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## Groton Community Calendar

**Tuesday, Dec. 20**

Senior Menu: Meat loaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, fruited Jell-O, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Turkey gravy over mashed potatoes, fresh baked bun.

St. John's Quilting, 9 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran newsletter deadline

GBB hosts Aberdeen Roncalli (7th grade at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade in GHS Gym; JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity in Arena)

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

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

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Conde UMC Ad Council; Conde Advent Bible Study, 6 p.m.

**Wednesday, Dec. 21- 1st DAY OF WINTER**

**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.



*“Logic will get you from A to B.  
Imagination will take you everywhere.”*

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Senior Menu: chicken tetrazzini, mixed vegetables, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Pizza, Cooked Carrots.

St. John's Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Pre-School Christmas program, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.; Longest Night Service, 7:15 p.m.

Community Coffee Hour at Groton UMC, 9:30 a.m.

**Thursday, Dec. 22**

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff with noodles, lettuce salad with dressing, peaches, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, chips.

End of Second Quarter

Elementary Christmas Concert, 1 p.m.

Boys Basketball at Roncalli, 6 p.m.

Wrestling Tri-angular at Redfield with Webster and Groton, 6 p.m.

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## **2023 DOG LICENSES due by Dec. 30, 2022**

**Fines start January 1, 2023**

Spayed/Neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog

Proof of rabies shot information is **REQUIRED!!**

Email proof to [city.kellie@nvc.net](mailto:city.kellie@nvc.net),  
fax to (605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that were previously licensed!

**Questions call (605) 397-8422**

**X SERIES** | *Cub Cadet*

## PUT WINTER IN ITS PLACE



### **3X** 30" HD

Gear up for the worst of winter weather with the 3X 30" HD powered by a 420cc Cub Cadet OHV engine.

- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel auger housing and side plates
- LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum gear box backed by 5-year limited warranty\*\*

MSRP  
**\$1,999\***



### **3X** 26" TRAC

Clear it all with the strength of the 3X 26" Trac featuring a powerful 357cc Cub Cadet OHV engine.

- Track Drive ideal for slopes, inclines and gravel driveways
- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel auger housing and side plates
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty\*\*

MSRP  
**\$2,099\***



### **2X** 30" MAX

Tak on winter with the commercial-grade durability of the 357cc Cub Cadet 2X 30" MAX snow blower

- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel side plates and auger housing
- 14" augers and impeller
- Sealed ball bearings on auger and wheel shafts
- LED light bar on auger housing
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- 16"x6.5" X-Trac tires
- High-arc steel chute
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty

MSRP  
**\$1,899\***

■ Indicates step-up feature



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<sup>1</sup>Restrictions apply. See dealer or cubcadet.com/en\_US/financing for details.

<sup>†</sup>When compared to the same engine without IntelliPower™ technology. Improvements vary depending on engine models and specific operating conditions.

\* Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications.

\*\* See owner's manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply.

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**EXCEPTIONAL FINANCING  
OFFERS AVAILABLE!**



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# GDILIVE.COM

## Girls' Basketball

Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2022

Aberdeen Roncalli at Groton Area

Junior Varsity Game starts at 6 p.m.

Sponsored by Adam and Nicole Wright

### followed by Varsity Game

Sponsored by

Bary Keith at Harr Motors

Bierman Farm Service

Blocker Construction

Dacotah Bank

Groton Chamber of Commerce

Groton Ford

John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric

Spanier Harvesting & Trucking

Bahr Spray Foam

Thunder Seed with John Wheeting

## St. John's Lutheran Pre-School Christmas Program

Wed., Dec. 21, 2022, 7 p.m.

Sponsored by Love to Travel

## Elementary Christmas Program

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2022, 2 p.m.

GDI Subscription or Ticket required

## Boys' Basketball

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2022

Groton Area at Aberdeen Roncalli

Junior Varsity Game starts at 6 p.m.

Sponsored by Hefty Seed

### followed by Varsity Game

Sponsored by

Bary Keith at Harr Motors

Bierman Farm Service

Blocker Construction

Dacotah Bank

Groton Chamber of Commerce

Groton Ford

John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric

Spanier Harvesting & Trucking

Bahr Spray Foam

Thunder Seed with John Wheeting

Anyone wanting to sponsor a JV game, Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460



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## Christmas Food Bags organized

Many came together in the Groton SD Community Sunday afternoon to pack Christmas food bags to be delivered to families in need this week!

Enrich Groton SoDak Inc. volunteers organized food bags with items received from the GHS and GES Can & Coin Drive that was held this month. With the help of our local Girl Scout Troop and a Thrivent Action Team, we were able to provide food bags to 41 families.

We are so grateful for the continued support of The Pantry - Groton, SD! If you or someone you know would like to sign up to receive future boxes, please be sure to contact an Enrich member or City Hall.

(Photos Courtesy April Abeln)



**Girl Scout Troop 40249 members that were able to volunteer include Emery Blackwood, Rosalyn Block and Hallie Perkins.** (Photo Courtesy April Abeln)





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**Paula Jensen**  
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## Fill Your Cup

A friend called me a few weeks ago in tears. She serves as a community leader in a progressive small town, yet the local negative narrative had her feeling down and out. Unfortunately, it had been building for a while. She was feeling alone and struggling to find any reason to celebrate her community's successes this year.

The old adage states, "Fill your cup, because you can't pour from an empty cup." The phrase, to fill your cup, means to replenish your stores of mental, emotional, and physical energy which are required to be a great community leader. My friend's cup was near empty.

Too often, this scenario is the reality for many leaders who carry the heavy day-to-day burden of creating a thriving community. Being a community leader requires energy to vision for the future, make hard decisions, analyze risk, clearly communicate, deal with local naysayers, complete projects, and most importantly, thoughtfully reflect.

In its simplest form, reflection is about wise consideration. But the kind of reflection that is valuable to community leaders is more nuanced than that. The most useful reflection involves making meaning -- naming what's happening, seeing patterns, identifying structures, weighing actions, and analyzing outcomes. This kind of reflection by community leaders becomes crucial to the ongoing development of the community, yet few leaders make time for it. Why? For one, it requires leaders to do several things they typically don't like to do: slow down, adopt a mindset of not knowing and curiosity, tolerate messiness and inefficiency, and take personal responsibility.

At her lowest, my friend took the time for reflection and meaning-making. She helped her community celebrate the highs of their success by engaging a group of community leaders to "Name the W.O.W." This group took 30 minutes to brainstorm a list of the key community projects and milestones in the past 12 months. Their list contained 20+ big successes to celebrate and learn from as they think toward 2023.

As we move toward a new year, how might we stop, reflect, and recharge as community leaders? My challenge for you is to do what my friend did -- Name the W.O.W. I've provided some brief instructions below.

**Name the WOW** (Wall of Wonder) Source: ToP (Technology of Participation)

This is a group reflection tool, that enables a group to review their history and progress. Through the process, they identify events that have taken place and place them on a visual timeline or write them on a flip chart. This process enables the group to slow down for a reflection of their journey over a specific period, remember what projects have shaped their journey, reconnect to what brought them to their current position, and recharge through celebration.

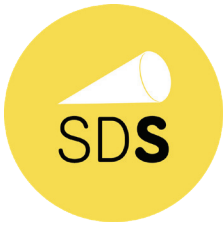
**Start Here** with a Reflection Question - What are the key events and milestones our community or organization accomplished in 2022 that are moving us toward a thriving [insert your town]? (capture your list on a whiteboard or flip chart)

**Next**, make meaning through group conversation (below are sample questions)

- What catches your attention on the W.O.W. list?
- What was easy? What was hard?
- What do you see as a turning point during this time period?
- Thinking back over what we did, where were key insights for you?
- What happened to us as a group as we completed this work?
- What new issues or questions have emerged for you?
- What is the significance of the work we accomplished this year?
- What bold steps could we take together in the upcoming year?

**Lastly**, share your W.O.W. with the community. Taking a few minutes to create your Wall of Wonder will have a lasting impact and help you clearly communicate the story of your success to the community.

The Community Coach. Having a passion for community leadership and development is what drives Paula Jensen's personal and professional life. Paula lives in her hometown of Langford, South Dakota, population 318+. She serves as a Strategic Doing practitioner, grant writer and community coach with Dakota Resources based in Renner, South Dakota. Dakota Resources is a mission-driven 501c3 Community Development Financial Institution working to connect capital and capacity to empower rural communities. Contact her at paula@dakotaresources.org.



# Noem terminates contract for transgender advocacy group

## Health secretary announces retirement two days after letter issued

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER AND JOHN HULT - DECEMBER 19, 2022 6:18 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem's administration issued contradictory reasons for terminating a transgender advocacy group's contract with the state Department of Health.

A Friday letter from the department alleged numerous contract violations committed by the group, while the governor's spokesman told the conservative media outlet that first reported on the letter that Noem does not support the group's efforts or "dividing our youth with radical ideologies."

Meanwhile, the secretary of the state Department of Health announced her retirement Monday amid unconfirmed speculation that the two events could be related.

The contract was with The Transformation Project, a transgender advocacy group based in Sioux Falls.

The contract helped fund the implementation of a community health worker at the organization, using \$136,000 in federal funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The state's online financial reporting system says The Transformation Project has received about \$23,000 in payments from the state so far this fiscal year.

The grant awarded to The Transformation Project lists the federal funding source as the "Health Disparity Grant," and was categorized as "Federal COVID" spending. South Dakota was awarded \$37.4 million in CDC Health Disparity Grant funding in 2021, with \$17.8 million carved out for rural services.

### Letter and retirement

A termination letter to the organization's leadership on Friday, revealed by The Daily Signal, included a list of contract violations, including failing to submit quarterly reports and failing to attend a conference.

"South Dakota does not support this organization's efforts, and state government should not be participating in them," Noem told The Daily Signal in a statement provided by spokesman Ian Fury. "We should not be dividing our youth with radical ideologies. We should treat every single individual equally as a human being."

Fury added that the state is reviewing all Department of Health contracts and that the contract was signed without Noem's prior knowledge or approval.

Department of Health Secretary Joan Adam, who held the position since March, announced her retirement Monday. Adam said she was retiring to focus on "family and personal commitments," ending her 20-year career with the department.

"My time with the Department of Health has been very rewarding," Adam said in a news release issued by Fury. "The dedication of the department's employees is impressive and will continue to serve the state well."

On her behalf, her husband Karl Adam, former state Republican Party chairman, said she would not comment on her retirement or whether it was related to the terminated contract. The Transformation Project has not responded to South Dakota Searchlight requests for comment.

The Department of Health did not respond to a detailed list of questions asking for clarification as to how many grantees had failed to meet similar benchmarks.

Members of the South Dakota Freedom Caucus, a group of lawmakers, said it plans to introduce leg-

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isolation next session to ban gender-affirming procedures for transgender youth. The U.S. Department of Justice has challenged bans in other states.

The South Dakota Legislature has a history of legislation labeled as anti-transgender by critics, including passing a law banning transgender girls from participating in girls sports.

## Money designed in part to aid marginalized communities

A community health worker (CHW) is a frontline public health and social services worker who is “a trusted member” of the community served. A CHW helps connect South Dakotans to public services.

The award to The Transformation Project aligned with one of the broad-brush goals of the federal grant funding program’s benchmarks. The LGBTQ community is among those listed as potential targets for assistance in the grant’s documentation. The health disparity grant from the CDC also notes rural populations as historically underserved.

Further guidance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, of which the CDC is a part, listed more specific guidelines on grant-worthy CHWs in 2022. The document urges programs to focus on marginalized groups who historically have had difficulty accessing such services, such as people of color, non-English speakers or members of the LGBTQ community.

The Transformation Project has been an outspoken advocacy group for transgender youth in South Dakota, as the demographic faces discrimination and hostility, leading to depression, isolation and suicidal thoughts, experts say.

The Transformation Project is one of over 50 organizations to receive funding for CHW initiatives, according to Open SD. The contract began in June.

South Dakota Voices for Peace was among the other grant funding recipients. For that group, the goal was to hire two CHWs to help those who do not speak English connect to services, said Executive Director Taneeza Islam.

A referral alone won’t be enough for someone who doesn’t speak English, Islam said. Navigating the nuances of applications for help or traveling to the places where services are located can be especially difficult for people without resources or English proficiency.

“For our clients specifically, it’s very basic needs: food, transportation, domestic violence services,” Islam said.

The Union Gospel Mission in Sioux Falls was also a grant recipient. That homeless shelter had hired CHWs before the funding appeared, CEO Eric Weber said, because the typical locale for such workers – hospitals and clinics – tended to be far away from those who needed the help.

“We needed to have CHWs on the street, where the people are. We needed to have them walking Eighth Street,” said Weber, referring to the street in Sioux Falls that’s home to two shelters and a soup kitchen.

The CHW, Weber said, is the hand that “leads the horse to water,” while the resources or services themselves, such as food pantries or community health clinics, are like the water.

“Our CHWs work with 200 or 300 people a week,” Weber said.

Islam and Weber said they had not received any calls from the DOH questioning their compliance with their contractor requirements.

Weber described the Department of Health employees with whom he’s worked on the CHW grant as “a very diverse group” and questioned whether any would have trouble funding the work of The Transformation Project.

That group’s work, like the Union Gospel Mission’s, he said, fills an important need.

“My heart goes out to them,” Weber said.



**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.



**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.

## Why Medicaid expansion ballots may hit a dead end after a fleeting victory in South Dakota

BY: RACHANA PRADHAN AND DANIEL CHANG - DECEMBER 19, 2022 5:57 PM

Republican-led legislatures have repeatedly thwarted Medicaid expansion in a dozen conservative states, despite high numbers of uninsured residents. In recent years, supporters of expansion have found success with another strategy: letting voters decide.

Since 2017, Medicaid expansion has passed in seven states where the issue was put on the ballot, adopting the Affordable Care Act provision that would grant health insurance to hundreds of thousands living at or near the poverty line.

Last month, South Dakota voters adopted the program after bypassing the state's conservative legislature. But any momentum from that November election victory was fleeting.

In Florida and Wyoming, the two remaining states where voters have the option, high costs and other hurdles baked into the ballot process render it almost impossible to enact a measure, advocates say.

"Each of those states, for different reasons, is particularly difficult to move a Medicaid expansion ballot measure through," raising questions about whether it is "an effective strategy," said Kelly Hall, executive director of the Fairness Project. The Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit has funded Medicaid ballot campaigns in multiple states and has pushed other progressive causes, including raising the minimum wage and guaranteeing paid sick leave for workers.

That leaves proponents to appeal to Republican lawmakers in the 11 holdout states, mostly in the South or Midwest, where opposition to the health law, also known as Obamacare, has thawed but remains firm.

A decade after the Supreme Court ruled that the federal government could not force states to provide Medicaid benefits to low-income adults, millions remain uninsured. A KFF estimate found that, before the pandemic, 2.2 million uninsured adults without other coverage options in resistant states would qualify.

Leaders of Florida Decides Healthcare, a citizen-led initiative pushing for Medicaid expansion, feel confident that voters would approve it despite Republicans' yearslong rejection. But Jake Flaherty, the group's campaign manager, said the earliest it would float a ballot measure is 2026, given the enormous financial and logistical hurdles of mounting a campaign in the Sunshine State.

For a question to reach the ballot, backers must collect signatures equal to 8% of the total voter turnout in the most recent presidential election, or nearly 900,000 signatures. Signatures also must equal at least 8% of the votes cast in that election in each of at least half of the state's 28 congressional districts.

Any measure must be reviewed by the Florida Supreme Court — but only after proponents collect a quarter of the required signatures from half of the state's congressional districts. For the measure to pass, 60% of Florida voters must support it.

Recent legislative changes to the initiative process — such as limiting the time to gather signatures, banning sponsors from paying activists based on how many signatures they get, and requiring petition circulators to register with the state — have hindered the political action committee from proposing initiatives, Flaherty said.

"What has spooked folks is that the process has changed so much that they believe it's just not workable," he said.

The changes "make Florida an even higher hill to climb," said Lucy Dagneau, a senior campaign director of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the political arm of the nonprofit, which has supported Medicaid ballot campaigns.

Florida lawmakers have also tried twice to restrict donations, but a federal judge blocked those laws from taking effect.

The changes have led some of the Florida initiative's biggest donors, including the Fairness Project, to pause financial support.

"This is a longer-term effort for us," said Holly Bullard, a member of the executive committee for Florida Decides Healthcare. "We've determined to aim for 2026 and to work with grassroots partners from Pen-



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sacola to Little Havana, and that's just not the model that specifically the Fairness Project has been after."

"The minute it turns into a really strong, viable ballot measure campaign, we will be there with them," said Hannah Ledford, the Fairness Project's campaigns director. She said the group is "not set up to do multiyear, multi-decade in some cases, advocacy pushes."

Since 2019, the Fairness Project has donated more than \$400,000 in legal services, printing costs, and other in-kind contributions to the group. Its last donation was in October 2020, according to Florida campaign finance data.

Flaherty estimates the campaign will cost at least \$10 million to get on the ballot. That's based on paying circulators a flat rate of \$20 per hour, he said. For voter messaging, he estimates another \$10 million. Those costs are considerably higher than other states' Medicaid ballot campaigns.

The group had about \$250,000 on hand as of November, Flaherty said. Past donors have included the Service Employees International Union, Planned Parenthood, Florida Voices for Health, and the Florida Policy Institute.

In Wyoming, the last time voters enacted a citizen-initiated measure was in 1992, according to the ballot-tracking website Ballotpedia. State rules say a ballot measure can't force lawmakers to appropriate funds, an obstacle because Medicaid is funded jointly by the federal and state governments.

"The more secure route — and the one that doesn't threaten coverage for people — is through the legislature," Dagneau said.

A ballot campaign "is not for the faint of heart," said Jan Cartwright of the Healthy Wyoming advocacy group.

Supporters in Wyoming believe the legislature provides their best shot because there is some Republican support there.

In November, a Wyoming legislative committee approved a bill following testimony from Montana Rep. Edward Buttrey about how the state has benefited since 2015. Newly covered people relied less on expensive emergency room care, used higher rates of primary care, and were more likely to work, the Republican testified.

"If someone is unhealthy or they're addicted, they simply are unable to contribute to their own or their state's success and health," Buttrey said.

Wyoming Rep. Steve Harshman, also a Republican, is listening. "I've voted against this probably 10 times," he said. "I've changed my mind. I've learned more, and I think it'll be really good for our state."

The Wyoming Department of Health estimates roughly 19,000 people would enroll within the first two years.

Though Wyoming's House passed expansion legislation in 2021, a state Senate committee defeated the bill, and opposition remains in the Republican-controlled legislature.

State Sen. Tom James, a Republican, voted against the bill in November. "Every employer I've ever worked for has had the option for insurance," he said. "We've had the option to not take it. I want to make sure that we're covering people that don't have the option of insurance."

In other non-expansion states, little has changed. Brian Kemp, Georgia's reelected Republican governor, is committed to implementing a smaller program that would provide Medicaid benefits to an additional 50,000 adults and require them to have a job or volunteer.

But other factors could raise the odds of expansion next year in a few states, Dagneau said. A financial incentive in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 gives new expansion states a 5 percentage point bump in Medicaid funds for two years, more than offsetting the cost of insuring more people, according to KFF estimates.

And once the Department of Health and Human Services lets the covid-19 public health emergency expire, millions of people on Medicaid could lose their benefits. A federal mandate has prevented states from kicking people off Medicaid during the pandemic.

That mandate has ensured coverage for millions of Americans who otherwise may not have had it, and engendered support for Medicaid expansion, supporters say.

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"The pandemic has changed a lot of folks' attitudes about whether or not health care coverage is something that you need," Dagneau said.

Advocates believe North Carolina is the most likely state to expand its program next, covering an estimated 400,000 uninsured people. Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper and Republican leaders in the North Carolina General Assembly back the move but have been unable to reach a compromise.

The John Locke Foundation, a conservative think tank in North Carolina, opposes expansion on the grounds that it would create unsustainable financial burdens, among other reasons. But it seems the state is in a holding pattern.

As Mitch Kokai, its senior political analyst, put it: "I think the one-word description right now is 'stalemate.'"

KHN (Kaiser Health News) is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues. Together with Policy Analysis and Polling, KHN is one of the three major operating programs at KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation). KFF is an endowed nonprofit organization providing information on health issues to the nation.

*Rachana Pradhan, Kaiser Health News correspondent, reports on a broad array of national health policy decisions and their effect on everyday Americans. She came to KHN from Politico, where for five years she covered health care policy and politics on national and state levels. Rachana has been involved in several high-impact projects in her time as a health care reporter, including an investigation into former HHS Secretary Tom Price's extensive use of private jets at taxpayers' expense. The investigation, which resulted in Price's resignation, was a 2018 finalist for the American Society of News Editors' O'Brien Fellowship Award and earned an honorable mention in the White House Correspondents' Association's Edgar A. Poe award. Rachana's other reporting stints include covering city government for The Daily Progress newspaper in Charlottesville, Virginia, and reporting on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act for Inside Health Policy, a health care trade publication. She graduated from James Madison University.*

*Daniel Chang, Kaiser Health News Florida correspondent, covers Florida and the South. He joined KHN in August 2022 after 22 years at The Miami Herald, where his health care reporting focused on access to care for low-income patients; accountability of physicians, hospitals, and state health agencies; and the covid-19 pandemic. He co-reported the series, "Birth & Betrayal," about a Florida program that shields doctors from liability for catastrophic birth-related injuries, which received a George Polk Award for state reporting, and he was part of the team awarded the Pulitzer Prize for breaking news for coverage of the Surfside, Florida, condominium collapse. A graduate of Florida International University, he is a native Floridian and fluent in Spanish.*

## U.S. Supreme Court temporarily keeps Title 42 immigration program in effect

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - DECEMBER 19, 2022 5:26 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court is keeping Title 42 in place until the justices can review whether the pandemic-era program should be lifted or continue.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts in an order on Monday stayed a lower court's ruling that would have allowed the program, which was put in place by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention during the Trump administration, to expire on Wednesday.

Title 42 allows border patrol officers to turn away migrants, including asylum seekers, at the border under the CDC's public health authorities.

If and when to end the program, which was tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, has been the subject of lawsuits for the past few months after the Biden administration announced earlier this year the CDC would sunset the program.

A U.S. district court in mid-November ruled the federal government couldn't continue the program, with Senior District Judge Emmet G. Sullivan writing the policy was "arbitrary and capricious in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act."

As a part of the ongoing court cases, 19 states filed an emergency application for a stay earlier Monday, saying the district court's ruling "further warrants review given the enormous national importance of this case and the crisis that a denial of a stay is certain to cause here."

The attorneys general for Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming filed the request for a Supreme Court stay.

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich said in a written statement announcing the emergency stay application that "getting rid of Title 42 will recklessly and needlessly endanger more Americans and migrants by exacerbating the catastrophe that is occurring at our southern border."

The Biden administration has until Tuesday at 5 p.m. to respond to the decision.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing Monday afternoon before the announcement that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was "surging resources to the border" ahead of the expected end of Title 42 on Wednesday.

Jean-Pierre said the Biden administration had "additional, robust planning underway" for the end of the public health designation, but pressed Congress to approve \$3.5 billion in additional funding to help the federal government respond to an expected increase in the number of migrants seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The additional funding was needed to end Title 42 in a "safe, orderly and humane way," Jean-Pierre said.

If "Republicans in Congress are serious about securing the border," she said, "then they should assist in making sure the men and women at the DHS have what they need to get this done."

The additional funding would be used to increase ground and air transportation to help move migrants to less crowded areas, establish new Customs and Border Protection holding facilities and speed up processing times for people filing asylum claims.

It would allow the federal government to hire more than 300 additional border agents, purchase additional technology and equipment, and increase support for towns near the border, like El Paso.



**JENNIFER SHUTT**  

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

## U.S. House Jan. 6 panel refers Trump for criminal charges, including inciting insurrection

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - DECEMBER 19, 2022 3:41 PM

The U.S. House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol in a historic vote agreed unanimously Monday to refer former President Donald Trump and others to the Justice Department for potential criminal charges, including inciting or aiding an insurrection.

Trump associates, including attorneys John Eastman and Kenneth Chesebro and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, a former Republican House member from North Carolina, likely also played criminal roles, the panel said in an executive summary of its final report.

The panel also referred four House Republicans to the House Ethics Committee for refusing to testify: Andy Biggs of Arizona, Jim Jordan of Ohio, Scott Perry of Pennsylvania and California's Kevin McCarthy, who is likely to become the next speaker when Republicans take control of the House in January.

Before taking the unprecedented step of referring a former president for criminal charges, the bipartisan panel recapped in its final public meeting its findings that Trump engaged in a multipart plan to overturn the 2020 presidential election, culminating in the deadly attack on the Capitol that shook a bedrock of the nation's democracy.

The Justice Department, which is already investigating Trump's conduct related to the 2020 election, will determine how to pursue the referrals.

In a post to his own social media network on Monday, Truth Social, Trump promoted another Dec. 9 post that linked to his video on Jan. 6 telling supporters to leave the Capitol. Committee members said that video came after more than three hours of inaction as Trump watched the attack.

### Four counts

The committee's seven Democrats and two Republicans all voted to refer Trump for criminal charges on four counts:

- Obstructing an official proceeding;
- Conspiring to defraud the United States;
- Conspiring to make a false statement;
- Inciting, assisting or aiding an insurrection.

Trump led a multipart effort to overturn the election, they said.

He claimed victory despite knowing he lost the election, pressured state and federal officials to promote his lie that the election results were fraudulent, summoned his supporters to the nation's capital on Jan. 6, 2021, and incited them to attempt to violently block the certification of election results.

Trump then sat in the White House dining room and watched as the attack unfolded, members of the panel said.

His actions violated a core principle of U.S. government, the two-century tradition of a peaceful transition of power, committee Vice Chair Liz Cheney, a Wyoming Republican, said.

"At the heart of our republic is the guarantee of the peaceful transfer of power," Cheney said.

"Every president in our history has defended this orderly transfer of authority, except one. Jan. 6, 2021, was the first time one American president refused his constitutional duty to transfer power peacefully to the next ... The Select Committee has recognized our obligation to do everything we can to ensure this never happens again."

The committee released the 154-page executive summary Monday, though the full report is not expected to be made public until later this week.

### Ethics Committee referral

The panel also referred Biggs, Jordan, Perry and McCarthy to their chamber's ethics panel.

Those members "had materially relevant communications" with Trump on Jan. 6 and the days leading up to the attack, and withheld that information from the panel, the committee said.

In an email, a spokesman for Jordan dismissed the accusation.



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"This is just another partisan and political stunt made by" the committee, Jordan spokesman Russell M. Dye wrote Monday.

Representatives for Biggs, Perry and McCarthy did not immediately return messages seeking comment Monday.

It would be up to the ethics panel, which is evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans, to decide whether to proceed with an inquiry into the four members who were named.

## 'Masterminds and ringleaders'

Chairman Bennie G. Thompson, a Mississippi Democrat, said Trump violated the basis of U.S. democracy and that criminal referrals were important to seek accountability and ensure that a similar insurrection on the U.S. government is never attempted again.

"Evidence we've gathered points to further action beyond the power of this committee or the Congress to help ensure accountability under law, accountability that can only be found in the criminal justice system," Thompson said.

While hundreds of Trump supporters who mobbed the Capitol that day have been charged, U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin, a Maryland Democrat and committee member, said Trump should also face charges

"Ours is not a system of justice where foot soldiers go to jail and the masterminds and ringleaders get a pass," he said.

## Fake electors

The committee's recommendation for two of the criminal charges, conspiracy to defraud the United States and conspiracy to make a false statement, centered on the scheme to use slates of false electors from states that Trump lost in 2020: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, New Mexico, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Some 84 Republicans, including dozens of party leaders, signed on to the bogus documents.

"These intentionally false documents were transmitted to multiple officers of the federal government," U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff, a California Democrat, said. "And were intended to interfere with the proper conduct of the joint session, where the existence of so-called competing slates of electors would serve as a pretext for legitimate electoral votes to be rejected."

In a statement following the panel's meeting, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi praised the committee's work and appeared to call for the Justice Department to prosecute Trump.

"With painstaking detail, this executive summary documents the sinister plot to subvert the Congress, shred the Constitution and halt the peaceful transfer of power," Pelosi said.

"The Committee has reached important conclusions about the evidence it has developed, and I respect those findings.

"Our Founders made clear that, in the United States of America, no one is above the law. This bedrock principle remains unequivocally true, and justice must be done."

*Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*



Groton Community Transit  
Invites you to their

## **Holiday Bake Sale** **Thursday Dec. 22, 2022**

**9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

**Coffee, cider and Christmas  
goodies will be served!**

If you would like to donate baked goods, please contact Groton Community Transit office at 605-397-8661. Any and all donations are welcome!! We are looking forward to seeing you!!

