providing evidence that its enemies abroad, including the U.S., are fomenting the unrest. At a World Cup where organizers hoped to divorce politics from the pitch, those tensions have bled out around the stadiums with pro- and anti-government demonstrators shouting at each other.

Ahead of Tuesday's match at Al Thumama Stadium, Iran has released a propaganda video with young children singing, including girls in white hijabs, in front of a small field. Waving flags and set against a

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blasting synthesizer beat, the children sing: "We back you on the bleachers, all with one voice Iran, Iran."

"We are waiting for a goal, our heart second by second is beating for our Iran," they add.

Such a win could prove to be a further boost to hard-liners. Already, they've reacted angrily to a protest by the U.S. Soccer Federation that saw them briefly erase the emblem of the Islamic Republic from Iran's flag in social media posts.

It's unclear whether any Iranian or U.S. government officials will be on hand for the match. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken already attended the U.S. match against Wales at the start of the tournament.

But opponents of Iran's government are on hand in Qatar with their own message. Among them is former U.S. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus, who flew in Monday afternoon for the Iran match. Ortagus served in the Trump administration and was one of the faces of its so-called "maximum pressure" campaign.

"It's one of those pivotal moments when geopolitics and sports collides," Ortagus told The Associated Press. "You're seeing the Iran team do what they can to stand up for the protesters and the people peacefully demonstrating."

Qatar loses on World Cup field, makes gains on global stage

By JENNA FRYER AP National Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — The gilded stadiums are among the most spectacular in the world. The seafront is sparkling and the skyscrapers are draped with larger-than-life banners featuring the stars of the World Cup.

Fans crowd around big screens throughout the city to watch soccer along the waterfront in Doha, or at the upscale Pearl Marina. Streets are canopied by the national flags of the 32 teams playing in this year's World Cup, and restaurants are packed. So is the fan zone, where Colombian singer Maluma performed on the eve of the opening game.

The only thing missing is a winning team.

Qatar became the first host nation in World Cup history to lose the opening match, and then only the second host to be eliminated from the group stage. South Africa in 2010 was the first to be eliminated in group stage but still had a chance to advance in its third and final group match.

Not Qatar. This time the host was eliminated after just two games — a 2-0 loss to Ecuador in the World Cup opener, then a 3-1 loss to Senegal — to make Tuesday's match against the Netherlands meaningless for the Qataris.

A total flop?

Qatar coach Felix Sanchez says absolutely not.

"I think these players have achieved a great deal over the last years. Now we need to be aware that to compete at this level, we are still lagging behind," Sanchez said the day before Qatar's final match. "I think if we work at this on a daily basis, gradually we will be closer to this level.

"I don't feel disappointed or embarrassed," Sanchez continued. "The World Cup is the most demanding competition, and only a few can be here. We are still slightly behind. The country will continue working so that the next time Qatar comes to a World Cup — hopefully soon — we'll be able to compete better than we did this time."

Qatar spent at least \$200 billion on the infrastructure required to host the global soccer tournament. There's no known figure on what it spent to build an actual team, an endeavor in which Qatar had 12 years to scout prospects, develop talent, and assemble a squad capable of competing against the best in the world.

The final 26 selected indeed includes 16 Qatar-born players. But the first-ever goal for Qatar at the World Cup was scored by Mohammed Muntari, who was born in Ghana, and the roster includes players born in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, France, Iraq and Sudan.

In preparation for the World Cup, Qatar wooed other confederations to play against its team in an effort to improve. The team received guest entries into the South American and CONCACAF championships, and played friendlies that were loosely attached to qualifying for the 2020 European Championship. It was all

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ted to Qatar Airways sponsorship and beIN TV rights.

It was not without controversy: Following a 4-0 loss to Qatar in the 2019 Asian Cup semifinals, the United Arab Emirates protested the eligibility of Sudanese-born Almoez Ali and Iraqi-born Bassam Al-Rawi. The case was dismissed when Qatar presented evidence claiming Ali's mother was born in the country.

Qatar won that tournament for the first time in its history, beating regional powerhouse Japan in the final. "To go back 12 years, the vast majority of the Qatari national team were expatriates. Today the vast majority are Qataris," said Dr. James Dorsey, an adjunct senior fellow at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

"But it's a small country. It's a small pool they can draw from. They are by definition disadvantaged by countries that are much bigger," he continued. "For those who look at this in purely sporting terms, yes, it is important that they are the first to lose an opening match and to crash out in the group stage. I think in a broader perspective, that's not going to make a big difference to the government."

Qatar, which did not play its first official match until 1970 and counts only 300,000 citizens among the population of 2.9 million, did not land the World Cup to win the World Cup.

The tournament instead was meant to elevate the profile of this energy-rich nation like no other event before it.

Qatar's hope was that the tournament improves its relationship with neighboring Saudi Arabia, which only two years earlier had been part of a four-nation boycott of the country. And Qatar cemented its ties with the West as a hedge in case of further political trouble ahead in the volatile Middle East.

"We knew from the start that this was a long shot for Qatar, given their lack of history and given where they were," said Alexi Lalas, a member of the United States' 1994 team and now a Fox Sports analyst.

"I think they also look at this as, yeah, it would be nice, but this is still that advertisement to the world," Lalas added. "Whether their team is in it or not, this is about showing the country and obviously they still have many more weeks here to kind of do that."

Qatar will host the Asian Cup soccer tournament in 2023, the multi-sport Asian Games in 2030 and is eyeing a bid on the 2036 Olympics. The seven new stadiums — controversially constructed by foreign laborers — will mostly be resized after the tournament and Lusail Stadium, where 88,966 spectators watched Argentina beat Mexico last weekend in the largest crowd at a World Cup match in 28 years, will be overhauled into a multi-use facility.

And despite the early World Cup exit, Qatar's soccer team is expected to continue to develop and grow, and perhaps even someday rival Middle East powerhouse teams including Iran and Saudi Arabia, which both won group-stage matches at this year's World Cup.

"Of course as a player, we would have wanted the Qatari fans to be proud of us. It wasn't our fate to win. But thank God we were at least able to score in the World Cup," Ali said. "This was our first participation in the World Cup. We hope it will not be the last."

Qatar received an automatic berth as host to play in this year's World Cup, but will shift its focus toward qualifying for future tournaments through its on-field play. The next World Cup in North America will be expanded from 32 to 48 teams and Asia will get eight guaranteed spots instead of four, making it easier to qualify for the tournament.

Mohammed Abdulrahim, a Qatari who said he was part of the organizing committee for the tournament's opening ceremony, thought expectations were too big for the young national team.

"That's why they lost their chance, don't forget it is their first World Cup and in their country. It was too much pressure... still we are proud," said Abdulrahim, adding Qataris are enjoying the chance to showcase the country.

"We have a message for all the people: We are people who like peace, we like to make friendship. World Cup for us and the whole Arab world is a chance to see our face," he said. "I think you'll see the country how safe it is, that's a point, that's a goal. Still we have positive things happening, not negative things happening."

Dorsey said the verdict is out on whether this tournament met all of Qatar's goals, but even with the

on-field disappointment, the country has made strides.

"I don't know that the World Cup is a zero-sum game. This is a major accomplishment, but it's not the end of the game," Dorsey said. "The Qatar World Cup will have a legacy of social change: workers conditions have improved in Qatar. Whether you think they're good or bad, or enough was done, is a different question. But it's the only Gulf state with a minimum wage. Could it have been higher? Absolutely.

"The fact of the matter is, there's been a number of other of those things, so there has been social change which probably would not have come about without the World Cup," Dorsey continued. "I think ultimately the soccer team will still perform. Look at China. Football is extremely important to (China leader Xi Jinping) and he's poured a fortune into it, and they're nowhere. In that sense, Qatar is certainly further than the Chinese are."

Ukraine's 'Invincibility' centers offer refuge, resilience

By VASILISA STEPANENKO and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

BUCHA, Ukraine (AP) — Retired Ukrainian construction worker Borys Markovnikov is on the move again: This time, just a few steps from his home in the town of Bucha, northwest of Kyiv, to seek shelter and warmth at a "Point of Invincibility" — a government-built help station that serves food, drinks, warmth and ultimately, resilience, in the face of Russia's military onslaught.

In recent weeks, Ukraine has rolled out hundreds of such help stations, christened with a name of defiance as places where residents facing outages of power, heating and water can warm up, charge their phones, enjoy snacks and hot drinks, and even be entertained.

Markovnikov, 78, has had to move a few times. He recalled how he was driven from his home in the eastern Donbas region after Russian-backed separatists seized territory there in 2014. Earlier this year, he fled his adopted town of Bucha — now infamous for massacres during a brief occupation by Russian forces — on foot, across the front line, to Kyiv. Later, he was able to return home, but home is not always an easy place to live.

"My neighbors told me there was a tent with electricity and a TV, and I came to have a look," said Markovnikov, ogling Monday's soccer World Cup match between Ghana and South Korea, adding he had no power at home. "We still believe. Without belief, you can't survive."

Ukraine's State Emergencies Service said Friday nearly 1,000 such centers have been erected across the country since the program was first launched on Nov. 18. Its website features a handy online map to show beleaguered citizens where they are located.

As of Friday, over 67,000 people had gotten help in them — and more could pour in if, as many experts and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have warned, more Russian strikes lie ahead.

Such centers — often consisting of small, insulated tents no larger than a classroom — were rolled out just in time as a string of massive airstrikes by Russian forces deprived many Ukrainians of basics of life at home.

The centers are in essence a stopgap while utility crews scramble to fix cut power lines and put water mains back into operation, so basic services can be restored to homes and businesses.

Power company DTEK said controlled outages continued Monday in Kyiv as a necessary step to balance the hobbled power system and avoid other breakdowns, while ensuring electricity to hospitals and heat-pumping stations.

Only 42 percent of power was available to household customers in the city, and "we do our best to provide light to each customer for 2 to 3 hours twice a day," the company said.

Outside the "Point of Invincibility" on an esplanade in front of a sports center in Bucha, teens had a snowball fight and a guitarist strummed his instrument outside an inflatable tent.

Inside, kids crouched over games of Roblox on mobile phones as young adults tapped away at laptops and elderly women sat quietly to while away the time. A young girl clutched her dog as staffers poured cups of hot tea and sweetened it with honey.

The "Points of Invincibility" offer a public-service — and free — alternative to the many coffee shops

and restaurants that have become hubs for internet access and warmth of Ukrainians seeking refuge from the cold and dark in their own homes.

"When the electricity went out, I had to look for a place with a connection," said Bucha resident Mykola Pestikov, 26, crouched over his computer. "These can be cafes that take energy from other places, or I look for a 'point' — like now."

Yuri Mikhailovskiy, a firefighter who helps run the site, showed a ledger that indicated more than 1,000 people had come through the center since it was first put up 10 days ago in Bucha, where electricity is spotty or nonexistent in most homes.

A new delivery of cookies was expected in the next few days.

Torture allegations mount in aftermath of Kherson occupation

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP) — When a dozen Russian soldiers stormed into Dmytro Bilyi's home in August, the 24-year-old police officer said they gave him a chilling choice: Hand in his pistol or his mother and brother would disappear.

Bilyi turned his gun over to the soldiers, who carried machine guns and had their faces concealed. But it didn't matter. They dragged him from his house in Ukraine's southern village of Chornobaivka to a prison in the nearby regional capital of Kherson, where he said he was locked in a cell and tortured for days, his genitals and ears shocked with electricity.

"It was like hell all over my body," Bilyi recalled. "It burns so bad it's like the blood is boiling ... I just wanted it to stop," he said.

More than two weeks after Russians retreated from the city, accounts such as his are helping to uncover sites where torture allegedly took place in Kherson, which Kremlin forces occupied for eight months. Five such rooms have been found in the city, along with at least four more in the wider Kherson region, where people allege that they were confined, beaten, shocked, interrogated and threatened with death, police said.

Human rights experts warn that the accusations made so far are likely only the beginning.

"For months we've received information about torture and other kind of persecution of civilians," said Oleksandra Matviichuk, head of the Center for Civil Liberties, a local rights group. "I am afraid that horrible findings in Kherson still lie ahead."

The Associated Press spoke with five people who allege that they were tortured or arbitrarily detained by Russians in Kherson or knew of others who disappeared and endured abuse. Sometimes, they said, the Russians rounded up whoever they saw — priests, soldiers, teachers or doctors — with no specific reason. In other cases, Russians were allegedly tipped off by sympathizers who provided names of people believed to be helping the Ukrainian military.

Once detained, the people said they were locked in crowded cells, fed meager portions of watery soup and bread and made to learn the Russian anthem while listening to screams from prisoners being tortured across the hall. Detainees were allegedly forced to give information about relatives or acquaintances with ties to the Ukrainian army, including names and locations disclosed in handwritten notes.

As a police officer with a father in the military, Bilyi remained under the radar for several months of Russia's occupation, until he said someone likely tipped them off. He spent four days in a cell with others, being pulled out for questioning and electric shocks.

Investigators accused him of having a Kalashnikov rifle — not just a pistol — and pressured him to share his father's whereabouts. Then they shocked him for half an hour a day for two days before releasing him, he said.

Ukrainian national police allege that more than 460 war crimes have been committed by Russian soldiers in recently occupied areas of Kherson. The torture in the city occurred in two police stations, one police-run detention center, a prison and a private medical facility, where rubber batons, baseball bats and a machine used for applying electrical shocks were found, said Andrii Kovanyi a press officer for the police in Kherson.

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When Igor was detained in September from the call center where he worked, he was brought into a room, ordered to remove his shirt and to place his palms on the metal door to increase the flow of electricity and the pain of being shocked with a stun gun, he said.

The Russian soldier said, "Are you ready? Now you're going to scream like a bitch ... You will not get out of here, and we will kill you," said Igor, who spoke on the condition that only his first name be used to protect his identity.

The 22-year-old, accused of providing Ukrainians with Russian military positions, said he was shocked by the gun along his back for 2 1/2 hours and then forced to stay awake in a chair all night.

Pictures on his phone, seen by the AP, show clusters of red circular marks lining the length of his back. He was freed after two days but not before writing a letter providing details about a relative of his uncle's who the Russians wanted information on.

Documenting the crimes in Kherson will be challenging because no other city this large has been occupied by Russia for so long, said Brian Castner senior crisis adviser at Amnesty International.

"Evidence must be collected and preserved to maintain that chain of custody, so that when there is international justice, the evidence is lock-tight and perpetrators can be held to account," he said.

Police in Kherson are investigating and collecting testimony. But more and more people are arriving daily, and the justice system is overwhelmed, local rights experts said.

In March, Dmytro Plotnikov's friend was seized by Russians when he went to Kherson's central square to run errands shortly after the occupation began. Plotnikov knows of three other people who were captured and released by Russians, one of whom still had visible bruises on his body more than a month after being freed, he said.

But since the Russians left Kherson, what concerns him most are the Ukrainians who collaborated with them and remained.

In May, Plotnikov's neighbor posted a photo of his sister and her address on a Russian chat group, he said. His sister is outspokenly pro-Ukrainian, and the neighbor accused her of spreading hate about Russian people, he said. Had the Russians seen it, they might have come to her house and arrested the family, he said.

Ukrainian police have spoken to the woman, but she remains in the community, he said.

"They should be punished," Plotnikov said. "I am ashamed that such people are around ... why in the 21st century (can) you can be tortured for your pro-Ukrainian position, for your love of the Ukrainian language and culture? I do not understand it."

'Everything Everywhere All at Once' wins at Gotham Awards

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Everything Everywhere All at Once" won best feature at the 32nd Gotham Awards on Monday, taking one of the first major prizes of Hollywood's awards season and boosting the Oscar hopes of the anarchic indie hit of the year.

Also taking an award for his work on the film was Ke Huy Quan, the "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" child star who made a lauded comeback in "Everything Everywhere All at Once" and won for best supporting actor.

"This time last year, all I was hoping for was a job," said an emotional Quan who had nearly given up acting before landing his role in the film. "For the first time in a very long time, I was given a second chance."

The Gotham Awards, held annually at Cipriani Wall Street, serve as a downtown celebration of independent film and an unofficial kickoff of the long marathon of ceremonies, cocktail parties and campaigning that lead up to the Academy Awards in March. Presented by the Gotham Film & Media Institute, the Gothams last year heaped awards on Maggie Gyllenhaal's "The Lost Daughter" while also, with an award for Troy Kotsur, starting "CODA" on its way to best picture.

But aside from any possible influence, the Gothams are also just a star-studded party that gets the industry back into the awards-season swing. Last year's ceremony was the first fully in-person award show

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for many after a largely virtual 2020-2021 pandemic-marred season. This year, the Gothams were held amid mounting concern over the tepid box-office results for many of the top awards contenders. Though moviegoing has recovered much of the ground it lost during the pandemic, adult audiences have inconsistently materialized in theaters this fall.