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## **Groton City Council Meeting Agenda**

**December 20, 2022 – 7:00pm**

**City Hall – 120 N Main Street**

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

- Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1

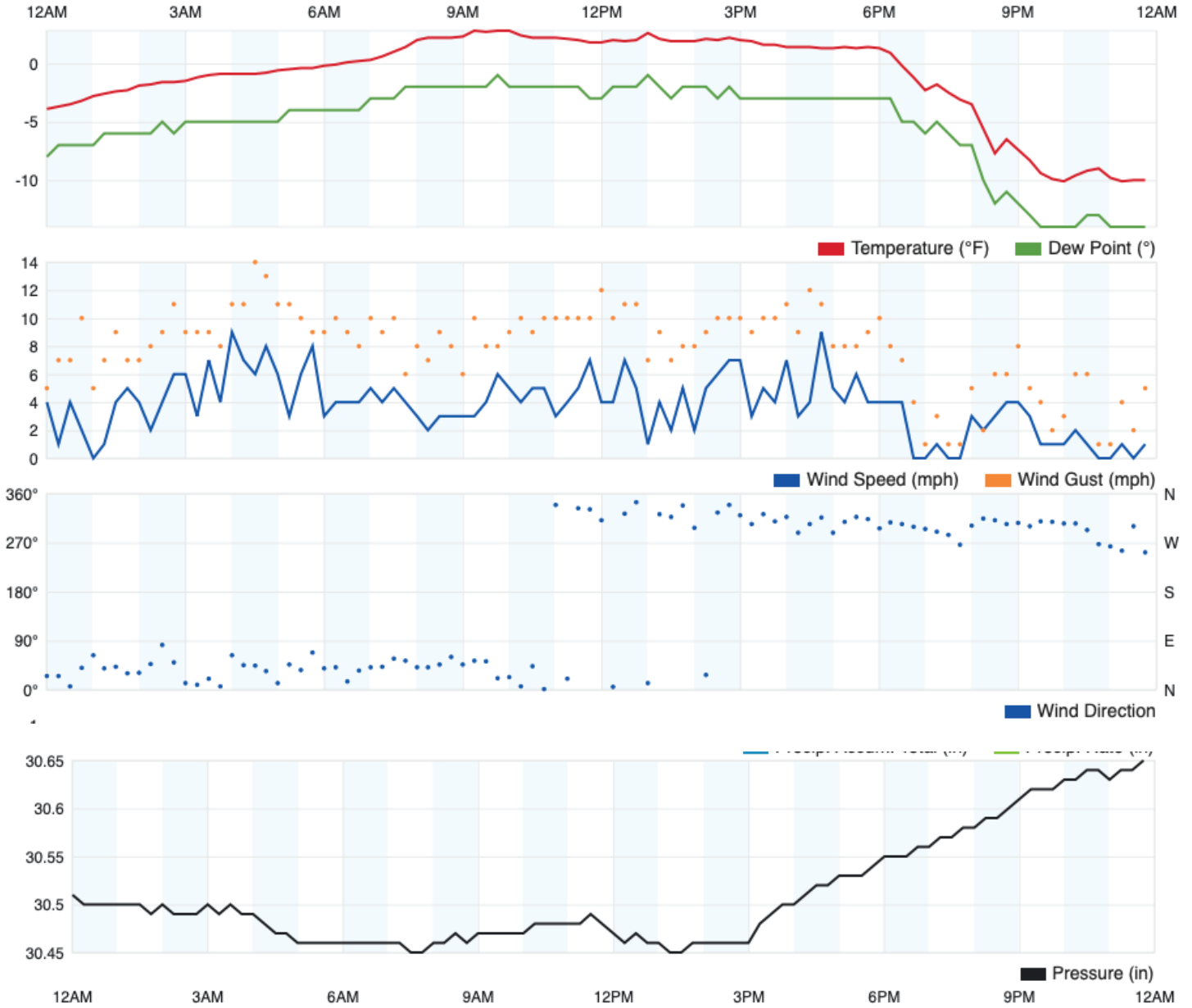
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)

- Minutes
- Bills
- November Finance Report
- Change Order #2 – Maguire Iron
- Second Reading of Ordinance #765 – Supplemental 2022 Appropriations
- 2023 Fee Schedule
- Economic Development Meeting from December 7, 2022 – Follow Up
- Applications Due by January 16th at 5:00pm:
  - Baseball Coordinator
  - Softball Coordinator
  - Legion Coach
  - Jr. Legion Coach
  - Jr. Teener Coach
- Holiday Lighting Contest Winners
  - 1st – Paul & Tina Kosel
  - 2nd – Nathan and Brandy Flajole
  - 3rd – Hope & Bryce Dargatz
- Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
- Adjournment

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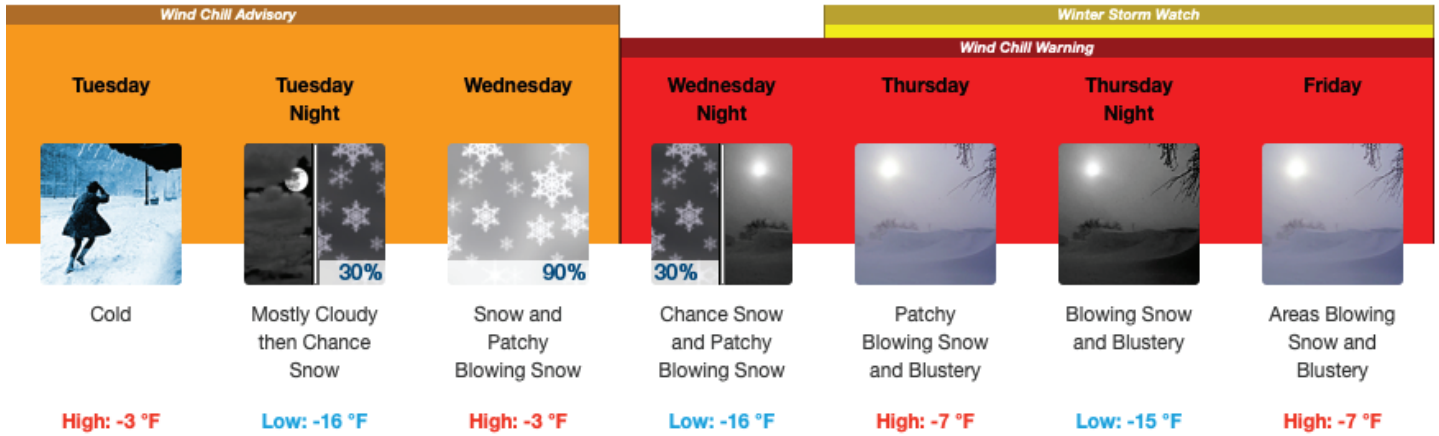
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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## Dangerous Winter Weather

December 20, 2022 4:36 AM

### Key Messages

- A system Wednesday will generate light to moderate snow.
- A reinforcing Arctic blast will follow late Wednesday/early Thursday, with **strong winds, extreme cold and dangerous wind chills**.
- **Blizzard conditions** Possible Thursday through Friday. Consider altering your travel plans now!
- **Stranded motorists will face the threat of frostbite, hypothermia and even life threatening exposure with these winds and temperatures!**

### Hazard Timing

- **Wind Chill Advisory** (Wind chills of -25 to -34°)
  - Through Wednesday
- **Wind Chill Warning** (Wind chills -35 to -55°)
  - Wednesday night through Saturday morning
- **Winter Storm Watch** (for Blizzard Conditions)
  - Central SD: Wednesday night through Friday
  - Eastern SD & west central MN: Thursday through Saturday

### NEW What Has Changed

- Wind Chill Warning late Wednesday through Saturday

### Next Scheduled Update

- Tuesday Afternoon

For details on the exact start and end times for your location, visit [weather.gov/abr](https://www.weather.gov/abr) and click on your location.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Bitterly cold air will remain in place, with another Arctic surge expected Wednesday evening into Thursday. This surge will come with accumulating snow, blowing snow and possible blizzard conditions and extremely cold wind chills into Friday and Saturday. Please consider altering any travel plans during this dangerous storm.

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## Minimum Wind Chills

December 20, 2022  
4:42 AM

	12/20 Tue		12/21 Wed		12/22 Thu		12/23 Fri		12/24 Sat		12/25 Sun											
	12pm	6pm	12am	6pm	12am	6pm	12am	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm										
<b>Aberdeen</b>	-23	-26	-29	-28	-28	-34	-39	-41	-36	-39	-41	-41	-35	-36	-37	-37	-27	-31	-31	-28	-15	-9
<b>Britton</b>	-29	-31	-29	-30	-28	-34	-37	-39	-37	-40	-40	-42	-36	-39	-39	-37	-30	-32	-32	-29	-17	-12
<b>Eagle Butte</b>	-26	-29	-30	-32	-38	-46	-52	-52	-45	-48	-48	-49	-39	-40	-40	-40	-27	-25	-24	-17	4	5
<b>Eureka</b>	-30	-30	-36	-37	-34	-40	-45	-46	-40	-43	-46	-49	-40	-45	-46	-46	-33	-35	-32	-26	-11	-6
<b>Gettysburg</b>	-25	-29	-34	-36	-35	-43	-49	-49	-44	-48	-49	-49	-42	-44	-44	-44	-32	-31	-31	-25	-7	-2
<b>Kennebec</b>	-20	-24	-27	-24	-28	-39	-47	-48	-43	-45	-46	-46	-37	-39	-39	-38	-26	-28	-27	-22	-1	1
<b>McIntosh</b>	-31	-32	-33	-36	-39	-45	-49	-49	-45	-46	-48	-52	-42	-43	-43	-42	-31	-29	-28	-18	-1	3
<b>Milbank</b>	-22	-25	-26	-27	-18	-33	-37	-38	-37	-40	-40	-40	-35	-36	-35	-34	-26	-29	-28	-25	-13	-11
<b>Miller</b>	-20	-23	-28	-26	-27	-36	-44	-46	-40	-43	-43	-43	-35	-39	-41	-41	-28	-30	-31	-25	-7	-2
<b>Mobridge</b>	-20	-24	-29	-31	-32	-38	-41	-41	-37	-40	-40	-43	-34	-35	-37	-37	-21	-20	-20	-15	0	5
<b>Murdo</b>	-20	-28	-29	-25	-34	-43	-49	-51	-45	-49	-48	-48	-38	-39	-39	-36	-25	-24	-24	-15	5	7
<b>Pierre</b>	-17	-20	-23	-22	-27	-35	-43	-44	-40	-40	-40	-41	-34	-34	-35	-35	-22	-23	-23	-18	0	8
<b>Redfield</b>	-22	-23	-26	-25	-26	-37	-42	-43	-38	-41	-43	-43	-35	-38	-40	-40	-28	-31	-32	-28	-11	-9
<b>Sisseton</b>	-26	-30	-26	-28	-22	-32	-35	-36	-35	-39	-39	-39	-35	-37	-35	-35	-28	-30	-28	-25	-13	-12
<b>Watertown</b>	-24	-20	-26	-26	-20	-34	-41	-43	-40	-43	-43	-43	-39	-40	-40	-40	-30	-31	-30	-28	-15	-11
<b>Webster</b>	-28	-25	-28	-31	-25	-36	-41	-42	-41	-44	-45	-45	-41	-41	-39	-39	-32	-31	-31	-28	-17	-10
<b>Wheaton</b>	-28	-29	-26	-27	-20	-29	-34	-37	-34	-38	-39	-39	-34	-36	-37	-37	-28	-29	-30	-28	-17	-15



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

## Winter Storm Watch Wind Chill Warning

**URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE**  
**National Weather Service Aberdeen SD**  
**255 AM CST Tue Dec 20 2022**

Brown-Spink-  
Including the cities of Aberdeen and Redfield  
...WIND CHILL ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL 6 PM CST WEDNESDAY...  
...WIND CHILL WARNING IN EFFECT FROM 6 PM WEDNESDAY TO NOON CST SATURDAY...  
...WINTER STORM WATCH REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM THURSDAY MORNING THROUGH LATE FRIDAY NIGHT...

\* WHAT...For the Wind Chill Warning, dangerously cold wind chills expected. Wind chills as low as 45 below zero. For the Wind Chill Advisory, very cold wind chills. Wind chills as low as 35 below zero. For the Winter Storm Watch, blizzard conditions possible. Winds could gust as high as 45 mph.

\* WHERE...Brown and Spink Counties.

\* WHEN...For the Wind Chill Warning, from 6 PM Wednesday to noon CST Saturday. For the Wind Chill Advisory, until 6 PM CST Wednesday. For the Winter Storm Watch, from Thursday morning through late Friday night.

\* IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. Areas of blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute. The dangerously cold wind chills could cause frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 10 minutes.

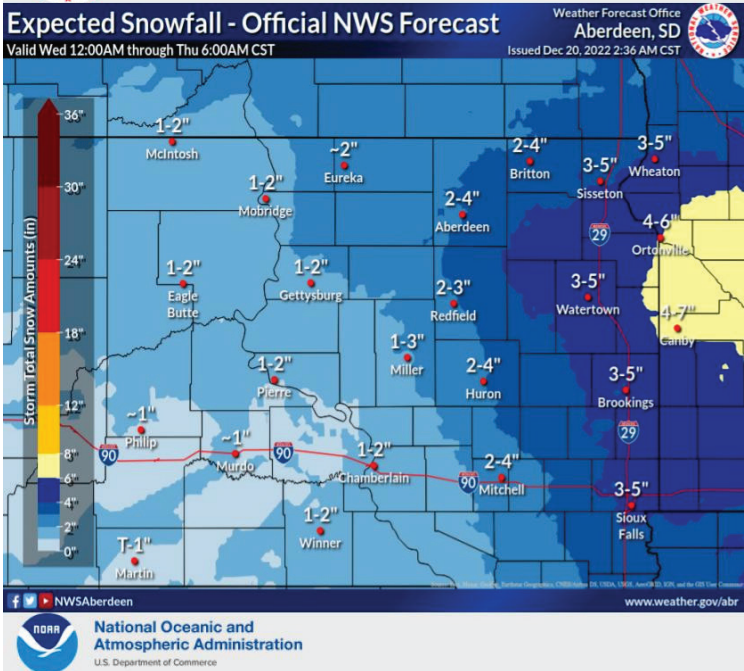
\* ADDITIONAL DETAILS...Pre holiday travel late Wednesday through Friday will be impacted. Stranded motorists will face the threat of frostbite, hypothermia and even life threatening exposure.



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## Accumulating Snowfall December 20, 2022 4:46 AM



**2-Day 6-hour Snow Forecast**

Location	Tue		Wed		Thu	
	6AM	12PM	6AM	12PM	6AM	12PM
Aberdeen	<1"	1-2"	1-2"	<1"	<1"	<1"
Waterbury	<1"	2-3"	1-2"	<1"	<1"	<1"
Britton	<1"	1-2"	1-2"	<1"	<1"	<1"
Millbank	<1"	2-3"	1-2"	1-2"	<1"	<1"
Redfield	<1"	1-2"	1-2"	<1"	<1"	<1"
Pierre	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"
Eagle Butte	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"
Kennebec	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"	<1"
Gettysburg	<1"	<1"	1-2"	<1"	<1"	<1"
Sisseton	<1"	<1"	1-2"	1-2"	<1"	<1"
Mobridge	<1"	<1"	1-2"	<1"	<1"	<1"
Wheaton	<1"	<1"	1-2"	1-2"	<1"	<1"

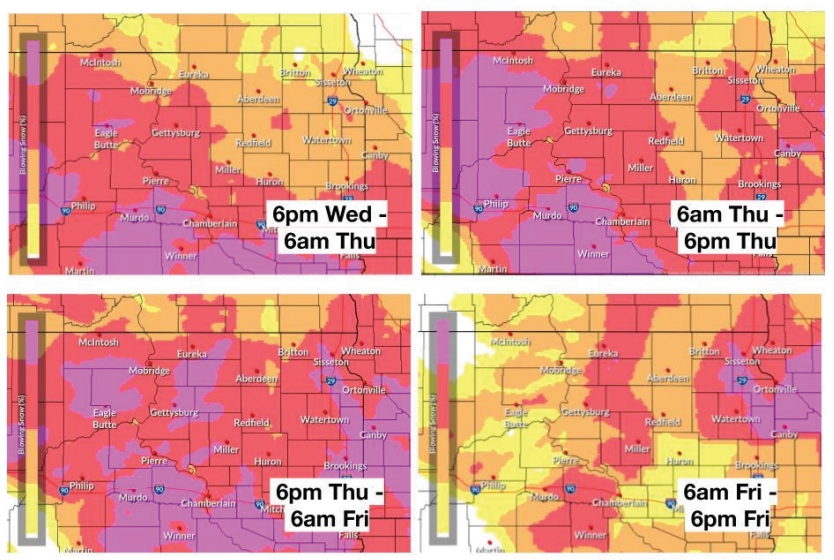
Last updated 12/20/22 at 02:10 AM CST

Generally 1 to 5 inches of snow is possible across the area early Wednesday morning through Wednesday night, with the heaviest amounts across northeastern South Dakota.

## Blowing Snow Potential December 20, 2022 4:48 AM

### Key Messages

- Winds increase Wednesday night.
- Persistent northwest winds may significantly impact **travel conditions into Christmas Eve.**
- **RED** and **PINK** = **Highest Likelihood of Blizzard Conditions** (visibilities 1/4 mile or less)
- If you have travel plans for Wednesday night through Christmas Eve, monitor future forecasts and **start considering alternative travel plans!**



<b>National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration</b> U.S. Department of Commerce	<b>Minor</b> ☁️ Patches of Blowing Snow with reduced visibilities expected	<b>Moderate</b> ☁️☁️ Areas of Blowing Snow with reduced visibilities expected	<b>Significant</b> ☁️☁️☁️ Widespread Blowing Snow and greatly reduced visibilities expected	<b>Blizzard</b> ☁️☁️☁️☁️ Significant Blowing Snow possible, travel may be impossible	<b>National Weather Service</b> Aberdeen, SD
	<p>Blizzard conditions are possible Wednesday night into Saturday when winds gust between 35 and 55 mph blow the newly-fallen snow. Motorists are advised to consider alternate travel plans, as potentially life-threatening cold air will be in place through the event.</p>				

Blizzard conditions are possible Wednesday night into Saturday when winds gust between 35 and 55 mph blow the newly-fallen snow. Motorists are advised to consider alternate travel plans, as potentially life-threatening cold air will be in place through the event.

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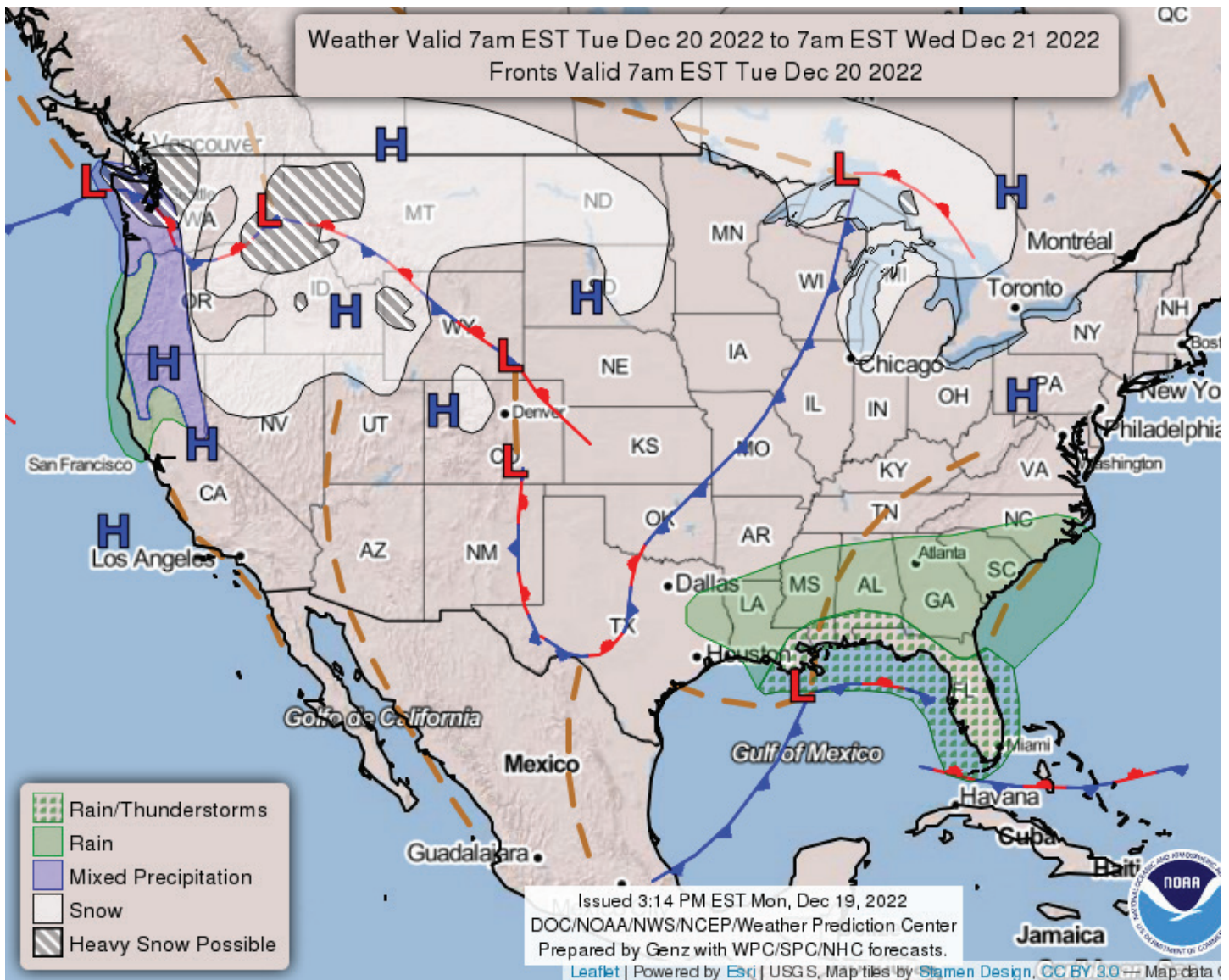
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 3 °F at 9:58 AM**  
**Low Temp: -10 °F at 9:55 PM**  
**Wind: 14 mph at 4:28 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 8 hours, 46 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1893  
Record Low: -29 in 1916  
Average High: 27°F  
Average Low: 7°F  
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.38  
Precip to date in Dec.: 1.85  
Average Precip to date: 21.59  
Precip Year to Date: 19.35  
Sunset Tonight: 4:53:12 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:07:30 AM





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## Today in Weather History

December 20, 1991: Light freezing drizzle and freezing rain developed over northern South Dakota from Timber Lake to Webster. Numerous car accidents were attributed to slippery conditions. The Aberdeen Police Department reported 24 accidents in Aberdeen, but only one resulted in an injury. Numerous businesses closed and schools were canceled.

December 20, 2008: Arctic air combined with blustery northwest winds brought extreme wind chills to the central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota from the late afternoon of the 20th until the afternoon of the 21st. Wind chills of 35 below to 45 below zero were common across the area.

1836: A famous "sudden freeze" occurred in central Illinois. A cold front with 70 mph winds swept through around Noon, dropping the temperature from 40 degrees to near zero in a matter of minutes. Many settlers froze to death. Folklore told of chickens frozen in their tracks and men frozen to saddles. Ice in streams reportedly froze to six inches in a few hours.

1929: An exceptional storm produced snow from the Middle Rio Grande Valley of Texas to southern Arkansas on December 20 - 21st, 1929. The storm produced 26 inches of snow near Hillsboro, Texas, and 24 inches in 24 hours in Clifton.

1942 - An early cold wave sent the temperature plunging to 3 degrees below zero at Nantucket, MA, and to 11 degrees below zero at Boston MA. (The Weather Channel)

1977: A "Once in a Lifetime" wind and dust storm struck the south end of the San Joaquin Valley in California. Winds reached 88 mph at Arvin before the anemometer broke, and gusts were estimated at 192 mph at Arvin by a U.S. Geological Survey. Meadows Field in Bakersfield recorded sustained 46 mph winds with a gust of 63 mph. The strong winds generated a wall of dust resembling a tidal wave that was 5,000 feet high over Arvin. Blowing sand stripped painted surfaces to bare metal and trapped people in vehicles for several hours. 70% of homes received structural damage in Arvin, Edison, and East Bakersfield. 120,000 Kern County customers lost power. Agriculture was impacted as 25 million tons of soil was loosened from grazing lands. Five people died, and damages totaled \$34 million.

These strong winds also spread a large fire through the Honda Canyon on Vandenberg Air Force Base in southern California. This fire, which started from a power pole on Tranquillon Ridge being blown over, claimed the lives of Base Commander Colonel Joseph Turner, Fire Chief Billy Bell, and Assistant Fire Chief Eugene Cooper. Additionally, severe burns were experienced by Heavy Equipment Operator Clarence McCauley. He later died due to complications from the burns.

1984: Lili, a rare December hurricane, was officially declared a tropical system in the central Atlantic as a distinct eye type feature was apparent on satellite imagery. The hurricane peaked at sustained 80 mph winds and a pressure of 980 millibars or 28.94 inches of mercury, a very respectable Category 1 Hurricane in December.

1987 - Heavy snow fell in the northern mountains of Colorado, with 15 inches reported in the Mary Jane ski area. Strong and gusty winds prevailed from the Northern High Plains to the Great Lakes. Winds gusted to 54 mph at Buffalo NY, and reached 66 mph at Livingston MT. Rain, freezing rain, sleet and snow fell across New England, with up to seven inches of snow in Maine. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong southerly winds ahead of a cold front in the central U.S. gusted to 70 mph at Indianapolis IN. The high winds toppled a masonry wall killing a construction worker. Low pressure and a trailing cold front brought rain and snow and high winds to the western U.S. Winds gusted to 90 mph at the Callahan Ranch south of Reno NV. Soda Springs, in the Sierra Nevada Range of California, received 17 inches of snow in less than 24 hours. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2006: Severe Cyclone Bondo, the equivalent of a Category 4, approaches the Madagascar coast with sustained winds of 138 mph.

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE JOY THAT COMES FROM CHRISTMAS

A young run-away girl collapsed on the streets of a large city at the beginning of the Christmas season. She was rushed to a hospital, placed in intensive care, and finally made it to a room where she made slow progress in regaining her health.

One evening a group of carolers stopped by her room and sang the beautiful songs that describe the birth of Jesus. After they sang, a young lady approached her bed and asked if she knew the Baby that they had been singing about.

Quietly, barely above a whisper, she said, "I heard about Him when I went to Sunday school. But don't remember too much about Him."

The young lady reminded her of the story and the meaning of the birth of Jesus and the plan of salvation. When she heard the story, she accepted the Lord as her Savior.

Finally, it was time for her to leave and a nurse said, "Well, now that you're better, it's time for you to leave."

Happily, she said, "Yes, but I'm not leaving alone. I'm taking Jesus with me. Do you know Jesus?"

"Oh, yes," replied the nurse, in a grumpy voice.

"Well, then," she asked, "why aren't you filled with joy like I am? If you truly know Jesus, you'll be happy all the time."

David said, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation!"

Prayer: Lord, sometimes we surrender our joy to the stress and strains of life. Come now and return the joy we once had when we accepted Christ as our Savior. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.



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

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## 2022-23 Community Events

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

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
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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

04-10-25-34-50, Star Ball: 5, ASB: 3

(four, ten, twenty-five, thirty-four, fifty; Star Ball: five; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$31,090,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 465,000,000

Powerball

07-37-55-65-67, Powerball: 12, Power Play: 5

(seven, thirty-seven, fifty-five, sixty-five, sixty-seven; Powerball: twelve; Power Play: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$170,000,000

### Mitchell scores 28 as UMKC knocks off South Dakota 62-45

By The Associated Press undefined

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Rayquawndis Mitchell had 28 points in UMKC's 62-45 victory over South Dakota on Monday night.

Mitchell also contributed five rebounds for the Kangaroos (5-9). Shemarri Allen added 13 points while going 4 of 10 and 5 of 6 from the free throw line, and they also had seven rebounds. Tyler Andrews recorded seven points and went 3 of 4 from the field.

Tasos Kamateros led the Coyotes (5-8) in scoring, finishing with 11 points. South Dakota also got 10 points from A.J. Plitzuweit. In addition, Paul Bruns finished with nine points.

### Vanover scores 21, Oral Roberts beats South Dakota St. 79-40

By The Associated Press undefined

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — Connor Vanover scored 21 points as Oral Roberts beat South Dakota State 79-40 on Monday night.

Vanover also added six rebounds and three steals for the Golden Eagles (10-3). DeShang Weaver shot 6 for 9, including 2 for 3 from beyond the arc to add 14 points. Carlos Jurgens shot 5 for 9, including 2 for 4 from beyond the arc to finish with 12 points, while adding three steals. The Golden Eagles extended their winning streak to seven games.

The Jackrabbits (5-8) were led by Alex Arians, who recorded eight points. South Dakota State also got eight points and three blocks from William Kyle III. In addition, Matthew Mors finished with six points.

### Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 64, Britton-Hecla 27

Castlewood 66, Elkton-Lake Benton 50

DeSmet 68, Dell Rapids St. Mary 24

Gayville-Volin 56, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 43

Hanson 56, Kimball/White Lake 40

Howard 61, Freeman 43

Kadoka Area 59, Lead-Deadwood 44

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Lennox 55, Canton 51  
Parkston 42, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 40  
Timber Lake 56, Herreid/Selby Area 46  
West Central 61, Garretson 36

## GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Britton-Hecla 30, Aberdeen Christian 28  
Dell Rapids St. Mary 46, Colman-Egan 44  
Edgemont 30, Bison 21  
Harrisburg 45, Marshall, Minn. 40  
James Valley Christian 39, Sunshine Bible Academy 17  
Kadoka Area 64, Lead-Deadwood 19  
Parkston 55, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 42  
Timber Lake 55, Herreid/Selby Area 42

## Boy who got new heart inspires tribe to boost organ donation

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

Greyson Parisien's time on earth was short. But the boy with dark-rimmed eyeglasses who was enchanted by the music in "Frozen," the sound of ripping paper and his dad playing the guitar is having an outsized impact on his tribal community in the far reaches of North Dakota.

His journey to correct an irregular heart led the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians to add an organ donation box to tribal IDs, which it unveiled during a November ceremony.

The rate of organ donations among Native Americans is much lower than other ethnic groups. For some tribes, cultural beliefs are a factor. In rural communities, time, distance and spotty internet access can hinder the process.

"You don't think about donation and how many people are not donors," said Greyson's grandmother, Joan Azure. "I was thinking, 'There has to be more donors.' When you're going through this personally, you don't want someone to die but you also want your child to live."

Fewer than 1% of the 100,000 people nationwide waiting for organ transplants are Native Americans, who make up nearly 3% of the U.S. population.

The figures are higher in some states, including New Mexico where 1 in 5 people on the waiting list are Native American. In South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota, nearly 5% of patients awaiting an organ donation are Native American.

Greyson had surgery at 5 months to correct a heart problem, and then he needed an external device to pump blood through his small body. A heart transplant allowed him to leave the hospital after a year and return to the Turtle Mountain reservation, headquartered in Belcourt, North Dakota.

Tribal members followed Greyson's treatment through updates his family posted on social media. They saw him hooked up to medical equipment and dressed sharply in boxy eyeglasses, bow ties and khakis, his hair combed in a mohawk.

When he died suddenly of pneumonia in September 2019, the community sought understanding and assurance that it wasn't because of his new heart. He was 21 months old.

Greyson's story and spirit live on in parades, powwows and conversations. Joan Azure also highlights her grandson during a week devoted to children born with congenital heart problems.

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians honored Greyson this year with a resolution to add an organ donation box to tribal IDs. The tribe unveiled the IDs in November, waived the \$10 fee and encouraged tribal members to check the box.

"Today is a monumental day that people will remember, especially Native nations, for decades to come," tribal Chairman Jamie Azure said, standing next to Greyson's photo, was taken after he got a new heart — smiling with arms stretched to the sky.

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The tribe believes it could be the first of the 574 federally recognized Native American nations to designate a spot on tribal IDs for organ donors.

Susan Mau Larson, the chief strategy officer for LifeSource, part of a network of nearly 60 organ procurement organizations, said she hopes other tribes follow suit. Several are working with tribal communities to raise awareness of organ donation and transplant.

Those conversations can be tough, especially when personal or traditional beliefs don't align with Western medicine. They happen in tribal communities, at events and in hospital rooms as someone nears the end of their life. And there are guidelines: Identify the decision maker in a family. Tell a story, don't explain the process. Give the family time to discuss. Be comfortable with silence. And comfort families, regardless of the decision.

In the Southwest, Darryl Madalena encourages tribal members to think about becoming organ donors by making a connection between kidney disease — which afflicts Native Americans at higher rates than the U.S. population — and organ donation and receipt.

He talks about tribes' increasing reliance on Western medicine and asks, hypothetically, if members would be prevented from journeying on if they had a pacemaker or an artificial hip. If not, why not donate or receive an organ?

"So much of westernized medicine is in the fabric of our communities, our lives, our culture," said Madalena, the Native American liaison for New Mexico Donor Services. "If you pull one string, that may be very detrimental to the health of Natives."

Madalena's work is partly driven by the memory of his partner, Mylia Phouamkha, a Hopi woman who died within a week of being hospitalized with liver problems in 2019, without enough time to seriously consider a transplant.

She and Madalena had a son together, Micca, who was 2 years old at the time.

"If your heart tells you and you have it within yourself to have a transplant if you need it ...I would say yes, do it," said her father, Myron Ami, as Micca sat on his lap.

Madalena has faced criticism for mentioning death, which can be a taboo topic. His community of Jemez Pueblo in New Mexico believes that people enter this world physically and spiritually whole, and that they should leave the same way.

"That's what we're taught, that's what the beliefs still are," he said.

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians doesn't hold the same beliefs, Joan Azure said. About 40% of people in Rollette County where the tribe is based have signed up to become organ donors, compared to 65% overall in North Dakota.

Education, means or opportunity are big factors, said Mau Larson. Simply getting a driver's license means traveling 80 miles (130 kilometers) from the Turtle Mountain reservation. But tribal IDs are renewed every two years, giving tribal members a more frequent opportunity to choose organ donation.

Studies show that organ recipients are best matched with donors of similar genetic makeup, Mau Larson said. Kidneys are especially needed in Native American communities, where one-quarter of the population is diabetic, she said.

Greyson and his family spent much of his life in Rochester, Minnesota, for his medical care, hundreds of miles from the rolling hills and lakes of the Turtle Mountain reservation. His heart came from a girl named Coralynn, whose picture on a puzzle piece was interlocked with Greyson's on a parade float banner reading "Not all Heroes Wear Capes!"

After Greyson died, his family asked a Turtle Mountain elder to bestow a traditional name upon him, through their creator. The elder was in a sweat lodge praying when it came to him: "Waasizo Gichi Anong Ningaabii' Anong," or "Shining Big Star in the West," said Joan Azure.

"Even in his worst moments, his smile shined brightly, his presence brought happiness and light to everyone he came into contact with," she said. "And he provided guidance to many with that bright shining light through his bravery and strength."

## Noem's health chief retires amid scrutiny of trans advocate

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's Cabinet secretary overseeing the state's health department announced her resignation Monday amid criticism from conservatives over the Republican governor's administration rewarding a community health care grant to an organization that advocates for transgender people.

The governor's office said in a statement that Secretary of Health Joan Adam, who has held the position since March, was retiring to focus on "family and personal commitments." But the end of her 20-year career with the Department of Health comes days after Noem faced questions from a conservative website, The Daily Signal, for the state granting a contract to The Transformation Project, an organization that advocates for transgender people in the conservative state.

The grant was part of an effort from the state Department of Health to administer funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for community health workers to link communities to health and social services. The program describes the health workers as a "trusted member" or someone who has a close understanding of a community.

Transgender-rights advocates, including The Transformation Project, have long said that transgender youth face discrimination and hostility, leading to depression, isolation and suicidal thoughts. The Republican-controlled Legislature has taken up efforts to discriminate against transgender youth.

The Department of Health awarded an annual contract to The Transformation Project starting in June. But Noem's spokesman, Ian Fury, has said the governor was not aware of the \$136,000 contract, did not authorize it and does not support the organization's work. The state dissolved the contract and reviewed other Department of Health contracts soon after the issue of the contract was raised.

Fury said the organization had not complied with the contract terms, including submitting quarterly reports.

The Transformation Project did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the grant being canceled.

Democratic state lawmaker, Rep. Linda Duba, called Noem's actions a disturbing example of her willingness to withdraw funding for health care based on her own political convictions.

"Just because you don't agree with someone's choice doesn't mean you withhold or take away health care," Duba said. "They have a high suicide rate and yet, this is what happened."

Conservatives in the Legislature, though, have taken aim at the transgender community and sometimes pushed for Noem, who is widely seen as a potential 2024 White House contender, to take action on the issue. The Legislature's Freedom Caucus, a right-wing group of Republican lawmakers, said Monday it would introduce legislation next year to ban gender-affirming procedures for transgender youth.

"This is a life-altering decision that shouldn't be made by or for a child at such a vulnerable age," said Republican Rep. Aaron Aylward, who chairs the caucus.

The U.S. Department of Justice has challenged bans in other states, slamming them as violations of federal law.

The Republican lawmakers also took issue with an annual conference in Sioux Falls that reviews the health care needs of transgender patients. It is being hosted by The Transformation Project and Sanford Health, the state's largest hospital system.

Meanwhile, Noem in a statement said she was "grateful" for the advice of Adam, her health secretary, and praised her for putting "families first."

Adam said in the statement: "My time with the Department of Health has been very rewarding. The dedication of the Department's employees is impressive and will continue to serve the state well."

## Review: 'The Good Country' revives Midwest's history

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

"The Good Country: A History of the American Midwest 1800-1900" by Jon K. Lauck (The University of Oklahoma Press)



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Dismissed as Flyover Country. Romanticized as the Heartland. Now, historian Jon K. Lauck seeks to re-define the Midwest as “The Good Country” — a place of progress and democratic ideals — in his chronicle of the region’s 19th century.

“The Good Country” argues that Midwestern roots are a far cry from the way the region is imagined in popular culture today — that is puritanical, repressive and dull. Instead, Lauck presents a Midwestern century from 1800 to 1900 when it formed a bulwark against slavery, fostered a pluralistic, education-rich society and ascended to lead the country through progressivism rooted in community.

Lauck describes the region as “a land of democratic vigor, cultural strength, racial and gender progress, and civic energy — a Good Country” that is worthy of reviving.

The book is accessible — and brief enough at 204 pages — for casual readers, yet contains evidence of exhaustive research to appeal to academics. It traces the development of the region from the Northwest Ordinance that opened it to American development to the Civil War era when it birthed leaders like Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant. It then closed out the century by leading the nation in women’s suffrage and anti-monopoly reforms.

Though Lauck clearly champions the region, he acknowledges its “many racial failings.” American settlement meant suffering for Native American tribes. A race riot shook Detroit in 1833 and led to racist laws that were common in the region. State laws allowed loopholes in forced servitude and initially failed to grant suffrage to Black people.

Lauck developed the book out of his own search for a comprehensive history of the region to teach in his classes at the University of South Dakota. He discovered that while scholarship dedicated to the American South and West was flourishing, historical study of the Midwest had long been neglected. As editor of the journal *Middle West Review*, Lauck presents the “Good Country” as a potential catalyst for developing a historical canon of the region.

The book’s ambition, however, is not limited to historical analysis. It hints at a present longing for a resurrection of Midwestern democratic vitality. Lauck laments the “callow tweets, sensationalism, celebrity worship, extreme loneliness, and mass and manufactured and purposeful distraction” of today and suggests “the old Midwest could be a reservoir of idealism and hope if we knew its history.”

## Chinese with mild COVID urged to work as restrictions ease

By DAKE KANG and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Several local governments in China encouraged people with mild cases of COVID-19 to go to work this week, another sign of the difficulty the country faces as its rollback of virus-containment measures sets off a wave of infections — and a growing number of deaths.

Health authorities reported Tuesday that five people died in the latest 24-hour period, all in Beijing, fueling concern that the toll could rise sharply after the lifting of most “zero-COVID” restrictions. The official toll likely understates the actual number, and it’s unclear how the unleashing of the virus will play out in China and whether the health care system can handle a surge in cases nationwide.

The city of Guiyang in southern Guizhou province proposed that infected people with little or no symptoms go to work in a range of sectors, including government offices, state-owned companies, medical, health and emergency workers and those in express delivery and supermarkets.

That’s a sea change from just a few weeks ago, when China’s policy was to isolate anyone infected at a hospital or government-run facility. The announcement Tuesday followed similar ones from the cities of Wuhu in Anhui province and Chongqing earlier this week. The moves appear to be in response to worker shortages that have affected medical care and food deliveries.

They also reflect the the difficulty officials face in trying to revive an economy that was throttled by pandemic restrictions, and now that they have been lifted, is being slowed by workers falling ill.

China had long hailed its restrictive “zero-COVID” approach of lockdowns, quarantines and compulsory testing as keeping case numbers and deaths relatively low. Yet the policy placed China’s society and the national economy under enormous stress and prompted rare anti-government protests, apparently con-

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vincing the ruling Communist Party to heed outside advice and alter its strategy.

Now, unofficial reports suggest a widespread wave of new coronavirus cases, and relatives of victims and people who work in the funeral business have said deaths tied to COVID-19 are increasing.

Wang Guangfa, a doctor in the Respiratory Department of Peking University First Hospital, warned Beijing will see the peak of severe cases in the next one or two weeks.

"The current wave of infection resembles an epidemic tsunami," he said in a Q&A piece published online this week. He also said northern China will have a higher rate of severe cases than the southern part because of the cold weather.

As is typical, cases of severe illness and death will be largely concentrated among the elderly or those who haven't received booster shots of vaccines, said Dr. Gagandeep Kang, who studies viruses at the Christian Medical College in Vellore, India.

China, despite fully vaccinating 90.3% of its population, has only given a booster dose to 60.5%. China needs to prioritize giving boosters, especially to those over 60, to avoid large numbers of deaths, Kang said.

The National Health Commission said the five newly recorded fatalities had taken the country's total death toll to 5,242 — relatively low by global standards but potentially set to increase substantially following moves by the government to step away from the "zero-COVID" policy.

With people now testing and recuperating at home, China has said it is no longer possible to keep an accurate count of new case numbers, making it substantially more difficult to gauge the state of the current wave of infection and its direction. Some scientific models have estimated numbers will rise with an eventual death toll in the tens or hundreds of thousands.

China is trying to persuade reluctant seniors and others at risk to get vaccinated, apparently with only moderate success. Vaccination centers visited over recent days have been largely empty and there has been no major publicity drive in the entirely state-controlled media.

The other major concern is shoring up health resources in smaller cities and the vast rural hinterland ahead of January's Lunar New Year travel rush, which will see migrant workers returning to their hometowns.

Numbers of fever clinics have been expanded in both urban and rural areas and people have been asked to stay home unless seriously ill to preserve resources. Hospitals are also running short on staff, and reports say workers have been asked to return to their posts as long as they aren't feverish.

Case and death counts in every country are thought to underestimate the true toll of the virus, but there are particular concerns in China. Chinese health authorities count only those who died directly from COVID-19, excluding deaths blamed on underlying conditions such as diabetes and heart disease that raise risks of serious illness.

In many other countries, guidelines stipulate that any death where the coronavirus is a factor or contributor is counted as a COVID-19 related.

## Huge crowds welcome Argentina team after World Cup victory

By DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Thousands of fans lined up in the middle of the night to try to get a glimpse of the Argentina soccer team that won one of the greatest World Cup finals of all time ahead what is scheduled to be a day of celebrations in Buenos Aires.

Members of the team, led by captain Lionel Messi, were all smiles as they descended from the plane in Ezeiza, right outside Argentina's capital, shortly before 3 a.m. Tuesday onto a red carpet that had been rolled out for the squad.

Messi was the first player from the plane carrying the World Cup, flanked by coach Lionel Scaloni, who put his arm around the captain as they walked past a sign that read, "Thank you, champions."

The players were welcomed by rock band La Mosca singing "Muchachos," a song that was written by a fan to the tune of an old song by the band and became a popular unofficial anthem for Argentine fans at the World Cup in Qatar.

The newly crowned champions of the world boarded an open top bus and several, including Messi,

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could be seen singing the words to "Muchachos" while they waited for everyone to get on to travel to the headquarters of the Argentine Football Association.

The bus moved at a snail's pace as fans, many of whom were waving Argentine flags, swarmed the bus on a highway, eager for a glimpse of the players as law enforcement officers tried to keep them at bay.

Throughout the trip, Messi held on the World Cup as players waved to fans and often sang along with them.

It took the bus around one hour to travel approximately 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) from the airport to AFA headquarters, where the players were welcomed with fireworks.

They will sleep at AFA headquarters for a few hours before boarding the bus later Tuesday to the Obelisk, the iconic Buenos Aires landmark that was a sea of people Sunday afternoon after the team won the country's third World Cup, and its first since 1986.

President Alberto Fernández declared a national holiday Tuesday so the country could celebrate the victory.

The day after the streets of Argentina turned into massive parties following the Sunday victory, many kept a close eye on the flight that brought the players home to celebrate. As the plane got closer to Argentine soil, almost 200,000 people were tracking its path online and news channels gave live coverage of the arrival.

In the afternoon, people started arriving at the airport and outside the AFA headquarters in hopes of getting a glimpse of the team.

Many were also already at the Obelisk, seemingly ready to spend the night there to ensure a prime spot for Tuesday's festivities.

Several players posted photos of the plane ride on social media.

Messi held the World Cup on the plane. Nicolás Tagliafico, meanwhile, posted a photo of the World Cup buckled into an airplane seat as if it were just another passenger.

As of early Tuesday morning there were no official plans for Fernández, or any other political leaders, to take part in the celebrations despite earlier rumors that the players would go to Government House, which was offered up for the celebrations, according to Security Minister Aníbal Fernández.

The World Cup and the success of the Messi-led squad has brought much-needed good news for a country that has been stuck in economic doldrums for years, is suffering one of the world's highest inflation rates and where almost four-in-10 people live in poverty.

Fernández retweeted several messages of congratulations for the World Cup victory from other world leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Thank you for this greeting President Putin," Fernández wrote on Twitter after a telephone call with the Russian leader. "Let the happiness that today unites Argentina with so many countries in the world serve as an example: Our societies need unity and peace."

## Police seize on COVID-19 tech to expand global surveillance

By GARANCE BURKE, JOSEF FEDERMAN, HUIZHONG WU, KRUTIKA PATHI and ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Majd Ramlawi was serving coffee in Jerusalem's Old City when a chilling text message appeared on his phone.

"You have been spotted as having participated in acts of violence in the Al-Aqsa Mosque," it read in Arabic. "We will hold you accountable."

Ramlawi, then 19, was among hundreds of people who civil rights attorneys estimate got the text last year, at the height of one of the most turbulent recent periods in the Holy Land. Many, including Ramlawi, say they only lived or worked in the neighborhood, and had nothing to do with the unrest. What he didn't know was that the feared internal security agency, the Shin Bet, was using mass surveillance technology mobilized for coronavirus contact tracing, against Israeli residents and citizens for purposes entirely unrelated to COVID-19.

In the pandemic's bewildering early days, millions worldwide believed government officials who said they

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needed confidential data for new tech tools that could help stop coronavirus' spread. In return, governments got a firehose of individuals' private health details, photographs that captured their facial measurements and their home addresses.

Now, from Beijing to Jerusalem to Hyderabad, India, and Perth, Australia, The Associated Press has found that authorities used these technologies and data to halt travel for activists and ordinary people, harass marginalized communities and link people's health information to other surveillance and law enforcement tools. In some cases, data was shared with spy agencies. The issue has taken on fresh urgency almost three years into the pandemic as China's ultra-strict zero-COVID policies recently ignited the sharpest public rebuke of the country's authoritarian leadership since the pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

For more than a year, AP journalists interviewed sources and pored over thousands of documents to trace how technologies marketed to "flatten the curve" were put to other uses. Just as the balance between privacy and national security shifted after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, COVID-19 has given officials justification to embed tracking tools in society that have lasted long after lockdowns.

"Any intervention that increases state power to monitor individuals has a long tail and is a ratcheting system," said John Scott-Railton, a senior researcher at the Toronto-based internet watchdog Citizen Lab. "Once you get it, is very unlikely it will ever go away."

## CODE RED

In China, the last major country in the world to enforce strict COVID-19 lockdowns, citizens have been required to install cell-phone apps to move about freely in most cities. Drawing from telecommunications data and PCR test results, the apps produce individual QR codes that change from green to yellow or red, depending on a person's health status.

The apps and lockdowns are part of China's sweeping pandemic prevention policies that have pushed the public to a breaking point. When an apartment fire in Urumqi last month left at least 10 dead, many blamed zero-tolerance COVID policies. That sparked demonstrations in major cities nationwide, the largest display of defiance in decades, after which the government announced it would only check health codes in "special places," such as schools, hospitals and nursing homes.

Last week, the government went further, saying it would shut down a national-level health code to ease travel between provinces. But cities and provinces have their own codes, which have been more dominant. In Beijing last week, restaurants, offices, hotels and gyms were still requiring local codes for entry.

Over the past few years, Chinese citizens have needed a green code to board domestic flights or trains, and in some cities even to enter the supermarket or to get on a bus. If they were found to have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, or if the government imposed a local quarantine, the code would turn red, and they were stuck at home.

There's evidence that the health codes have been used to stifle dissent.

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This story, supported by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, is part of an ongoing Associated Press series, "Tracked," that investigates the power and consequences of decisions driven by algorithms on people's everyday lives.

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In early September, former wealth manager Yang Jiahao bought a train ticket to Beijing, where he planned to lodge various complaints with the central government. The night before, a woman he described as a handler invited him to dinner. Handlers are usually hired by state security as part of "stability maintenance" operations and can require people to meet or travel when authorities worry they could cause trouble. Yang had a meal with the handler, and the next morning Guangzhou health authorities reported a COVID-19 case less than a kilometer from where they dined, he said.

Based on city regulations, Yang's code should have turned yellow, requiring him to take a few COVID tests to show he was negative.

Instead, the app turned red, even though tests showed that he didn't have COVID. Yang was ordered to quarantine and a paper seal was placed on his door.



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"They can do whatever they want," he said.

An officer at the Huangcun station of the Guangzhou police referred comment to city-level authorities on Yang's case, saying he required proof that the caller was from the AP. Guangzhou's Public Security Bureau and the city's Center for Disease Control and Prevention did not respond to faxed requests for comment.

In another show of how the apps can control lives, in June, a group of bank customers were effectively corralled by the health codes when they tried going to Henan's provincial capital in Zhengzhou to protest being unable to access their online bank accounts.

A notice said the problem was due to a system upgrade. But the customers soon found out the real reason: a police investigation into stockholders in the parent bank had rendered 40 billion yuan in funds inaccessible, according to local media reports. Frustrated after months of complaints, a group of customers decided to hold a protest in Zhengzhou at the provincial banking commission.

Customer Xu Zhihao uploaded his itinerary to get the Henan province health code after he tested negative for COVID-19 in his coastal city of Tianjin, just south of Beijing. As he got off the train in Zhengzhou, Xu was asked to scan his QR code at the station, and immediately it turned red. The train station employee called security and took him to a police booth.

Xu said police took him to the basement to quarantine. Three other people joined him, and all four realized that they had come to get their money back.

"They had set the net in place, waiting for us," Xu said.

From a group chat, Xu and others learned that many protesters had met a similar fate, at the high-speed rail train station, at the airport and even on the highway. A government inquiry later found that red codes were given to 1,317 people, many of whom had planned to protest.

China's National Health Commission, which has led the COVID response, did not reply to a fax requesting comment. The Henan provincial government did not respond either.

Even after China ends lockdowns, some dissidents and human rights activists predict the local-level health codes will stay on as a technological means of social control. Early on, provinces didn't share data, but in the past few years, that has changed.

Some provincial governments have created local apps that can link health, location and even credit information, which leaves open the possibility for these apps or the national databases they draw from to be used to monitor people in the future, according to an AP review of procurement documents, research and interviews. Xu and Yang, for instance, were both stopped in their tracks by local health codes.

In February, police in northeastern Heilongjiang province sought to upgrade their local health code so they could search PCR test results for anyone in China, in real time, according to procurement documents provided exclusively by ChinaFile, a digital magazine published by the Asia Society. A company whose parent is government-owned won the non-competitive bid to connect that app to a national database of PCR data run by the State Council, China's Cabinet, fulfilling a national directive, the documents show. The same company, Beijing Beiming Digital Technology, also claims on its website that it has developed more than 30 pandemic apps.

"It's the governance model, the philosophy behind it is to strengthen social control through technology. It's strengthened by the health app, and it's definitely going to stay after COVID is over," said Yaqiu Wang, a senior researcher with Human Rights Watch. "I think it's very, very powerful."

"THERE ARE TWO SETS OF LAWS"

In Jerusalem's Old City, tourists sipping fresh pomegranate juice, worshippers and locals taking a shortcut home are all monitored by Israeli security forces holding automatic weapons. The labyrinth of cavernous pathways is also lined with CCTV cameras and what authorities have described as "advanced technologies."

After clashes in May 2021 at the Al-Aqsa Mosque helped trigger an 11-day war with Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip, Israel experienced some of the worst violence in years. Police lobbed stun grenades into the disputed compound known to Jews as the Temple Mount, home to Al-Aqsa, Islam's third-holiest site, as Palestinian crowds holed up inside hurling stones and firebombs at them.

By that time, Israelis had become accustomed to police showing up outside their homes to say they

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weren't observing quarantine and knew that Israel's Shin Bet security agency was repurposing phone surveillance technology it had previously used to monitor militants inside Palestinian territories. The practice made headlines at the start of the pandemic when the Israeli government said it would be deployed for COVID-19 contact tracing.

A year later, the Shin Bet quietly began using the same technology to send threatening messages to Israel's Arab citizens and residents whom the agency suspected of participating in violent clashes with police. Some of the recipients, however, simply lived or worked in the area, or were mere passers-by.

Ramlawi's coffeeshop sits in the ornate Cotton Merchant's Market outside the mosque compound, an area lined with police and security cameras that likely would have identified the barista had he participated in violence.

Although Ramlawi deleted the message and hasn't received a similar one since, he said the thought of his phone being used as a monitoring tool still haunts him.

"It's like the government is in your bag," said Ramlawi, who worries that surveillance enabled to stop COVID-19 poses a lasting menace for east Jerusalem residents. "When you move, the government is with you with this phone."

The Shin Bet's domestic use of the technology has generated an uproar over privacy and civil liberties within Israel, as well as questions about its accuracy. The Ministry of Communications, which oversees Israel's telecommunications companies, refused a request seeking further details submitted for the AP by the Movement for Freedom of Information, a nonprofit that frequently works with media organizations.

Gil Gan-Mor, an attorney with the nonprofit Association for Civil Rights in Israel, estimates that hundreds of Arabs in Jerusalem received the threatening message during the unrest and said the mass text message blast was unprecedented.

"You cannot just say to people, 'We are watching you ... and we will get revenge,'" he said. "You cannot use this tool to frighten people. If you have something against someone, you can put them on trial."

After Gan-Mor's organization sued, Shin Bet made no apologies.

"There was a clear security need to send an urgent message to a very large number of people, all of whom had a credible suspicion of being involved in performing violent crimes," the agency said in a legal filing last year. The filing, signed by "Daniella B.," the Shin Bet's legal adviser for the Jerusalem district, also acknowledged that "lessons were learned."

In February, Israel's attorney general upheld the continued use of the technology, saying it was a legitimate security tool, while acknowledging glitches in the system and that messages were distributed to a small number of unintended targets. Israel's Supreme Court is now reviewing the matter.

Sami Abu Shehadeh, a former Arab lawmaker who served in Israel's parliament at the time Shin Bet sent its warning texts, said the messages demonstrate the broader struggles of Israel's 20% Arab minority.

"The state does not deal with us as citizens," he said. "There are two sets of laws -- one for Jews and one for Arabs."

## '360 DEGREE SURVEILLANCE'

Technologies designed to combat COVID-19 were redirected by law enforcement and intelligence services in other democracies as governments expanded their digital arsenals amid the pandemic.

In India, facial recognition and artificial intelligence technology exploded after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party swept into power in 2014, becoming a tool for police to monitor mass gatherings. The country is seeking to build what will be among the world's largest facial recognition networks.

As the pandemic took hold in early 2020, state and central governments tasked local police with enforcing mask mandates. Fines of up to \$25, as much as 12 days' pay for some laborers and unaffordable for the nearly 230 million people estimated to be living in poverty in India, were introduced in some places.

In the south-central city of Hyderabad, police started taking pictures of people flaunting the mask mandate or simply wearing masks haphazardly.