But in feting "Everything Everywhere All at Once," the metaverse-skipping action adventure directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheiner, the filmmaking duo known as "the Daniels," the Gothams selected an unlikely runaway success. Released in March, "Everything Everywhere All at Once" made more than \$100 million worldwide against a \$14 million budget, making it A24's highest grossing film. The warm affection for the absurdist film now has it poised to potentially play underdog at the Oscars. The film also recently led nominations to the Film Independent Spirit Awards.

"This movie has been celebrated by the Asian American community, by the immigrant community, by people with weird brains, people who are overwhelmed or sad," said Scheiner accepting the award with his filmmaking partner. "This award is for you guys. Your stories matter. You matter."

While the Gothams are known for exalting the hardscrabble pursuit of lower budget filmmaking, one of its many tribute awards went to another box-office force in Adam Sandler. The 56-year-old actor-comedian, who this year starred in the well-received Netflix basketball drama-comedy "Hustle," provided the night's most raucous speech, after an introduction by "Uncut Gems" filmmakers Josh and Benny Safdie.

Sandler, explaining that he had been too busy to prepare remarks, claimed his speech was written by his two daughters. His career, as he read, was launched with two guiding principles: "People in prison need movies, too," and: "TBS needs content."

The Gotham award, Sandler read, "means a lot to him seeing as most of the awards on his trophy shelf are shaped like popcorn buckets, blimps or fake mini Oscars that say Father of the Year which he sadly purchased himself while wondering in a self-pitying fog through the head shops of Time's Square."

The Gothams give gender neutral acting awards, which meant that some awards favorites this year that wouldn't normally be head-to-head, like Brendan Fraser ("The Whale") and Cate Blanchett ("Tár"), were up against each other. Todd Fields' "Tár," starring Blanchett as a renowned conductor, came into the Gothams with a leading five nominations and went home with an award for Fields' screenplay.

But "Till" star Danielle Deadwyler ultimately prevailed in the crowded lead acting category. Deadwyler, who plays Mamie Till-Bradley in the piercing drama, wasn't able to attend the ceremony. "Till" director Chinonye Chukwu accepted on her behalf.

Deadwyler's win should add momentum to her Oscar chances, as should the award for Quan, who is best known as the child star of "The Goonies" and "Temple of Doom."

The breakthrough director award went to Charlotte Wells for "Aftersun," the Scottish filmmaker's tender, devastating debut about a father (Paul Mescal) and daughter (Frankie Corio) on vacation. "Aftersun" also earned a shoutout from Daniel Kwan who said "Aftersun" should have won best feature, not "Everything Everywhere All at Once."

Steven Spielberg had been scheduled to introduce a tribute award for Michelle Williams, star of Spielberg's "The Fabelmans." Filling in was Williams' co-star Paul Dano, who said Spielberg tested positive for COVID-19. Williams spent much of her speech reflecting on how instrumental "Dawson's Creek" co-star Mary Beth Peil was to her as a young actor. Williams was also visibly stunned by a standing ovation.

"What is happening?" said a wide-eyed Williams. "I shouldn't even be out of the house. I just had a baby."

Other winners included Audrey Diwan's "Happening" for best international feature. The French abortion drama, set in 1963 France, took on added relevance after the repeal in the United States of Roe v. Wade. "All That Breathes," Shaunak Sen's film about a New Dehli bird hospital, took best documentary.

Tribute honorees also included Focus Features' Peter Kujawski and Jason Cassidy, and a thunderous tribute to the late Sidney Poitier by Jonathan Majors, who announced a new initiative in Poitier's name to help young filmmakers. "Bravo, Mr. Poitier," Majors said. "We got your back."

Gina Prince-Bythewood, "The Woman King" filmmaker, was also honored after being introduced by Katheryn Bigelow. Prince-Bythewood said the "Hurt Locker" filmmaker inspired her to believe she could

be a director. "Kathryn was my possible," said Prince-Bythewood.

"When you see the trailer to 'The Woman King,' do you see incredible women or do you see other? Do you see incredible women to be inspired by or do you see other?" said Prince-Bythewood. "I want you to see yourself in my characters the same way I see myself in yours."

China lockdown protests pause as police flood city streets

By KANIS LEUNG and ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — With police out in force, there was no word of additional protests against strict government anti-pandemic measures Tuesday in Beijing, as temperatures fell well below freezing. Shanghai, Nanjing and other cities where online calls to gather had been issued were also reportedly quiet.

Rallies against China's unusually strict anti-virus measures spread to several cities over the weekend in the biggest show of opposition to the ruling Communist Party in decades. Authorities eased some regulations, apparently to try to quell public anger, but the government showed no sign of backing down on its larger coronavirus strategy, and analysts expect authorities to quickly silence the dissent.

Police were checking making random checks on phones at the People's Square subway station in Shanghai Monday evening, an eyewitness said. The person declined to give his name out of fear of retribution, as he was en route to a planned protest near the station, which he did not find.

In Hong Kong Monday, about 50 students from mainland China sang at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and some lit candles in a show of support for those in mainland cities who demonstrated against restrictions that have confined millions to their homes. Hiding their faces to avoid official retaliation, the students chanted, "No PCR tests but freedom!" and "Oppose dictatorship, don't be slaves!"

The gathering and a similar one elsewhere in Hong Kong were the biggest protests there in more than a year under rules imposed to crush a pro-democracy movement in the territory, which is Chinese but has a separate legal system from the mainland.

"I've wanted to speak up for a long time, but I did not get the chance to," said James Cai, a 29-year-old from Shanghai who attended a Hong Kong protest and held up a piece of white paper, a symbol of defiance against the ruling party's pervasive censorship. "If people in the mainland can't tolerate it anymore, then I cannot as well."

It wasn't clear how many people have been detained since the protests began in the mainland Friday, sparked by anger over the deaths of 10 people in a fire in the northwestern city of Urumqi. That prompted angry questions online about whether firefighters or victims trying to escape were blocked by locked doors or other anti-virus controls. Authorities denied that, but the incident became a target for public frustration about the controls.

Without mentioning the protests, the criticism of Xi or the fire, some local authorities eased restrictions Monday.

The city government of Beijing announced it would no longer set up gates to block access to apartment compounds where infections are found.

"Passages must remain clear for medical transportation, emergency escapes and rescues," said Wang Daguang, a city official in charge of epidemic control, according to the official China News Service.

Guangzhou, a manufacturing and trade center that is the biggest hot spot in China's latest wave of infections, announced some residents will no longer be required to undergo mass testing.

The U.S. Embassy advised citizens to prepare for all eventualities and said Ambassador Nicholas Burns and other American diplomats have "regularly raised our concerns on many of these issues directly."

"We encourage all U.S. citizens to keep a 14-day supply of medications, bottled water, and food for yourself and any members of your household," the Embassy said in a statement Monday.

In Washington, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby "obviously, there are people in China that — that have — have concerns about that," referring to lockdowns.

"And they're protesting that, and we believe they should be able to do that peacefully," Kirby said at a Monday briefing.

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Urumqi, where the fire occurred, and another city in the Xinjiang region in the northwest announced markets and other businesses in areas deemed at low risk of infection would reopen this week and public bus service would resume.

"Zero COVID," which aims to isolate every infected person, has helped to keep China's case numbers lower than those of the United States and other major countries. But tolerance for the measures has flagged as people in some areas have been confined at home for up to four months and say they lack reliable access to food and medical supplies.

The ruling party promised last month to reduce disruption by changing quarantine and other rules known as the "20 Guidelines." But a spike in infections has prompted cities to tighten controls.

On Tuesday, the number of daily cases dipped slightly to 38,421 after setting new records over recent days. Of those, 34,860 were among people who showed no symptoms.

The ruling party newspaper People's Daily called for its anti-virus strategy to be carried out effectively, indicating Xi's government has no plans to change course.

"Facts have fully proved that each version of the prevention and control plan has withstood the test of practice," a People's Daily commentator wrote.

In Hong Kong, protesters at Chinese University put up posters that said, "Do Not Fear. Do Not Forget. Do Not Forgive," and sang including "Do You Hear the People Sing?" from the musical "Les Miserables." Most hid their faces behind blank white sheets of paper.

"I want to show my support," said a 24-year-old mainland student who would identify herself only as G for fear of retaliation. "I care about things that I couldn't get to know in the past."

University security guards videotaped the event but there was no sign of police.

At an event in Central, a business district, about four dozen protesters held up blank sheets of paper and flowers in what they said was mourning for the fire victims in Urumqi and others who have died as a result of "zero COVID" policies.

Police cordoned off an area around protesters, who stood in small, separate groups to avoid violating pandemic rules that bar gatherings of more than 12 people. Police took identity details of participants but there were no arrests.

Hong Kong has tightened security controls and rolled back Western-style civil liberties since China launched a campaign in 2019 to crush a pro-democracy movement. The territory has its own anti-virus strategy that is separate from the mainland.

Hong Kong's Chief Executive John Lee is a law-and-order hardliner who led the crackdown on protesters, including on university campuses.

Both the Hong Kong government and the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued statements Monday pledging to uphold public order and the authority of the National Security Law, which gives authorities sweeping powers to charge demonstrators with crimes including sedition.

Protests also occurred over the weekend in Guangzhou near Hong Kong, Chengdu and Chongqing in the southwest, and Nanjing in the east, according to witnesses and video on social media. Guangzhou has seen earlier violent confrontations between police and residents protesting quarantines.

Most protesters have complained about excessive restrictions, but some turned their anger at Xi, China's most powerful leader since at least the 1980s. In a video that was verified by The Associated Press, a crowd in Shanghai on Saturday chanted, "Xi Jinping! Step down! CCP! Step down!"

The British Broadcasting Corp. said one of its reporters was beaten, kicked, handcuffed and detained for several hours by Shanghai police but later released.

The BBC criticized what it said was Chinese authorities' explanation that its reporter was detained to prevent him from contracting the coronavirus from the crowd. "We do not consider this a credible explanation," the broadcaster said in a statement.

Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Zhao Lijian said the BBC reporter failed to identify himself and "didn't voluntarily present" his press credential.

"Foreign journalists need to consciously follow Chinese laws and regulations," Zhao said.

Swiss broadcaster RTS said its correspondent and a cameraman were detained while doing a live broad-

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cast but released a few minutes later. An AP journalist was detained but later released.

GOP's new committee leaders prepare blitz of investigations

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans are promising aggressive oversight of the Biden administration once they assume the majority next year, with a particular focus on the business dealings of presidential son Hunter Biden, illegal immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border and the originations of COVID-19.

Republicans won't have enough votes to advance key legislative priorities if there is no Democratic buy-in, but their oversight of government agencies could put Democrats on the defensive and dampen support for the Biden administration going into the 2024 presidential elections.

Some of the lawmakers expected to lead those investigations once House Republicans select their new committee chairs:

JUDICIARY'S BIG ROLE

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, is expected to serve as the next chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Jordan helped form and then lead the ultra-conservative House Freedom Caucus and voted on Jan. 6, 2021, to object to counting Pennsylvania's electoral vote. President Donald Trump thought so highly of Jordan that he presented the congressman with the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The Judiciary Committee handles oversight of the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security and issues such as crime, immigration and protection of civil liberties. It's typically one of the most partisan committees on Capitol Hill, yet Jordan's combative style stands out even there. The committee would be the place where any effort would begin to impeach a member of the Biden administration, as some Republicans have been proposing for Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

Jordan's inquiries to the administration in recent months make clear the committee will investigate the FBI's execution of a search warrant at Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence. He has also advocated for a wide-ranging look at the Biden administration's immigration policies and the origins of COVID-19.

"All those things need to be investigated just so you have the truth," Jordan told conservative activists last summer at a conference. "Plus that will frame up the 2024 race when I hope and I think President Trump is going to run again and we need to make sure that he wins."

OVERSIGHT'S LONG LIST

Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., is expected to serve as the next chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee and has made clear that investigating President Joe Biden's son Hunter will be one of his top priorities. The Republicans say their investigation of Hunter Biden's business dealings is to "determine whether these activities compromise U.S. national security and President Biden's ability to lead with impartiality."

Comer has also been laying the groundwork for investigating the situation on the U.S.-Mexico border. He sent a letter to Mayorkas seeking an array of documents and communications pertaining to the administration's border policy. "We cannot endure another year of the Biden Administration's failed border policies," the letter said.

But that's just a slice the committee's focus.

"We're going to investigate between 40 and 50 different things," Comer said Sunday on NBC's "Meet The Press." "We have the capacity. We'll have 25 members on the committee, and we're going to have a staff close to 70. So we have the ability to investigate a lot of things."

The federal government's spending in response to COVID-19 will also be scrutinized.

"We believe that there have been hundreds of billions, if not trillions of dollars wasted over the past three years, so that spans two administrations, in the name of COVID.

"We want to have hearings on that. We want to try to determine what happened with the fraudulent unemployment insurance funds, the fraudulent PPP loan funds, some of this money that's being spent for state and local governments in the COVID stimulus money," Comer said.

AFGHANISTAN IN FOCUS

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Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, is expected to serve as the next chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, which will be investigating the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. McCaul reiterated a request in mid-October for various documents and directed the State Department to preserve all records related to the chaotic withdrawal, which included the loss of 13 U.S. service members killed during a suicide bombing attack.

"The way it was done was such a disaster and such a disgrace to our veterans that served in Afghanistan. They deserve answers to the many questions we have," McCaul said on ABC's "This Week." He added: "Why wasn't there a plan to evacuate? How did it go so wrong?"

SPOTLIGHT ON ENERGY AND TAXES

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., is expected to serve as the next chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which has the broadest jurisdiction of any authorizing committee in Congress, from health care to environmental protection to national energy policy. Republicans on the committee have already spent months investigating the origins of COVID-19 and are expected to continue that work in the next Congress.

Reps. Jason Smith, R-Mo., Adrian Smith, R-Neb., and Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., have expressed interest in serving as the next chairman of the tax-writing House Ways & Means Committee, which has already been seeking documents related to the spending in the nearly \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package that Democrats passed early last year. The committee also has oversight over the IRS, a frequent target of GOP scrutiny and scorn.

OTHER KEY SPOTS

Likely leaders of other prominent committees:

- Agriculture Committee: Glenn Thompson, R-Pa.
- Appropriations Committee: Kay Granger, R-Texas.
- Armed Services Committee: Mike Rogers, R-Ala.
- Budget Committee: Lloyd Smucker, R-Pa., Buddy Carter, R-Ga., and Jodey Arrington, R-Texas, have all expressed interest in the chairmanship.
- Financial Services Committee: Patrick McHenry, R-N.C.
- Homeland Security Committee: Dan Crenshaw, R-Texas, Mark Green, R-Tenn., and Clay Higgins, R-La., have all expressed interest in the chairmanship.
- Intelligence Committee: Michael Turner, R-Ohio
- Natural Resources Committee: Bruce Westerman, R-Ark.
- Science, Space and Technology Committee: Frank Lucas, R-Okla.
- Transportation and Infrastructure Committee: Sam Graves, R-Mo.
- Veterans' Affairs Committee: Mike Bost, R-Ill.

Biden, Macron ready to talk Ukraine, trade in state visit

By AAMER MADHANI and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron is headed to Washington for the first state visit of Joe Biden's presidency — a revival of diplomatic pageantry that had been put on hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Biden-Macron relationship had a choppy start. Macron briefly recalled France's ambassador to the United States last year after the White House announced a deal to sell nuclear submarines to Australia, undermining a contract for France to sell diesel-powered submarines.

But the relationship has turned around with Macron emerging as one of Biden's most forward-facing European allies in the Western response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This week's visit — it will include Oval Office talks, a glitzy dinner, a news conference and more — comes at a critical moment for both leaders.

The leaders have a long agenda for their Thursday meeting at the White House, including Iran's nuclear program, China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific and growing concerns about security and stability in Africa's Sahel region, according to U.S. and French officials. But front and center during their

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Oval Office meeting will be Russia's war in Ukraine, as both Biden and Macron work to maintain economic and military support for Kyiv as it tries to repel Russian forces.

In Washington, Republicans are set to take control of the House, where GOP leader Kevin McCarthy says Republicans will not write a "blank check" for Ukraine. Across the Atlantic, Macron's efforts to keep Europe united will be tested by the mounting costs of supporting Ukraine in the nine-month war and as Europe battles rising energy prices that threaten to derail the post-pandemic economic recovery.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on Monday described Macron as the "dynamic leader" of America's oldest ally while explaining Biden's decision to honor the French president with the first state visit of his presidency.

The U.S. tradition of honoring foreign heads of state dates back to Ulysses S. Grant, who hosted King David Kalakaua of the Kingdom of Hawaii for a more than 20-course White House dinner, but the tradition has been on hold since 2019 because of COVID-19 concerns.

"If you look at what's going on in Ukraine, look at what's going on in the Indo Pacific and the tensions with China, France is really at the center of all those things," Kirby said. "And so the president felt that this was exactly the right and the most appropriate country to start with for state visits."

Macron was also Republican Donald Trump's pick as the first foreign leader to be honored with a state visit during his term. The 2018 state visit included a jaunt by the two leaders to Mount Vernon, the Virginia estate of George Washington, America's founding president.

Macron was scheduled to arrive in Washington on Tuesday evening ahead of a packed day of meetings and appearances in and around Washington on Wednesday — including a visit to NASA headquarters with Vice President Kamala Harris and talks with Biden administration officials on nuclear energy.

On Thursday, Macron will have his private meeting with Biden followed by a joint news conference and visits to the State Department and Capitol Hill before Macron and his wife, Brigitte Macron, are feted at the state dinner. Grammy winner Jon Batiste is to provide the entertainment.

Macron will head to New Orleans on Friday, where he is to announce plans to expand programming to support French language education in U.S. schools, according to French officials.

For all of that, there are still areas of tension in the U.S.-French relationship.

Biden has steered clear of embracing Macron's calls on Ukraine to resume peace talks with Russia, something Biden has repeatedly said is a decision solely in the hands of Ukraine's leadership.

Perhaps more pressing are differences that France and other European Union leaders have raised about Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, sweeping legislation passed in August that includes historic spending on climate and energy initiatives. Macron and other leaders have been rankled by a provision in the bill that provides tax credits to consumers who buy electric vehicles manufactured in North America.

The French president, in making his case against the subsidies, will underscore that it's crucial for "Europe, like the U.S., to come out stronger ... not weaker" as the world emerges from the tumult of the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, according to a senior French government official who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity to preview private talks.

Macron earlier this month said the subsidies could upend the "level playing field" on trade with the EU and called aspects of the Biden legislation "unfriendly."

The White House, meanwhile, plans to counter that the legislation goes a long way in helping the U.S. meet global efforts to curb climate change. The president and aides will also impress on the French that the legislation will also create new opportunities for French companies and others in Europe, according to a senior Biden administration official who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity to preview the talks.

Macron's visit comes about 14 months after the relationship hit its nadir after the U.S. announced its deal to sell nuclear submarines to Australia.

After the announcement of the deal, which had been negotiated in secret, France briefly recalled its ambassador to Washington. A few weeks later Macron met Biden in Rome ahead of the Group of 20 summit, where the U.S. president sought to patch things up by acknowledging his administration had been

“clumsy” in how it handled the issue.

Macron’s visit with Harris to NASA headquarters on Wednesday will offer the two countries a chance to spotlight their cooperation on space.

France in June signed the Artemis Accords, a blueprint for space cooperation and supporting NASA’s plans to return humans to the moon by 2024 and to launch a historic human mission to Mars.

The same month, the U.S. joined a French initiative to develop new tools for adapting to climate change, the Space for Climate Observatory.

High court to hear arguments over Biden’s deportation policy

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is taking up a dispute over a blocked Biden administration policy that would prioritize deportation of people in the country illegally who pose the greatest public safety risk.

Republican-led states sued and won a nationwide court order that is meant to limit immigration officers’ discretion in deciding whom to deport. The justices are hearing arguments in the case Tuesday.

It’s the latest example of a Republican litigation strategy that has succeeded in slowing Biden administration initiatives by going to GOP-friendly courts.

In a separate ongoing legal dispute, three judges chosen by President Donald Trump are among the four Republican-appointed judges who have so far prevented the administration’s student loan cancellation program from taking effect.

At the center of the immigration legal fight is a September 2021 directive from the Department of Homeland Security that paused deportations unless individuals had committed acts of terrorism, espionage or “egregious threats to public safety.”

The guidance, issued after Joe Biden became president, updated a Trump-era policy that removed people in the country illegally regardless of criminal history or community ties.

The administration said in a written high-court filing that the “decision to prioritize threats to national security, public safety, and border security was both reasonable and reasonably explained,” especially since Congress has not given DHS enough money to vastly increase the number of people it holds and deports.

Texas and Louisiana, which sued over the directive, responded that the administration’s guidance violates federal law that requires the detention of people who are in the U.S. illegally and who have been convicted of serious crimes.

The states said they would face added costs of having to detain people the federal government might allow to remain free inside the United States, despite their criminal records.

Federal appeals courts had reached conflicting decisions over DHS guidance.

The federal appeals court in Cincinnati earlier overturned a district judge’s order that put the policy on hold in a lawsuit filed by Arizona, Ohio and Montana.

But in a separate suit filed by Texas and Louisiana, a federal judge in Texas ordered a nationwide halt to the guidance and a federal appellate panel in New Orleans declined to step in.

In July, the court voted 5-4 to leave the immigration policy frozen nationwide. Conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett joined the court’s three liberals in saying they would have allowed the Biden administration to put in place the guidance.

At the same time, the court said it would hear arguments in the case in late November.

Buffalo gunman pleads guilty in racist supermarket massacre

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The white gunman who massacred 10 Black shoppers and workers at a Buffalo supermarket pleaded guilty Monday to murder and hate-motivated terrorism charges, guaranteeing he will spend the rest of his life in prison.

Payton Gendron, 19, entered the plea Monday in a courthouse roughly two miles from the grocery store where he used a semiautomatic rifle and body armor to carry out a racist assault he hoped would help

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preserve white power in the U.S.

Gendron, who was handcuffed and wore an orange jumpsuit, occasionally licked and clenched his lips as he pleaded guilty to all of the most serious charges in the grand jury indictment, including murder, murder as a hate crime and hate-motivated domestic terrorism, which carries an automatic sentence of life without parole.

He answered "yes" and "guilty" as Judge Susan Eagan referred to each victim by name and asked whether he killed them because of their race. Gendron also pleaded guilty to wounding three people who survived the May attack.

Many of the relatives of those victims sat and watched, some dabbing their eyes and sniffing. Speaking to reporters later, several said the plea left them cold. It didn't address the bigger problem, which they said is racism in America.

"His voice made me feel sick, but it showed me I was right," said Zeneta Everhart, whose 20-year-old son was shot in the neck but survived. "This country has a problem. This country is inherently violent. It is racist. And his voice showed that to me."

After the roughly 45-minute proceeding ended, Gendron's lawyers suggested that he now regrets his crimes, but they didn't elaborate or take questions.

"This critical step represents a condemnation of the racist ideology that fueled his horrific actions on May 14," said Gendron's lawyer, Brian Parker. "It is our hope that a final resolution of the state charges will help in some small way to keep the focus on the needs of the victims and the community."

Gendron's parents, in their first public statement, said the guilty plea ensures their son will be held accountable. Paul and Pamela Gendron said they "pray for healing for everyone affected." They thanked law enforcement authorities who investigated the case, adding they will "continue to provide any assistance we can."

"We remain shocked and shattered to learn that our son was responsible for the hideous attack at the Tops grocery store on May 14, 2022," said the emailed statement, which was provided to The Associated Press by their attorney.

Gendron has pleaded not guilty to separate federal hate crime charges that could result in a death sentence if he is convicted. The U.S. Justice Department has not said whether it will seek capital punishment. Acknowledgement of guilt and a claim of repentance could potentially help Gendron in a penalty phase of a death penalty trial.

The plea comes at a time when many Americans have become nearly desensitized to mass shootings. In recent weeks, there have been deadly attacks at a Walmart in Virginia, at a gay club in Colorado and at the University of Virginia.

Just days after Gendron's rampage in Buffalo, a gunman killed 19 children and two teachers at a school in Uvalde, Texas.

Gendron wore body armor and used a legally purchased AR-15 style rifle in his attack on the Tops Friendly Market in Buffalo. Those killed ranged in age from 32 to 86 and included an armed security guard died trying to protect customers, a church deacon and the mother of a former Buffalo fire commissioner. Gendron surrendered when police confronted him as he emerged from the store.

Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown, who was in the courtroom for Gendron's guilty plea, told reporters afterwards that "It was important to hear why these precious lives were snatched from us for no other reason than the color of their skin."

The mayor, a Democrat, called for a ban on assault weapons, as did Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia. Relatives of the victims reiterated their calls for Congress and the FBI to address white supremacy and gun violence. "We are literally begging for those in power to do something about it," said Garnell Whitfield, whose 86-year-old mother, Ruth Whitfield, was killed.

White supremacy was Gendron's motive. He said in documents posted online just before the attack that he'd picked the store, about a three hour drive from his home in Conklin, New York, because it was in a predominantly Black neighborhood. He said he was motivated by a belief in a massive conspiracy to dilute the power of white people by "replacing" them in the U.S. with people of color.

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"Swift justice," is how Erie County District Attorney John Flynn described Monday's result, noting that it's the first time anyone in the state of New York has been convicted of the hate-motivated terrorism charge. His sentencing is scheduled for Feb. 15.

Attorney Benjamin Crump, who represents several of the victims' families, said they remain baffled that the gunman survived. They want harsh punishment, he said: "We want him to be treated as the heinous, cold blooded vicious murderer that he was for killing all these innocent Black people. It is emotional and we are angry."

Mark Talley, the son of Geraldine Talley, who was killed, called on authorities to incarcerate him in Erie County, in the same community where he caused so much pain, so that he might face the same horror experienced by his victims. "I want that pain to eat at him every second of every day for the rest of his life," Talley said.

Talley and Everhart said they were offended by Gendron's tone and cleaned-up appearance in court. They said a Black defendant would have been treated differently. Gendron is a "thug," they said.

"We show them in a way that doesn't make them threatening, and it's disgusting," Everhart said.

"Am I happy he's going to jail for life?" Talley said. "What would make me happy is if America acknowledged its history of racism."

Drying California lake to get \$250M in US drought funding

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The federal government said Monday it will spend \$250 million over four years on environmental cleanup and restoration work around a drying Southern California lake that's fed by the depleted Colorado River.

The future of the Salton Sea, and who is financially responsible for it, has been a key issue in discussions over how to prevent a crisis in the Colorado River. The lake was formed in 1905 when the river overflowed, creating a resort destination that slowly morphed into an environmental disaster as water levels receded, exposing residents to harmful dust and reducing wildlife habitat.

The lake is largely fed by runoff from farms in California's Imperial Valley, who use Colorado River water to grow many of the nation's winter vegetables as well as feed crops like alfalfa. As the farmers reduce their water use, less flows into the lake. California said it would only reduce its reliance on the over-tapped river if the federal government put up money to mitigate the effects of less water flowing into the sea.

"It's kind of a linchpin for the action we need to see on the Colorado River," said Wade Crowfoot, California's natural resources secretary. "Finally we are all in agreement that we can't leave the Salton Sea on the cutting room floor, we can't take these conservation actions — these extraordinary measures — at the expense of these residents."

The deal announced Monday needs approval from the Imperial Irrigation District, the largest user of Colorado River water. The water entity's board will take it up on Tuesday.

Both the district's general manager and board member JB Hamby applauded the deal Monday.

"The collaboration happening at the Salton Sea between water agencies and state, federal, and tribal governments is a blueprint for effective cooperation that the Colorado River Basin sorely needs," Hamby said in a statement.

The \$250 million will come out of the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act, which set aside \$4 billion to stave off the worst effects of drought across the U.S. West.

Most of the money is contingent on the Imperial Irrigation District and Coachella Valley Water District making good on their commitments to reduce their own use of river water. Both submitted proposals to cut back their usage for payment as part of a new federal program.

The quarter-billion dollars will largely go to bolster and speed up existing state projects designed to lower the negative environmental impact of the drying lake bed. The state has committed nearly \$583 million to projects at the sea, including dust suppression and habitat restoration. One project underway aims to create wetlands and ponds that will limit dust from blowing into the air while creating safe spaces for fish

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and birds, according to the state.

The deal comes as the U.S. Interior Department and the seven states that rely on the river — California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming — scramble to prevent the worst impacts of the ongoing drought and historic overuse of the river. Lakes Powell and Mead, the key reservoirs that store river water and provide hydropower across the West, are only about a quarter full.

After months of failed negotiations over a deal to drastically cut water use, the federal government in October said it would pay farmers and cities to cut back through activities like leaving fields unplanted or lining canals to prevent water from seeping into the ground. Proposals were due earlier this month. Meanwhile, the Interior Department has taken steps to unilaterally revise guidelines that govern when water shortages are declared, a move that could force states to further cut back.

The Salton Sea, meanwhile, became its own political flashpoint in October when Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly, then up for reelection, urged the federal government to withhold any environmental cleanup money unless California agreed to give up more water. That prompted criticism he was using communities who already suffer from poor air quality as a bargaining chip.

The agreement marks a good step forward but key details still need to be fleshed out, said Frank Ruiz, Salton Sea program director for Audubon California. He worries that \$250 million is not enough to mitigate all of the damage already done at the sea.

"This is a great step but I think we need a lot more," he said. "We need to continue discussing water sustainability in the region."

Broadly, he wants to see a more equitable distribution of the region's water supplies and hopes the Salton Sea gets a guaranteed minimum amount of water even as overall use declines.

Australia argues against 'endangered' Barrier Reef status

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia's environment minister said Tuesday her government will lobby against UNESCO adding the Great Barrier Reef to a list of endangered World Heritage sites, arguing that criticisms of government inaction on climate change were outdated.

Officials from the U.N. cultural agency and the International Union for Conservation of Nature released a report on Monday warning that without "ambitious, rapid and sustained" climate action, the world's largest coral reef is in peril.

The report, which recommended shifting the Great Barrier Reef to endangered status, followed a 10-day mission in March to the famed reef system off Australia's northeast coast that was added to the World Heritage list in 1981.

Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek said the report was a reflection on Australia's previous conservative government, which was voted out of office in May elections after nine years in power.

She said the new center-left Labor Party government has already addressed several of the report's concerns, including action on climate change.

"We'll very clearly make the point to UNESCO that there is no need to single the Great Barrier Reef out in this way" with an endangered listing, Plibersek told reporters.

"The reason that UNESCO in the past has singled out a place as at risk is because they wanted to see greater government investment or greater government action and, since the change of government, both of those things have happened," she added.

The new government has legislated to commit Australia to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 43% below the 2005 level by 2030.

The previous government only committed to a reduction of 26% to 28% by the end of the decade.

Plibersek said her government has also committed 1.2 billion Australian dollars (\$798 million) to caring for the reef and has canceled the previous government's plans to build two major dams in Queensland state that would have affected the reef's water quality.

"If the Great Barrier Reef is in danger, then every coral reef in the world is in danger," Plibersek said. "If this World Heritage site is in danger, then most World Heritage sites around the world are in danger

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from climate change.”

The report said Australia’s federal government and Queensland authorities should adopt more ambitious emission reduction targets in line with international efforts to limit future warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.

The minor Greens party, which wants Australia to slash its emissions by 75% by the end of the decade, called for the government to do more to fight climate change in light of the report.

Jodie Rummer, a marine biologist at James Cook University in Townsville who has worked on the reef for more than a decade, supported calls for Australia to aim for a 75% emissions reduction.

“We are taking action, but that action needs to be much more rapid and much more urgent,” Rummer told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

“We cannot claim to be doing all we can for the reef at this point. We aren’t. We need to be sending that message to the rest of the world that we are doing everything that we possibly can for the reef and that means we need to take urgent action on emissions immediately,” she added.

Feedback from Australian officials, both at the federal and state level, will be reviewed before Paris-based UNESCO makes any official proposal to the World Heritage committee.

In July last year, the previous Australian government garnered enough international support to defer an attempt by UNESCO to downgrade the reef’s status to “in danger” because of damage caused by climate change.

The Great Barrier Reef accounts for around 10% of the world’s coral reef ecosystems. The network of more than 2,500 reefs covers 348,000 square kilometers (134,000 square miles).

Australian government scientists reported in May that more than 90% of Great Barrier Reef coral surveyed in the latest year was bleached, in the fourth such mass event in seven years.

Bleaching is caused by global warming, but this is the reef’s first bleaching event during a La Niña weather pattern, which is associated with cooler Pacific Ocean temperatures, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority said in its annual report.

Bleaching in 2016, 2017 and 2020 damaged two-thirds of the coral.

Coral bleaches as a response to heat stress and scientists hope most of the coral will recover from the latest event.

City holds vigil, honors 6 dead in Virginia Walmart shooting

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE, Va. (AP) — Hundreds gathered Monday in Virginia’s second-largest city to honor six people killed in a mass shooting at a Walmart, with the state’s governor pledging to confront a “mental health and a behavioral health crisis.”

Chesapeake’s candlelight vigil paid tribute to a diverse group of third-shift workers, ages 16 to 70, who unloaded trucks, broke down cardboard boxes and stocked shelves in this sprawling but tight-knit community near the coast.

The employees were slain Tuesday night by a store supervisor, who also died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound, police said. Several others were wounded.

The shooter left behind a note that claimed he was harassed and pushed to the brink by a perception his phone was hacked, police said. The handgun that was used was legally purchased that morning, and he had no criminal record.