Police Commissioner C.V. Anand said the city has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years on patrol vehicles, CCTV cameras, facial recognition and geo-tracking applications and several hundred

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facial recognition cameras, among other technologies powered by algorithms or machine learning. Inside Hyderabad's Command and Control Center, officers showed an AP reporter how they run CCTV camera footage through facial recognition software that scans images against a database of offenders.

"When (companies) decide to invest in a city, they first look at the law-and-order situation," Anand said, defending the use of such tools as absolutely necessary. "People here are aware of what the technologies can do, and there is wholesome support for it."

By May 2020, the police chief of Telangana state tweeted about his department rolling out AI-based software using CCTV to zero-in on people not wearing masks. The tweet included photos of the software overlaying colored rectangles on the maskless faces of unsuspecting locals.

More than a year later, police tweeted images of themselves using hand-held tablets to scan people's faces using facial recognition software, according to a post from the official Twitter handle of the station house officer in the Amberpet neighborhood.

Police said the tablets, which can take ordinary photographs or link them to a facial recognition database of criminals, were a useful way for officers to catch and fine mask offenders.

"When they see someone not wearing a mask, they go up to them, take a photo on their tablet, take down their details like phone number and name," said B Guru Naidu, an inspector in Hyderabad's South Zone.

Officers decide who they deem suspicious, stoking fears among privacy advocates, some Muslims and members of Hyderabad's lower-caste communities.

"If the patrolling officers suspect any person, they take their fingerprints or scan their face – the app on the tablet will then check these for any past criminal antecedents," Naidu said.

S Q Masood, a social activist who has led government transparency campaigns in Hyderabad, sees more at stake. Masood and his father-in-law were seemingly stopped at random by police in Shahrani market, a predominantly Muslim area, during a COVID-19 surge last year. Masood said officers told him to remove his mask so they could photograph him with a tablet.

"I told them I won't remove my mask. They then asked me why not, and I told them I will not remove my mask." He said they photographed him with it in place. Back home, Masood went from bewildered to anxious: Where and how was this photo to be used? Would it be added to the police's facial recognition database?

Now he's suing in the Telangana High Court to find out why his photo was taken and to limit the widespread use of facial recognition. His case could set the tone for India's growing ambition to combine emerging technology with law enforcement in the world's largest democracy, experts said.

India lacks a data protection law and even existing proposals won't regulate surveillance technologies if they become law, said Apar Gupta, executive director of the New Delhi-based Internet Freedom Foundation, which is helping to represent Masood.

Police responded to Masood's lawsuit and denied using facial recognition in his case, saying that his photograph was not scanned against any database and that facial recognition is only used during the investigation of a crime or suspected crime, when it can be run against CCTV footage.

In two separate AP interviews, local police demonstrated both how the TSCOP app carried by police on the street can compare a person's photograph to a facial recognition database of criminals, and how from the Command and Control Center police can use facial recognition analysis to compare stored mugshots of criminals to video gathered from CCTV cameras.

Masood's lawyers are working on a response and awaiting a hearing date.

Privacy advocates in India believe that such stepped-up actions under the pandemic could enable what they call 360 degree surveillance, under which things like housing, welfare, health and other kinds of data are all linked together to create a profile.

"Surveillance today is being posed as a technological panacea to large social problems in India, which has brought us very close to China," Gupta said. "There is no law. There are no safeguards. And this is general purpose deployment of mass surveillance."

'THE NEW NORMAL'

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What use will ultimately be made of the data collected and tools developed during the height of the pandemic remains an open question. But recent uses in Australia and the United States may offer a glimpse.

During two years of strict border controls, Australia's conservative former Prime Minister Scott Morrison took the extraordinary step of appointing himself minister of five departments, including the Department of Health. Authorities introduced both national and state-level apps to notify people when they had been in the vicinity of someone who tested positive for the virus.

But the apps were also used in other ways. Australia's intelligence agencies were caught "incidentally" collecting data from the national COVIDSafe app. News of the breach surfaced in a November 2020 report by the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, which said there was no evidence that the data was decrypted, accessed or used. The national app was canceled in August by a new administration as a waste of money: it had identified only two positive COVID-19 cases that wouldn't have been found otherwise.

At the local level, people used apps to tap their phones against a site's QR code, logging their individual ID so that if a COVID-19 outbreak occurred, they could be contacted. The data sometimes was used for other purposes. Australian law enforcement co-opted the state-level QR check-in data as a sort of electronic dragnet to investigate crimes.

After biker gang boss Nick Martin was shot and killed at a speedway in Perth, police accessed QR code check-in data from the health apps of 2,439 drag racing fans who attended the December 2020 race. It included names, phone numbers and arrival times.

Police accessed the information despite Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan's promise on Facebook that the COVID-related data would only be accessible to contact-tracing personnel at the Department of Health. The murder was eventually solved using entirely traditional policing tactics, including footprint matching, cellphone tracking and ultimately a confession.

Western Australia police didn't respond to requests for comment. Queensland and Victoria law enforcement also sought the public's QR check-in data in connection with investigations. Police in both states did not address AP questions regarding why they sought the data, and lawmakers in Queensland and Victoria have since tightened the rules on police access to QR check-in information.

In the U.S., which relied on a hodge-podge of state and local quarantine orders to ensure compliance with COVID rules, the federal government took the opportunity to build out its surveillance toolkit, including two contracts in 2020 worth \$24.9 million to the data mining and surveillance company Palantir Technologies Inc. to support the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' pandemic response. Documents obtained by the immigrant rights group Just Futures Law under the Freedom of Information Act and shared with the AP showed that federal officials contemplated how to share data that went far beyond COVID-19.

The possibilities included integrating "identifiable patient data," such as mental health, substance use and behavioral health information from group homes, shelters, jails, detox facilities and schools. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control does not use any of that individual-level information in the platform CDC now manages, said Kevin Griffis, a department spokesman. Griffis said he could not comment on discussions that occurred under the previous administration.

The protocols appeared to lack information safeguards or usage restrictions, said Paromita Shah, Just Futures Law's executive director.

"What the pandemic did was blow up an industry of mass collection of biometric and biographical data," Shah said. "So, few things were off the table."

Last year, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control purchased detailed cellphone location data revealing people's daily whereabouts, nationwide. "Mobility insights" data from at least 20 million devices could be used to "project how much worse things would have been without the bans," such as stay-at-home orders and business closures, according to a July 2021 contract obtained by the nonprofit group Tech Inquiry and shared with the AP.

The contract shows data broker Cuebiq provided a "device ID," which typically ties information to individual cell phones. The CDC also could use the information to examine the effect of closing borders, an



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emergency measure ordered by the Trump administration and continued by President Joe Biden, despite top scientists' objections that there was no evidence the action would slow the coronavirus.

CDC spokeswoman Kristen Nordlund said the agency acquired aggregated, anonymous data with extensive privacy protections for public health research, but did not address questions about whether the agency was still using the data. Cuebiqu did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

For Scott-Railton, that sets a dangerous precedent.

"What COVID did was accelerate state use of these tools and that data and normalize it, so it fit a narrative about there being a public benefit," he said. "Now the question is, are we going to be capable of having a reckoning around the use of this data, or is this the new normal?"

## Lawmakers unveil bill to avoid gov't shutdown, boost Ukraine

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional leaders unveiled a \$1.7 trillion spending package early Tuesday that includes another large round of aid to Ukraine, a nearly 10% boost in defense spending and roughly \$40 billion to assist communities across the country recovering from drought, hurricanes and other natural disasters.

The bill includes about \$772.5 billion for non-defense discretionary programs and \$858 billion in defense funding.

Lawmakers are working to stuff in as many priorities as they can into what is likely to be the last major bill of the current Congress. They are racing to complete passage of the bill before a midnight Friday deadline or face the prospect of a partial government shutdown going into the Christmas holiday. Lawmakers leading the negotiations released the details of the bill shortly before 2 a.m. Tuesday.

The U.S. has provided about \$68 billion in previous rounds of military, economic and humanitarian assistance for Ukraine. President Joe Biden has requested more than \$37 billion more. Congress is going further with Sen. Patrick Leahy, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, saying the spending package includes about \$45 billion in emergency assistance to Ukraine.

"Finalizing the omnibus is critical, absolutely critical for supporting our friends in Ukraine," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

Republican leader Mitch McConnell has warned that if the fiscal year 2023 spending measure fails to gain bipartisan support this week, he would seek another short-term patch into next year, guaranteeing that the new Republican majority in the House would get to shape the package.

Leahy argued against that approach in releasing the bill saying, "the choice is clear. We can either do our jobs and fund the government, or we can abandon our responsibilities without a real path forward."

Despite the warning, McConnell framed the longer-term spending bill as a victory for the GOP, even as many will undoubtedly vote against it. He said Republicans were successful in increasing defense spending far beyond Biden's request while scaling back some of the increase Biden wanted for domestic spending.

"The Congress is rejecting the Biden administration's vision and doing the exact opposite," McConnell said.

The bill's unveiling was delayed by haggling over language related to location of the FBI's future headquarters. Maryland lawmakers have argued that ensuring predominately Black communities get their fair share of federal investments should be more thoroughly considered as part of the selection process. They are advocating for building the headquarters at one of two sites in Maryland's Prince George's County.

In September, the General Services Administration issued a site selection plan based on five criteria, the most heavily weighted at 35% was proximity to the FBI training academy in Quantico, Virginia. Advancing equity was weighted at 15%.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., said at a recent forum that a Biden executive order early in his administration emphasized that the issue of racial equity is not just an issue for any one department, but it has to be the business of the whole government.

"I would submit that the GSA and the FBI clearly haven't gotten the message, given the low weight they've given to this factor," Van Hollen said.

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A Senate Democratic aide familiar with the negotiations said Schumer worked to incorporate language in the spending bill ensuring the GSA administrator conduct "separate and detailed consultations" with lawmakers representing the Maryland and Virginia sites to get their perspectives.

Lawmakers are nearing completion of the 2023 spending package nearly three months late. It was supposed to be finished by last Oct. 1, when the government's fiscal year began.

The last time Congress enacted all its spending bills by then was in 1996, when the Senate finished its work on Sept. 30, the very last day of the budget year. Then-President Bill Clinton signed it that same day.

The Senate is expected to vote on the spending bill first where support from at least 10 Republican senators will be needed to pass it before the measure is considered by the House. As has been the case with recent catchall spending bills, lawmakers voiced concerns about passing legislation containing thousands of pages on short notice.

"We still haven't seen a single page of the Pelosi-Schumer spending bill, and they're expecting us to pass it by the end of this week," tweeted Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla. "It's insane."

## Trump's tax returns to be discussed by congressional panel

By JOSH BOAK and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democratic-controlled House Ways and Means Committee is expected to vote Tuesday on whether to publicly release years of Donald Trump's tax returns, which the former president has long tried to shield.

Committee Chairman Richard Neal, D-Mass., has kept a close hold on the panel's actions, including whether the panel will meet in a public or private session. And if lawmakers move forward with plans to release the returns, it's unclear how quickly that would happen.

But after a yearslong battle that ultimately resulted in the Supreme Court clearing the way last month for the Treasury Department to send the returns to Congress, Democrats are under pressure to act aggressively. The committee received six years of tax returns for Trump and some of his businesses. And with just two weeks left until Republicans formally take control of the House, Tuesday's meeting could be the last opportunity for Democrats to disclose whatever information they have gleaned.

Trump has long had a complicated relationship with his personal income taxes.

As a presidential candidate in 2016, he broke decades of precedent by refusing to release his tax forms to the public. He bragged during a presidential debate that year that he was "smart" because he paid no federal taxes and later claimed he wouldn't personally benefit from the 2017 tax cuts he signed into law that favored people with extreme wealth, asking Americans to simply take him at his word.

Tax records would have been a useful metric for judging his success in business. The image of a savvy businessman was key to a political brand honed during his years as a tabloid magnet and star of "The Apprentice" television show. They also could reveal any financial obligations — including foreign debts — that could influence how he governed.

But Americans were largely in the dark about Trump's relationship with the IRS until October 2018 and September 2020, when The New York Times published two separate series based on leaked tax records.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning 2018 articles showed how Trump received a modern equivalent of at least \$413 million from his father's real estate holdings, with much of that money coming from what the Times called "tax dodges" in the 1990s. Trump sued the Times and his niece, Mary Trump, in 2021 for providing the records to the newspaper. In November, Mary Trump asked an appeals court to overturn a judge's decision to reject her claims that her uncle and two of his siblings defrauded her of millions of dollars in a 2001 family settlement.

The 2020 articles showed that Trump paid just \$750 in federal income taxes in 2017 and 2018. Trump paid no income taxes at all in 10 of the past 15 years because he generally lost more money than he made.

The articles exposed deep inequities in the U.S. tax code as Trump, a reputed multi-billionaire, paid little in federal income taxes. IRS figures indicate that the average tax filer paid roughly \$12,200 in 2017, about 16 times more than the former president paid.

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Details about Trump's income from foreign operations and debt levels were also contained in the tax filings, which the former president derided as "fake news."

At the time of the 2020 articles, Neal said he saw an ethical problem in Trump overseeing a federal agency that he has also battled with legal filings.

"Now, Donald Trump is the boss of the agency he considers an adversary," Neal said in 2020. "It is essential that the IRS's presidential audit program remain free of interference."

The Manhattan district attorney's office also obtained copies of Trump's tax records in February 2021 after a protracted legal fight that included two trips to the Supreme Court.

The office, then led by District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr., had subpoenaed Trump's accounting firm in 2019, seeking access to eight years of Trump's tax returns and related documents.

The DA's office issued the subpoena after Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen told Congress that Trump had misled tax officials, insurers and business associates about the value of his assets. Those allegations are the subject of a fraud lawsuit that New York Attorney General Letitia James filed against Trump and his company in September.

Trump's longtime accountant, Donald Bender, testified at the Trump Organization's recent criminal trial that Trump reported losses on his tax returns every year for a decade, including nearly \$700 million in 2009 and \$200 million in 2010.

Bender, a partner at Mazars USA LLP who spent years preparing Trump's personal tax returns, said Trump's reported losses from 2009 to 2018 included net operating losses from some of the many businesses he owns through his Trump Organization.

The Trump Organization was convicted earlier this month on tax fraud charges for helping some executives dodge taxes on company-paid perks such as apartments and luxury cars.

The current Manhattan district attorney, Alvin Bragg, told The Associated Press in an interview last week that his office's investigation into Trump and his businesses continues.

"We're going to follow the facts and continue to do our job," Bragg said.

Trump, who refused to release his returns during his 2016 presidential campaign and his four years in the White House while claiming that he was under IRS audit, has argued there is little to be gleaned from the tax returns even as he has fought to keep them private.

"You can't learn much from tax returns, but it is illegal to release them if they are not yours!" he complained on his social media network last weekend.

Republicans, meanwhile, have railed against the potential release, arguing that it would set a dangerous precedent.

Rep. Kevin Brady of Texas, the Ways and Means Committee's Republican leader, accused Democrats on the committee of "unleashing a dangerous new political weapon that reaches far beyond President Trump, and jeopardizes the privacy of every American."

"Going forward, partisans in Congress have nearly unlimited power to target political enemies by obtaining and making public their private tax returns to embarrass and destroy them," Brady said in a statement. "We urge Democrats, in their rush to target former President Trump, not to unleash this dangerous new political weapon on the American people."

## Suspense builds at border over future of US asylum rules

By MORGAN LEE, GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Suspense mounted at the U.S. border with Mexico on Tuesday about the future of restrictions on asylum-seekers as the Supreme Court issued a temporary order to keep pandemic-era limits on migrants in place.

Conservative-leaning states won a reprieve — though it could be brief — as they push to maintain a measure that allows officials to expel asylum-seekers. In a last-ditch written appeal to the Supreme Court, they argued that increased numbers of migrants would take a toll on public services such as law enforcement and health care and warned of an "unprecedented calamity" at the southern border.



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Chief Justice John Roberts granted a stay pending further order, asking the administration of President Joe Biden to respond by 5 p.m. Tuesday. That's just hours before restrictions are slated to expire on Wednesday.

The Department of Homeland Security, which is responsible for enforcing border security, acknowledged Roberts' order — and also said the agency would continue "preparations to manage the border in a safe, orderly, and humane way when the Title 42 public health order lifts."

Migrants have been denied rights to seek asylum under U.S. and international law 2.5 million times since March 2020 on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19 under a public-health rule called Title 42.

The decision on what comes next is going down to the wire, as pressure builds in communities along both sides of the southwestern U.S. border.

In El Paso, Democratic Mayor Oscar Leeser warned Monday that shelters across the border in Ciudad Juárez are packed to capacity with an estimated 20,000 migrants who are prepared to cross into the U.S.

Despite the court stay Monday, the City of El Paso rushed to expand its ability to accommodate more migrants by converting large buildings into shelters, as the Red Cross brings in 10,000 cots.

Local officials also say they hope to relieve pressure on local shelters by chartering buses to other large cities in Texas or nearby states, bringing migrants a step closer to relatives and sponsors in coordination with nonprofit groups.

"We will continue to be prepared for whatever is coming through," Leeser said.

At a church-affiliated shelter a few blocks from the border, migrants including women and children lined up in the early afternoon Monday in hopes of securing a bed for the night, accepting donations of food from a succession of cars bearing gifts. Police and municipal garbage workers arrived to remove abandoned blankets and discarded possessions.

Jose Natera, a 48-year-old handyman from the Venezuelan town of Guaicaipuro, said he traveled for three months to reach El Paso, sometimes on foot, with no money or sponsors to take him further.

"I have to stop here until I can get a ticket" out, he said.

El Paso residents Roberto Lujan and Daniela Centeno handed out fruit, Hostess cakes, soda and chips to throngs at a street corner.

"I have to do it," said Lujan, a 39-year-old construction worker. "I have kids and I know the struggle."

Conservative-leaning states have argued that lifting Title 42 will lead to a surge of migrants into their states and take a toll on government services like health care or law enforcement. They also charge that the federal government has no plan to deal with an increase in migrants — while in Washington, Republicans are set to take control of the House and make immigration a key issue.

Biden administration officials said they have marshaled more resources to the southern border in preparation for the end of Title 42. That includes more border patrol processing coordinators, more surveillance and increased security at ports of entry.

About 23,000 agents are currently deployed to the southern border, according to the White House.

Immigration advocates have said that the Title 42 restrictions, imposed under provisions of a 1944 health law, go against American and international obligations to people fleeing to the U.S. to escape persecution — and that the pretext is outdated as coronavirus treatments improve. They sued to end the use of Title 42; a federal judge in November sided with them and set the December 21 deadline.

Catholic bishop of El Paso, Mark Seitz, expressed concern Monday that the stay would keep migrants who have no choice but to flee their home from even making the case for protection in the U.S., after years of pent-up need.

"What happens now with all those on their way?" he said.

Title 42 restrictions have applied to all nationalities but have fallen disproportionately on those from countries that Mexico has agreed to take back: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and, more recently Venezuela, in addition to Mexico.

## Elon Musk and Donald Trump: 2 disrupters face a reckoning

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Elon Musk and Donald Trump share bestride-the-colossus egos, an incessant desire to be the center of attention and a platform to showcase their eccentricities and erraticism.

Both the Tesla CEO and the former president have used that platform, Twitter, as a sword and a shield — a soapbox to rouse the passions (and tap the pocketbooks) of tens of millions of followers and repulse the other side.

Trump weaponized Twitter before he was banned after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. Musk was a persistent Twitter poster, taunting stock market regulators and railing against his version of conformity in numerous tweets. Then he decided to buy the platform.

Now both face a reckoning this week brought on at least in part by their use of Twitter to advance their agendas and feed their outsize id.

Trump is confronted with a select congressional committee's unanimous recommendation to the Justice Department on Monday that he be criminally prosecuted for his part in the Jan. 6 assault on the Capitol by supporters stirred to action that day by his public remarks, on and off social media.

Right behind that could come the release Tuesday of Trump tax returns, now in the hands of another House panel, that he has spent years fighting to keep private.

After firing about half the Twitter workforce and sowing chaos with impulsive and ever-changing policies, Musk essentially asked users whether he should fire himself. In an unscientific poll he set up, a majority of the 17.5 million respondents said he should step down as Twitter chief. No word yet whether he will honor the result as promised.

The tribulations of these two June babies, born 25 years and continents apart, may be unlike anything thrown at them before.

"The biggest thing they have in common is little experience with true failure, that is, failure with consequences," said Eric Dezenhall, a consultant to companies beset by crisis.

"Even though Trump has failed multiple times, he's always been protected by family money and amazing luck," Dezenhall said. "While Musk is a genius, he's had the good fortune to have built multiple businesses on government funding rather than in the bruising free market.

"Given their life experiences, how could these guys not feel invincible?"

Kindred spirits at least in part, Musk invited Trump back on Twitter shortly after he bought it. So far, Trump is sticking with his own platform, Truth Social, which has miniscule reach in comparison.

Musk's invitation was a selective exercise of the right to free speech, as he also suspended a variety of mainstream journalists from Twitter and banned links to "prohibited" social media sites like Facebook, before relenting to some degree on both fronts.

Musk was until recently the world's richest man, with the amount verified by the worth of his stock. Trump has often argued he should be considered among the wealthiest, though behind that claim was a mirage.

Both have operated from a sense that things begin and end by CEO fiat. But Musk has also built viable companies and genuine wealth, in contrast with Trump's record of self-branding, fraught real estate deals and dubious enterprises regarding steaks, vodka or even his own real estate investor "university."

Musk registers 120 million Twitter followers; Trump, a Republican, had 88 million when he was barred from the platform after the Jan. 6 insurrection. The site has vastly amplified both their voices, in a way that has benefited Musk's businesses and Trump's political career over the years, though at a cost to their reputations.

"A hater hellscape," Musk called Twitter in 2017. But it also was a siren's call to him.

"On Twitter, likes are rare & criticism is brutal," he tweeted in 2018. "So hardcore.

"It's great."

On that platform, Musk comes across less as the visionary engineer who made electric vehicles hot, builds reusable rockets and cares deeply about climate change than as a petty settler of personal scores who can sink into right-wing conspiracy theories and misogyny.

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A month ago, teasing Trump for holding out just after Twitter agreed to let him back in, Musk posted a depiction of a woman naked from the waist down, with the Twitter logo covering her genitals and Trump, as Jesus, looking on. "And lead us not into temptation," said Musk's post.

Both men have used Twitter to assail the mainstream media, spread misinformation, push the limits of what's acceptable in social media and engage in provocations that can make it hard to look away.

But of the two, only Trump held the power of office. For all his spacecraft, Musk's universe is much smaller. In the public-opinion influence game, it's made up mostly of tweets and corporate policy about how to manage them.

Their politics don't match — Musk's right-wing and libertarian beliefs come with a devotion to controlling global warming, for example, and Trump's don't. Their personalities differ in some respects, too — Musk admits error and even apologizes on occasion; Trump doesn't.

Their work ethic bears no resemblance to each other.

Trump, a 76-year-old from Queens in New York City, spends most of his time at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, after a presidency notable for ample time on the golf links. Musk, a 51-year-old native of South Africa who lived in Canada as a young man, is known for working insane hours, hands on, these days in Twitter's San Francisco headquarters.

But as disrupters, they might as well be twins separated at birth.

"Both of these guys are free-stylers," said Dezenhall. "There is never a plan, never a strategy, just a collection of on-the-fly tactics. This has worked out very well for them.

"It wouldn't be the case for the rest of us."

## Wartime Ukraine erasing Russian past from public spaces

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — On the streets of Kyiv, Fyodor Dostoevsky is on the way out. Andy Warhol is on the way in.

Ukraine is accelerating efforts to erase the vestiges of Soviet and Russian influence from its public spaces by pulling down monuments and renaming hundreds of streets to honor its own artists, poets, soldiers, independence leaders and others — including heroes of this year's war.

Following Moscow's invasion on Feb. 24 that has killed or injured untold numbers of civilians and soldiers and pummeled buildings and infrastructure, Ukraine's leaders have shifted a campaign that once focused on dismantling its Communist past into one of "de-Russification."

Streets that honored revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin or the Bolshevik Revolution were largely already gone; now Russia, not Soviet legacy, is the enemy.

It's part punishment for crimes meted out by Russia, and part affirmation of a national identity by honoring Ukrainian notables who have been mostly overlooked.

Russia, through the Soviet Union, is seen by many in Ukraine as having stamped its domination of its smaller southwestern neighbor for generations, consigning its artists, poets and military heroes to relative obscurity, compared with more famous Russians.

If victors write history, as some say, Ukrainians are doing some rewriting of their own — even as their fate hangs in the balance. Their national identity is having what may be an unprecedented surge, in ways large and small.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has taken to wearing a black T-shirt that says: "I'm Ukrainian."

He is among the many Ukrainians who were born speaking Russian as a first language. Now, they shun it — or at least limit their use of it. Ukrainian has traditionally been spoken more in the western part of the country — a region that early on shunned Russian and Soviet imagery.

Large parts of northern, eastern and central Ukraine are making that linguistic change. The eastern city of Dnipro on Friday pulled down a bust of Alexander Pushkin — like Dostoevsky, a giant of 19th century Russian literature. A strap from a crane was unceremoniously looped under the statue's chin.

This month, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko announced about 30 more streets in the capital will be rechristened.



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Volodymyr Prokopiv, deputy head of the Kyiv City Council, said Ukraine's "de-Communization" policy since 2015 had been applied in a "soft" way so as not to offend sensitivities among the country's Russian-speaking and even pro-Moscow population.

"With the war, everything changed. Now the Russian lobby is now powerless – in fact, it doesn't exist," Prokopiv said in an interview with The Associated Press in his office overlooking Khreschatik Street, the capital's main thoroughfare. "Renaming these streets is like erasing the propaganda that the Soviet Union imposed on Ukraine."

During the war, the Russians have also sought to stamp their culture and domination in areas they have occupied.

Andrew Wilson, a professor at University College London, cautioned about "the dangers in rewriting the periods in history where Ukrainians and Russians did cooperate and build things together: I think the whole point about de-imperializing Russian culture should be to specify where we have previously been blind — often in the West."

Wilson noted that the Ukrainians "are taking a pretty broad-brush approach."

He cited Pushkin, the 19th century Russian writer, who might understandably rankle some Ukrainians.

To them, for example, the Cossacks — a Slavic people in eastern Europe — "mean freedom, whereas Pushkin depicts them as cruel, barbarous, antiquated. And in need of Russian civilization," said Wilson, whose book "The Ukrainians" was recently published in its fifth edition.

In its program, Kyiv conducted an online survey, and received 280,000 suggestions in a single day, Prokopiv said. Then, an expert group sifted through the responses, and municipal officials and street residents give a final stamp of approval.

Under the "de-Communization" program, about 200 streets were renamed in Kyiv before this year. In 2022 alone, that same number of streets have been renamed and another 100 are scheduled to get renamed soon, Prokopiv said.

A street named for philosopher Friedrich Engels will honor Ukrainian avant-garde poet Bohdan-Ihor Antonych. A boulevard whose name translates as "Friendship of Peoples" — an allusion to the diverse ethnicities under the USSR — will honor Mykola Mikhnovsky, an early proponent of Ukrainian independence.

Another street recognizes the "Heroes of Mariupol" — fighters who held out for months against a devastating Russian campaign in that Sea of Azov port city that eventually fell. A street named for the Russian city of Volgograd is now called Roman Ratushnyi Street in honor of a 24-year-old civic and environmental activist who was killed in the war.

A small street in northern Kyiv still bears Dostoevsky's name but soon will be named for Warhol, the late Pop Art visionary from the United States whose parents had family roots in Slovakia, across Ukraine's western border.

Valeriy Sholomitsky, who has lived on Dostoevsky Street for nearly 40 years, said he could go either way.

"We have under 20 houses here. That's very few," Sholomitsky said as he shoveled snow off the street in front of a fading address sign bearing the name of the Russian writer. He said Warhol was "our artist" — with heritage in eastern Europe:

Now, "it will be even better," he said.

"Maybe it is right that we are changing many streets now, because we used to name them incorrectly," he added.

## As climate clock ticks, aviator races to photograph glaciers

By NAT CASTAÑEDA Associated Press

VOSS, Norway (AP) — Chunks of ice float in milky blue waters. Clouds drift and hide imposing mountaintops. The closer you descend to the surface, the more the water roars — and the louder the "CRACK" of ice, as pieces fall from the arm of Europe's largest glacier.

The landscape is vast, elemental, seemingly far beyond human scale. The whole world, it seems, lies sprawled out before you. Against this outsized backdrop, the plane carrying the man who chases glaciers

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seems almost like a toy.

"No one's there," the man marvels. "The air is virtually empty."

This is Garrett Fisher's playground — and, you quickly realize, his life's work.