“I’m not alone in concluding that we have a mental health and a behavioral health crisis in the United States and in Virginia,” Gov. Glenn Youngkin said in a city park. “A crisis that shows up in all facets of our society, in our homes, in our schools, in our workplace.”

The Republican governor said he will work across party lines “to chart a path forward.”

Much of the vigil focused on those who died and efforts to help this city of about 250,000 people to heal. And many people wrote messages on six white crosses as the sun set and a crescent moon hung low in the sky.

Among them was Doris Manuel, who lost nephew Brian Pendleton, 38.

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"We know when something like this happens it's not just us. It's a whole city, a whole region," she said. Tammy Hawkins came in place of her son, Christian, who was too shook up over the death of high school friend Fernando Chavez-Barron.

"He loved Fernando like a brother," Hawkins said.

Chesapeake City Councilman Don J. Carey III shared details on each victim.

Chavez-Baron had started working at the store to lessen the financial burden on his parents. His dad said he was his best friend.

Pendleton lived a clean life and believed in Jesus Christ. Despite not having a car or a driver's license, he got to work on time for 11 years, never wanting to miss a shift.

Lorenzo Gamble, 43, was a quiet and reserved man who loved spending time with his two sons.

Tyneka Johnson, 22, had a smile that could light up any room. Her mom said she felt like she lost her best friend.

Kellie Pyle, 52, spread positivity wherever she went and would give her last dollar to make sure her friends and family had their needs met.

Randy Blevins, 70, was a kind and gentle man who loved Thanksgiving because he got the day off and could spend time with his family.

"We honor and pray for all those who were injured that night," Carey said. "And for those throughout our community who suffered emotional wounds: We see you. We love you. We are here for you."

Earlier Monday, the City Council held a brief special meeting to approve a resolution that will help free up funding for the response to and recovery from the shooting.

The Walmart, still closed, sits along a suburban strip of box stores that are located about a half-hour drive from the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay. For many here, the store served as a de facto community center that facilitated unplanned chats in the aisles.

"You could run into your physician, teachers, principals," Cliff Hayes, a lawmaker in Virginia's House of Delegates, told The Associated Press. "This was a centralized place that will forever be changed."

Walmart has more than 4,700 stores across the country and employs about 1.7 million people in the U.S. And yet each store can be unique, said Adam Reich, a Columbia University sociology professor who co-wrote the book, "Working for Respect, Community and Conflict at Walmart."

The book describes life experiences that drew workers to Walmart and analyzes dynamics among employees. In some stores — though not all — workers formed strong bonds despite their varying backgrounds, Reich said. And it was often those tight relationships that kept associates in their jobs for long periods.

"It's sort of astonishing that, on the one hand, Walmart is so standardized," Reich said. "But on the other hand, there's just so much variation and uniqueness that workers manage to establish and carve out in their individual stores. I don't know the story of this store, but it sounds from the little I've read that that's what workers had done here."

GOP-controlled Arizona county refuses to certify election

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Republican officials in a rural Arizona county refused Monday to certify the 2022 election despite no evidence of anything wrong with the count, a decision that was quickly challenged in court by the state's top election official.

The refusal to certify by Cochise County in southeastern Arizona comes amid pressure from prominent Republicans to reject results showing Democrats winning top races.

Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, a Democrat who narrowly won the race for governor, asked a judge to order county officials to canvass the election, which she said is an obligation under Arizona law. Lawyers representing a Cochise County voter and a group of retirees filed a similar lawsuit Monday, the deadline for counties to approve the official tally of votes, known as the canvass.

The two Republican county supervisors delayed the canvass vote until Friday, when they want to hear once more about concerns over the certification of ballot tabulators, though election officials have repeat-

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edly said the equipment is properly approved.

State Elections Director Kori Lorick wrote in a letter last week that Hobbs is required by law to approve the statewide canvass by next week and will have to exclude Cochise County's votes if they aren't received in time.

That would threaten to flip the victor in at least two close races — a U.S. House seat and state schools chief — from a Republican to a Democrat.

Hobbs' lawsuit asks the Cochise County Superior Court to order officials to certify by Thursday. Failing to certify would undermine the will of the county's voters "and sow further confusion and doubt about the integrity of Arizona's election system," lawyers for Hobbs wrote.

"The Board of Supervisors had all of the information they needed to certify this election and failed to uphold their responsibility for Cochise voters," Sophia Solis, a spokeswoman for Hobbs, said in an email.

Arizona law requires county officials to approve the election canvass, and lawyers in several counties warned Republican supervisors they could face criminal charges for failing to carry out their obligations.

Election results have largely been certified without issue in jurisdictions across the country. That's not been the case in Arizona, which was a focal point for efforts by former President Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the 2020 election and push false narratives of fraud.

Officials in a northeastern Pennsylvania county where paper shortages caused Election Day ballot problems deadlocked Monday on whether to report official vote tallies to the state, effectively preventing their certification of the results.

Arizona was long a GOP stronghold, but this month Democrats won most of the highest profile races over Republicans who aggressively promoted Trump's 2020 election lies. Kari Lake, the GOP candidate for governor who lost to Hobbs, and Mark Finchem, the candidate for secretary of state, have refused to acknowledge their losses.

They blame Republican election officials in Maricopa County, the state's largest, including metro Phoenix, for a problem with some ballot printers. Officials in Maricopa County said everyone had a chance to vote and all legal ballots were counted.

Navajo, a rural Republican-leaning county, and Coconino, which is staunchly Democratic, voted to certify on Monday. In conservative Mohave and Yavapai counties, supervisors voted to canvass the results despite their own misgivings and several dozen speakers urging them not to.

"Delaying this vote again will only prolong the agony without actually changing anything," said Mohave County Supervisor Hildy Angius, a Republican. The county last week delayed its certification vote to register a protest against voting issues in Maricopa County.

In Cochise County, GOP supervisors abandoned plans to hand count all ballots, which a court said would be illegal, but demanded last week that the secretary of state prove vote-counting machines were legally certified before they would approve the election results. On Monday, they said they wanted to hear again about those concerns.

There are two companies that are accredited by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission to conduct testing and certification of voting equipment, such as the electronic tabulators used in Arizona to read and count ballots.

Conspiracy theories surrounding this process surfaced in early 2021, focused on what appeared to be an outdated accreditation certificate for one of the companies that was posted online. Federal officials investigated and reported that an administrative error had resulted in the agency failing to reissue an updated certificate as the company remained in good standing and underwent audits in 2018 and in early 2021.

Officials also noted federal law dictates the only way a testing company can lose certification is for the commission to revoke it, which did not occur.

Lake has pointed to problems on Election Day in Maricopa County, where printers at some vote centers produced ballots with markings that were too light to be read by on-site tabulators. Lines backed up amid the confusion, and Lake says an unknown number of her supporters may have been dissuaded from voting as a result.

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She filed a public records lawsuit last week, demanding the county produce documents shedding light on the issue before voting to certify the election on Monday. Republican Attorney General Mark Brnovich also demanded an explanation ahead of the vote.

The county responded on Sunday, saying nobody was prevented from voting, and 85% of vote centers never had lines longer than 45 minutes. Most vote centers with long lines had others nearby with shorter waits, county officials said.

The response blamed prominent Republicans, including party chair Kelli Ward, for sowing confusion by telling supporters on Twitter not to place their ballots in a secure box to be tabulated later by more robust machines at county elections headquarters.

The county said that just under 17,000 Election Day ballots were placed in those secure boxes and all were counted. Officials also said the problem was distributed across the county, dispelling claims by Lake that it was concentrated in Republican areas. Election Day ballots went overwhelmingly for Republicans, though only 16% of the 1.56 million votes cast in Maricopa County were made in-person on Election Day.

Maricopa County supervisors heard for hours from dozens of people angry about the election, some demanding the county hold a revote, though there is no provision in state law allowing that. Supervisors unanimously approved the canvass.

"This was not a perfect election," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Gates, a Republican. "But it was safe and secure. The votes have been counted accurately."

Meanwhile, Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Randall Warner said he would decide in the next few days whether to allow an election challenge by Abraham Hamadeh, the Republican candidate for Arizona attorney general, to move ahead.

Warner, who was appointed to the court in 2007 by Democratic Gov. Janet Napolitano, spoke after a Monday afternoon hearing. Hamadeh filed the lawsuit earlier this month against his opponent, Democrat Kris Mayes, who holds a 510-vote lead in the race, along with every county recorder in Arizona and Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, who is now governor-elect.

The lawsuit alleges errors and inaccuracies at some voting centers and seeks to have Hamadeh installed as attorney general. A lawyer for Mayes says the suit is premature.

Erupting Hawaii volcano spurs warning for people to prepare

By CALEB JONES Associated Press

KAILUA-KONA, Hawaii (AP) — Waves of orange, glowing lava and smoky ash belched and sputtered Monday from the world's largest active volcano in its first eruption in 38 years, and officials told people living on Hawaii's Big Island to be ready in the event of a worst-case scenario.

The eruption of Mauna Loa wasn't immediately endangering towns, but the U.S. Geological Survey warned the roughly 200,000 people on the Big Island that an eruption "can be very dynamic, and the location and advance of lava flows can change rapidly."

Officials told residents to be ready to evacuate if lava flows start heading toward populated areas.

The eruption began late Sunday night following a series of fairly large earthquakes, said Ken Hon, scientist-in-charge at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory.

The areas where lava was emerging — the volcano's summit crater and vents along the volcano's north-east flank — are both far from homes and communities.

Officials urged the public to stay away from them, given the dangers posed by lava, which is shooting 100 to 200 feet (30 to 60 meters) into the air out of three separate fissures roughly estimated to be 1 to 2 miles (1.6 to 3.2 kilometers) long.

Volcanic gases wafting out of the vents, primarily sulfur dioxide, are also harmful.

Air quality on the Big Island more generally is good right now but officials are monitoring it carefully, said Dr. Libby Char, the director of the state Department of Health.

Hon said air quality could deteriorate while the eruption lasts, which scientists expect will be about one or two weeks if the volcano follows historical patterns.

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Lifelong Big Island resident Bobby Camara, who lives in Volcano Village, said everyone across the island should keep track of the eruption. He said he's seen three Mauna Loa eruptions in his lifetime and stressed the need for vigilance.

"I think everybody should be a little bit concerned," he said. "We don't know where the flow is going, we don't know how long it's going to last."

Gunner Mench, who owns an art gallery in Kamuela, said he awoke shortly after midnight and saw an alert on his phone about the eruption.

Mench and his wife, Ellie, ventured out to film the eerie red glow cast over the island, watching as lava spilled down the volcano's side.

"You could see it spurting up into the air, over the edge of this depression," Mench said.

"Right now it's just entertainment, but the concern is" it could reach populated areas, he said.

Seeing Mauna Loa erupt is a new experience for many residents of the Big Island, where the population has more than doubled from 92,000 in 1980.

More than a third of the island's residents live either in the city of Kailua-Kona to the west of the volcano, or about 23,000 people, and Hilo to the east, with about 45,000. Officials were most worried about several subdivisions some 30 miles (50 kilometers) to the volcano's south that are home to about 5,000 people.

A time-lapse video of the eruption from overnight showed lava lighting up one area, moving across it like waves on the ocean.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the eruption had migrated to a rift zone on the volcano's northeast flank. Rift zones are where the mountain rock is cracked and relatively weak — making it easier for magma to emerge.

Lava could move toward the county seat of Hilo, but that could take about a week, Hon said at a news conference.

Scientists hope the flow will parallel the 1984 eruption, where the lava was more viscous and slowed down.

Mauna Loa has another rift zone on its southwest flank. Lava could reach nearby communities in hours or days if the volcano erupts from this area. But Hon said historically Mauna Loa has never erupted from both rift zones simultaneously.

"So we presume at this point that all of the future activity is going to be on the northeast rift zone of Mauna Loa and not on the southeast rift zone," he said. "So those residents in that area do not have to worry about lava flows."

Hawaii County Civil Defense announced it had opened shelters because it had reports of people evacuating from along the coast on their own initiative.

The USGS warned residents who could be threatened by the lava flows to review their eruption preparations. Scientists had been on alert because of a recent spike in earthquakes at the summit of the volcano, which last erupted in 1984.

Portions of the Big Island were under an ashfall advisory issued by the National Weather Service in Honolulu. It said up to a quarter-inch (0.6 centimeters) of ash could accumulate in some areas.

"Volcanic gas and possibly fine ash and Pele's hair may be carried downwind," Gov. David Ige said, referring to glass fibers that form when hot lava erupts from a fissure and rapidly cools in the air. The wind stretches the fibers into long strands that look like hair. "So certainly we would ask those with respiratory sensitivities to take precautions to minimize exposure."

Mauna Loa is one of five volcanoes that together make up the Big Island of Hawaii, the southernmost island in the Hawaiian archipelago.

Mauna Loa, rising 13,679 feet (4,169 meters) above sea level, is the much larger neighbor of Kilauea, which erupted in a residential neighborhood and destroyed 700 homes in 2018. Some of Mauna Loa's slopes are much steeper than Kilauea's, so lava can flow much faster when it erupts.

During a 1950 eruption, the mountain's lava traveled 15 miles (24 kilometers) to the ocean in under three hours.

Mauna Loa's volume is estimated at least 18,000 square miles (75,000 square kilometers), making it the

world's largest volcano when measured from the ocean floor its summit.

Tourism is Hawaii's economic engine but Big Island Mayor Mitch Roth predicted few problems for those vacationing during the eruption.

"It will be spectacular where it is, but the chances of it really interrupting the visitor industry — very, very slim," he said.

Tourism officials said no one should have to change Big Island travel plans.

For some, the eruption might cut down on some travel time, even if there is more volcanic smog caused by higher sulfur-dioxide emissions.

"But the good thing is you don't have to drive from Kona over to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park to see an eruption anymore," Roth said. "You can just look out your window at night and you'll be able to see Mauna Loa erupting."

Georgia runoff: Early voting for Warnock-Walker round 2

By BILL BARROW and JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — In-person early voting for the last U.S. Senate seat is underway statewide in Georgia's runoff, with Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock working to get the jump on Republican challenger Herschel Walker who is putting less emphasis on advance balloting.

After winning a state lawsuit to allow Saturday voting after Thanksgiving, Warnock spent the weekend urging his supporters not to wait until the Dec. 6 runoff. Trying to leverage his role as pastor of Martin Luther King Jr.'s church and Georgia's first Black U.S. senator, Warnock concentrated his efforts Sunday among Black communities in metro Atlanta.

"What we are doing right now is soul work," Warnock said at Liberty International Church southwest of downtown, where he rallied supporters before leading a march to a nearby early voting site where he cast his ballot. "We are engaged in a political exercise," Warnock continued, "but this is moral and spiritual work, and for us that has always been based on the foundation of the church."

Walker, in contrast, did not hold public events over the long Thanksgiving weekend, and in his return to the campaign Monday night in the northern Atlanta suburb of Cumming, he did not mention early voting specifically. "Tell your friends to come with you to vote," he said. "If you don't have any friends, go make some friends."

Separately, the Republican Party and its aligned PACs are trying to drive turnout after Walker underperformed other Georgia Republicans in the general election. Walker finished the first round with about 200,000 fewer votes than Gov. Brian Kemp, who easily won a second term. Walker resumes his campaign Monday with stops in small-town Toccoa and suburban Cumming.

Early in-person voting continues through Friday. Runoff Election Day is Tuesday of next week.

Warnock led Walker by about 37,000 votes out of about 4 million cast in the general election but fell short of the majority required under Georgia law, triggering a four-week runoff blitz. Warnock first won the seat as part of concurrent Senate runoffs on Jan. 5, 2021, when he and Sen. Jon Ossoff prevailed over Republican incumbents to give Democrats narrow control of the Senate for the start of President Joe Biden's tenure. Warnock won a special election and now is seeking a full six-year term.

This time, Senate control is not in play, with Democrats already having secured 50 seats to go with Vice President Kamala Harris's tiebreaking vote. That puts pressure on both Warnock and Walker to convince Georgia voters that it's worth their time to cast a second ballot, even if the national stakes aren't as high.

As of late Sunday, almost 200,000 ballots had been cast in the relative handful of counties that opted to have weekend voting. The first day of statewide early voting on Monday added at least 250,000 more, the largest in-person early voting day in Georgia history, according to Deputy Secretary of State Gabriel Sterling. That's included long lines in several heavily Democratic counties of metro Atlanta, enough to give Democrats confidence that their core supporters remain excited to vote for Warnock. But the total remains a fraction of the nearly 2.3 million early in-person voters ahead of the Nov. 8 general election.

And Democrats remain cautious given that the early voting window is much shorter than two years ago,

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when the second round spanned two months between the general election and runoff. Voting on Saturday was allowed only because Warnock and Democrats sued amid a dispute with the Republican secretary of state over whether Saturday voting could occur on a holiday weekend.

The senator followed up with a parade of Black leaders for weekend rallies and a march reminiscent of voting rights demonstrations during the civil rights movement.

"We have one vote here that can change the world," Andrew Young, a former Atlanta mayor and onetime aide to King, implored Black voters on Sunday. Rising from his wheelchair to speak, the 90-year-old former congressman and U.N. ambassador reminded the assembly of the congressional compromise that ended post-Civil War Reconstruction and paved the way for Jim Crow segregation across the South.

"One vote at the end of the Civil War pulled all of the Union troops out of the South and lost us the rights we had fought for in the war and that people had fought for us," he said, starting "a struggle that we have been in ever since."

Warnock praised the weekend turnout as he campaigned Monday with college students on the campus of Morehouse College, where he graduated. "I don't want us to get too comfortable, or self-congratulatory," he said. "We've had just two days of early voting, today is day three. We cannot take our foot off the gas."

Later Monday, Warnock appeared in suburban Cobb County with musician Dave Matthews, who praised Warnock as a "decent man." The audience of hundreds included many middle-aged white voters, a key target for Warnock as he tries to reach past core Democrats to capture voters who sometimes choose Republicans.

"When you go home, please tell all your friends that were like, on the fence, to get on the correct side of the fence," Matthews said.

Walker, for his part, has drawn enthusiastic crowds in the early weeks of the runoff, as well, and his campaign aides remain confident that he has no problem among core Republicans. His challenge comes with the middle of the Georgia electorate, a gap highlighted by his shortfall compared to Kemp.

"I feel Herschel Walker benefited by having Brian Kemp in the original election on Nov. 8, and I think Kemp not being there will hurt the Republicans a little bit," said Alpharetta resident Marcelo Salvatierra, who voted for Republican Kemp and Democrat Warnock and still supports the senator in the runoff.

Salvatierra said he backed Kemp's re-election "because it seems to me Georgia has done well." But Republicans at the federal level, he said, never offered a serious counter to Democratic control of Washington, while Walker also comes with considerable personal baggage.

"Character matters and I sense he doesn't have character," Salvatierra said.

Warnock has encouraged that sentiment among core Democrats, independents and moderate Republicans. For months, he's said Walker, a former football star making his first bid for public office, was "not ready" for the Senate. In recent weeks, he's ratcheted up the attack to say Walker is "not fit," highlighting the challenger's falsehoods about his accomplishments in the private sector, along with allegations of violence against women and accusations by two women that Walker encouraged and paid for their abortions. Walker, who backs a national ban on abortions without exceptions, denies that he ever paid for any abortions.

Biden calls on Congress to head off potential rail strike

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — President Joe Biden on Monday asked Congress to intervene and block a railroad strike before next month's deadline in the stalled contract talks, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said lawmakers would take up legislation this week to impose the deal that unions agreed to in September.

"Let me be clear: a rail shutdown would devastate our economy," Biden said in a statement. "Without freight rail, many U.S. industries would shut down."

In a statement, Pelosi said: "We are reluctant to bypass the standard ratification process for the Tentative Agreement — but we must act to prevent a catastrophic nationwide rail strike, which would grind our economy to a halt."

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Pelosi said the House would not change the terms of the September agreement, which would challenge the Senate to approve the House bill without changes.

The September agreement that Biden and Pelosi are calling for is a slight improvement over what the board of arbitrators recommended in the summer. The September agreement added three unpaid days off a year for engineers and conductors to tend to medical appointments as long as they scheduled them at least 30 days in advance. The railroads also promised in September not to penalize workers who are hospitalized and to negotiate further with the unions after the contract is approved about improving the regular scheduling of days off.

Hundreds of business groups had been urging Congress and the president to step into the deadlocked contract talk and prevent a strike.

Both the unions and railroads have been lobbying Congress while contract talks continue. If Congress acts, it will end talks between the railroads and four rail unions that rejected their deals Biden helped broker before the original strike deadline in September. Eight other unions have approved their five-year deals with the railroads and are in the process of getting back pay for their workers for the 24% raises that are retroactive to 2020.

If Congress does what Biden suggests and imposes terms similar to what was agreed on in September, that will end the union's push to add paid sick time. The four unions that have rejected their deals have been pressing for the railroads to add that benefit to help address workers' quality of life concerns, but the railroads had refused to consider that.

Biden said that as a "a proud pro-labor president" he was reluctant to override the views of people who voted against the agreement. "But in this case — where the economic impact of a shutdown would hurt millions of other working people and families — I believe Congress must use its powers to adopt this deal."

Biden's remarks and Pelosi's statement came after a coalition of more than 400 business groups sent a letter to congressional leaders Monday urging them to step into the stalled talks because of fears about the devastating potential impact of a strike that could force many businesses to shut down if they can't get the rail deliveries they need. Commuter railroads and Amtrak would also be affected in a strike because many of them use tracks owned by the freight railroads.

The business groups led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers and National Retail Federation said even a short-term strike would have a tremendous impact and the economic pain would start to be felt even before the Dec. 9 strike deadline. They said the railroads would stop hauling hazardous chemicals, fertilizers and perishable goods up to a week beforehand to keep those products from being stranded somewhere along the tracks.

"A potential rail strike only adds to the headwinds facing the U.S. economy," the businesses wrote. "A rail stoppage would immediately lead to supply shortages and higher prices. The cessation of Amtrak and commuter rail services would disrupt up to 7 million travelers a day. Many businesses would see their sales disrupted right in the middle of the critical holiday shopping season."

A similar group of businesses sent another letter to Biden last month urging him to play a more active role in resolving the contract dispute.

On Monday, the Association of American Railroads trade group praised Biden's action.

"No one benefits from a rail work stoppage — not our customers, not rail employees and not the American economy," said AAR President and CEO Ian Jefferies. "Now is the appropriate time for Congress to pass legislation to implement the agreements already ratified by eight of the twelve unions."

Business groups that have been pushing for Congress to settle this contract dispute praised Biden's move.

"The Biden administration's endorsement of congressional intervention affirms what America's food, beverage, household and personal care manufacturers have been saying: Freight rail operations cannot shut down and imperil the availability and affordability of consumers' everyday essentials," said Tom Madrecki, vice president of supply chain for the Consumer Brands Association. "The consequences to consumers if a strike were to occur are too serious, especially amid continued supply chain challenges and disruptions."

Clark Ballew, a spokesman for the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division, which rep-

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resents track maintenance workers, said before Biden's announcement that the union was "headed to D.C. this week to meet with lawmakers on the Hill from both parties. We have instructed our members to contact their federal lawmakers in the House and Senate for several weeks now."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Neil Bradley said Biden was correct in advocating for the deal already reached. "Congress must do what it has done 18 times before: intervene against a national rail strike," Bradley said in a statement, and he called Congress enforcing the deal agreed to by railroads and union leaders the "only path to avoid crippling strike."

The railroads, which include Union Pacific, BNSF, Norfolk Southern, CSX and Kansas City Southern, wanted any deal to closely follow the recommendations a special board of arbitrators that Biden appointed made this summer that called for the 24% raises and \$5,000 in bonuses but didn't resolve workers' concerns about demanding schedules that make it hard to take a day off and other working conditions. That's what Biden is calling on Congress to impose.

Favre asks to be dismissed from Mississippi welfare lawsuit

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Retired NFL quarterback Brett Favre is asking to be removed from a lawsuit by the state of Mississippi that seeks to recover millions of dollars in misspent welfare money that was intended to help some of the poorest people in the U.S.

An attorney for Favre filed papers on Monday saying the Mississippi Department of Human Services "groundlessly and irresponsibly seeks to blame Favre for its own grossly improper and unlawful handling of welfare funds and its own failure to properly monitor and audit" how organizations used the money.

"Including Favre in this lawsuit has had the intended effect — it has attracted national media attention to this case," Favre's attorney, Eric D. Herschmann, wrote in the filing in Hinds County Circuit Court.

Herschmann wrote that the lawsuit focuses on the welfare agency's "false insinuations concerning Favre's supposed involvement" rather than on the agency, "which in fact is responsible for allowing this scandal to occur."

It was not immediately clear how soon Hinds County Circuit Judge Faye Peterson might consider the request.

Favre is not facing criminal charges. He is among more than three dozen people or companies being sued by the Mississippi Department of Human Services as it seeks to recover a portion of the money mis-spent in the state's largest-ever public corruption case. The department filed the lawsuit in May, saying the defendants "squandered" more than \$20 million from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families anti-poverty program.

Favre grew up in Mississippi and played football at the University of Southern Mississippi before a long career with the Green Bay Packers that included a win in Super Bowl XXXI. He was traded to the New York Jets in 2008 and played there one year before playing his final two seasons for the Minnesota Vikings.

Favre has repaid \$1.1 million he received for speaking fees from the Mississippi Community Education Center, a nonprofit group that spent TANF money with approval from the Department of Human Services. But state Auditor Shad White said Monday that Favre still owes \$228,000 in interest.

White's office has investigated the welfare spending. In response to questions Monday about Favre seeking to be dismissed from the civil lawsuit, White told The Associated Press: "Every party in the civil case is free to make the arguments that they would like to make, and I'm not going to comment on them. The court system can see the case through, and the judge can determine who owes what back."

A former Department of Human Services director, John Davis, pleaded guilty in September to federal and state charges tied to the welfare misspending.

The director of the the Mississippi Community Education Center, Nancy New, pleaded guilty in April to charges of misspending welfare money, as did her son Zachary New, who helped run the center. Like Davis, they await sentencing and have agreed to testify against others.

In a Sept. 12 court filing in the civil lawsuit, an attorney for the Mississippi Community Education Center

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released several text messages about \$5 million in welfare money that went toward a volleyball facility that Favre was seeking to get built at his alma mater, the University of Southern Mississippi, where his daughter was playing the sport. The messages were between Nancy New and Favre, between Favre and former Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant and between Bryant and New. The messages were from 2017 to 2019, when the Republican Bryant was still governor.

That court filing said the nonprofit center agreed to pay Favre \$1.1 million "for a few radio spots" to help fund the volleyball arena, which was also being called a campus wellness center.

Another court filing in September included text messages that showed Favre tried to get additional welfare money for an indoor practice facility for the University of Southern Mississippi's football team. Bryant told him federal money for children and low-income adults is "tightly controlled" and "improper use could result in violation of Federal Law."

Fentanyl's scourge plainly visible on streets of Los Angeles

By JAE C. HONG and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In a filthy alley behind a Los Angeles doughnut shop, Ryan Smith convulsed in the grips of a fentanyl high — lurching from moments of slumber to bouts of violent shivering on a warm summer day.

When Brandice Josey, another homeless addict, bent down and blew a puff of fentanyl smoke his way in an act of charity, Smith sat up and slowly opened his lip to inhale the vapor as if it was the cure to his problems.

Smith, wearing a grimy yellow T-shirt that said "Good Vibes Only," reclined on his backpack and dozed the rest of the afternoon on the asphalt, unperturbed by the stench of rotting food and human waste that permeated the air.

For too many people strung out on the drug, the sleep that follows a fentanyl hit is permanent. The highly addictive and potentially lethal drug has become a scourge across America and is taking a toll on the growing number of people living on the streets of Los Angeles.

Nearly 2,000 homeless people died in the city from April 2020 to March 2021, a 56% increase from the previous year, according to a report released by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Overdose was the leading cause of death, killing more than 700.

Fentanyl was developed to treat intense pain from ailments like cancer. Use of fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid that is cheap to produce and is often sold as is or laced in other drugs, has exploded. Because it's 50 times more potent than heroin, even a small dose can be fatal.

It has quickly become the deadliest drug in the nation, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. Two-thirds of the 107,000 overdose deaths in 2021 were attributed to synthetic opioids like fentanyl, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

The drug's toll spreads far beyond the streets.

Jennifer Catano, 27, has the names of two children tattooed on her wrists, but she hasn't seen them for several years. They live with her mother.

"My mom doesn't think it's a good idea because she thinks it's gonna hurt the kids because I'm not ready to get rehabilitated," Catano said.

She has overdosed three times and been through rehab seven or eight times.

"It's scary to get off of it," she said. "The withdrawals are really bad."

Catano wandered around a subway station near MacArthur Park desperate to sell a bottle of Downy fabric softener and a Coleman camping chair she stole from a nearby store.

Drug abuse can be a cause or symptom of homelessness. Both can also intersect with mental illness.

A 2019 report by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority found about a quarter of all homeless adults in Los Angeles County had mental illnesses and 14% had a substance use disorder. That analysis only counted people who had a permanent or long-term severe condition. Taking a broader interpretation of the same data, the Los Angeles Times found about 51% had mental illnesses and 46% had substance

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use disorders.

Billions of dollars are being spent to alleviate homelessness in California but treatment is not always funded.

A controversial bill signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom could improve that by forcing people suffering from severe mental illness into treatment. But they need to be diagnosed with a certain disorder such as schizophrenia and addiction alone doesn't qualify.

Help is available but it is outpaced by the magnitude of misery on the streets.

Rita Richardson, a field supervisor with LA Door, a city addiction-prevention program that works with people convicted of misdemeanors, hands out socks, water, condoms, snacks, clean needles and flyers at the same hotspots Monday through Friday. She hopes the consistency of her visits will encourage people to get help.

"Then hopefully the light bulb comes on. It might not happen this year. It might not happen next year. It might take several years," said Richardson, a former homeless addict. "My goal is to take them from the dark to the light."

Parts of Los Angeles have become scenes of desperation with men and women sprawled on sidewalks, curled up on benches and collapsed in squalid alleys. Some huddle up smoking the drug, others inject it.

Armando Rivera, 33, blew out white puffs to attract addicts in the alley where Smith was sleeping. He needed to sell some dope to buy more. Those without enough money to support their habit, hovered around him, hoping for a free hit. Rivera showed no mercy.

Catano couldn't sell the chair, but eventually she sold the fabric softener to a street vendor for \$5.

It was enough money for another high.

Cyber Monday deals lure in consumers amid high inflation

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Days after flocking to stores on Black Friday, consumers are turning online for Cyber Monday to score more discounts on gifts and other items that have ballooned in price because of high inflation.

Cyber Monday is expected to remain the year's biggest online shopping day and rake in up to \$11.6 billion in sales, according to Adobe Analytics, which tracks transactions at over 85 of the top 100 U.S. online stores. That forecast represents a jump from the \$10.7 billion consumers spent last year.

Adobe's numbers are not adjusted for inflation, but the company says demand is growing even when inflation is factored in. Some analysts have said top line numbers will be boosted by higher prices and the amount of items consumers purchase could remain unchanged — or even fall — compared to prior years. Profit margins are also expected to be tight for retailers offering deeper discounts to attract budget-conscious consumers and clear out their bloated inventories.

Shoppers spent a record \$9.12 billion online on Black Friday, up 2.3% from last year, according to Adobe. E-commerce activity continued to be strong over the weekend, with \$9.55 billion in online sales.

Salesforce, which also tracks spending, said their estimates showed online sales in the U.S. hit \$15 billion on Friday and \$17.2 billion over the weekend, with an average discount rate of 30% on products. Electronics, active wear, toys and health and beauty items were among those that provided a big boost, the two groups said.

CONSUMERS ARE SPENDING CAUTIOUSLY

Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks spending across all types of payments including cash and credit card, said that overall sales on Black Friday rose 12% from the year-ago. Sales at physical stores rose 12%, while online sales were up 14%.

RetailNext, which captures sales and traffic via cameras reported that store traffic rose 7% on Black Friday, while sales at physical stores improved 0.1% from a year ago. However, spending per customer dropped nearly 7% as cautious shoppers did more browsing than buying. Another company that tracks store traffic — Sensormatic Solutions — said store traffic was up 2.9% on Black Friday compared to a

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year ago.

"Shoppers are being more thoughtful, but they are going to more than a few retailers to be able to make a determination of what they are going to buy this year," said Brian Field, Sensormatic's global leader of retail consulting and analytics.

Danny Groner, a 39-year-old who lives in New York City, said he and his wife want to get a new TV to replace one they've had for about seven years. He spent some time on Monday searching for deals online and found some good discounts. Still, he says he wants to be intentional about what he buys and doesn't mind spending a bit more for the right product.

Overall, online spending has remained resilient in the past few weeks as eager shoppers buy more items on credit and embrace "buy now, pay later" services that lack interest charges but carry late fees.

In the first three weeks of November, online sales were essentially flat compared with last year, according to Adobe. It said the modest uptick shows consumers have a strong appetite for holiday shopping amid uncertainty about the economy.

Still, some major retailers are feeling a shift. Target, Macy's and Kohl's said this month they've seen a slowdown in consumer spending in the past few weeks. The exception was Walmart, which reported higher sales in its third quarter and raised its earnings outlook.