He is traveling the world, watching it from far above, sitting in the seat of his tiny blue-white "Super Cub" aircraft. It's here that he combines his two longtime passions — photography and flight — in a quest to document every remaining glacier on the face of the Earth.

On one level, the 41-year-old Fisher does it for a simple reason: "Because I love them."

But he does it, too, because of weightier things. Because the climate clock is ticking, and the planet's glaciers are melting. Because Fisher is convinced documenting, archiving, remembering all of this serves a purpose.

Because, in the end, nothing lasts forever — not even ancient glaciers.

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Glaciers aren't static. In a world that's getting warmer, they're getting smaller.

"In 100 or 200 years, most of them will be gone or severely curtailed," Fisher says. "It is the front line of climate change ... the first indication that we're losing something."

According to data from the European Environmental Agency, the Alps, for example, have lost about half their volume since 1900, with the most evident acceleration of melting happening since the 1980s. And the glacier retreat is expected to continue in the future.

Estimates from the EEA say that by 2100, the volume of European glaciers will continue to decline by between 22% and 84% — and that's under a moderate scenario. More aggressive modeling suggests up to 89% could be lost.

"We have a record of observations of small glaciers in settled areas, particularly in the Alps and Norway and New Zealand," says Roderik van de Wal, a glacier expert at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. That record, he says, shows glaciers retreating even more. "That's a consequence of climate change."

The slow demise of glaciers, of course, is a problem that transcends aesthetics or even the glaciers themselves. A rise in sea level of about 15 centimetres around the globe during the past century is due in large part to glacier melt.

Which sets that ticking clock running. And which has gotten Garrett Fisher moving.

For Fisher, it started — as so many things do for so many people — in childhood.

He grew up in a quiet rural community in upstate New York, the child of local business owners and grandson of a scrappy pilot who introduced him early to aviation. He lived next door to a private airport.

Fisher was only a toddler when his grandfather Gordon plopped him in the back of his plane. The boy wasn't happy about it, but the dismay quickly turned to delight. By age 4, he was hooked on flight.

Fisher recalls endless hours spent gazing out of his bedroom window, waiting for the barn door to his grandfather's airplane hangar to open. The older man would tell him: "Whatever you set your mind to, you can do."

Then, as a young man, he took up photography. Two of the three parts of his obsession were in place.

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Sometime in the late 1990s, a friend told Fisher that the world's glaciers were disappearing. It has haunted him ever since, so much so that it added the third piece of the triangle: the urgency to beat the clock.

He saw them disappearing, and he wanted to make sure these pieces of the world — pieces he saw as indescribably beautiful — were preserved, if only in pixels.

"When I'm high up, I see these forbidden views," he says. "They're views you can't have on the ground, that don't really exist for anyone else."

He aims his efforts squarely at posterity. Any documentation he makes of the glaciers before their demise, he believes, could be invaluable to future generations. So, he has launched a glacier initiative, a non-profit to support and showcase his work, and he plans to open his archive to the public for research — some now, the rest when he is gone.

Fisher is hardly the first to feel the archival instinct when it comes to glaciers. Since the invention of

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photography in the early decades of the 19th century, glaciers have been documented with fascination by everyone from passing travelers to scientists.

Norwegian photographer Knud Knudsen, one of his nation's founding art photographers, delved into the landscape with an obsession similar to Fisher's. He traveled around Norway's west coast, photographing nature: fjords, mountains, waterfalls ... and glaciers.

But in an era where everything related to photography was heavy, unwieldy, and slow, Knudsen was earthbound, traveling on wagons and boats. On one trip, he brought about 175 pounds in gear – including glass negatives. Unlike Fisher, he could not soar – and could not capture the feeling of looking down upon the vast and magnificent natural formations that he was chronicling in his homeland.

For Fisher, Norway is only the latest glacier frontier. He spent years documenting them in other places, including the American West, before shifting his focus to the Alps and Europe. He has photographed thousands of glaciers and is hungry for more.

Never, though, even amid the silence and beauty of his flights, does Fisher lose the sense of documenting the “decisive moment” – the inflection points of a glacier that is still here but in the process of disappearing.

He knows, with every flight, that he is documenting a slow-moving tragedy as it unfolds.

The Piper Super Cub is a small two-seater. Fisher squeezes in. He is about to ascend into skies of crystal and cotton in hopes of photographing Nigardsbreen.

“There's about a 30% chance we get to see the glacier,” he says. “There's a bunch of clouds sitting right there.”

The Piper feels – and rumbles – like an old car. It smells of oil and fuel and everything is manual. Fisher brings in his iPad for navigation, but his aviation software doesn't have GPS information on glaciers. So he flies using a mix of instinct, observation and Google Maps.

The aircraft's huge glass windows serve up incredible views. When he's aloft, the houses start to feel like Monopoly pieces. Anxiety dispels into moments of profound peace. It's as if the altitude – the distance from the world we know – makes all that's happening on the planet below seem a little more manageable. And yet he knows: One false move would end all this.

“The weather's bad, extremely cold, the winds are very strong and the flying's extremely technically challenging,” Fisher says. “And to photograph glaciers, we're getting very close to all of this action. So, it requires a lot of skill, time and determination.”

Lots of people are afraid of flying, especially in small planes. When news hits of a plane down, it's usually a small craft.

He adds: “I've been told by many pilots that I'm crazy.”

Many glaciers are remote and hard to reach or document – except by satellite or by air, making the tiny Super Cub the perfect vehicle for this photographic journey. It is built to navigate the blustery winds and dangerous environments necessary for his work.

Why risk it? Fisher believes satellite images will never capture glaciers effectively – not aesthetically and not scientifically. The glow of a glacier at “magic hour.” The way shadow falls on the ice, revealing an unending, undefinable blue. The sheer epic presence of these ice goliaths that are in a constant state of unbecoming.

Will the engine quit? He has detailed plans in case of a crash on a glacier. He has calculated that he can survive for about 24 hours if he goes down and has measured the tail of the plane to be sure he can fit into it and stay out of the elements while he waits for help. Not for the faint of heart.

Fisher moves around a lot: The United States, Spain, Norway. He rarely stops. His wife, Anne, his friend since childhood, drags him to bed most nights; left to his own devices, he says, he would hardly sleep. This is what happens to people so bent on something that everything else starts to fall away.

Until now, Fisher has paid for his passion with his own money, but it's not cheap; he is running out of funding and looking for backers.

He positions the work carefully. It is, in many ways, science. In other ways, it is public service. But he always comes back to one thing: beauty.



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"Science has all of the data we need. They have tons of datasets, which will be available in the future," Fisher says. "The problem is, it's not beautiful."

What he does, he says, is something whose aesthetics are not only pleasing but might encourage people to change their ways.

He adds: "It's not a dataset. It's a very motivating, emotionally compelling rendition of these glaciers while they're here. Because these views will not come back."

Glaciers are a window to our past. Photography, too, is a window to our past. Garrett Fisher has combined these pursuits to ensure many views to this moment are available – and that whatever disappears will be remembered.

In the end, so much of his work is about memory. But what about the here and now? Can a photograph communicate the profound experience of being in front of something that is soon to be lost forever? In many ways, that is what his work is trying to figure out.

The archive is the thing he has poured everything into, dedicating countless hours. And beyond the archival dreams, he dares to hope for change.

If he finds the right light, the right angle, the right moment, then maybe people will care more. He's chasing the perfect image; one so beautiful it can make people and policymakers act. And if it isn't one image, then maybe an entire archive convinces people to come, to look, to get close, to pay attention.

"We can live without them. We will live without them," Fisher says. "However, it hurts us to lose them."

Everything disappears. But not yet. There is still time, and Garrett Fisher has an airplane and a camera and is not turning away.

## Racers, mechanics, tinkerers converting classic cars to EVs

By THOMAS PEIPERT Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — When Kevin Erickson fires up his 1972 Plymouth Satellite, a faint hum replaces what is normally the sound of pistons pumping, gas coursing through the carburetor and the low thrum of the exhaust.

Even though it's nearly silent, the classic American muscle car isn't broken. It's electric.

Erickson is among a small but expanding group of tinkerers, racers, engineers and entrepreneurs across the country who are converting vintage cars and trucks into greener, and often much faster, electric vehicles.

Despite derision from some purists about the converted cars resembling golf carts or remote-controlled cars, electric powertrain conversions are becoming more mainstream as battery technology advances and the world turns toward cleaner energy to combat climate change.

"RC cars are fast, so that's kind of a compliment really," said Erickson, whose renamed "Electrolite" accelerates to 0-60 mph (0-97 kph) in three seconds and tops out at about 155 mph (249 kph). It also invites curious stares at public charging stations, which are becoming increasingly common across the country.

At the end of 2019, Erickson, a cargo pilot who lives in suburban Denver, bought the car for \$6,500. He then embarked on a year-and-a-half-long project to convert the car into a 636-horsepower electric vehicle (475 kW), using battery packs, a motor and the entire rear subframe from a crashed Tesla Model S.

"This was my way of taking the car that I like — my favorite body — and then taking the modern technology and performance, and mixing them together," said Erickson, who has put about \$60,000 into the project.

Jonathan Klinger, vice president of car culture for Hagerty Insurance, which specializes in collector vehicles, said converting classic cars into EVs is "definitely a trend," although research on the practice is limited.

In May, the Michigan-based company conducted a web-based survey of about 25,000 self-identified automobile enthusiasts in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. About 1% had either partially or fully converted their classic to run on some sort of electrified drivetrain.

The respondents' top three reasons for converting their vehicles were for faster acceleration and improved performance, for a fun and challenging project, and because of environmental and emissions concerns.

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About 25% of respondents said they approve of classic vehicles being partially or fully converted to EVs.

"Electric vehicles deliver some pretty astonishing performance just by the nature of the mechanics of how they work," Klinger said. So it's not surprising to him that a small percentage of people converting classic cars to EVs are interested in improving performance. He compared the current trend to the hot-rod movement of the 1950s.

But Klinger, who owns several vintage vehicles, said he doesn't think electric motors will replace all internal combustion engines — especially when considering historically significant vehicles.

"There's something satisfying about having a vintage car that has a carburetor," he said, because it's the same as when the car was new. Some enthusiasts want to preserve the sound and rumble of older cars' original engines.

Other barriers to converting cars include the knowledge it takes to delve into such a complicated project, as well as safety concerns about tinkering with high-voltage components, the availability of parts, and the time it takes to realize a positive, environmental impact. Because classic vehicles are driven for fewer than 1,500 miles (2,414 kilometers) a year on average, it takes longer to offset the initial carbon footprint of manufacturing the batteries, Klinger said.

And then there's the price.

Sean Moudry, who co-owns Inspire EV, a small conversion business in suburban Denver, recently modified a 1965 Ford Mustang that was destined for the landfill. The year-and-a-half-long project cost more than \$100,000 and revealed several other obstacles that underscore why conversions are not "plug-and-play" endeavors.

Trying to pack enough power into the pony car to "smoke the tires off of it" at a drag strip, Moudry and his partners replaced the underpowered six-cylinder gas engine with a motor from a crashed Tesla Model S. They also installed 16 Tesla battery packs weighing a total of about 800 pounds (363 kilograms).

Most classic vehicles, including the Mustang, weren't designed to handle that much weight — or the increased performance that comes with a powerful electric motor. So the team had to beef up the car's suspension, steering, driveshaft and brakes.

The result is a Frankenstein-like vehicle that includes a rear axle from a Ford F-150 pickup and rotors from a Dodge Durango SUV, as well as disc brakes and sturdier coil-over shocks in the front and rear.

Although Ford and General Motors have or are planning to produce standalone electric "crate" motors that are marketed to classic vehicle owners, Moudry says it's still not realistic for a casual car tinkerer to have the resources to take on such a complicated project. Because of this, he thinks it will take a while for EV conversions to become mainstream.

"I think it's going to be 20 years," he said. "It's going to be a 20-year run before you go to a car show and 50 to 60% of the cars are running some variant of an electric motor in it."

But that reality could be coming sooner than expected, according to Mike Spagnola, president and CEO of the Specialty Equipment Market Association, a trade group that focuses on aftermarket vehicle parts.

He said that during SEMA's annual show in Las Vegas this fall, some 21,000 square feet (1,951 square meters) of convention space was dedicated to electric vehicles and their parts. That was up from only 2,500 square feet (232 square meters) at the 2021 show.

Companies are developing universal parts, as well as lighter, smaller and more powerful battery packs. They're also creating wiring components that are easier to install and myriad other innovations. Some are even building vehicle frames with the electric motor, batteries and components already installed. Buyers can just install the body of a classic vehicle on top of the platform.

"The early adopters of this would take a crashed Tesla and pull the motor and harnesses and batteries and all that out of the vehicle and find a way to shoehorn it into whatever vehicle they wanted to build," Spagnola said. "But today there are many manufacturers now starting to make components. ... We're really excited about it."

## Peru Congress to reconsider early election, unrest continues

By DAVID PEREDA Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Peru's Congress is set Tuesday to consider holding early elections, beset by protesters who have blocked highways and clashed with security forces amid deadly nationwide unrest ever since the lawmakers ousted President Pedro Castillo.

It's the second time in days that the lawmakers — easily the most reviled of a widely discredited political elite — are taking up the proposal to push forward to next year the elections for president and Congress originally planned for 2026.

The measure has the backing of caretaker President Dina Boluarte, who took over from Castillo after the former rural school teacher tried to dissolve Congress on Dec. 7 — a move widely condemned by even his leftist supporters as a self-coup and act of political suicide. After the failed move, he was swiftly arrested.

The early elections proposal failed to muster enough votes last week after leftist lawmakers abstained, conditioning their support on the promise of a constitutional assembly to overhaul Peru's political charter — something that conservatives denounce as putting Peru's free market economic model at risk.

"Don't be blind," Boluarte said in comments over the weekend, slamming lawmakers for not moving more decisively to defuse mounting political tensions. "Look at the people and take action in line with what they are asking."

Castillo, a political novice who lived in a two-story adobe home in the Andean highlands before moving to the presidential palace, eked out a narrow victory in elections last year that rocked Peru's political establishment and laid bare the deep divisions between residents of the vibrant capital, Lima, and the long-neglected countryside.

Castillo's attempts to break a stalemate with hostile lawmakers by closing Congress only deepened those tensions. Within hours of his attempted power grab, he was ousted by Congress and jailed facing a criminal investigation, accused of trying to usurp power in violation of the constitution.

Boluarte, who has the backing of U.S. President Joe Biden's administration and speaks fluently the native Quechua language of many protesters, has struggled to restore order in the restive nation.

In several parts of the country, protesters who voted for her and Castillo's ticket last year have defied a 30-day state of emergency and taken to the streets to demand her immediate resignation.

The death toll from the unrest rose to 26 on Monday after security forces firing tear gas dispersed thousands of informal miners who cut off the Pan-American Highway at two vital chokepoints for more than a week, forcing truckers to dump spoiled food and fish bound for market. Hundreds have been injured.

Should lawmakers decide to push up elections, they would in essence be throwing themselves out of work. Under Peru's constitution, the 130 members of Congress are entitled to serve only a single term.

Boluarte is also facing pressure from fellow leftists across Latin America led by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Ignoring calls by Boluarte and others to butt out of Peru's internal affairs, López Obrador has criticized Peru's conservative media and business establishment for the classist, sometimes bigoted way it portrayed Castillo during his 17-month presidency.

On Monday he said that if lawmakers reject early elections and cling to power, and the president stays, then "everything will have to be achieved by force and repression, leading to a great deal of suffering and instability for the people."

The Mexican president has reiterated his willingness to grant asylum to Castillo, who was intercepted by protesters and security forces while trying to flee to the Mexican Embassy in Lima after his bid to shutter Congress backfired.



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## **GOP's usual embrace of Trump muted after criminal referral**

By STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Republican Party quickly and forcefully rallied behind Donald Trump in the hours after federal agents seized classified documents from his Florida estate this summer.

Four months later, that sense of intensity and urgency was missing — at least for now — after the Jan. 6 House committee voted to recommend the Justice Department bring criminal charges against him. Leading Republicans largely avoided the historic criminal referral Monday, while others pressed to weigh in offered muted defenses — or none at all.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a Trump critic who suggested the former president likely benefited — politically, at least — from the FBI's summertime search of his Florida home, said Trump was at least partly responsible for the deadly attack on the Capitol.

"No man is above the law," Hogan told The Associated Press shortly before the committee's vote.

The divergent responses are a sign of how quickly the political landscape has shifted for Trump as he faces a new legal threat and mounts a third bid for the presidency. It's a marked change for a party that has been defined, above all, by its unconditional loyalty to Trump under any and all circumstances for the last six years.

Monday's hearing of the Jan. 6 House committee, comprised of seven Democrats and two Republican Trump critics, likely marks Congress' final attempt to hold the former president accountable for the attack on the U.S. Capitol by hundreds of his loyalists as elected officials worked to certify President Joe Biden's 2020 election victory. The criminal referral, which is nonbinding, is the culmination of a yearlong investigation that included more than 1,000 witnesses, 10 televised public hearing and over 1 million documents.

The committee, which Republican House leader Kevin McCarthy boycotted and dismissed as a "sham process," will formally disband on Jan. 3 as Republicans take over the House majority.

Ever defiant, Trump predicted the criminal referral would ultimately help him.

"These folks don't get it that when they come after me, people who love freedom rally around me. It strengthens me. What doesn't kill me makes me stronger," Trump said in a statement posted on his social network, condemning the criminal referral as "a partisan attempt to sideline me and the Republican Party."

This week's vote comes just one month after Trump formally launched his 2024 White House campaign. He had hoped that his status as an announced candidate might give him new leverage in his many legal entanglements while warding off potential Republican primary challengers.

Such hopes have yet to materialize. Early polls suggest the 76-year-old former president is no lock to win the 2024 nomination as emboldened Republican rivals prepare to line up to run against him.

Already weakened, Trump is also bracing for the potential release of his tax returns, which he has worked for years to keep out of the public eye. The House Ways and Means Committee on Tuesday was scheduled to consider the release of six years of Trump's taxes, as well as those related to his businesses, although it wasn't immediately clear when any documents might be available to the public.

Trump's greatest liability heading into the next presidential election may have little to do with his legal challenges, however. Republicans are increasingly worried about his ability to win.

The GOP's concerns about Trump's electability intensified after the November midterm elections, when Trump's hand-picked candidates in several high-profile contests were defeated. The setbacks followed deeper Republican losses in the two previous national elections under Trump's leadership.

Indeed, the initial weeks of Trump's third presidential campaign are going so poorly that some Trump allies are privately wondering whether he's serious about his 2024 ambitions at all.

Trump faced Republican demands to apologize for his decision last month to share a private meal with noted white supremacist Nick Fuentes. Days later, Trump called for the "termination" of parts of the Constitution over his lie that the 2020 election was stolen. And days after that, his hand-picked candidate in Georgia's high-stakes Senate race, former football star Herschel Walker, lost his runoff election.

Trump has not held a single campaign event. Last week, after previewing a "MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT," he unveiled a line of digital trading cards depicting him as a superhero.

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At the same time, Trump's legal challenges are mounting.

Attorney General Merrick Garland last month appointed a special counsel to oversee the Justice Department's investigation into the presence of classified documents at Trump's Florida estate as well as key aspects of a separate probe involving the insurrection and efforts to undo the 2020 election. The Fulton County, Georgia, district attorney is separately investigating attempts to overturn that state's 2020 election results.

It's impossible to predict how much longer the investigations will last or whether the DOJ will take the unprecedented step of indicting a former president and current candidate. But Trump is no longer shielded from prosecution the way he was as president.

And his party is becoming less willing to stand behind him.

The Republican National Committee announced it would stop paying some of Trump's legal bills after he launched his 2024 presidential campaign.

Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell called for "an immediate and thorough explanation" after the FBI executed a search warrant at Trump's estate in August. On Monday, he told reporters he had only one "immediate observation" about the criminal referral: "The entire nation knows who is responsible for that day."

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., called for Garland's resignation over the summer, but on Monday, he was silent on the committee's referral, focusing instead on alleged FBI missteps.

Former Vice President Mike Pence, a 2024 presidential prospect himself who aggressively condemned the FBI after it seized classified documents from Trump's estate, offered somewhat muted criticism of the Jan. 6 committee when given the chance.

"As I wrote in my book, the president's actions and words on Jan. 6 were reckless. But I don't know that it's criminal to take bad advice from lawyers," Pence told Fox News. He added, "When it comes to the Justice Department's decision about bringing charges in the future, I would hope that they would not bring charges against the former president."

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, who is also considering a 2024 White House campaign, acknowledged Trump's role in Jan. 6 but said the criminal referral "isn't helpful" to the DOJ's investigation.

"The record is clear that former Pres. Trump is responsible for what happened on January 6, but accountability is most likely to come from the American people who are ready for our country to move beyond the events of January 6," he tweeted.

So far, only a handful of members of Congress have endorsed Trump's 2024 bid.

One of them, No. 3 House Republican Rep. Elise Stefanik, called the Democratic-led committee "unconstitutional and illegitimate." She said Trump was well positioned heading into the 2024 presidential contest.

"As of today — he announced a few weeks ago at this point — the only candidate is Donald Trump, and he is winning significantly against the field," Stefanik told The Associated Press on Monday. "So, we'll see what happens. But I think he's in a very strong position."

## Harvey Weinstein found guilty of rape in Los Angeles trial

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After a month-long trial and nine days of deliberations, Los Angeles jurors on Monday found Harvey Weinstein guilty of the rape and sexual assault of just one of the four accusers he was charged with abusing.

But the three guilty counts involving an Italian actor and model known at the trial as Jane Doe 1 still struck a major blow against the disgraced movie mogul, and provided another #MeToo moment of reckoning, five years after he became a magnet for the movement.

Weinstein, 70, who is two years into a 23-year sentence for a rape and sexual assault conviction in New York that is under appeal, could get up to 24 years in prison in California when he's sentenced.

He was found guilty of rape, forced oral copulation and another sexual misconduct count involving the woman who said he appeared uninvited at her hotel room door during a Los Angeles film festival in 2013.



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"Harvey Weinstein forever destroyed a part of me that night in 2013 and I will never get that back. The criminal trial was brutal and Weinstein's lawyers put me through hell on the witness stand, but I knew I had to see this through to the end, and I did," the woman said in a statement after the verdict. "I hope Weinstein never sees the outside of a prison cell during his lifetime."

Weinstein was acquitted of a sexual battery allegation made by a massage therapist who treated him at a hotel in 2010.

The jury was unable to reach a decision on counts involving two accusers, notably rape and sexual assault charges involving Jennifer Siebel Newsom, a documentary filmmaker and the wife of California Gov. Gavin Newsom. A mistrial was declared on those counts.

Weinstein looked down at the table and appeared to put his face in his hands when the initial guilty counts were read. He looked forward as the rest of the verdict was read.

"Harvey is obviously disappointed in the verdict. He knows what happened and what never did," Weinstein's spokesperson Juda Engelmayer said in an email, saying there was a strong basis for an appeal on the convictions. "Harvey is grateful for the jury's work on the other counts, and he's determined to continue his legal challenges in ultimately proving his innocence."

Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón applauded the accusers for their bravery to testify in the case, saying in a statement he was disappointed by the split verdict but hoped it brings "some measure of justice to the victims."

"Harvey Weinstein will never be able to rape another woman. He will spend the rest of his life behind bars where he belongs," Siebel Newsom said in a statement. "Throughout the trial, Weinstein's lawyers used sexism, misogyny, and bullying tactics to intimidate, demean, and ridicule us survivors. The trial was a stark reminder that we as a society have work to do."

Siebel Newsom's intense and dramatic testimony, in which she described being raped by Weinstein in a hotel room in 2005, brought the trial its most dramatic moments. But only eight of the 12 jurors agreed to find Weinstein guilty of those counts.

Jurors were deadlocked 10-2 on a sexual battery count involving Lauren Young, the only accuser who testified at both Weinstein trials. She said she was a model aspiring to be an actor and screenwriter who was meeting with Weinstein about a script in 2013 when he trapped her in a hotel bathroom, groped her and masturbated in front of her.

Lacking any forensic evidence or eyewitness accounts of years-old allegations, the case hinged heavily on the stories and credibility of the four women at the center of the charges.

The women's stories echoed the allegations of dozens of others who have emerged since Weinstein became a #MeToo lightning rod starting with stories in the New York Times in 2017. A movie about that reporting, "She Said," was released during the trial, and jurors were repeatedly warned not to see it.

It was the defense that made #MeToo an issue during the trial, however, emphasizing that none of the four women went to the authorities until after the movement made Weinstein a target.

Defense lawyers said two of the women — including the one he would be found guilty of raping — were entirely lying about their encounters with Weinstein. They said the other two had "100% consensual" sexual interactions that they later reframed.

Defense attorneys said during the trial that if Siebel Newsom hadn't reached her later prominence she would be "just another bimbo who slept with Harvey Weinstein to get ahead in Hollywood."

"Regret is not the same thing as rape," Weinstein attorney Alan Jackson said in his closing argument.

He urged jurors to look past the the women's emotional testimony and focus on the factual evidence.

"Believe us because we're mad, believe us because we cried," Jackson said jurors were being asked to do. "Well, fury does not make fact. And tears do not make truth."

All the women involved in the charges went by Jane Doe in court. The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they have been sexually abused unless they come forward publicly or agree to be named through their attorneys, as the women named here did.

Prosecutors called 40 other witnesses in an attempt to give context and corroboration to those stories.

Four were other women who were not part of the charges but testified that Weinstein raped or sexually assaulted them. They were brought to the stand to establish a pattern of sexual predation.

Weinstein beat four other felony charges before the trial even ended when prosecutors said a woman he was charged with raping twice and sexually assaulting twice would not appear to testify. They declined to give a reason. Judge Lisa Lench dismissed those charges.

Weinstein's latest conviction hands a victory to victims of sexual misconduct of famous men in the wake of some legal setbacks, including the dismissal of Bill Cosby's conviction last year. The rape trial of "That '70s Show" actor Danny Masterson, held simultaneously and just down the hall from Weinstein's, ended in a mistrial. And actor Kevin Spacey was victorious at a sexual battery civil trial in New York last month.

Weinstein's New York conviction survived an initial appeal, but the case is set to be heard by the state's highest court next year. The California conviction, also likely to be appealed, means he will not walk free even if the East Coast conviction is thrown out.

## Central Park gate honors wrongly imprisoned 'Exonerated 5'

By TED SHAFFREY and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — At a small patch of Central Park flanking New York's Harlem neighborhood, scores came Monday to remember the injustice that imprisoned five Black and Latino teenagers after they were wrongly accused and convicted of the 1989 rape of a white jogger.

They arrived in the chill of a late fall morning, some singing hymns, to dedicate a park entry to the men once known as the Central Park Five, but now remembered as the Exonerated Five.

The entryway, located on the northern perimeter of the park between Fifth Avenue and Malcolm X Boulevard, will be known as the "Gate of the Exonerated." It commemorates the miscarriage of justice that not only befell the five men, organizers say, but the unknown others who might have been wrongly imprisoned.

"This is a moment. This is legacy time," said one of the men, Yusef Salaam.

"We are here because we persevere," he said to a cheering crowd.

Monday was the first time Raymond Santana, another of the men, now in his 40s, has returned to Central Park since that fateful day 33 years ago.

Santana was 14 and Salaam was 16 when they and three others — Kevin Richardson, 14; Korey Wise, 16; and Antron McCray, 15 — were wrongly tried for the rape of a 28-year-old woman, whose brutal attack left her with permanent injuries and no memory of the assault. The high-profile incident prompted police to round up Black and Brown men and boys in connection with the rape.

"We were babies, who had no dealing with the law. Never knew what Miranda was," said Santana, as he recounted a time of confusion when police rustled him up and began interrogating him.

Matias Reyes, a murderer and serial rapist already in prison, would later confess to the crime.

Soon after, the convictions of the Central Park Five were thrown out in 2002 after the men served six to 13 years in prison.

"It needs to be known what we went through. We went to hell and back," said Richardson. "We have these scars that nobody sees."

The three men — Wise and McCray could not attend — spoke about how the criminal justice system is stacked against people of color.

The gate, they said, would stand as reminder of the injustice of the past but also of those still being committed today.

"This is an important time right here — the Gate of the Exonerated, this is for everybody," Richardson said. "Everybody that's been wronged by cops."

The modest remembrance — words etched in stone on a waist-high wall — was years in the making.

Other entrances to the park have been labeled to reflect groups of people who live and work in the city, with names like Artisans' Gate, Scholars' Gate and Strangers' Gate.

Mayor Eric Adams, who was just starting his career as a New York City police officer during the 1989

episode, arrived to the ceremony to pay tribute to the men.