"We're seeing that inflation is starting to really hit the wallet and that consumers are starting to amass more debt at this point," said Guru Hariharan, founder and CEO of retail e-commerce management firm CommerceIQ, adding there's more pressure on consumers to purchase cheaper alternatives.

SHIFTING DEMAND

This year's Cyber Monday also comes amid a wider e-commerce slowdown affecting online retailers that saw a boom in sales during most of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumers who feared leaving their homes and embraced e-commerce during the pandemic are heading back to physical stores in greater numbers this year as normalcy returns.

The National Retail Federation said its recent survey showed a 3% uptick in the number of Black Friday shoppers planning to go to stores. It expects 63.9 million consumers to shop online during Cyber Monday, compared to 77 million last year.

Amazon saw its retail business thrive during most of the pandemic, but much of the demand waned as the worst of the pandemic eased. To deal with the change, the company has been scaling back its warehouse expansion plans and is cutting costs by axing some of its projects. It's also following in the steps of other tech companies and implementing mass layoffs in its corporate ranks. Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said the company will continue to cut jobs until early next year.

Shopify, a company which helps businesses set up e-commerce websites and also offers offline software, laid off 10% of its staff this summer.

The company said Monday that its merchants have surpassed \$5.1 billion in global sales since the start of Black Friday in New Zealand. And spending per U.S. customer went up \$5 compared to last year, said Shopify President Harley Finkelstein.

Despite the bump, Finkelstein said shoppers were more intentional about their spending this year and waiting for discounts before making a purchase.

Lull in Russian attacks against Ukraine energy, aid pledged

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia held back Monday from launching a new round of strikes that have been expected against power stations and other key infrastructure in Ukraine, as officials warned a lingering energy and water crisis from earlier attacks could prompt more evacuations from the capital.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, hosting the largest delegation of top foreign officials since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a Russian invasion of Ukraine over nine months ago, insisted that better air defenses were needed from allies "to break this vicious cycle" of Russian air strikes followed by Ukrainian rebuilding of damaged infrastructure.

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"Every time we will be restoring it, the Russians will be destroying it," he told counterparts from seven Baltic and Nordic countries.

The foreign ministers from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Iceland, Sweden, Norway and Finland pledged more military, economic and humanitarian aid as an energy crisis deepens and Ukrainian forces seek to move on with a counteroffensive against Russian troops.

Sweden said it had provided a 270-million-euro (\$279 million) package of air defense systems, ammunition, all-terrain vehicles and personal winter gear for troops. Finland pledged to take in more Ukrainian refugees. In Washington, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. is working with partners and allies to provide energy and water replacement equipment to Ukraine.

In Israel — which has straddled a fine political line in the conflict — Channel 13 reported that a high-level Ukrainian delegation recently visited to discuss an Israeli pledge to provide a system that detects incoming missiles. Israel's Defense Ministry declined comment.

Israel has voiced support for Ukraine but has refused so far to provide it arms or impose sanctions against Moscow because of its sensitive ties with Russia. Israel's and Russia's militaries communicate to avoid conflict in Syria. Israel also does not want to endanger the large Jewish community in Russia.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned late Sunday that Russian troops "are preparing new strikes, and as long as they have missiles, they won't stop." He met Monday with senior government officials to discuss what actions to take.

"The upcoming week can be as hard as the one that passed," he predicted.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg insisted Putin was intent on using frost, snow and ice to his advantage, not only on the battleground but against Ukrainian civilians.

"President Putin is now trying to use the winter as a weapon of war against Ukraine, and this is horrific and we need to be prepared for more attacks," he said on the eve of a two-day meeting of NATO foreign ministers — including those who visited Kyiv on Monday — in Bucharest, Romania. "That's the reason why NATO's allies have stepped up their support to Ukraine."

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said some of the city's 3 million people might have to be evacuated to where essential services would be less prone to shutdowns caused by missile attacks.

For weeks, Russia has been pounding energy facilities around Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities with missile strikes, usually on Mondays at the work week's beginning, resulting in outages of power and water supplies.

Based on the pattern of infrastructure attacks and the Russian military's preparation time, an advisor to Ukraine's interior minister said on national TV that the next strikes could occur in another week. A Ukrainian military spokesman also said on national TV that Russian aircraft had intensified their activity over Ukraine on Monday.

With temperatures hovering around freezing, and expected to dip as low as minus 11C (12 Fahrenheit) in little more than a week, international help was increasingly focused on items like generators and transformers, to make sure blackouts that affect everything from kitchens to operating rooms are as limited and short as possible. The power situation was so dire that Ukraine's energy trader — in normal times an exporter — tested importing electricity from neighboring Romania.

Putin "continues trying to make Ukraine a black hole — no light, no electricity, no heating to put the Ukrainians into the darkness and the cold," said European foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, who is leading a meeting of EU ministers in Bucharest to help Ukraine with its humanitarian crisis. "So we have to continue our support providing more material for the Ukrainians to face the winter without electricity."

Ukraine's energy provider Ukrenergo said Monday it is still short 27% of output and that "the scale and complexity of the damage are high, and repair works have continued around the clock."

Power supply was restored to 17% of residents in the southern city of Kherson, which Ukraine reclaimed earlier this month. The Russians have continued pounding the city with artillery barrages from newly consolidated positions across the Dnieper River. Britain's Defense Ministry reported that the strikes reached a record high, 54, on Sunday.

Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address Monday that Russian forces had fired 258 times on 30 settlements in the Kherson region over the past week, and had damaged a water pumping station for Mykolaiv.

Ukraine's presidential office said Monday that at least four civilians were killed and 11 others wounded

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in the latest Russian attacks. It said intense fighting is continuing in the east, with the Russians shelling Bakhmut and Toretsk.

"People are sheltering in the basements, many of which are filled by water," said Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko. "They have been living in catastrophic conditions without power or heating."

Also Monday, Russia denied that it plans to withdraw from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine, which it has occupied since the early days of the war.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a call with reporters that it was pointless to look for signs of a pullback from the plant "when there are none and there can't be."

Peskov's comments were in response to Ukrainian claims that Russian forces were bound to retreat from the plant as they face a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

The plant was shut down because of repeated shelling, for which Russia and Ukraine have traded blame. The U.N. nuclear watchdog and international leaders have urged Russia to demilitarize the plant to avoid a nuclear disaster, but Moscow has rejected the demands, arguing that it needs to maintain troops there to ensure its safety.

Also Monday, a Russian official told the Tass news agency that nuclear workers who have refused to sign contracts with a Russian company claiming to have take over the plant's operations are barred from entry.

5 officers charged after Black man paralyzed in police van

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (AP) — Five Connecticut police officers were charged Monday with cruelly neglecting a Black man after he was partially paralyzed in the back of a police van, despite his repeated and desperate pleas for help.

Randy Cox, 36, was being driven to a New Haven police station June 19 for processing on a weapons charge when the driver braked hard at an intersection to avoid a collision, causing Cox to fly headfirst into a metal partition in the van.

"I can't move. I'm going to die like this. Please, please, please help me," Cox said minutes after the crash.

As Cox pleaded for help, some of the officers at the detention center mocked him and accused him of being drunk and faking his injuries, according to dialogue captured by surveillance and body-worn camera footage. Officers dragged Cox by his feet from the van and placed him in a holding cell prior to his eventual transfer to a hospital.

"I think I cracked my neck," Cox said after the van arrived at the detention center.

"You didn't crack it, no, you drank too much ... Sit up," said Sgt. Betsy Segui, one of the five officers charged.

Cox was later found to have a fractured neck and was paralyzed.

The five New Haven police officers were charged with second-degree reckless endangerment and cruelty, both misdemeanors. The others charged were Officer Oscar Diaz, Officer Ronald Pressley, Officer Jocelyn Lavandier and Officer Luis Rivera. All have been on administrative leave since last summer.

Messages seeking comment were sent to attorneys for the officers.

Though each officer faces the same charges, some seemed to take Cox's pleas more seriously than others. Diaz, who drove the transport van, pulled over after Cox complained of his injury, spoke to him and requested that an ambulance meet them at the detention center. However, Diaz did not render medical attention to Cox as he lay face down on the floor.

The officers turned themselves in at a state police barracks Monday. Each was processed, posted a \$25,000 bond and are due back in court Dec. 8, according to a news release from state police.

New Haven's police chief, speaking to reporters Monday along with the city's mayor, said it was important for the department to be transparent and accountable.

"You can make mistakes, but you can't treat people poorly, period. You cannot treat people the way Mr. Cox was treated," said Police Chief Karl Jacobson.

The case has drawn outrage from civil rights advocates like the NAACP, along with comparisons to the Freddie Gray case in Baltimore. Gray, who was also Black, died in 2015 after he suffered a spinal injury

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while handcuffed and shackled in a city police van.

An attorney for Cox's family, Ben Crump, said Monday that the New Haven officers need to be held accountable.

"It is important — when you see that video of how they treated Randy Cox and the actions and inactions that led to him being paralyzed from his chest down — that those police officers should be held to the full extent of the law," Crump said.

Cox was arrested June 19 after police said they found him in possession of a handgun at a block party. The charges against him were later dropped.

Cox's family filed a federal lawsuit against the city of New Haven and the five officers in September. The lawsuit alleges negligence, exceeding the speed limit and failure to have proper restraints in the police van.

Four of the officers filed motions last week claiming qualified immunity from the lawsuit, arguing that their actions in the case did not violate any "clearly established" legal standard.

New Haven officials announced a series of police reforms this summer stemming from the case, including eliminating the use of police vans for most prisoner transports and using marked police vehicles instead. They also require officers to immediately call for an ambulance to respond to their location if the prisoner requests or appears to need medical aid.

Brazil advances at World Cup with 1-0 win over Switzerland

By TALES AZZONI AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Struggling and unconvincing without Neymar on the field, Brazil still played well enough to secure a spot in the next round of the World Cup.

The five-time champions overcame the absence of their injured star to beat Switzerland 1-0 with a late goal Monday and make it to the round of 16 with a match to spare in Group G.

"Of course we miss a player like Neymar," Brazil coach Tite said. "The team loses a lot without him. But we also have other players who can get the job done, as we saw it today."

Casemiro got the only goal in the 83rd minute of a game in which Brazil had difficulties creating scoring chances without its main playmaker. The defensive midfielder scored with a one-timer into the far corner, using the outside of his right foot for a shot that deflected slightly off defender Manuel Akanji.

"We knew that it wasn't going to be easy. We had to be patient," Casemiro said. "Our first objective was to advance and we achieved that."

Neymar stayed at the team's hotel to treat a right ankle injury sustained in the opener in Qatar. He posted an Instagram story showing him watching the match on television while undergoing treatment on his foot.

"Casemiro has been the best defensive midfielder in the world for a long time," Neymar wrote on Twitter.

Team doctors have not yet given a timetable for Neymar's return — or said if he will return at all. Vinícius Júnior said Neymar also had a fever on Monday, though the team had not officially said anything about it.

"We know that Neymar is a great player and that he makes a difference," Brazil defender Marquinhos said. "In difficult moments he takes on the responsibility and creates the opportunities, but we showed once again that we have quality players to make up for his absence."

The win gave Brazil six points from two matches, leaving Switzerland with three. Serbia and Cameroon, which drew 3-3 earlier Monday, have one point each.

Switzerland, which had no attempts on target, needs a win in the last match against Serbia to guarantee its spot in the next stage. A draw may be enough depending on the match between Brazil and Cameroon.

The result extended Brazil's unbeaten run in the group stage to 17 matches, with 14 wins and three draws. It has lost only one of its last 29 group games, with the last defeat coming against Norway in 1998 in France.

Switzerland had lost only two of its last 13 group matches at the World Cup.

"I can't really blame the team, it did a good job for quite some time," Switzerland coach Murat Yakin said through a translator. "I don't think it's a disappointment. We have a lot of good takeaways here. The next game is something we have control over."

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It was an even match early on, with both teams trying to control the game but not creating many significant chances. Without Neymar, Brazil struggled to get near Switzerland's area until Casemiro's goal. The assists came from Vinícius Junios and Rodrygo, the Real Madrid players who until recent had Casemiro as their teammate. Casemiro now plays for Manchester United.

Tite replaced Neymar with Fred, Casemiro's teammate at Man United, freeing up Lucas Paquetá to play closer to the attack. Éder Militão, who plays as a central defender at Real Madrid, came in for Danilo in the right back position, instead of veteran Dani Alves.

With Paquetá not being able to create much for Brazil, Tite began the second half with Rodrygo in the team. Richarlison, who scored both of Brazil's goals in the opener, was not as effective and was substituted in the second half.

Vinícius Júnior thought he had given Brazil the lead with a shot from inside the area after a pass by Casemiro in the 64th, but video review determined there was offside in the buildup. Few had noticed it until the VAR call was announced at Stadium 974.

LIGHTS OUT

The lights dimmed for a few seconds before halftime at Stadium 974, prompting a brief stoppage in play. Brazil was about to take a corner when it suddenly started turning dark at the temporary stadium.

Iranian general acknowledges over 300 dead in unrest

By The Associated Press undefined

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An Iranian general on Monday acknowledged that more than 300 people have been killed in the unrest surrounding nationwide protests, giving the first official word on casualties in two months.

That estimate is considerably lower than the toll reported by Human Rights Activists in Iran, a U.S.-based group that has been closely tracking the protests since they erupted after the Sept. 16 death of a young woman being held by the country's morality police.

The activist group says 451 protesters and 60 security forces have been killed since the start of the unrest and that more than 18,000 people have been detained.

The protests were sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who was detained for allegedly violating the Islamic Republic's strict dress code. They quickly escalated into calls for the overthrow of Iran's theocracy and pose one of the most serious challenges to the ruling clerics since the 1979 revolution that brought them to power.

Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the commander of the aerospace division of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, was quoted by a website close to the Guard as saying that more than 300 people have been killed, including "martyrs," an apparent reference to security forces. He also suggested that many of those killed were ordinary Iranians not involved in the protests.

He did not provide an exact figure or say where his estimate came from.

Authorities have heavily restricted media coverage of the protests. State-linked media have not reported an overall toll and have largely focused on attacks on security forces, which officials blame on shadowy militant and separatist groups.

Hajizadeh reiterated the official claim that the protests have been fomented by Iran's enemies, including Western countries and Saudi Arabia, without providing evidence. The protesters say they are fed up after decades of social and political repression, and deny having any foreign agenda.

The protests have spread across the country and drawn support from artists, athletes and other public figures. The unrest has even cast a shadow over the World Cup, with some Iranians actively rooting against their own national team because they see it as being linked to the government.

The niece of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei recently called on people to pressure their governments to cut ties with Tehran over its violent suppression of the demonstrations.

In a video posted online by her France-based brother, Farideh Moradkhani urged "conscientious people of the world" to support Iranian protesters. The video was shared online this week after Moradkhani's

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reported arrest on Nov. 23, according to the activist group.

Moradkhani is a long-time activist whose late father was an opposition figure married to Khamenei's sister and is the closest member of the supreme leader's family to be arrested. The branch of the family has opposed Khamenei for decades and Moradkhani has been imprisoned on previous occasions for her activism.

"I ask the conscientious people of the world to stand by us and ask their governments not to react with empty words and slogans but with real action and stop any dealings with this regime," she said in her video statement.

The protests, now in their third month, have continued despite a brutal crackdown by Iranian security forces using live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas.

Iran refuses to cooperate with a fact-finding mission that the U.N. Human Rights Council recently voted to establish.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will not engage in any cooperation, whatsoever, with the political committee," Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said Monday.

In a separate development, Iran released a 76-year-old dual Iranian-Austrian citizen from prison for health reasons, the Austria Press Agency reported.

APA quoted the Austrian Foreign Ministry confirming that Massud Mossaheb was given indefinite medical leave. The ministry said "intensive diplomatic efforts" had led to his release, which was first reported by Austrian daily Die Presse. There was no immediate comment from Iran.

Mossaheb was arrested on suspicion of espionage in early 2019 during a visit to the capital, Tehran, and later sentenced to 10 years in prison. He must remain in Iran and report to authorities every other week, APA reported.

Iran has detained several dual nationals in recent years on charges of threatening national security. Analysts and rights groups accuse hard-liners in Iran's security agencies of using foreign detainees as bargaining chips in negotiations or prisoner swaps with the West, which Tehran denies.

World Cup Viewer's Guide: US and Iran pulled into politics

By JENNA FRYER AP National Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — The American and Iranian soccer teams are the only ones putting politics aside as the sides meet in a match to determine if either nation continues in this World Cup.

The two met at the 1998 World Cup in France when memories of the 1979 Islamic Revolution were still fresh for both countries. Even the White House was talking about the game as then-President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeline Albright used the match to discuss the possible resumption of diplomatic relations with Iran, which had been cut off since the 1979-81 hostage crisis.

The State Department a month before that game called Iran the world's "most active" sponsor of terrorism, so nerves were frayed for both nations. And just a week ahead of kickoff, a French television station broadcast the 1991 film "Not Without My Daughter," a movie based on the true story of an American woman who escaped Iran with her daughter against the wishes of her Iranian husband.

The Iranians claimed the broadcast was a purposeful insult.

Iran won 2-1 but neither team advance to the knockout round. They met one other time — a 1-1 draw in a 2000 friendly.

Now the teams head into their final Group B match Tuesday and the United States can only advance with a win. Iran would advance with a win, and perhaps a draw depending on the results England's match against Wales.

But headed into one of the most politically charged matches — rematch in this case — in tournament history, the conversation was again not centered on winning or losing.

In Monday's pre-match news conference, United States captain Tyler Adams and coach Gregg Berhalter were asked about a variety of social and political subjects that had nothing to do with what happens on the field. Adams was asked to defend the U.S.'s treatment of Black people and chastised for pronouncing the opponent "Eye-ran" instead of "E-ran."

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Berhalter was questioned about U.S. immigration and Naval policy, and also apologized for the U.S. Soccer Federation's decision to strip the emblem of the Islamic Republic from Iran's flag in a since-deleted social media post.

Iran coach Carlos Queiroz was asked about the social media post, which led the governing body of Iranian soccer to demand FIFA expel the United States from the tournament. He said he did not intend to use the controversy as motivation.

"If after 42 years in this game as a coach I still believe that I could win games with those mental games, I think I did not learn nothing about the game," Queiroz said. "We have solidarity with the humanitarian causes all over the world, whatever they are or who they are. If you talk about human rights, racism, kids that die in schools with shootings, we have solidarity to all those causes, but here our mission is to bring the smiles for the people at least for 90 minutes."

TWO AT A TIME

Tuesday marks the final day of play for both Groups A and B, and it is the first day of simultaneous kickoffs.

The practice of starting two games at the same time began in 1986, four years after a match dubbed the "Disgrace of Gijon." The match was scandalous because West Germany and Austria both knew that a German win by one or two goals would advance both teams at the expense of Algeria.

After Germany scored an early goal, neither team tried to score again.

WALES-ENGLAND

British rivals meet at the World Cup when Wales faces England with animosity high between the nations over a 2016 video.

Footage went viral six years ago of Wales players celebrating wildly when England was eliminated from the European Championship in a humiliating defeat. Wales had lost to England in the group stage and was ecstatic to see its British neighbor lose.

Now set to meet Tuesday in their final group game, England can send Wales home.

The Three Lions only need a draw to move into the knockout stage, but Wales must win to have a chance at advancing in its first World Cup since 1958.

Wales drew 1-1 with the United States in its opening match, then lost to Iran 2-0 and has only one point in Group B.

"We have shown time and time again when you write us off we will prove people wrong," Wales defender Chris Mepham said.

England is a World Cup favorite and opened strong with a 6-2 win over Iran, but looked flat in a goalless draw against the United States. England coach Gareth Southgate has been criticized for conservative play and not starting winger Phil Foden.

The Manchester City midfielder has played only 19 minutes in the first game. No matter who starts for England, the goal is to send Wales home and avenge being mocked in 2016.

"I don't think it takes a genius to see how we've improved since 2016. For me it feels like a completely different team," England forward Marcus Rashford said. "We've come on so much. We've learned a lot about ourselves along the way."

ECUADOR-SENEGAL

Enner Valencia scored three goals in Ecuador's first two World Cup games but his health is in question heading into a match against Senegal.

The 33-year-old striker was carried off the field on a stretcher in a 1-1 draw with the Netherlands with an injured right knee. Valencia also sprained his left knee in Ecuador's opening win over Qatar.

It's concerning to Ecuador because Valencia has carried the team and scored its last six World Cup goals. Valencia is trying to become only the second player to score seven straight goals for a single nation at the World Cup.

Senegal, meanwhile, is considering lineup changes for the must-win Group A game.

Senegal lost to the Netherlands 3-1 in its opening match, and only a win against Ecuador will advance the team to the knockout stage for the first time since reaching the quarterfinals in 2002 in its first World Cup.

Senegal has never beaten a South American opponent at the World Cup, losing to Uruguay in 2002 and

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Colombia in 2014. Senegal has struggled without star Sadio Mané.

Senegal is ranked No. 18 in the world and won the African Cup of Nations title in February.

NETHERLANDS-QATAR

Qatar will play its final match of the World Cup on Tuesday when it faces the Netherlands in a game with nothing on the line for the host nation.

Qatar was eliminated after its second loss in group play to become only the second host to fail to advance to the knockout stage. South Africa in 2010 was the first to be eliminated in group stage but still had a chance to advance in its third and final group match.

Qatar also was the first host nation to lose the opening World Cup game in tournament history, a 2-0 defeat to Ecuador. Qatar also lost to Senegal 3-1 and was the first team eliminated.

"We are a country with 6,000 football licenses," Qatar coach Felix Sanchez said. "And I think these players have achieved a great deal over the last years. And now we need to be aware that to compete at this level, we are still lagging behind."

The Netherlands is on the verge of reaching the knockout stage with a draw after failing to qualify for the World Cup four years ago. The Dutch could even get through with a loss if Ecuador beats Senegal in the other Group A match.

The Netherlands is on a 17-game unbeaten run since coach Louis van Gaal returned to lead the team for the third time.

'Gaslighting' is Merriam-Webster's word of the year for 2022

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — "Gaslighting" — behavior that's mind manipulating, grossly misleading, downright deceitful — is Merriam-Webster's word of the year.

Lookups for the word on merriam-webster.com increased 1,740% in 2022 over the year before. But something else happened. There wasn't a single event that drove significant spikes in curiosity, as it usually goes with the chosen word of the year.

The gaslighting was pervasive.

"It's a word that has risen so quickly in the English language, and especially in the last four years, that it actually came as a surprise to me and to many of us," said Peter Sokolowski, Merriam-Webster's editor at large, in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press ahead of Monday's unveiling.

"It was a word looked up frequently every single day of the year," he said.

There were deepfakes and the dark web. There were deep states and fake news. And there was a whole lot of trolling.

Merriam-Webster's top definition for gaslighting is the psychological manipulation of a person, usually over an extended period of time, that "causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories and typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator."

More broadly, the dictionary defines the word thusly: "The act or practice of grossly misleading someone especially for one's own advantage."

Gaslighting is a heinous tool frequently used by abusers in relationships — and by politicians and other newsmakers. It can happen between romantic partners, within a broader family unit and among friends. It can be a corporate tactic, or a way to mislead the public. There's also "medical gaslighting," when a health care professional dismisses a patient's symptoms or illness as "all in your head."

Despite its relatively recent prominence — including "Gaslighter," The Chicks' 2020 album featuring the rousing angry titular single — the word was brought to life more than 80 years ago with "Gas Light," a 1938 play by Patrick Hamilton.

It birthed two film adaptations in the 1940s. One, George Cukor's "Gaslight" in 1944, starred Ingrid Bergman as Paula Alquist and Charles Boyer as Gregory Anton. The two marry after a whirlwind romance and Gregory turns out to be a champion gaslighter. Among other instances, he insists her complaints over

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the constant dimming of their London townhouse's gaslights is a figment of her troubled mind. It wasn't.

The death of Angela Lansbury in October drove some interest in lookups of the word, Sokolowski said. She played Nancy Oliver, a young maid hired by Gregory and told not to bother his "high-strung" wife.

The term gaslighting was later used by mental health practitioners to clinically describe a form of prolonged coercive control in abusive relationships.

"There is this implication of an intentional deception," Sokolowski said. "And once one is aware of that deception, it's not just a straightforward lie, as in, you know, I didn't eat the cookies in the cookie jar. It's something that has a little bit more devious quality to it. It has possibly an idea of strategy or a long-term plan."

Merriam-Webster, which logs 100 million pageviews a month on its site, chooses its word of the year based solely on data. Sokolowski and his team weed out evergreen words most commonly looked up to gauge which word received a significant bump over the year before.

They don't slice and dice why people look up words, which can be anything from quick spelling and definition checks to some sort of attempt at inspiration or motivation. Some of the droves who looked up "gaslighting" this year might have wanted to know, simply, if it's one or two words, or whether it's hyphenated.

"Gaslighting," Sokolowski said, spent all of 2022 in the top 50 words looked up on merriam-webster.com to earn top dog word of the year status. Last year's pick was "vaccine." Rounding out this year's Top 10 are:

- "Oligarch," driven by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- "Omicron," the persistent COVID-19 variant and the 15th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- "Codify," as in turning abortion rights into federal law.
- "Queen consort," what King Charles' wife, Camilla is newly known as.
- "Raid," as in the search of former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago home.
- "Sentient," with lookups brought on by Google canning the engineer who claimed an unreleased AI system had become sentient.
- "Cancel culture," enough said.
- "LGBTQIA," for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual, aro-mantic or agender.
- "Loamy," which many Wordle users tried back in August, though the right word that day was "clown."

Santa's back in town with inflation, inclusion on his mind

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Don't look for plastic partitions or faraway benches when visiting Santa Claus this year. The jolly old elf is back, pre-pandemic style, and he's got some pressing issues on his mind.

Santa booker HireSanta.com has logged a 30% increase in demand this Christmas season over last year, after losing about 15% of its performers to retirement or death during the pandemic, said founder and head elf Mitch Allen.

He has a Santa database of several thousand with gigs at the Bloomingdale's flagship store in New York, various Marriott properties and other venues around the U.S. Most of Allen's clients have moved back to kids on laps and aren't considering COVID-19 in a major way, he said, but Santa can choose to mask up.

Another large Santa agency, Cherry Hill Programs, is back up to pre-pandemic booking numbers for their 1,400 or so Santas working at more than 600 malls and other spots this year, said spokesperson Chris Landtroop.

"I can't even explain how excited we are to see everyone's smiles at all locations this season without anything covering up those beautiful faces," she said.

Cherry Hill Santas are also free to wear masks, Landtroop said.

Among standout Santas still keeping their distance? There will be no lap visits at the Macy's flagship store in New York's Herald Square. Santa is seated behind his desk.

Some Santas who stayed home the last two years out of concern for their health have returned to the

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ho ho ho game, but Allen is desperately trying to refill his pipeline with new performers.

Inflation has also taken a bite out of Santa. Many are older, on fixed incomes and travel long distances to don the red suit. They spend hundreds on their costumes and other accoutrements.

"We're charging the clients slightly more and we're also paying our Santas slightly more," Allen said.

Bookings for many Santas were made months in advance, and some work year-round. Allen's Santas will earn from \$5,000 to \$12,000 for the season.

A few Santas told The Associated Press they're unbothered by the cost, however. They're not in the Santa profession to make a buck but do it out of sheer joy.

Allen and other agencies are juggling more requests for inclusive Santas, such as Black, deaf and Spanish-speaking performers. Allen also has a female Santa on speed dial.

"I haven't been busted yet by the kids and, with one exception, by the parents, either," said 48-year-old Melissa Rickard, who stepped into the role in her early 20s when the Santa hired by her father's lodge fell ill.

"To have a child not be able to tell I'm a woman in one sense is the ultimate compliment because it means I'm doing Santa justice. It cracks my husband up," added Rickard, who lives outside Little Rock, Arkansas. "I know there are more of us out there."

By mid-November, Rickard had more than 100 gigs lined up, through Hire Santa and other means.

"A lot of it is word of mouth," she said. "It's 'Hey, have you seen the female Santa?'"

Rickard charges roughly \$175 an hour as Santa, depending on the job, and donates all but her fuel money to charity. And her beard? Yak hair.

Eric Elliott's carefully tended white beard is the real deal. He and his Mrs. Claus, wife Moeisha Elliott, went pro this year after first taking on the roles as volunteers in 2007. Both are retired military.

They spent weeks in formal Claus training. Among the skills they picked up was American Sign Language and other ways to accommodate people with disabilities. Their work has included trips into disaster zones with the Texas-based nonprofit Lone Star Santas to lend a little cheer.

The Elliotts, who are Black, say breaking into the top tier of Santas as first-time pros and Clauses of color hasn't been easy. For some people, Eric said, "We understand that we're not the Santa for you."

The Santa Experience at Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, is staffing up with six Saint Nicks, including two who are Black and its first Asian Santa. Visits in Spanish and Cantonese are provided.

Working smaller jobs, including house visits, the Elliotts have seen how rising prices have hit some people hard. They've lowered their rates at times when they sense that people are struggling.

"People are having issues just eating, but they don't want to miss out on the experience," Eric said. Sometimes, he said, "You'll meet them and be like, 'You go ahead and hold on to that. I know you worked hard for that.'"

For other clients, the Elliotts charge anywhere from \$150 to \$300 an hour.

Charles Graves, a rare, professional deaf Santa in New Braunfels, Texas, said through an interpreter that he was inspired to grow his beard and put on the suit in part by awkward encounters with hearing Santas as a child.

"As a child, I was very excited to receive a gift, but then you just kind of go away and you're like, there's no connection there. Children look at me now and they're like, wow, you know, there's a connection there with the deaf culture. And I can always connect with the hearing kids as well," said Graves, a spry Santa at 52.

Graves, who has a day job at a school for deaf children, also received training to be Santa. He works as Santa with interpreters. Breaking in has been difficult and expensive, he says, but "this is something really, really important to me."

By mid-November, he had more than a dozen gigs, including a parade in Santa Paula, California, a mall in Austin, Texas, and at Morgan's Wonderland, a nonprofit accessible theme park in San Antonio. He's also doing some Zoom visits.

Among Santa's rising costs this year are his duds. The price of suits, from custom to ready-to-wear, is up about 25%, said 72-year-old Stephen Arnold, a longtime Santa who heads the more than 2,000-strong International Brotherhood of Real Bearded Santas.

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"Most of the performers I know are raising their rates, mostly due to the costs of transportation, accommodation and materials," he said. "Personally, I'm raising my rates a bit for new clients but I'm holding prices this year for my repeat gigs."

Arnold, who's in Memphis, Tennessee, charges \$250 to \$350 an hour. Others in his organization, depending on location and experience, charge anywhere from \$100 to \$500 an hour, the latter in big cities like Los Angeles. Some, he said, don't know their worth and lowball it at \$50 or \$75 an hour.

As for the pandemic, Arnold hasn't heard a word about it from his clients, compared to last year and 2020, when he worked inside a snow globe. The Santas he knows seem unflustered.

"I'm surprised how few people are concerned about it," Arnold said. "I visit my wife twice a day in a nursing facility. I'm diabetic. I mean, most of us are old fat men."

China's Xi faces threat from public anger over 'zero COVID'

By DAKE KANG Associated Press

SHANGHAI (AP) — Barely a month after granting himself new powers as China's potential leader for life, Xi Jinping is facing a wave of public anger of the kind not seen for decades, sparked by his "zero COVID" strategy that will soon enter its fourth year.

Demonstrators poured into the streets over the weekend in cities including Shanghai and Beijing, criticizing the policy, confronting police — and even calling for Xi to step down. On Monday, demonstrators gathered in the semi-autonomous southern city of Hong Kong, where the pro-democracy movement was all but snuffed out by a harsh crackdown following monthslong demonstrations that began in 2019.

Students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong chanted "oppose dictatorship" and "Freedom! Freedom!" Floral tributes were laid in the Central district that had been the epicenter of previous protests.

The widespread demonstrations are unprecedented since the army crushed the 1989 student-led pro-democracy movement centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

Most protesters focused their anger on restrictions that can confine families to their homes for months and have been criticized as neither scientific nor effective. Some complained the system is failing to respond to their needs.

The cries for the resignation of Xi and the end of the Communist Party that has ruled China for 73 years could be deemed sedition, which is punishable by prison.

In response, police in Shanghai used pepper spray to drive away demonstrators, and dozens were detained in police sweeps and taken away in police vans and buses. China's vast internal security apparatus is also famed for identifying people it considers troublemakers and picking them up later when few are watching.

The possibility of more protests is unclear. Government censors scrubbed the internet of videos and messages supporting them. And analysts say unless divisions emerge, the Communist Party should be able to contain the dissent.

China's stringent measures were originally accepted for minimizing deaths while other countries suffered devastating waves of infections, but that consensus has begun to fray in recent weeks.

While the ruling party says anti-coronavirus measures should be "targeted and precise" and cause the least possible disruption to people's lives, local officials are threatened with losing their jobs or other punishments if outbreaks occur. They have responded by imposing quarantines and other restrictions that protesters say exceed what the central government allows.

Xi's unelected government doesn't seem too concerned with the hardships brought by the policy. This spring, millions of Shanghai residents were placed under a strict lockdown that resulted in food shortages, restricted access to medical care and economic pain. Nevertheless, in October, the city's party secretary, a Xi loyalist, was appointed to the Communist Party's No. 2 position.

The party has long imposed surveillance and travel restrictions on minorities including Tibetans and Muslim groups such as Uyghurs, more than 1 million of whom have been detained in camps where they are forced to renounce their traditional culture and religion and swear fealty to Xi.