"To these soldiers here, you personify the Black male experience," the mayor, who is also Black, said to the men.

Alvin Bragg, who now leads the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, apologized for their ordeal.

"The truth is we shouldn't be here today," he said, alluding to past mistakes.

## High court temporarily blocks lifting of asylum restrictions

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is temporarily blocking an order that would lift pandemic-era restrictions on asylum seekers but the brief order leaves open the prospect that the restrictions in place since the coronavirus pandemic began and have been used to turn back hundreds of thousands of prospective asylum seekers could still expire on Wednesday.

The court's decision comes as officials and aid groups along the border are trying to prepare for whatever changes may or may not come Wednesday.

In the city of El Paso, Mayor Oscar Leeser said they've received information from Border Patrol and shelters just across the border in Mexico indicating that up to 20,000 migrants might be waiting to cross into El Paso. The Red Cross has brought 10,000 cots to help with the increase, he said.

The order Monday by Chief Justice John Roberts — who handles emergency matters that come from federal courts in the nation's capital — comes as conservative states are pushing to keep the limits on asylum seekers that were put in place to stem the spread of COVID-19. The states appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court in a last-ditch effort before the restrictions are set to expire Wednesday, saying that lifting the limits on asylum seekers would cause irreparable harm to their states.

In the one-page order, Roberts granted a stay pending further order and asked the government to respond by 5 p.m. Tuesday. That is just hours before the restrictions are slated to expire on Wednesday.

The order by Roberts means the high-profile case that has drawn intense scrutiny at a time that the Republicans are set to take control of the House and make immigration a key issue will go down to the wire.

The immigration restrictions, often referred to as Title 42, were put in place under then-President Donald Trump in March 2020 and have prevented hundreds of thousands of migrants from seeking asylum in the U.S. in recent years. But as they're set to expire, thousands more migrants are packed in shelters on Mexico's border with the U.S.

Conservative-leaning states have argued that lifting Title 42 will lead to a surge of migrants into their states and take a toll on government services like health care or law enforcement. They also charge that the federal government has no plan to deal with an increase in migrants.

"This Court's review is warranted given the enormous national importance of this case. It is not reasonably contestable that the failure to grant a stay will cause an unprecedented calamity at the southern border," the states wrote in their request Monday.

Immigration advocates have said that the use of Title 42 goes against American and international obligations to people fleeing to the U.S. to escape persecution. And they've argued that things like vaccines and treatments for the coronavirus have made the policy outdated. They sued to end the use of Title 42; a federal judge in November sided with them and set the December 21 deadline.

Immigration advocates weighed in on Roberts' order. In a statement, Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, the President and CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, called the decision "deeply regrettable."

"The Biden administration must make a full-throated defense of our humanitarian obligations in the face of politically motivated litigation. Title 42 has never been grounded in any public health rationale," Vignarajah said in a statement late Monday. "Title 42 has only driven up repeat attempts to cross the border and lined the pockets of cartel smugglers who prey on vulnerable asylum seekers."

In a statement late Monday the Department of Homeland Security, which is responsible for enforcing border security, said as Title 42 is still in effect people who try to enter the U.S. "unlawfully" will be expelled to Mexico.



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"While this stage of the litigation proceeds, we will continue our preparations to manage the border in a safe, orderly, and humane way when the Title 42 public health order lifts," the statement read.

In the leadup to the end of Title 42, administration officials said they have surged more resources to the southern border, including more border patrol processing coordinators, more surveillance and increased security at ports of entry. About 23,000 agents are currently deployed to the southern border, according to the White House.

Before the Supreme Court weighed in, White House officials stressed Monday that the administration was bound by a court order to lift the pandemic-era border policy, despite urging from Republicans and some Democrats in Congress to extend it.

"The removal of Title 42 does not mean the border is open," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

Jean-Pierre said the administration has "additional robust planning underway" and pushed Congress to approve \$3.5 billion in more funding for DHS as lawmakers continue to haggle over details for a massive year-end spending bill.

That money for DHS would expand transportation capabilities so migrants can either be moved to less crowded border facilities, or be quickly removed if they have no legal grounds to stay. It would also fund more holding facilities, help speed up the processing of asylum claims and hire 300 more additional border patrol agents.

In the border communities, officials and aid groups have been preparing for the end of Title 42 as well and doing so at a time when temperatures are expected to drop as an Arctic blast sweeps south.

The top elected official in Hidalgo County, Judge Richard Cortez, said in the Texas border community of McAllen Border Patrol agents have been meeting with city and county officials, including in Mexico, to prepare for an influx of migrants crossing the border once the Title 42 policy ends. He's concerned about where migrants will be able to sleep or get a warm meal and making sure the bridge connecting the U.S. and Mexico remains open to commercial traffic.

"If they get overwhelmed at the ports of entry, they're just going to turn them loose ... and so where are they going to sleep at night, where are they going to eat? It just puts us in an unknown situation. What do we prepare for?" he said. "We're going to do the very best we can. To me, I don't know why Congress has not sat down and tried to improve the situation."

## **FTX founder agrees to extradition to US, attorney says**

Associated Press undefined

Sam Bankman-Fried may be ready to come to the U.S. to face criminal charges related to the collapse of cryptocurrency exchange FTX following a chaotic court appearance in the Bahamas.

A lawyer for Bankman-Fried was quoted as saying Monday the disgraced FTX founder has agreed to be extradited to the United States. A court hearing was stopped earlier in the day when his attorneys said it was premature for him to stand before the court.

Jerone Roberts, a local defense attorney for Bankman-Fried, told The New York Times that lawyers will prepare the necessary documents for extradition. "Mr. Bankman-Fried wishes to put the customers right, and that is what has driven his decision," the Times quoted Roberts telling reporters.

It was not immediately clear when extradition could occur.

The court appearance came just a week after Bankman-Fried's lawyers had initially said that they planned to fight extradition. An extradition hearing had been scheduled for Feb. 8. The reversal could speed up the timetable for him to be sent to the U.S.

Bahamian authorities arrested Bankman-Fried last Monday at the request of the U.S. government. U.S. prosecutors allege he played a central role in the rapid collapse of FTX and hid its problems from the public and investors. The Securities and Exchange Commission said Bankman-Fried illegally used investors' money to buy real estate on behalf of himself and his family. The 30-year-old could potentially spend the rest of his life in jail.

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Bankman-Fried arrived at the courthouse in a black van marked Corrections, which was escorted by a SWAT vehicle and a police vehicle. Police quickly whisked him into an entrance at the back of the courthouse.

A handful of people who said they were either crypto enthusiasts or FTX customers came to the courthouse to witness the proceedings.

"We want him to feel the weight of what he's done," said Ben Armstrong, the founder of the BitBoy Crypto website. Armstrong said he'd come to the courthouse with a dozen people, some of whom had lost their money with FTX.

If he is brought to New York, Bankman-Fried will likely be held, at least temporarily, in a federal detention center in Brooklyn. Other famous prisoners at the Metropolitan Detention Center in recent years have included the sexually-abusive singer R. Kelly, the pharmaceutical company executive Martin Shkreli and the socialite Ghislaine Maxwell, who was convicted of helping the millionaire Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse children.

During her time at the MDC, which houses around 1,600 prisoners, Maxwell's lawyers repeatedly complained to a judge that it was unsanitary, plagued by cockroaches and rodents. In recent years, three guards there have been convicted of sexually abusing inmates. In 2019, a power failure left inmates shivering for a week in the dead of winter.

Once he's back in the U.S., Bankman-Fried's attorney will be able to request that he be released on bail. A separate judge in the Bahamas denied Bankman-Fried's request for bail last week on the grounds he was a flight risk.

Bankman-Fried's downfall, from crypto evangelist to pariah, occurred with stunning speed. FTX filed for bankruptcy protection on Nov. 11 when it ran out of money after the cryptocurrency equivalent of a bank run.

Before the bankruptcy, Bankman-Fried was considered by many in Washington and on Wall Street as a wunderkind of digital currencies, someone who could help take them mainstream, in part by working with policymakers to bring more oversight and trust to the industry.

Bankman-Fried had been worth tens of billions of dollars — at least on paper — and was able to attract celebrities like Tom Brady or former politicians like Tony Blair and Bill Clinton to his conferences at luxury resorts in the Bahamas. One prominent Silicon Valley firm, Sequoia Capital, invested hundreds of millions of dollars in FTX.

The new CEO of FTX, John Ray III, told a congressional committee on Tuesday that there was nothing sophisticated about what Bankman-Fried was up to.

"This is just old fashion embezzlement, taking money from others and using it for your own purposes," he said.

## Mystery Nevada fossil site could be ancient maternity ward

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists have uncovered new clues about a curious fossil site in Nevada, a graveyard for dozens of giant marine reptiles. Instead of the site of a massive die-off as suspected, it might have been an ancient maternity ward where the creatures came to give birth.

The site is famous for its fossils from giant ichthyosaurs — reptiles that dominated the ancient seas and could grow up to the size of a school bus. The creatures — the name means fish lizard — were underwater predators with large paddle-shaped flippers and long jaws full of teeth.

Since the ichthyosaur bones in Nevada were excavated in the 1950s, many paleontologists have investigated how all these creatures could have died together. Now, researchers have proposed a different theory in a study published Monday in the journal *Current Biology*.

"Several lines of evidence all kind of point towards one argument here: That this was a place where giant ichthyosaurs came to give birth," said co-author Nicholas Pyenson, curator of fossil marine mammals at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

Once a tropical sea, the site — part of Nevada's Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park — now sits in a dry, dusty

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landscape near an abandoned mining town, said lead author Randy Irmis, a paleontologist at the University of Utah.

To get a better look at the massive skeletons, which boast vertebrae the size of dinner plates and bones from their flippers as thick as boulders, researchers used 3D scanning to create a detailed digital model, Irmis said.

They identified fossils from at least 37 ichthyosaurs scattered around the area, dating back about 230 million years. The bones were preserved in different rock layers, suggesting the creatures could have died hundreds of thousands of years apart rather than all at once, Pyenson said.

A major break came when the researchers spotted some tiny bones among the massive adult fossils, and realized they belonged to embryos and newborns, Pyenson said. The researchers concluded that the creatures traveled to the site in groups for protection as they gave birth, like today's marine giants. The fossils are believed to be from the mothers and offspring that died there over the years.

"Finding a place to give birth separated from a place where you might feed is really common in the modern world — among whales, among sharks," Pyenson said.

Other clues helped rule out some previous explanations.

Testing the chemicals in the dirt didn't turn up any signs of volcanic eruptions or huge shifts to the local environment. And the geology showed that the reptiles were preserved on the ocean floor pretty far from the shore — meaning they probably didn't die in a mass beaching event, Irmis said.

The new study offers a plausible explanation for a site that's baffled paleontologists for decades, said Dean Lomax, an ichthyosaur specialist at England's University of Manchester who was not involved with the research.

The case may not be fully closed yet but the study "really helps to unlock a little bit more about this fascinating site," Lomax said.

## Christmas tree demand remains high despite inflation

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

SOUTH PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — For all the worries about inflation and the economy, Americans aren't scrimping on a centerpiece of many celebrations this holiday season: the Christmas tree.

Retailers from Home Depot and Lowes to mom and pop operations raised their prices on trees — but people are still buying them.

Some Christmas tree growers fretted over external factors — high fuel, fertilizer and labor costs — only to rediscover that holiday greenery is largely inflation-proof, even as Americans cut back on retail spending last month.

The cost of an average-size tree from the local Rotary Club's Christmas trees in South Portland, Maine, is \$70 — \$5 more than last year.

A survey of 55 of the nation's largest Christmas tree wholesalers indicated virtually all of them intended to raise prices, with most wholesale cost increases in the 5% to 15% range — but with some increases reaching 21% or more, according to the Real Christmas Tree Board in Howell, Michigan, which conducts marketing and research for the industry.

But another survey indicated 85% of people feel Christmas trees are worth it despite price increases, the board said.

That suggests a tree — whether real or artificial — remains a requisite part of the holiday tradition, along with Christmas toys, cards and carols, and ugly sweaters.

Like individual traditions, the types of trees and local market conditions can vary.

In the end, nearly 21 million live Christmas trees will be sold by the time consumers wrap up purchases over the final days leading up to Christmas Day, putting sales on par with last year's strong performance, according to Jill Sidebottom of the National Christmas Tree Association.

"It wouldn't really be Christmas without a tree," said Susan Adams, of South Portland, who's making do with a smaller tree this year — for the same cost as last year's bigger tree.



## Children's medicine shortage hits as flu season starts fast

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

Caring for sick children has become extra stressful recently for many U.S. parents due to shortages of Children's Tylenol and other medicines.

Doctors and other experts say the problem could persist through the winter cold-and-flu season but should not last as long as other recent shortages of baby formula or prescription drugs.

They also say parents have alternatives if they encounter empty store shelves.

Here's a closer look:

### WHAT'S HAPPENING

An unusually fast start to the annual U.S. flu season, plus a spike in other respiratory illnesses, created a surge in demand for fever relievers and other products people can buy without a prescription.

"There are more sick kids at this time of year than we have seen in the past couple years," said Dr. Shannon Dillon, a pediatrician at Riley Children's Health in Indianapolis.

Experts say that's the main factor behind the shortages, which vary around the country and even within communities.

"At this point, it's more like toilet paper at the beginning of the (COVID-19) pandemic," Dillon said "You just have to look in the right place at the right time."

Drugmaker Johnson & Johnson says it is not experiencing widespread shortages of Children's Tylenol, but the product may be "less readily available" at some stores. The company said it is running its production lines around the clock.

In the meantime, CVS Health has placed a two-product limit on all children's pain relief products bought through its pharmacies or online.

Walgreens is limiting customers online to six purchases of children's over-the-counter fever reducing products. That limit doesn't apply in stores.

Aside from over-the-counter products, the prescription antibiotic amoxicillin also is in short supply due to increased demand, according to the Food and Drug Administration. The drug is often used to treat nose and throat infections in children.

### WHAT TO DO

Check first for alternatives in the store if some products aren't available. Generic versions of brand-name products are "perfectly safe and often a much more affordable option," Dillon said.

Other stores nearby also may have better options. Manufacturers say there are no widespread national shortages of these medications, according to the Consumer Healthcare Products Association.

A family doctor may know which stores have decent supplies.

A doctor also may be able to tell parents whether they can try alternatives like crushing the proper dose of a pill version and mixing it with food or chocolate syrup. Doctors say parents or caregivers should not try this on their own, because determining proper doses for children can be tricky.

"You don't need to experiment at home," said Dr. Sarah Nosal, a South Bronx family physician. "Your family doctor wants to talk to you and see you."

### GOING WITHOUT

Doctors also caution that fevers don't always have to be treated. They are a body's natural defense against infection, and they make it hard for a virus to replicate.

Dillon noted, for instance, that a fever may not be intrinsically harmful to older children. However, parents should take a newborn under 2 months old to the doctor if the child has a fever of 100.4 degrees or more. And doctors say any child with a fever should be monitored for behavior changes.

Instead of medicine, consider giving the child a bath in lukewarm water. Cold water makes the body shiver, which can actually raise the temperature.

Put fans in the child's room or set up a cool mist humidifier to help their lungs.

Nosal also said two teaspoons of honey can help control coughs in children older than a year. Avoid

using honey for young children because it carries a risk of infant botulism.

WHEN WILL SUPPLIES GET BETTER?

Shortages might last in some communities until early next year.

Resolving them can depend on whether there are enough workers at warehouses and stores to deliver the product and stock the shelves, noted Erin Fox. She researches drug shortages and is the senior pharmacy director at University of Utah Health, which runs five hospitals.

Fox said there are no problems at factories or a lack of ingredients contributing to current shortages. Those obstacles can lead to long supply disruptions.

"I don't expect this to last a year or more like some of our other shortages do," she said.

## Jan. 6 panel urges Trump prosecution with criminal referral

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, ERIC TUCKER and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Jan. 6 committee urged the Justice Department on Monday to bring criminal charges against Donald Trump for the violent 2021 Capitol insurrection, calling for accountability for the former president and "a time of reflection and reckoning."

After one of the most exhaustive and aggressive congressional probes in memory, the panel's seven Democrats and two Republicans are recommending criminal charges against Trump and associates who helped him launch a wide-ranging pressure campaign to try to overturn his 2020 election loss. The panel also released a lengthy summary of its final report, with findings that Trump engaged in a "multi-part conspiracy" to thwart the will of voters.

At a final meeting Monday, the committee alleged violations of four criminal statutes by Trump, in both the run-up to the riot and during the insurrection itself, as it recommended the former president for prosecution to the Justice Department. Among the charges they recommend for prosecution is aiding an insurrection — an effort to hold him directly accountable for his supporters who stormed the Capitol that day.

The committee also voted to refer conservative lawyer John Eastman, who devised dubious legal maneuvers aimed at keeping Trump in power, for prosecution on two of the same statutes as Trump: conspiracy to defraud the United States and obstructing an official proceeding.

While a criminal referral is mostly symbolic, with the Justice Department ultimately deciding whether to prosecute Trump or others, it is a decisive end to a probe that had an almost singular focus from the start.

Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., said Trump "broke the faith" that people have when they cast ballots in a democracy and that the criminal referrals could provide a "roadmap to justice" by using the committee's work.

"I believe nearly two years later, this is still a time of reflection and reckoning," Thompson said. "If we are to survive as a nation of laws and democracy, this can never happen again."

Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, the panel's Republican vice chairwoman, said in her opening remarks that every president in American history has defended the orderly transfer of power, "except one."

The committee also voted 9-0 to approve its final report, which will include findings, interview transcripts and legislative recommendations. The full report is expected to be released on Wednesday.

The report's 154-page summary, made public as the hearing ended, found that Trump engaged in a "multi-part conspiracy" to overturn the election. While the majority of the report's main findings are not new, it altogether represents one of the most damning portraits of an American president in recent history, laying out in great detail Trump's broad effort to overturn his own defeat and what the lawmakers say is his direct responsibility for the insurrection of his supporters.

The panel, which will dissolve on Jan. 3 with the new Republican-led House, has conducted more than 1,000 interviews, held 10 well-watched public hearings and collected more than a million documents since it launched in July 2021. As it has gathered the massive trove of evidence, the members have become emboldened in declaring that Trump, a Republican, is to blame for the violent attack on the Capitol by his supporters almost two years ago.

After beating their way past police, injuring many of them, the Jan. 6 rioters stormed the Capitol and

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interrupted the certification of Biden's presidential election win, echoing Trump's lies about widespread election fraud and sending lawmakers and others running for their lives.

The attack came after weeks of Trump's efforts to overturn his defeat — a campaign that was extensively detailed by the committee in its multiple public hearings, and laid out again by lawmakers on the panel at Monday's meeting. Many of Trump's former aides testified about his unprecedented pressure on states, on federal officials and Pence to object to Biden's win. The committee has also described in great detail how Trump riled up the crowd at a rally that morning and then did little to stop his supporters for several hours as he watched the violence unfold on television.

The panel aired some new evidence at the meeting, including a recent interview with longtime Trump aide Hope Hicks. Describing a conversation she had with Trump around that time, she said he told her that no one would care about his legacy if he lost the election.

Hicks told the committee that Trump told her, "The only thing that matters is winning."

Trump's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but the former president slammed members of the committee Sunday as "thugs and scoundrels" as he has continued to falsely dispute his 2020 loss.

While a so-called criminal referral has no real legal standing, it is a forceful statement by the committee and adds to political pressure already on Attorney General Merrick Garland and special counsel Jack Smith, who is conducting an investigation into Jan. 6 and Trump's actions.

On the recommendation to charge Trump on aiding an insurrection, the committee said in the report's summary that the former president "was directly responsible for summoning what became a violent mob" and refused repeated entreaties from his aides to condemn the rioters or to encourage them to leave.

For obstructing an official proceeding, the committee cites Trump's relentless badgering of Vice President Mike Pence and others to prevent the certification of the election results on Jan. 6. And his repeated lies about the election and efforts to undo the results open him up to a charge of conspiracy to defraud the United States, the panel said.

The final charge recommended by the panel is conspiracy to make a false statement, citing the scheme by Trump and his allies to put forward slates of fake electors in battleground states won by President Joe Biden.

Among the other charges contemplated, but not approved, by the committee was seditious conspiracy, the same allegation Justice Department prosecutors have used to target a subset of rioters belonging to far-right groups like the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys.

Thompson said after the hearing that the seditious conspiracy charge is "something that the committee didn't come to agreement on."

The panel was formed in the summer of 2021 after Senate Republicans blocked the formation of what would have been a bipartisan, independent commission to investigate the insurrection. When that effort failed, the Democratic-controlled House formed an investigative committee of its own.

House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy of California, a Trump ally, decided not to participate after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi rejected some of his appointments. That left an opening for two anti-Trump Republicans in the House — Reps. Liz Cheney of Wyoming and Adam Kinzinger of Illinois — to join seven Democrats, launching an unusually unified panel in the divided Congress.

McCarthy was one of four House Republicans who ignored congressional subpoenas from the panel and were referred to the House Ethics Committee on Monday for their non-compliance.

The Republican leader, who is hoping to become speaker of the House when his party takes the majority in January, has acknowledged he spoke with Trump on Jan. 6. The committee also referred Reps. Jim Jordan of Ohio, Scott Perry of Pennsylvania and Andy Biggs of Arizona, all of whom were in touch with Trump or the White House in the weeks leading up to the attack.

While the committee's mission was to take a comprehensive accounting of the insurrection and educate the public about what happened, they've also aimed their work at an audience of one: the attorney general. Lawmakers on the panel have openly pressured Garland to investigate Trump's actions, and last month he appointed a special counsel, Smith, to oversee two probes related to Trump, including those related to



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the insurrection and the presence of classified documents at Trump's Florida estate.

The committee members said that full accountability can only be found in the criminal justice system. "No one should get a pass," said Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif.

## Janelle Monáe, the not-so-secret weapon of 'Glass Onion'

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — To get a sense of Janelle Monáe's powers of transformation, look no further than her Instagram photos of past Halloweens. Monáe doesn't just throw something on. When she turns into the White Rabbit from "Alice in Wonderland" or Diva Plavalaguna from "The Fifth Element," Monáe looks legitimately ready to step onto a movie set.

"I am indeed a self-proclaimed transformer," Monáe says, smiling. "I love going outside of what I think I know about me."

Monáe, who grew up in a working-class Baptist family in the Quindaro neighborhood of Kansas City, Kansas, first remade herself in music as a retro-styled dynamo. Performing in a tuxedo and a vintage pompadour, she fashioned herself as a time-traveling android alter-ego named Cindi Mayweather. Acting was probably inevitable for Monáe, who studied musical theater at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy before dedicating herself to music.

"It is that character building that I love," Monáe said in a recent interview. "I love just getting my body into discovering a new way to talk and to breathe, and, hopefully, being a reflection for other folks. Go outside of who you think you are every day."

But as much as Monáe has been a natural, full-body entertainer and a red-carpet head-turner — a self-evident movie star -- it has sometimes seemed since her two 2016 big-screen debuts in "Hidden Figures" and "Moonlight" that Hollywood hasn't known quite how to fully harness the wide-ranging talents of such a self-propelled, mold-breaking Black female artist.

But in Rian Johnson's whodunit sequel "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery," which debuts Friday on Netflix, Monáe may have found a film to suit her proclivity for shape shifting. In Johnson's puzzle box of a movie, Monáe's character is the most mysterious and enigmatic of a colorful ensemble. If "Knives Out" gave Ana de Armas a chance to shine, "Glass Onion" is a revelation of Monáe's many layers.

"It's been an incredibly transformative experience for me as an actor," Monáe says. "I got an opportunity to show range. This character goes from comedy to the deep emotional, heavy-lifting dramatic scenes all the way to action, where I found myself working with a stunt coordinator at five, six in the morning in Greece after eating baclava."

The less said about exactly how Monáe fits into "Glass Onion," the better. In Johnson's film, which had a one-week theatrical run in late November, Edward Norton plays a tech billionaire, Miles Bron, who invites friends to his private Greek island. Detective Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig) is on hand for a murder mystery that spins out of control and a plot that, in dredging up Bron's past, skewers a social media mogul not so unlike some of today's real-world tech tycoons.

"I got an opportunity to honor those women who are the minority in the majority in those spaces, who have their ideas taken from them, who are not given credit for their work, who have to deal with these alligators, deal with these tech bros, deal with these geniuses who in fact haven't done anything except for cause confusion," says Monáe.

Monáe is something of a futurist, herself. Earlier this year she published a collection of sci-fi stories titled "The Memory Librarian," adapted from elements in her 2018 album, "Dirty Computer." In it, Monáe depicts a future world where human desires are controlled by an organization called New Dawn and the identities of LGBTQ people can be wiped by a drug called Nevermind.

Monáe earlier this year said on "Red Table Talk" that she identifies as non-binary. Her pronouns, she has said, are her/she, they/them and "free-ass motherf-----." The film industry, especially this time of year when awards are given to actors and actresses, can be more codified in its classifications. Monáe, herself, was named best supporting actress for her performance in "Glass Onion" by the National Board of Review.

The multidimensional characters of "Glass Onion," Monáe says, has given her more hope that she can

find films that authentically connect with her. "I just want to tip my hat off to those writers and directors who are thinking about dynamism when they're writing these characters," she says. That includes Johnson, who she's been a fan of since seeing his 2012 science-fiction film "Looper." Says Monáe: "I was like: Who is this guy who likes time travel as much as me?"

Johnson, for his part, felt he was working with "a true artist."

"It's not like she has a tremendous artifice to her, but I've never met her where she doesn't look better than I will ever look in my life," he says, laughing. "She's an entertainer but she's also an artist. It's not a facade that she just puts on for attention. All the stuff that she does comes from a place that's really close to her heart."

Through her Paisley Park-like creative hub Wondaland in Atlanta, Monáe is trying, she says, to "tell radical, rebellious, smart stories." With A24, she's developing a TV series on Josephine Baker, the French dancer and WWII resistance fighter. She's eager for more.

"As timeless as I like to think I am, time waits for nobody," Monáe says.

But regardless of future roles, for Monáe metamorphosis is more of a habit. On a weekend during shooting, Johnson sent out hand-written invitations to the cast to gather for their own murder mystery. Monáe arrived decked out as Sherlock Holmes, complete with top hat, beard, mustache, cane and cape. Or as Monáe says, "Ready to play."

## Elon Musk Twitter poll ends with users seeking his departure

By MATT O'BRIEN, KELVIN CHAN and TOM KRISHER AP Business Writers

Millions of Twitter users asked Elon Musk to step down as the head of Twitter in a poll the billionaire created and promised to abide by. But by Monday afternoon there was no word on whether Musk would step aside or who the new leader might be.

Twitter has grown more chaotic and confusing under Musk's leadership with rapidly vacillating policies that are issued, then withdrawn or changed.

Among those voting with the "go" camp almost certainly were Tesla investors who have grown tired of the 24/7 Twitter chaos that they say has distracted the eccentric CEO from the electric car company, his main source of wealth.

Musk also used his Tesla stock to partially fund the acquisition of Twitter.

Shares of Tesla are down 35% since Musk took over Twitter on Oct. 27, costing investors billions. Tesla's market value was over \$1.1 trillion on April 1, the last trading day before Musk disclosed he was buying up Twitter shares. The company has since lost 58% of its value, at a time when rival auto makers are cutting in on Tesla's dominant share of electric vehicle sales.

"This has been a black eye moment for Musk and been a major overhang on Tesla's stock, which continues to suffer in a brutal way since the Twitter soap opera began," Wedbush analyst Dan Ives wrote Monday.

If Musk's tenure ends, it would be a major positive for Tesla stock and a sign that Musk is "finally reading the room that has been growing frustration around this Twitter nightmare," Ives wrote.

Musk attended the World Cup final Sunday in Qatar, where he opened the poll. Since the poll closed early Monday, Musk has been uncharacteristically silent on Twitter as he appeared to be flying back to the U.S.

Musk has taken a number of unscientific polls on substantial issues facing the social media platform, including whether to reinstate journalists that he had suspended from Twitter, which was broadly criticized in and out of media circles.

The polls have only added to a growing sense of tumult on Twitter since Musk bought the company for \$44 billion, potentially leaving the future direction of the company in the hands of its users.

Among those users are people recently reinstated on the platform under Musk, people who had been banned for racist and toxic posts, or who had spread misinformation.

Since buying Twitter, Musk has presided over a dizzying series of changes that have unnerved advertisers and turned off users. He's laid off half of the workforce, axed contract content moderators and disbanded a council of trust and safety advisors. He has dropped enforcement of COVID-19 misinformation rules and

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called for criminal charges against Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert.

Musk clashed with some users on multiple fronts and on Sunday, he asked Twitter users to decide if he should remain in charge, acknowledging he made a mistake in launching new restrictions that banned the mention of rival social media websites.

The results of the online survey, which lasted 12 hours, showed that 57.5% of the 17.5 million respondents wanted him to leave, while 42.5% wanted him to stay.

The poll followed just the latest significant policy change since Musk acquired Twitter in October. Twitter had announced that users will no longer be able to link to Facebook, Instagram, Mastodon and other platforms targeted for "prohibition."

Early Monday, the tweets from Twitter's 'Support' account and the Twitter blog announcing the "prohibitions" disappeared without explanation. Twitter no longer has a press office so it was not possible to ask why.

That decision had generated immediate blowback, including criticism from past defenders of Twitter's new owner. Musk then promised that he would not make any more major policy changes to Twitter without an online survey of users.

The action to block competitors was Musk's latest attempt to crack down on certain speech after he shut down a Twitter account last week that was tracking the flights of his private jet.

The banned platforms included mainstream websites such as Facebook and Instagram, and rivals Mastodon, Tribel, Nostr, Post and former President Donald Trump's Truth Social.

A growing number of Twitter users have left under Musk, or created alternative accounts on rival platforms and included those addresses in their Twitter profiles.

Musk has advocated for free speech on Twitter, but shut down the jet-tracking account, calling it a security risk. He used that to justify the decision last week to suspend the accounts of numerous journalists who cover Twitter and Musk, among them reporters working for The New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, Voice of America and other publications. Many of those accounts were restored following an online poll by Musk.

The Washington Post's Taylor Lorenz was suspended over the weekend after requesting an interview with Musk in a tweet tagged to the Twitter owner.

Sally Buzbee, The Washington Post's executive editor, called it an "arbitrary suspension of another Post journalist" that further undermined Musk's promise to run Twitter as a platform dedicated to free speech.

"Again, the suspension occurred with no warning, process or explanation — this time as our reporter merely sought comment from Musk for a story," Buzbee said. By midday Sunday, Lorenz's account was restored, as was the tweet she thought had triggered her suspension.

Musk was questioned in court on Nov. 16 about how he splits his time among Tesla and his other companies, including SpaceX and Twitter. He had to testify in Delaware's Court of Chancery over a shareholder's challenge to Musk's potentially \$55 billion compensation plan as CEO of the electric car company.

Musk said he never wanted to be a CEO of any company, preferring to see himself as an engineer.

In public banter with Twitter followers Sunday, Musk expressed pessimism about the prospects for a new CEO, saying that person "must like pain a lot" to run a company that "has been in the fast lane to bankruptcy."

"No one wants the job who can actually keep Twitter alive. There is no successor," Musk tweeted.

## **Official: Russia, Iran turmoil limited meddling in US vote**

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

FORT MEADE, Md. (AP) — Russia's war in Ukraine and anti-regime protests in Iran limited both Moscow and Tehran's ability to try to influence or interfere in the recent U.S. midterm elections, a senior American military official said Monday.

U.S. agencies were on high alert before November's vote for potential cyberattacks or foreign influence operations, particularly after adversaries were judged by intelligence agencies to have meddled in the last



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two presidential elections. But there was little sign of disruption in the midterms.

"I was surprised by the lack of activity we saw from the Russians, the Iranians, or the Chinese," said Army Maj. Gen. William Hartman, who leads the U.S. Cyber National Mission Force, which partners with the National Security Agency in detecting and stopping election intrusions.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has been mired in a prolonged war with tens of thousands of casualties since he ordered an invasion of Ukraine in February. And Iran's leaders are waging a bloody crackdown against street protests sparked by the September death of a 22-year-old woman, in one of the largest sustained challenges to their power since the 1979 revolution.

Hartman noted that Russia's domestic, military, and foreign intelligence services are expending more resources than previously expected on Ukraine, which has put up greater resistance than many in Moscow or Washington expected.

Though on an apparently lesser scale than in recent elections, all three countries have been linked by the U.S. to alleged influence efforts this year.

The FBI in October warned that an Iran-linked cyber group was considering so-called "hack-and-leak" operations to publish and amplify stolen data. The Justice Department in March charged five men with surveilling and harassing Chinese dissidents, including a little-known congressional candidate.

And Russia, which was accused by U.S. intelligence of trying to support Donald Trump's presidential bids in 2016 and 2020, was alleged to be seeking to amplify doubts about the integrity of the election.

Hartman met with reporters after a ceremony establishing the Cyber National Mission Force as a sub-unified command. The designation establishes the mission force, created in 2012 under U.S. Cyber Command, as a permanent entity that can set higher standards for hiring and development for technological expertise in the military, he said.

The model he and other proponents of growing military programs on cyber have suggested is akin to U.S. Joint Special Operations Command, which oversees special forces responsible for high-profile U.S. successes like the raid that killed Osama bin Laden.

"We really want to build the JSOC of Cyber Command," Hartman said.

The mission force is tasked with several signature priorities of the head of U.S. Cyber Command, Army Gen. Paul Nakasone, who also leads the National Security Agency and is expected to leave both roles next year.

Among the force's work is its "hunt forward" missions in which military cyber experts go to ally and partner countries to check their networks for intrusions or vulnerabilities. Several dozen U.S. personnel were in Ukraine for months before the larger war began, leaving just before Putin's invasion.

The force also takes on an election defense role working with the NSA, which spies on electronic communications and is believed to be the nation's largest intelligence agency.

Hartman declined to say whether members of his force took down or deterred any foreign influence activities this year.

## **FBI: Steep climb in teens targeted by online 'sextortion'**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI sounded the alarm Monday about an explosive increase in teenage boys being targeted online and extorted for money after being tricked into sending sexually explicit pictures.

At least 3,000 children, mostly teenage boys, have been victims of the schemes that are connected to more than a dozen suicides this year, a scale that U.S. authorities have not seen before, Justice Department officials said. Many think they are chatting online with kids around their own age but are quickly manipulated into sending explicit pictures and then blackmailed for money with threats to release the images, the FBI said.

Most victims are between 14 and 17, but kids as young as 10 have been targeted.

The FBI said it was issuing the national public safety alert now since kids may be spending more time online as schools close for winter break.

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There's been a staggering tenfold increase in reports since last year, and there are likely more victims who never came forward, FBI officials said. Embarrassment and shame can prevent them from asking for help.

"Victims may feel like there is no way out—it is up to all of us to reassure them that they are not in trouble, there is hope, and they are not alone," said FBI Director Christopher Wray in a statement.

Many of the current wave of schemes are believed to be originating with scammers based in West African countries like Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. The suspects typically pose as kids of similar age, often using a girl's profile picture and even listing schools or adding friends to make it look like they live in the same area. It happens often on large platforms like Instagram or Facebook, but can also be on gaming or video chats, authorities said.

The alert is meant to thrust the issue into the public spotlight, so kids can feel more comfortable coming forward and adults can help them learn how to spot fake identities and reject anyone asking for explicit images, said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Polite of the Justice Department's criminal division.

The Department of Homeland Security is also working to track fake accounts back to their source, said Steve Francis, the acting executive director of Homeland Security Investigations. It isn't clear whether federal prosecutors had brought any cases tied to the scams.

The tactics used by those behind the fake accounts are getting more aggressive, sometimes asking for photos within minutes, and cases have been rising around the world, advocates said.

"This is a growing crisis and we've seen sextortion completely devastate children and families," said Michelle DeLaune, CEO of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. "The best defense against this crime is to talk to your children about what to do if they're targeted online."

## FIFA mostly wins big but loses some trust at Qatar World Cup

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

Even before an epic final won by Lionel Messi and Argentina, FIFA president Gianni Infantino was calling it "the best World Cup ever" in Qatar.

There was clear self-interest to declare the success of a tournament that was politically fraught for most of the 12 years since the wealthy emirate was picked as host by a previous FIFA leadership broadly tainted by corruption allegations.

FIFA's fundamental role is to oversee global soccer's rules and make sure World Cups happen on schedule: Goal achieved, billions of dollars duly earned.

As ever with arguably world sport's most colorful governing body, there was much else going on.

### ON THE FIELD

When the games begin focus shifts to the field, and FIFA got that early on day three when Messi and Argentina lost to Saudi Arabia 2-1 in an upset for the ages.

One day later, Germany lost to Japan and then Brazil delighted the world in its first game against Serbia. Morocco picked up the baton and was the first African or Arab nation to still be playing on the last weekend of a World Cup.

Games were consistently compelling if not the best quality. These were not vintage Spain or Netherlands teams, and not even Brazil by the time of its quarterfinals exit.

The drama rose with simultaneous group-stage games that carried Japan, South Korea and Croatia to the round of 16 and sent Germany and Belgium home.

All continents got teams into the knockout rounds, letting Infantino repeat his claim of soccer "becoming truly global for the first time."

When the final was a true classic on Sunday, Argentina winning on penalties after a 3-3 draw, it left everyone except France feeling like they won.

### POLITICS

It was a most political World Cup. Before a game was played there was scrutiny of Qatar for its human rights record, employment practices and a years-long boycott by neighboring states in which FIFA pushed for the Gulf region to share the tournament.

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In the final weeks of preparation, Qatar pushed back more confidently against its critics – a process FIFA joined after teams and media arrived on site.

Infantino's infamous "I feel gay, I feel a migrant worker" speech on Nov. 19 hit many of the host nation's talking points that alleged western hypocrisy and racism.

FIFA gave assurances in private — to European teams about captains wearing anti-discrimination armbands; to fans about wearing rainbow symbols; to World Cup sponsor AB InBev about selling Budweiser beer with alcohol at stadiums – that started to collapse. Bonds of trust were severely strained.

Pre-tournament talk of being open to supporting a compensation fund and better resources for migrant workers in Qatar was mostly shut down.

Qatar's World Cup was a state-run project and it seemed clear who was in charge.

When European women lawmakers came to games wearing the "One Love" armband, Middle East officials started sporting a Palestinian armband.

When an Italian field invader displayed European activist messages, days later a Tunisian man did the same with a Palestinian flag.

During the tournament, basic operational detail was hard to get and most requests were ignored. Routine briefings and news conferences at past World Cups, including Russia in 2018, did not happen.

A guiding principle seemed to be "never complain, never explain" for World Cup organizers.

## FANS

The FIFA president is traditionally jeered at World Cup finals. It happened again on Sunday when Infantino was introduced for the trophy presentations.

Infantino also was booed when the TV broadcast showed him sitting in VVIP seats during the England-Wales game. Both countries had armband and rainbow issues with FIFA, while British media extensively covered migrant labor issues.

Though Argentina and Morocco fans traveled in big numbers, fewer than expected Europeans came to Qatar. The pre-tournament target was 1.2 million international visitors but the official total was less than 800,000 entering the final week.

Yet, when thousands of Morocco fans tried to arrive for an unexpected semifinal against France last Wednesday, several flights into Doha were canceled to limit numbers.

High-priced accommodation like tents and cabins also seemed to put off visiting fans.

Empty seats at kickoff for most games would steadily fill by halftime. There was evidence and anecdotes of residents in Qatar being taken to games and offered free tickets, and the host nation's loudest cheer squad was fans brought from Lebanon and Syria.

When tournament attendance topped 3.4 million, it was unclear and went unanswered if the total included all the volunteers, catering and security staff who clocked in to work in stadiums.

## MORE MONEY

This was a clear win for FIFA, despite a likely breach of contract issue to resolve with AB InBev.

FIFA reported higher than expected revenue of \$7.5 billion for the four-year commercial cycle tied to Qatar's World Cup.

The World Cup was a tougher sell in the past decade when new sponsors came only from Russia and Qatar — two often problematic host nations — and China while prosecutors in the United States, Switzerland and France ran corruption investigations targeting soccer officials.

A late run of sponsor signings for this World Cup included tourism in Saudi Arabia and Las Vegas, plus companies in the online gambling, cryptocurrency and blockchain sectors.

Most deals now expire and FIFA plans to cash in from staging a bigger 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico, by offering sponsors huge local markets and more games being played mostly in high-yield NFL stadiums.

Infantino said on Friday that FIFA's four-year forecast is for \$11 billion through 2026. All 211 member federations will be getting millions more dollars from Zurich.

## HIGH LIFE

FIFA leaders could stay in opulent Qatari hotels that opened just in time for the World Cup.



One base was the waterside Fairmont Hotel, nearly 40 stories high and shaped like a curved sword. It offered 18-karat gold tiles in the shower of some suites and a 56-meter (185-foot) high chandelier in the lobby.

Coupled with an unprecedented level of security at a World Cup, it added to the feel of FIFA isolating in an ivory tower.

While France's President Emmanuel Macron went for a brief walkabout at the main market in Doha, Infantino almost never met ordinary fans.

One regular Infantino companion was a celebrity chef famed for painting gold leaf on steaks that costs hundreds of dollars at his restaurants.

The chef, known as Salt Bae, also seemed to breach World Cup protocol by holding the gold trophy when joining the Argentina players on the field on Sunday for post-game celebrations.

For veteran FIFA watchers, it was an apt final symbol for the World Cup in Qatar.

## Fortnite maker to pay \$520M for privacy, e-commerce abuses

By The Associated Press undefined

The maker of the popular Fortnite video game will pay \$520 million in penalties and refunds to settle complaints revolving around children's privacy and its payment methods that tricked players into making unintended purchases, U.S. federal regulators said Monday.

The Federal Trade Commission reached the settlements to resolve two cases against Epic Games Inc., which has parlayed Fortnite's success in the past five years to become a video game powerhouse.

The \$520 million covered in the settlement consists of \$245 million in customer refunds and a \$275 million fine for collecting personal information on Fortnite players under the age of 13 without informing their parents or getting their consent. It's the biggest penalty ever imposed for breaking an FTC rule.

"Epic used privacy-invasive default settings and deceptive interfaces that tricked Fortnite users, including teenagers and children," FTC Chair Lina Khan said in a statement.

Even before the settlement was announced, Epic said in a statement it had already rolled out a series of changes "to ensure our ecosystem meets the expectations of our players and regulators, which we hope will be a helpful guide for others in our industry." The Cary, North Carolina, company also asserted that it no longer engages in the practices flagged by the FTC.

The \$245 million in customer refunds will go to players who fell victim to so-called "dark patterns" and billing practices. Dark patterns are deceptive online techniques used to nudge users into doing things they didn't intend to do.

In this case, "Fortnite's counterintuitive, inconsistent, and confusing button configuration led players to incur unwanted charges based on the press of a single button," the FTC said.

Players could, for example, be charged while trying to wake the game from sleep mode, while the game was in a loading screen, or by pressing a nearby button when simply trying to preview an item, it said.

"These tactics led to hundreds of millions of dollars in unauthorized charges for consumers," the FTC said.

Epic said it agreed to the FTC settlement because it wants "to be at the forefront of consumer protection and provide the best experience for our players."

"No developer creates a game with the intention of ending up here," Epic said.

During the past two years, Epic also has been locked in a high-profile legal battle with Apple in an attempt to dismantle the barriers protecting the iPhone app store, which has emerged as one of the world's biggest e-commerce hubs during the past 14 years. After Epic introduced a different payment system within its Fortnite app in August 2020, Apple ousted the video from the app store, triggering a lawsuit that went to trial last year.

A federal judge ruled largely in Apple's favor, partly because she embraced the iPhone maker's contention that its exclusive control of the app store helped protect the security and privacy of consumers. The ruling is currently under appeal, with a decision expected at some point next year.

## California approves roadmap for carbon neutrality by 2045

By SOPHIE AUSTIN Associated Press/Report for America

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California air regulators voted unanimously Thursday to approve an ambitious plan to drastically cut reliance on fossil fuels by changing practices in the energy, transportation and agriculture sectors, but critics say it doesn't go far enough to combat climate change.

The plan sets out to achieve so-called carbon neutrality by 2045, meaning the state will remove as many carbon emissions from the atmosphere as it emits. It aims to do so in part by reducing fossil fuel demand by 86% within that time frame.

California had previously set this carbon neutrality target, but Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation making it a mandate earlier this year. The Democrat has said drastic changes are needed to position California as a global climate leader.

"We are making history here in California," Newsom said in a statement Thursday.

But the plan's road to approval by the California Air Resources Board was not without criticism. Capturing large amounts of carbon and storing it underground is one of the most controversial elements of the proposal. Critics say it gives the state's biggest emitters reason to not do enough on their part to mitigate climate change.

In a meeting that lasted several hours, activists, residents and experts used their last chance to weigh in on the plan ahead of the board's vote. Many said the latest version, while not perfect, was an improvement from earlier drafts, committing the state to do more to curb planet-warming emissions.

Davina Hurt, a board member, said she was proud California is moving closer to its carbon neutrality goal.

"I'm glad that this plan is bold and aggressive," Hurt said.

The plan does not commit the state to taking any particular actions but sets out a broad roadmap for how California can achieve its goals. Here are the highlights:

### RENEWABLE POWER

The implementation of the plan hinges on the state's ability to transition away from fossil fuels and rely more on renewable resources for energy. It calls for the state to cut liquid petroleum fuel demand by 94% by 2045, and quadruple solar and wind capacity along that same timeframe.

Another goal would mean new residential and commercial buildings will be powered by electric appliances before the next decade.

The calls for dramatically lowering reliance on oil and gas come as public officials continue to grapple with how to avoid blackouts when record-breaking heat waves push Californians to crank up their air conditioning.

And the Western States Petroleum Association took issue with the plan's timeline.

"CARB's latest draft of the Scoping Plan has acknowledged what dozens of studies have confirmed — that a complete phase-out of oil and gas is unrealistic," said Catherine Reheis-Boyd, the group's president, in a statement. "A plan that isn't realistic isn't really a plan at all."

At the beginning of Thursday's meeting, California Air Resources Board Chair Liane Randolph touted the latest version of the plan as the most ambitious to date. It underwent changes after public comments earlier this year.

"Ultimately, achieving carbon neutrality requires deploying all tools available to us to reduce emissions and store carbon," Randolph said.

### TRANSPORTATION

Officials hope a move away from gas-powered cars and trucks reduces greenhouse gas emissions while limiting the public health impact of chemicals these vehicles release.

In a July letter to the air board, Newsom requested that the agency approve aggressive cuts to emissions from planes. This would accompany other reductions in the transportation sector as the state transitions to all zero-emission vehicle sales by 2035.

The plan's targets include having 20% of aviation fuel demand come from electric or hydrogen sources by 2045 and ensuring all medium-duty vehicles sold are zero-emission by 2040. The board has already

passed a policy to ban the sale of new cars powered solely by gasoline in the state starting in 2035.

## CARBON CAPTURE

The plan refers to carbon capture as a “necessary tool” to implement in the state alongside other strategies to mitigate climate change. It calls for the state to capture 100 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent and store it underground by 2045.

Connie Cho, an attorney for environmental justice group Communities for a Better Environment, called the plan’s goal of phasing down oil refining “a huge step forward” to mitigate climate change and protect public health.

“Our communities have been suffering from chronic disease and dying at disproportionate rates for far too long because of the legacy of environmental racism in this country,” Cho said.

But Cho criticized its carbon capture targets, arguing they give a pathway for refineries to continue polluting as the state cuts emissions in other areas.

## AGRICULTURE

One of the goals is to achieve a 66% reduction in methane emissions from the agriculture sector by 2045. Cattle are a significant source for releasing methane — a potent, planet-warming gas.

The plan’s implementation would also mean less reliance by the agriculture sector on fossil fuels as an energy source.

## Putin in Belarus, eyeing next steps in Ukraine war

By HANNA ARHIROVA and VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin made a rare trip Monday to Moscow’s ally Belarus as his forces pursued their campaign to bombard Ukraine from the air amid a broad battlefield stalemate almost 10 months into the war.

Putin’s visit to Minsk came hours after Russia’s latest drone attack on Ukraine. Moscow has been targeting Ukraine’s power grid since October as part of a strategy to deprive the country of heat and power during winter.

His brief trip could herald more military support for the Kremlin war effort, after Belarus provided Russia with a launching pad for the invasion of Ukraine last February.

Putin said he and Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko discussed forming “a single defense space” in the region but rejected claims that Moscow was poised to swallow its neighbor.

“Russia isn’t interested in any kind of merger, it’s not feasible,” Putin said.

Putin said that he supported Lukashenko’s proposal to train the crews of Belarusian warplanes that already have been modified for using special warheads — a reference to nuclear weapons.

Earlier this year, Russia and Belarus have announced a plan to modernize Belarusian aircraft to make them nuclear-capable. Lukashenko said Belarusian crews have been training with Russia to operate those planes modified to carry nuclear weapons.

Lukashenko thanked Putin for providing his military with Iskander short range missiles and S-400 air defense systems. He also said the countries agreed to continue hold joint military exercises.

Belarus is believed to have Soviet-era weapons stockpiles that could be useful for Moscow. Lukashenko, meanwhile, needs help with his country’s ailing economy. It was a rare trip to Minsk by Putin, who usually receives Lukashenko in Russia.

Moscow has kept up its war effort despite Western sanctions and the supply of Western air defense systems to Ukrainian forces.

Sitting beside Lukashenko, Putin emphasized their close military-technical ties. He said they include not only mutual supplies of equipment but also joint work in high-tech military industries.

Analysts say the Kremlin might be seeking some kind of Belarusian military support for its Ukraine operations. But the winter weather and Russia’s depleted resources mean any big Russian attack probably won’t come soon, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a think tank in Washington.

“The capacity of the Russian military, even reinforced by elements of the Belarusian armed forces, to prepare and conduct effective large-scale mechanized offensive operations in the next few months remains

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questionable," it said in an assessment published Sunday.

It concluded that "it is unlikely that Lukashenko will commit the Belarusian military (which would also have to be re-equipped) to the invasion of Ukraine."

In Ukraine, multiple explosive drones attacked the capital before dawn. The attack came three days after what Ukrainian officials described as one of Russia's biggest assaults on Kyiv since the war started.

Russia launched 23 self-exploding drones over Kyiv while the city slept, but Ukrainian forces shot down 18 of them, the Kyiv city administration said on Telegram. No major casualties were reported from the attack, although the Ukrainian president's office said the war killed at least three civilians and wounded 11 elsewhere in the country between Sunday and Monday.

The drone barrage caused emergency power outages in 11 central and eastern regions, including the capital region, authorities said.

Monday was St. Nicholas Day, which marks the start of the Christmas holidays in Ukraine and is when children typically receive their first gifts hidden under pillows.

"This is how Russians congratulated our children on the holiday," Serhii Kruk, the head of Ukraine's State Emergency Service, wrote on Telegram, attaching photos of firefighters at a stricken infrastructure facility.

"In the night when everyone is waiting for a miracle, the terrorist country continues to terrorize the peaceful Ukrainian people," said Ukraine's human rights chief, Dmytro Lubinets.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pleaded for Western countries to send sophisticated air defense systems as winter tightens its grip.

"A 100% air defense shield for Ukraine will be one of the most successful steps against Russian aggression," Zelenskyy said by video link at a northern European regional threat conference in Latvia. "This step is needed right now."

Wreckage from the downed drones damaged a road in the Solomianskyi district and broke windows in a multistory building in the Shevchenkyvskyi district of Kyiv, city officials said.

One drone hit the home of Olha and Ivan Kobzarenko, ages 84 and 83, in the outskirts of the capital. Ivan sustained a head injury.

Their garage was destroyed and their dog, Malysch, was killed. Olha, speaking in her bedroom where shattered glass and blood covered the floor, said the blast flung the front gate into the house.

"I know that I am not alone," she said. "Everyone is suffering. Everyone."

Nina Sobol, a 59-year-old clerk at one of Kyiv's power companies, was going to work when the strikes happened. Like many of her colleagues, she waited outside while emergency services inspected damage.

"I feel really anxious," she said. "Anxious because you never know at which moment there will be an incoming missile."

Ukraine's air force said on Telegram that its personnel were able to destroy 30 of at least 35 self-exploding drones that Russia launched across the country from the eastern side of the Azov Sea on Ukraine's south-east coast. Russia is on the other side of the sea.

The Ukrainian military has reported increasing success in shooting down incoming Russian missiles and drones, but Zelenskyy said Moscow had received a fresh batch of drones from Iran.

Meanwhile, warships from Russia's Pacific Fleet set off Monday for joint naval drills with China. The exercise follows a series of joint maneuvers that have highlighted growing military cooperation between Moscow and Beijing as they both face tensions with the United States.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the U.S. was treading on dangerous ground by getting involved in the war in Ukraine.

"This dangerous and shortsighted policy has put the U.S. and Russia on the brink of a direct confrontation," Zakharova said in a statement Monday. "Moscow is calling on Joe Biden's administration to soberly assess the situation and refrain from dangerous escalation."

At the United Nations, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he sees no prospect of talks to end the war in the immediate future.

"I strongly hope that in 2023, we'll be able to reach peace in Ukraine," Guterres said.



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## At 50, 'Immaculate Reception' still lifts a region's spirits

By PETER SMITH and JESSIE WARDARSKI Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — And it came to pass — actually, quarterback Terry Bradshaw came to pass, but bear with us. This is a story about football, culture and religion, so it seems right to begin with some biblical phrasing.

Thus, Bradshaw barely got off the pass, which was deflected in a collision between defender and receiver. Everyone thought the game was over except a hustling fullback, Franco Harris. He made an improbable shoestring catch and raced into the end zone, securing the Pittsburgh Steelers' first-ever playoff win, the start of a long dynasty.

That was 50 years ago this Friday, on Dec. 23, 1972. But even though the NFL has officially designated it the greatest play in league history, it was bigger than that.

"Dec. 23 will henceforth be celebrated in Pittsburgh as the Feast of the Immaculate Reception," legendary local sportscaster Myron Cope proclaimed.

He got the idea from a caller whose boyfriend had coined the name in a barroom victory celebration — putting a twist on the recently passed Catholic Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which marks the belief that the Virgin Mary was conceived without sin.

The coinage was as durable as it was instant, "using religious terminology to almost mythologize a sporting event," said Anne Madarasz, chief historian and director of the Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum.

The Immaculate Reception crystallized the rise of the Steelers — even as their namesake industry was on the decline, as was the Pittsburgh of compact immigrant neighborhoods with multiple ethnic Catholic parishes.

By 1980, just as the Steelers were celebrating their fourth Super Bowl victory, Pittsburgh's famed steel industry was moving from decline to all-out collapse. Many young people moved out of the demoralized region in search of jobs across the country (helping build the Steelers' national fan base, by the way).

Still, those who left and those who stayed had the memory of a play called immaculate — a story with a never-give-up moral.

"This was our cultural rallying point," said the Rev. Lou Vallone, a retired Catholic priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

"It's what kept us going as we saw our immigrant culture begin to dissipate, as the economics went down, the steel mills closed, as people moved out into the suburbs, people moved out of the area," said Vallone. He used to preside at Masses at St. Peter Church, the parish nearest the stadium, where the congregants included many game-day tailgaters, clad in Steelers' black and gold.

The city's and region's population decreased in the years after the catch. The ranks of Catholics — 40% of the region's population in 1972 — dropped by about a third. Many ethnic and other parishes have closed or merged, and often merged again. A church named for the Immaculate Conception recently closed.

The region has taken on new economic drivers — education, medicine, energy.

But the mythology of the Immaculate Reception endures.

At the Pittsburgh International Airport, a statue immortalizing Franco Harris at the moment of his catch stands next to another historical figure, someone named George Washington.

And where Three Rivers Stadium once stood — now a sea of parking spaces near the Steelers' current stadium — there's a monument to the Immaculate Reception. You might call it a shrine.

It includes a marker where fans who are so inclined can put their foot in the exact spot where Harris' foot landed.

And as with the Immaculate Reception, people have been putting themselves in Harris' cleats since they first poured onto the field in 1972, joining him in an end zone celebration.

"It's not just him crossing the goal line, it's the team and the city," Madarasz said.

It's hardly the only Catholic connection to the Steelers. "There was nobody more Catholic than the Chief," Vallone said of the team's legendary founder, Art Rooney. And for decades, the team has practiced at St. Vincent College, a nearby Catholic school and home to a Benedictine abbey.

While the Immaculate Reception has a Catholic name, it also has an element of interfaith cooperation.

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Sportscaster Cope was Jewish. Years later, he addressed the perennial controversy of whether the catch was even legitimate under NFL rules (depending on whether the ball touched the defender or receiver before bouncing to Harris). In a New York Times essay, he posed an only-in-America question:

"Was Franco Harris' Immaculate Reception kosher?"

It was indeed, he insisted, after studying the film.

Religious and football iconography have merged long before praying coaches had their day in the Supreme Court this year. Quarterback Doug Flutie's 1984 "Hail Mary" touchdown pass to Gerard Phelan gave a legendary victory to a Catholic school, Boston College, over the University of Miami.