But this weekend's protests included many members of the educated urban middle class from the ethnic

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Han majority. The ruling party relies on that group to abide by an unwritten post-Tiananmen agreement to accept autocratic rule in exchange for a better quality of life.

Now, it appears that old arrangement has ended as the party enforces control at the expense of the economy, said Hung Ho-fung of Johns Hopkins University.

"The party and the people are trying to seek a new equilibrium," he said. "There will be some instability in the process."

To develop into something on the scale of the 1989 protests would require clear divisions within the leadership that could be leveraged for change, Hung said.

Xi all but eliminated such threats at an October party congress. He broke with tradition and awarded himself a third five-year term as party leader and packed the seven-member Politburo Standing Committee with loyalists. Two potential rivals were sent into retirement.

"Without the clear signal of party leader divisions ... I would expect this kind of protest might not last very long," Hung said.

It's "unimaginable" that Xi would back down, and the party is experienced in handling protests, Hung said.

China is now the only major country still trying to stop transmission of the virus that was first detected in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019.

The normally supportive head of the World Health Organization has called "zero COVID" unsustainable. Beijing dismissed his remarks as irresponsible, but public acceptance of the restrictions has worn thin.

People who are quarantined at home in some areas say they lack food and medicine. And the ruling party faced anger over the deaths of two children whose parents said anti-virus controls hampered efforts to get emergency medical care.

Protests then erupted after a fire on Thursday killed at least 10 people in an apartment building in the city of Urumqi in the northwest, where some residents have been locked in their homes for four months. That prompted an outpouring of angry questions online about whether firefighters or people trying to escape were blocked by locked doors or other pandemic restrictions.

Yet Xi, an ardent nationalist, has politicized the issue to the point that exiting the "zero COVID" policy could be seen as a loss to his reputation and authority.

"Zero COVID" was "supposed to demonstrate the superiority of the 'Chinese model,' but ended up demonstrating the risk that when authoritarian regimes make mistakes, those mistakes can be colossal," said Andrew Nathan, a Chinese politics specialist at Columbia University. He edited *The Tiananmen Papers*, an insider account of the government's response to the 1989 protests.

"But I think the regime has backed itself into a corner and has no way to yield. It has lots of force, and if necessary, it will use it," Nathan said. "If it could hold onto power in the face of the pro-democracy demonstrations of 1989, it can do so again now."

14 years later, NATO is set to renew its vow to Ukraine

By LORNE COOK and STEPHEN MCGRATH Associated Press

BUCHAREST (AP) — NATO returns on Tuesday to the scene of one of its most controversial decisions, intent on repeating its vow that Ukraine — now suffering through the 10th month of a war against Russia — will join the world's biggest military alliance one day.

NATO foreign ministers will gather for two days at the Palace of the Parliament in the Romanian capital Bucharest. It was there in April 2008 that U.S. President George W. Bush persuaded his allies to open NATO's door to Ukraine and Georgia, over vehement Russian objections.

"NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO," the leaders said in a statement. Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was at the summit, described this as "a direct threat" to Russia's security.

About four months later, Russian forces invaded Georgia.

Some experts describe the decision in Bucharest as a massive error that left Russia feeling cornered by a seemingly ever-expanding NATO. NATO counters that it doesn't pressgang countries into joining, and that some requested membership to seek protection from Russia — as Finland and Sweden are doing now.

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More than 14 years on, NATO will pledge this week to support Ukraine long-term as it defends itself against Russian aerial, missile and ground attacks — many of which have struck power grids and other civilian infrastructure, depriving millions of people of electricity and heating.

In a press conference Monday in Bucharest after a meeting with Romania's President Klaus Iohannis, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg highlighted the importance of investing in defense "as we face our greatest security crisis in a generation."

"We cannot let Putin win," he said. "This would show authoritarian leaders around the world that they can achieve their goals by using military force — and make the world a more dangerous place for all of us. It is in our own security interests to support Ukraine."

Stoltenberg noted Russia's recent bombardment of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, saying Putin "is trying to use winter as a weapon of war against Ukraine" and that "we need to be prepared for more attacks."

North Macedonia and Montenegro have joined the U.S.-led alliance in recent years. With this, Stoltenberg said last week before travelling to Bucharest, "we have demonstrated that NATO's door is open and that it is for NATO allies and aspirant countries to decide on membership. This is also the message to Ukraine."

This gathering in Bucharest is likely to see NATO make fresh pledges of non-lethal support to Ukraine: fuel, electricity generators, medical supplies, winter equipment and drone jamming devices.

Individual allies are also likely to announce fresh supplies of military equipment for Ukraine — chiefly the air defense systems that Kyiv so desperately seeks to protect its skies. NATO as an organization will not offer such supplies, to avoid being dragged into a wider war with nuclear-armed Russia.

But the ministers, along with their Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba, will also look further afield.

"Over the longer term we will help Ukraine transition from Soviet-era equipment to modern NATO standards, doctrine and training," Stoltenberg said last week. This will not only improve Ukraine's armed forces and help them to better integrate, it will also meet some of the conditions for membership.

That said, Ukraine will not join NATO anytime soon. With the Crimean Peninsula annexed, and Russian troops and pro-Moscow separatists holding parts of the south and east, it's not clear what Ukraine's borders would even look like.

Many of the 30 allies believe the focus now must be uniquely on defeating Russia.

"What we have seen in the last months is that President Putin made a big strategic mistake," Stoltenberg said. "He underestimated the strength of the Ukrainian people, the Ukrainian armed forces, and the Ukrainian political leadership."

But even as economic pressure — high electricity and gas prices, plus inflation, all exacerbated by the war — mounts on many allies, Stoltenberg would not press Ukraine to enter into peace talks, and indeed NATO and European diplomats say that Putin does not appear willing to come to the table.

"The war will end at some stage at the negotiating table," Stoltenberg said Monday. "But the outcome of those negotiations are totally dependent on the situation on the battlefield," adding "it would be a tragedy for (the) Ukrainian people if President Putin wins."

The foreign ministers of Bosnia, Georgia and Moldova — three partners that NATO says are under increasing Russian pressure — will also be in Bucharest. Stoltenberg said NATO would "take further steps to help them protect their independence, and strengthen their ability to defend themselves."

Surgeons work by flashlight as Ukraine power grid battered

By YURAS KARMANAU, SAM MEDNICK and DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

Dr. Oleh Duda was in the middle of a particularly complicated surgery at a hospital in Lviv, Ukraine, when he heard explosions nearby. Moments later, the lights went out.

Duda had no choice but to keep working with only a headlamp for light. The lights came back when a generator kicked in three minutes later, but it felt like an eternity.

"These fateful minutes could have cost the patient his life," the cancer surgeon told The Associated Press.

The operation on the patient's major artery took place Nov. 15, when the city in western Ukraine suffered blackouts as Russia unleashed yet another missile barrage on the power grid, damaging nearly 50%

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of the country's energy facilities.

The devastating strikes, which continued last week and plunged the country into darkness once again, strained and disrupted the health care system, already battered by years of corruption, mismanagement, the COVID-19 pandemic and nine months of war.

Scheduled operations are being postponed; patient records are unavailable because of internet outages; and paramedics have had to use flashlights to examine patients in darkened apartments.

The World Health Organization said last week that Ukraine's health system is facing "its darkest days in the war so far," amid the growing energy crisis, the onset of cold winter weather and other challenges.

"This winter will be life-threatening for millions of people in Ukraine," the WHO's regional director for Europe, Dr. Hans Kluge, said in a statement.

He predicted that 2 million to 3 million more people could leave their homes in search of warmth and safety, and "will face unique health challenges, including respiratory infections such as COVID-19, pneumonia and influenza."

Last week, Kyiv's Heart Institute posted on its Facebook page a video of surgeons operating on a child's heart with the only light coming from headlamps and a battery-powered flashlight.

"Rejoice, Russians, a child is on the table and during an operation the lights have gone completely off," Dr. Boris Todurov, director of the institute in the capital, said in the video. "We will now turn on the generator — unfortunately, it will take a few minutes."

Attacks have hit hospitals and outpatient clinics in southeastern Ukraine, too. The WHO said in a statement last week that they have verified at least 703 attacks between Feb. 24, when Russian troops rolled into Ukraine, and Nov. 23.

The Kremlin has rejected accusations that it targets civilian facilities. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov once again insisted last week that Russia is targeting only sites "directly or indirectly related to military power."

But just last week, a strike on a maternity ward in a hospital in eastern Ukraine killed a newborn and heavily wounded two doctors. In the northeastern Kharkiv region, two people were killed after the Russian forces shelled an outpatient clinic.

In Lviv, Duda said the explosions were so close to the hospital that "the walls were shaking," and doctors and patients had to go down to the shelter in the basement — something that happens every time an air raid siren sounds.

The hospital, which specializes in treating cancer, performed only 10 out of 40 operations scheduled for that day.

In the recently retaken southern city of Kherson, without power after the Russian retreat, paralyzed elevators are a real challenge for paramedics.

They have to carry immobile patients all the way down the stairs of apartment buildings, and then bring them up again to operating rooms.

Across Kherson, where it starts to get dark after 4 p.m. in late November, doctors are using headlamps, phone lights and flashlights. In some hospitals, key equipment no longer works.

Last Tuesday, Russian strikes on the southern city wounded 13-year-old Artur Voblikov, and doctors had to amputate his arm. Medical workers carried the teenager through the dark stairwells of a children's hospital to an operating room on the sixth floor.

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

The generator the children's hospital uses broke down last week, leaving the facility without any form of power for several hours. Doctors are wrapping newborns in blankets because there's no heat, said Dr. Olga Pilyarska, deputy head of intensive care.

The lack of heat makes operating on patients difficult, said Dr. Maya Mendel, at the same hospital. "No one will put a patient on an operating table when temperatures are below zero," she said.

Health Minister Viktor Liashko said on Friday that there are no plans to shut down any of country's

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hospitals, no matter how bad the situation gets, but the authorities will “optimize the use of space and accumulate everything that’s necessary in smaller areas” to make heating easier.

Liashko said that diesel or gas generators have been provided to all Ukrainian hospitals, and in the coming weeks an additional 1,100 generators sent by the country’s Western allies will be delivered to the hospitals as well. Currently, hospitals have enough fuel to last seven days, the minister said.

Additional reserve generators are still badly needed, the minister added. “The generators are designed to work for a short period of time — three to four hours,” but power outages can last up to three days, Liashko said.

In the recently recaptured territories, the medical system is reeling from months of Russian occupation.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has accused the Russian forces of shutting down medical facilities in the Kherson region and looting medical equipment — even the ambulances, “literally everything.”

Dr. Olha Kobevko, who has recently returned from the retaken areas of Kherson after delivering humanitarian aid there, echoed the president’s remarks in an interview.

“The Russians stole even towels, blankets and bandages from medical facilities,” Kobevko said.

In Kyiv, the majority of the hospitals are functioning as usual, while relying on generators part of the time.

Smaller private practices and dentist clinics, in the meantime, are having a hard time keeping their doors open for patients.

Dr. Viktor Turakevich, a dentist in Kyiv, said he has to reschedule even urgent appointments, because power outages in his clinic last for at least four hours a day, and a generator he ordered will take weeks to arrive.

“Every doctor has to answer a question about who they will take in first,” Turakevich said.

Power outages have also made it difficult to access online patients’ records, and the Health Ministry’s system that stores all the data has been unavailable, said Kobevko, who works in the western city of Chernivtsy.

Duda, the cancer surgeon from Lviv, said that three doctors and several nurses from his hospital left to treat Ukrainian soldiers on the front lines.

“The war has affected every doctor in Ukraine, be it in the west or in the east, and the level of pain we’re facing every day is hard to measure,” Duda said.

Today in History: November 29, Warren Commission appointed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 29, the 333rd day of 2022. There are 32 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Nov. 29, 1947, the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the partitioning of Palestine between Arabs and Jews; 33 members, including the United States, voted in favor of the resolution, 13 voted against while 10 abstained. (The plan, rejected by the Arabs, was never implemented.)

On this date:

In 1864, a Colorado militia killed at least 150 peaceful Cheyenne Indians in the Sand Creek Massacre.

In 1910, British explorer Robert F. Scott’s ship Terra Nova set sail from New Zealand, carrying Scott’s expedition on its ultimately futile — as well as fatal — race to reach the South Pole first.

In 1924, Italian composer Giacomo Puccini died in Brussels before he could complete his opera “Turandot.” (It was finished by Franco Alfano.)

In 1929, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Richard E. Byrd, pilot Bernt Balchen, radio operator Harold Gatty and photographer Ashley McKinney made the first airplane flight over the South Pole.

In 1961, Enos the chimp was launched from Cape Canaveral aboard the Mercury-Atlas 5 spacecraft, which orbited earth twice before returning.

In 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson named a commission headed by Earl Warren to investigate the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

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In 1981, film star Natalie Wood drowned in a boating accident off Santa Catalina Island, California, at age 43.

In 1986, actor Cary Grant died in Davenport, Iowa, at age 82.

In 1987, a Korean Air 707 jetliner en route from Abu Dhabi to Bangkok was destroyed by a bomb planted by North Korean agents with the loss of all 115 people aboard.

In 2001, former Beatle George Harrison died in Los Angeles following a battle with cancer; he was 58.

In 2008, Indian commandos killed the last remaining gunmen holed up at a luxury Mumbai hotel, ending a 60-hour rampage through India's financial capital by suspected Pakistani-based militants that killed 166 people.

In 2020, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that New York City would reopen its school system to in-person learning, and increase the number of days a week many children attend class, even as the coronavirus pandemic intensified in the city.

Ten years ago: The United Nations voted overwhelmingly to recognize a Palestinian state, a vote that came exactly 65 years after the General Assembly adopted a plan to divide Palestine into separate states for Jews and Arabs. (The vote was 138 in favor; nine members, including the United States, voted against and 41 abstained.) President Barack Obama had lunch with defeated Republican nominee Mitt Romney in the White House's private dining room; the White House says they discussed America's leadership in the world.

Five years ago: North Korea launched its most powerful weapon yet, claiming a new type of intercontinental ballistic missile that some observers believed could put the entire U.S. East Coast within range. "Today" host Matt Lauer was fired for what NBC called "inappropriate sexual behavior" with a colleague; a published report accused him of crude and habitual misconduct with women around the office. Garrison Keillor, who'd entertained public radio listeners for 40 years on "A Prairie Home Companion," was fired by Minnesota Public Radio following allegations of inappropriate workplace behavior.

One year ago: A federal judge blocked the Biden administration from enforcing a coronavirus vaccine mandate on thousands of health care workers in 10 states that had brought the first legal challenge against the requirement. Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey stepped down as CEO of the social media platform; he was succeeded by Twitter's chief technology officer, Parag Agrawal. LSU hired Brian Kelly away from Notre Dame, a stunning move by one of the most accomplished coaches in college football jumping from the sport's most storied program to a Southeastern Conference powerhouse. Arlene Dahl, a 1950s movie star who later remained prominent in television, died in New York at 96. Merriam-Webster chose "vaccine" as its 2021 word of the year.

Today's Birthdays: Blues singer-musician John Mayall is 89. Actor Diane Ladd is 87. Songwriter Mark James is 82. Composer-musician Chuck Mangione is 82. Pop singer-musician Felix Cavaliere (The Rascals) is 80. Former Olympic skier Suzy Chaffee is 76. Actor Jeff Fahey is 70. Movie director Joel Coen is 68. Actor-comedian-celebrity judge Howie Mandel is 67. Former Homeland Security Director Janet Napolitano (neh-pahl-ih-TAN'-oh) is 65. Former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel is 63. Actor Cathy Moriarty is 62. Actor Kim Delaney is 61. Actor Tom Sizemore is 61. Actor Andrew McCarthy is 60. Actor Don Cheadle is 58. Actor-producer Neill Barry is 57. Pop singer Jonathan Knight (New Kids on the Block) is 54. Rock musician Martin Carr (Boo Radleys) is 54. Actor Jennifer Elise Cox is 53. Baseball Hall of Famer Mariano Rivera is 53. Actor Larry Joe Campbell is 52. Rock musician Frank Delgado (Deftones) is 52. Actor Paola Turbay is 52. Contemporary Christian singer Crowder is 51. Actor Gena Lee Nolin is 51. Actor Brian Baumgartner is 50. Actor Julian Ovenden is 47. Actor Anna (AH'-nuh) Faris is 46. Gospel singer James Fortune is 45. Actor Lauren German is 44. Rapper The Game is 43. Actor Janina Gavankar is 42. Rock musician Ringo Garza is 41. Actor-comedian John Milhiser is 41. Actor Lucas Black is 40. NFL quarterback Russell Wilson is 34. Actor Diego Boneta is 32. Actor Lovie Simone (TV: "Greenleaf") is 24.