"Touchdown Jesus," a large mural of Christ with his arms raised, is a landmark near the stadium of Notre Dame University, the Catholic school that long ago fielded the apocalyptic backfield, the Four Horsemen.

The Oakland Raiders, while on the losing end of the Immaculate Reception, may have benefited from divine help another time, if nicknames are to be believed. They won a 1978 game on a "Holy Roller" fumble that took a long, winding route through running back Pete Banaszak's hands toward a teammate in the end zone. "I believe in the Big Guy," Banaszak later said. "He was there."

Vallone hears that kind of talk a lot, from fans as well as players. He's even got a homily to go with it.

"If you want to believe God's on your side in a football game or a soccer game, that's fine, as long as you live your life on God's side," Vallone said.

Fans tailgating near the Immaculate Reception monument before the Steelers' Dec. 11 game against the Ravens could readily recite the moment-by-moment details of the play. That includes those who saw it live, and those who weren't even born then.

The 1972 game was subject to local blackout rules. But Buster Boots, living northwest of Pittsburgh in Ellwood City, recalled his family using a large antenna to catch the broadcast "on a big old 25-inch RCA TV with a picture coming in from Cleveland."

After the play, "we were going nuts," he recalled. "We got to see it live."

John Michael of nearby Aliquippa said he saw the Immaculate Reception in person. He said there's a good reason for the name.

"Probably because of Pittsburgh, you know," he said. "A lot of ethnic groups, a lot of religions, a lot of churches and a lot of love."

## Loved or hated, Fauci's parting advice: Stick to the science

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Long before the bobbleheads and the "Fauci ouchie," Dr. Anthony Fauci was a straight-shooter about scary diseases -- and "stick with the science" remains his mantra.

Fauci steps down from a five-decade career in public service at the end of the month, one shaped by the HIV pandemic early on and the COVID-19 pandemic at the end.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Fauci said he leaves excited by the prospect of advances such as next-generation coronavirus vaccines -- but worried that misinformation and outright lies mark a "profoundly dangerous" time for public health and science.

"Untruths abound and we almost normalize untruths," Fauci said. "I worry about my own field of health, but I also worry about the country."

Fauci, who turns 82 on Christmas Eve, has been a physician-scientist at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for 54 years, and its director for 38 of them.

Because he candidly puts complex science into plain English, Fauci has advised seven presidents, from Ronald Reagan to Joe Biden, about a long list of outbreaks -- HIV, Ebola, Zika, bird flu, pandemic flu, even the 2001 anthrax attacks.

"Stick with the science and never be afraid to tell somebody something that is the truth -- but it's an inconvenient truth in which there might be the possibility of the messenger getting shot," Fauci said. "You don't worry about that. You just keep telling the truth."

He added, with characteristic understatement: "That's served me really quite well with one exception

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that, you know, the truth generated a lot of hostility towards me in one administration.”

For all his prior influence on national and even global responses to infectious diseases, it wasn't until COVID-19 paralyzed the world in early 2020 that Fauci became a household name -- giving the latest updates at daily White House press conferences and in frequent media interviews.

But eventually, Fauci found himself having to contradict then-President Donald Trump's attempts to downplay the severity of the viral threat and promote unproven treatments. Trump and his allies began attacking Fauci, who even received death threats that required a security detail for his protection.

As the world enters another year of COVID-19, Fauci still is a frequent target of the far right -- but also remains a trusted voice for millions of Americans.

Under his watch, researchers at the National Institutes of Health laid the scientific groundwork for the speedy development of powerful coronavirus vaccines. An analysis released by the Commonwealth Fund last week found the shots saved 3.2 million lives in the U.S. alone and prevented 18.5 million hospitalizations.

With another winter uptick underway, Fauci's disappointed that just 14% of people eligible for the updated COVID-19 boosters -- shots that add protection against omicron strains -- have gotten one.

“That doesn't make any sense at all, when you have a vaccine that you know is life-saving,” he said. But he's also looking forward to next-generation vaccines that do a better job of preventing infection, citing promising leads like nasal vaccines.

For all the political attacks, the public did struggle to understand why some of his and others' health advice changed as the pandemic wore on — such as why masks first were deemed unnecessary and later mandated in certain places.

Fauci said one of the pandemic's lessons is to better convey that it's normal for messages to change as scientists make new discoveries.

“That doesn't mean you're flip-flopping. That means you're actually following the science,” he said.

Fauci has had a hand in life-saving scientific advances for decades. As a young researcher at the National Institutes of Health, he helped develop highly effective therapies for rare but once-fatal blood vessel diseases known as vasculitis syndromes.

Then came the AIDS crisis and days that Fauci, treating patients in NIH's hospital, recalled as “very dark and very difficult.”

“As a physician you're trained to heal people. And we weren't healing anybody. Everybody was dying in front of us.”

Fauci created an AIDS division that, together with drug companies and universities, led research into drugs that eventually transformed HIV into a manageable chronic disease. Later, under President George W. Bush, Fauci helped develop PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, to bring those HIV medications to poor countries. The program is credited with saving more than 20 million lives over the past 20 years.

But it took years to get even the first anti-AIDS medications -- and in the late 1980s and early '90s, furious activists protested what they saw as government indifference. Fauci brought the activists to the table, making it standard practice for patient advocates to have a voice in government decisions about drug research.

Unfortunately, he said, that experience can't help bridge today's political divisions that are hurting public health.

The AIDS activists “were theatrical. They were iconoclastic. They were provocative. They were confrontational, all of the above. But the fundamental core message that they had was a correct message,” Fauci said. “That is enormously different from what is going on right now with COVID, where untruths abound, conspiracy theories abound, distortions of reality abound.”

Despite that kind of rancor, Fauci is excited about recent scientific progress against a list of other scourges such as work toward vaccines for malaria, tuberculosis and maybe one day HIV. That's why even though he's leaving the government, Fauci says he's not retiring.

“I'm going to continue to lecture and to write and to try and encourage and inspire people to go into science, medicine and public health,” he said. “There are a lot of things that are unfinished business and

they will be finished sometime because science is going to do it.”

## Dutch leader apologizes for Netherlands’ role in slave trade

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte apologized Monday on behalf of his government for the Netherlands’ role in slavery and the slave trade, in a speech welcomed by activists as historic but lacking in concrete plans for repair and reparations.

“Today I apologize,” Rutte said in a 20-minute speech that was greeted with silence by an invited audience at the National Archive.

Ahead of the speech, Waldo Koendjibiharie, a retiree who was born in Suriname but lived for years in the Netherlands, said an apology was not enough.

“It’s about money. Apologies are words and with those words you can’t buy anything,” he said.

Rutte told reporters after the speech that the government is not offering compensation to “people — grandchildren or great grandchildren of enslaved people.”

Instead, it is establishing a 200 million-euro (\$212 million) fund for initiatives to help tackle the legacy of slavery in the Netherlands and its former colonies and to boost education about the issue.

Rutte apologized “for the actions of the Dutch state in the past: posthumously to all enslaved people worldwide who have suffered from those actions, to their daughters and sons, and to all their descendants into the here and now.”

Describing how more than 600,000 African men, women and children were shipped, “like cattle” mostly to the former colony of Suriname, by Dutch slave traders, Rutte said that history often is “ugly, painful, and even downright shameful.”

Rutte went ahead with the apology even though some activist groups in the Netherlands and its former colonies had urged him to wait until July 1 of next year, the anniversary of the abolition of slavery 160 years ago and said they had not been sufficiently consulted in the process leading up to the speech. Activists consider next year the 150th anniversary because many enslaved people were forced to continue working in plantations for a decade after abolition.

Mitchell Esajas, director of an organization called The Black Archives and a member of activist group Black Manifest, did not attend the speech despite being invited because of what he called the “almost insulting” lack of consultations with the Black community.

He said it was a historic moment but lamented the lack of a concrete plan for reparations.

“Reparation wasn’t even mentioned,” Esajas said. “So, beautiful words, but it’s not clear what the next concrete steps will be.”

Rutte’s gave his speech at a time when many nations’ brutal colonial histories have received critical scrutiny because of the Black Lives Matter movement and the police killing of George Floyd, a Black man, in the U.S. city of Minneapolis on May 25, 2020.

The prime minister’s address was a response to a report published last year by a government-appointed advisory board. Its recommendations included the government’s apology and recognition that the slave trade and slavery from the 17th century until abolition “that happened directly or indirectly under Dutch authority were crimes against humanity.”

The report said that what it called institutional racism in the Netherlands “cannot be seen separately from centuries of slavery and colonialism and the ideas that have arisen in this context.”

Dutch ministers fanned out Monday to discuss the issue in Suriname and former colonies that make up the Kingdom of the Netherlands — Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten as well as three Caribbean islands that are officially special municipalities in the Netherlands, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba.

In Suriname, the small South American nation where Dutch plantation owners generated huge profits through the use of enslaved labor, the largest opposition party, NDP, condemned the Dutch government for failing to adequately consult descendants of enslaved people in the country. Activists in the country say that what’s really needed is compensation.



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"The NDP therefore expresses its disapproval of this unilateral decision-making process and notes that the Netherlands is comfortably taking on the role of the mother country again," the party said in a statement.

The year starting July 1, 2023, will be a slavery memorial year in which the Netherlands "will pause to reflect on this painful history. And on how this history still plays a negative role in the lives of many today," the government says.

The Dutch first became involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the late 1500s and became a major trader in the mid-1600s. Eventually, the Dutch West India Company became the largest trans-Atlantic slave trader, said Karwan Fatah-Black, an expert in Dutch colonial history and an assistant professor at Leiden University.

In 2018, Denmark apologized to Ghana, which it colonized from the mid-17th century to the mid-19th century. In June, King Philippe of Belgium expressed "deepest regrets" for abuses in Congo. In 1992, Pope John Paul II apologized for the church's role in slavery. Americans have had emotionally charged fights over taking down statues of slaveholders in the South.

Now the Netherlands has joined their ranks.

But for some in the Black community, the notable day was tinged with disappointment.

"For a lot of people, it's a very beautiful and historic moment but with — in Dutch we say — a bitter taste ... and it should have been a historic moment with a sweet taste," Esajas said.

## TCU's Sonny Dykes named Associated Press coach of the Year

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

TCU's Sonny Dykes was named The Associated Press Coach of the Year on Monday after leading the No. 3 Horned Frogs to the College Football Playoff in his first season with the school.

Dykes received 37 of 46 first-place votes and 120 points from AP Top 25 voters to become the second TCU to win the award, which is presented by Regions Bank. The first two were won by Gary Patterson (2009, 2014), the coach Dykes replaced after last season.

"It's the ultimate team award," Dykes told AP. "It's indicative of literally everybody in our office, coaches, players, everybody, because more so than ever in college football it is truly a team effort."

TCU (12-1) faces No. 2 Michigan (13-0) on Dec. 31 in the Fiesta Bowl for a berth in the national championship game.

Tulane coach Willie Fritz was second with 40 points and two first-place votes, followed by Tennessee's John Heupel (38 points, one) and last year's winner, Jim Harbaugh of Michigan (28 points, five). Georgia's Kirby Smart (15 points) also received a first-place vote.

Dykes, 53, is in his fourth stop after stints with Louisiana Tech, California and SMU. The Texan and son of longtime Texas Tech coach Spike Dykes, Sonny Dykes is 83-64 in 13 seasons as a head coach.

"It's not always like this and I've been on both ends and so something like this probably means more to me than it might somebody," Dykes said. "I've been 1-11 and I've been fired. I've been kind of on top and then on bottom, too. I'm always thankful for those bad times because it really truly does make you appreciate the good times more."

Dykes' path to AP coach of the year is unique. The award was established in 1998 and no coach had ever won his first coach of the year on his fourth stop as an Bowl Subdivision head coach.

Dykes moved across town to take over at TCU after being with rival SMU for five years. Playing against the Horned Frogs annually, he had a good idea of what kind of team he was getting.

Instead of a major roster overhaul of last season's 5-7 TCU team, Dykes dipped into the transfer portal to fill some holes, but mostly took what he inherited and turned it into one of the best teams in the country.

"Sometimes it's more about the chemistry of things and trying to get the chemistry of those rooms right as opposed to necessarily adding talent," Dykes said. "That part of it, I think, is really overlooked. Just the chemistry and creating competition and all that."

The Horned Frogs started the season unranked and didn't lose until dropping the Big 12 championship in overtime to Kansas State.

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"We really had no expectations whatsoever when the year started," Dykes said. "We thought we had a chance to be pretty good, but we just gained confidence every week and we had some kids that really were tough and like to compete, and that made everything so much better."

Dykes is one of several head coaches in major college football right now who worked for Mike Leach early in his career. Leach died last week at 61 of complications from a heart condition. He was in his third season at Mississippi State after stints at Texas Tech and Washington State.

Dykes called Leach one of the most influential people in his career, second only to his father.

"One of a kind, for sure," Dykes said.

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AP Coach of the Year voting (1st place votes, 2nd, 3rd, total points):

Sonny Dykes, TCU 37 4 1 – 120

Willie Fritz, Tulane 2 12 10 – 40

Josh Heupel, Tennessee 1 13 9 – 38

Jim Harbaugh, Michigan 5 5 3 – 28

Kirby Smart, Georgia 1 4 4 – 15

Lincoln Riley, USC 0 4 5 – 13

Kalen DeBoer, Washington 0 1 4 – 6

Lance Leipold, Kansas 0 2 1 – 5

Mike Elko, Duke 0 1 1 – 3

Jim Mora, UConn 0 0 3 – 3

Jonathan Smith, Oregon St. 0 0 2 – 2

Shane Beamer 0 0 1 – 1

Chris Klieman, Kansas St. 0 0 1 – 1

Bret Bielema, Illinois 0 0 1 – 1

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## **EXPLAINER: How do parties and states set presidential votes?**

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Even before President Joe Biden told Democrats his preference for reordering the presidential primary calendar, states began balking.

Officials in Iowa, the leadoff voting state for 40 years, noted a state law mandating that its caucuses take place at least eight days before any other nominating contest. In New Hampshire, the site of the first-in-the-nation primary for more than a century, a state law requires that its presidential primary be held first by at least a week.

Nonetheless, the Democratic National Committee's rule-making arm on Dec. 2 approved a revamped schedule for early votes for the 2024 presidential primary: first South Carolina, followed by New Hampshire and Nevada on the same day, then Georgia and finally Michigan. The DNC didn't set a specific date for Iowa to vote, and it wasn't immediately clear how the state planned to reconcile its existing law with the party's new calendar.

States can pass laws with the aim of telling other states what they can and cannot do, but such laws have no force. Any state could enact a law saying it must vote first, without it binding elsewhere.

So what happens if state law clashes with what national party leaders want on voting order? A state must change that law or run the risk that its delegates will not count toward the national nominating total.

**WHY ALL THE CHANGES NOW?**

The new calendar, awaiting approval by the full DNC, has been in the works for years. The party has long debated putting more diverse states in front of largely white states and moving away from the time-consuming and confusing caucus process.

What accelerated the changes was the debacle of the 2020 Iowa caucuses.

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A new smartphone app designed to calculate and report results failed, leading to a telephone backlog that prevented the party from reporting final results for nearly a week after the contest. There were so many irregularities and inconsistencies in the reporting of the results that The Associated Press was unable to declare a winner, though Pete Buttigieg, a former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, who is now Biden's transportation secretary, and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders finished essentially tied for the lead.

Biden finished fourth in Iowa and fifth in New Hampshire that year before going on to win the nomination after a dominant performance in South Carolina, the first state with a predominantly Black Democratic base. After that commanding victory, voters in other states followed suit, elevating Biden from a crowded field of candidates.

South Carolina's vault into the first spot would put it in a premier position in 2024.

## WHAT ARE THE STATES SAYING?

Iowa had been bracing for losing its leadoff slot ever since the 2020 caucus chaos.

Former Iowa Democratic Chair Scott Brennan, a member of the DNC committee that considered the 2024 calendar, voted against the changes to the order of states. He said they would "certainly favor front-runners and billionaire vanity candidates" by not including early-voting states in the center of the country. Ross Wilburn, the current head of the Iowa Democratic Party, said over the weekend that he won't run for reelection in January after the DNC move to put the South Carolina primary ahead.

New Hampshire's delegation has long threatened to defy Democratic rules and hold its primary first anyway. A state law passed in the 1970s requires that its presidential primary be held first, laying out the purpose as to "protect the tradition of the New Hampshire first-in-the-nation presidential primary." It also gives the secretary of state the exclusive power to set the primary date.

On news of the revised calendar plan, New Hampshire Democrats appeared ready to spurn the national party. "We will always hold the first in the nation primary, and this status is independent of the president's proposal or any political organization," said Sen. Maggie Hassan.

Nevada has been the first voting state in the West since 2008. Last year, Democratic Gov. Steve Sisolak signed a law changing the contest from a party-run, in-person caucus to a government-run primary election, to be held on the first Tuesday in February in a presidential election year — or, for 2024, on Feb. 6.

While Nevada officials had hoped this would lead to the state's holding the new first-in-the-nation status, it will still hold significant prominence, especially with early voting beginning on Jan. 27.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF STATES DON'T GO ALONG WITH THE NATIONAL PARTY?

If states defy the DNC, there are a few possible penalties, including refusal to seat delegates at the national convention from any state that held its votes out of order.

That happened in 2008. Florida and Michigan held voting contests before their slots on both parties' calendars. National Republicans banned half of the delegates from the states. Democrats removed both states' delegates from the national convention, although the DNC ultimately voted to seat all of the delegates, awarding half a vote to each.

Four years later, states including Florida again scheduled their contests before the early window only then allocated to Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina; all but Nevada moved their votes into January. National party leaders again penalized the rogue states by pulling half of their delegates.

The parties could penalize candidates directly, perhaps by denying them prime speaking slots at national conventions. But University of New Hampshire political scientist David Moore said he doubted that ramifications would be severe enough to keep states such as New Hampshire from defying the calendar.

"I don't know right now how committed the Democratic Party is to penalizing Iowa and New Hampshire if they go rogue," he said.

## WHAT ABOUT THE REPUBLICANS?

The Republican National Committee has already decided to keep Iowa as the first contest on its presi-

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dential calendar. For months, potential GOP hopefuls have been making trips as the field begins to form. RNC members also voted unanimously to keep New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada in the early-voting window.

South Carolina's parties, and not its lawmakers, set primary dates, so Democrats have no concern of their 2024 voting date being held up by the GOP-controlled Legislature.

No date has been set for Georgia's GOP presidential preference primary in 2024.

Gabriel Sterling is a top official in the office of Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who has sole responsibility for setting primary dates. Sterling said the agency "has been telling Democrats for over a year that we will do nothing that would require having two dates" for the parties' primaries. He said that because of the national GOP's calendar, holding Georgia's Republican primary before March 1 "would cut their delegate count in half."

## **New this week: Mariah Carey special, 'Maverick,' 'Best Man'**

By The Associated Press undefined

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

### MOVIES

— At long last, "Top Gun: Maverick" is coming to a streaming hub. The biggest film of the year is gearing up to land on Paramount+ as of Thursday after its high-flying run in theaters in which it became the highest grossing film of the year with over \$1.4 billion in worldwide ticket sales. In the unlikely chance you've been holding out for this moment to finally watch the film which finds Tom Cruise back in the cockpit, the AP's Mark Kennedy, in his review, wrote that "Top Gun: Maverick" is "a textbook example of how to make a sequel."

— Netflix also saved a big gun for the holiday corridor with Rian Johnson's "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery" hitting the service on Friday. The crowd-pleasing whodunnit brings back Daniel Craig's honey-voiced detective Benoit Blanc and puts him on a private Greek island with a group of self-styled disruptors to solve a new mystery (what the mystery is is even part of the mystery this time). The star-studded cast includes Edward Norton, Janelle Monáe, Kate Hudson and Dave Bautista. With its wealthy protagonists, intrigue and enviable vacation fashions, it's a terrific chaser for those mourning the loss "White Lotus" season 2.

— Also coming to Netflix is "Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical," which will be available to watch Christmas Day. The adaptation of the 2011 stage musical (itself an adaptation of the 1988 children's classic) follows a young girl with a big imagination who decides to take a stand against her tyrannical keepers. Emma Thompson plays Miss Trunchbull and Lashana Lynch is Miss Honey, while Alisha Weir takes on the title role in this well-reviewed romp that doesn't shy away from the source material's darker themes.

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

### MUSIC

— How better to celebrate the holidays than with The Queen of Christmas herself? Mariah Carey is offering a two-hour primetime concert special on CBS on Tuesday. "Mariah Carey: Merry Christmas to All!" will also be available to stream live and on demand the next day on Paramount+. Filmed in New York City at Madison Square Garden, the concert special will feature the singer-songwriter performing a repertoire of her festive holiday hits, including the perennial favorite, "All I Want for Christmas Is You."

— A more somber event happens online on Wednesday when Theater of War presents Sophocles' "Antigone" outdoors on a burial ground for enslaved Africans in downtown Savannah, Georgia, alongside choirs and singers from Savannah, St. Louis and New York City. Performers at the free event include Kara Young, Jesse Eisenberg, Ato Blankson Wood, Krista Tippett and the Rev. Leonard Small. Live choral and gospel music will help frame the audience-driven dialogue after the play. A Zoom link will be distributed via email and available to registered attendees.

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy



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## TELEVISION

— The U.S. has remade a number of modern-day competition shows that first aired in the UK. "American Idol" came from "Pop Idol," "Dancing with the Stars" is inspired by "Strictly Come Dancing." The UK also had "Dragons' Den" before we began airing "Shark Tank." Now, comedian Michael McIntyre brings his hit British game show "The Wheel" stateside for a two-week stretch on NBC beginning Monday. Hosted by McIntyre, each episode features six celeb guests (including Bobby Berk of "Queer Eye," Chrissy Metz of "This is Us," and "Yellowjackets" actor Christina Ricci) who help everyday people win money.

— The 1965 animated special, "A Charlie Brown Christmas," about the plucky Chuck who is pulled out of a seasonal funk by a tiny eyesore of a Christmas tree, remains a holiday favorite year after year. Apple TV+ will exclusively stream the cartoon this year, but good news, between Thursday and Christmas Day, it's free. Subscribers will have more time to watch.

— "The Best Man," a romantic comedy released in 1999 featuring an all-star cast of young, attractive Black actors including Taye Diggs, Nia Long and Terrence Howard, was a box office hit, cementing it in pop culture. A long-awaited sequel in 2013 called "The Best Man Holiday" was also successful. Director-writer Malcom D. Lee wraps up the franchise with a new limited series on Peacock. To underscore the finality of it all, the title of the series is "The Best Man: The Final Chapters." All eight episodes drop Thursday on the streaming service.

— A new six-episode anthology series called "Snap" coming to ALLBLK has been compared to "Black Mirror" in that it tackles social and ethical questions through storytelling. Eric Benet created and acts in "Snap" alongside Michael Buscemi, Clifton Powell and Tisha Campbell. It debuts Thursday. ALLBLK is a subscription video on demand (SVOD) service dedicated to Black entertainment.

— Alicia Rancilio

## Not just for kids: Toymakers aim more products at grown-ups

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Since the pandemic, Elizabeth Hulanick has turned to toys from her childhood to relieve stress.

She and her co-workers chip in to buy Legos at Target and play at their desks. She also started playing with Silly Putty again, noting she felt comforted by the bouncy rubbery stuff that changes colors.

Even her American Girl doll called Samantha, which she keeps in her china cabinet, resonates more these days; she waited one year for her mother to buy her that doll when she was a child and now, she says, it served as a reminder to always be patient.

"(This) probably will be with me forever. I always need something to be tinkering with, and that's probably the safest bet for me to stick with a toy versus keep trying to figure out how to fix cars or something like that," the 37-year-old Piscataway, New Jersey resident said.

Long before the pandemic, many adults turned to toys from Legos to collectible items to tap into their inner childhood for comfort. But all the stresses from the health crisis accelerated and solidified the trend, according to Jim Silver, editor-in-chief of TTPM, a toy review site.

And even as the pandemic's threat ebbs, toy makers from Mattel's American Girl to Build-a-Bear Workshop Inc. see adults' interest in playthings as long-lasting and are creating new products, services and websites aimed for the older group.

This so-called "kid-adult" market is significant. Ages 18 and older represented 14% of U.S. toy industry sales, or \$5.7 billion for the 12 months ending September 2022. It grew 19% since the 12 months ending September 2021, according to the NPD Group Inc., a market research firm. This group also enjoyed the second-fastest increase after customers ages 12 to 17.

Starting early this year, Mattel's American Girl Cafe added more adult fare like beet and goat cheese salads and cocktails like Aperol spritzes and Bloody Marys after seeing adults show up without children. Last year, Build-a-Bear launched a website called Bear Cave for the 18-year-old and over, highlighting items like stuffed rabbits holding a bottle of wine. And Basic Fun took a high-tech spin on the traditional Lite

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Brite toy from the 1960s and recreated it as wall art with thousands of pegs and 45 LED lights aimed at the adults in time for the holidays — with a \$99 price tag.

Lego A/S has been steadily increasing its products for adults since 2020; it now has 100 sets, including intrepid space exploration and luxury cars.

"The pandemic certainly served as a catalyst for this trend as adults found themselves stuck at home with nothing else to do with a lot of time in their hands," said Genevieve Cruz, senior director at Lego, which sees adults of all ages embracing the colorful building blocks. "But we do believe that the trend goes beyond the pandemic."

Executives say what makes this time different is that consumers are really getting into the role-playing. Build-a-Bear says adults are actually taking their stuffed animals to bed. At American Girl, women get dressed up in outfits inspired by their favorite dolls and are bringing their dolls from their childhood to the cafes and sitting with them, said Jaime Cygielman, general manager and president at American Girl. They're also bringing them to the doll hospital or the hair salon at the stores to have them repaired or have their hair coiffed, she noted.

Such role-playing could be seen at a recent visit to the American Girl Cafe in Manhattan, where Marisa Dragos, 23, along with her childhood friend Lisa Costantino, 24, were eating lunch, with two of the dolls they borrowed from the store. They were visiting from Los Angeles.

"(My mom) feels sad I'm still in my childhood bedroom because I can't really afford to move out right now," Dragos said. "I think it's funny to me. I still have the dolls, just kind of sitting in my room, but I feel like they've grown with me. They are my little friends that I hang out with."

Among the hottest items for adults: Star Wars and Harry Potter-themed Lego sets, plush items like Squishmallows — whimsical stuffed creatures from Jazzwares — and action figures from the likes of Marvel, according to NPD.

McDonald's is also tapping into this group, releasing adult Happy Meals in October with nostalgic figurines designed by the fashion brand Cactus Plant Flea Market. McDonald's President and CEO Chris Kempczinski said the company sold half its supply of collectibles in the first four days of the promotion.

The toy industry, which generated annual sales of roughly \$38 billion last year, could use some help from adults.

For the first nine months of this year, the number of toys sold slipped 3%, while spending rose by the same amount due to higher prices. That's a big change from the first two years of the pandemic when sales soared as parents splurged on toys from board games to dolls to entertain their children who were staying close to home.

Sharon Price John, CEO of Build-a-Bear, said she started noticing adults buying the stuffed animals for themselves five years ago and it's only grown since. In response, the company is focusing its online business with the adult in mind. In 2019, it launched its "After Dark" collection of edgy bears that one adult Valentine gives to another.

"There are many more teens and adults in our stores just enjoying the experience and not just with their families, like with each other," John said.

Now, 40% of its total sales at Build-a-Bear comes from adults and teens, up from 20% in 2012.

Finding that inner youth through toys is not just being embraced by consumers in their 20s to 40s.

Loren Brereton, 61, was recently visiting the American Girl store with her granddaughter Alana, 7. She said that during the pandemic, she took comfort looking at her own daughter's dolls. She also pulled out some of her son's Lego's and other toys and played with them. She is now thinking of buying a few playthings for herself.

"All of those games have brought me comfort when I was a kid, but, you know, sort of changed you at different times when you needed it," she said. "And you needed it."

## Holiday advice for home bartenders, plus 4 festive cocktails

LOUISE DIXON Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Looking to create a bit of winter luxury when tending bar at home this holiday season? London's top cocktail-makers have some tips.

"Christmas is a special time when you want to join with friends and family. And sometimes, the centerpiece of any happiness is to have a good drink," says Salvatore Calabrese, an Italian-born drinks expert and author who has been making cocktails at top hotels, bars and private clubs for over 40 years.

Currently at the cocktail bar Velvet, at London's five-star Corinthia hotel, Calabrese goes by the nickname "The Maestro."

And The Maestro's advice?

First, choose the right glassware.

"The glass is the star. It's the canvas of the drink," he says. So if it looks elegant, things already feel festive.

Next, think about the quality of the ice and how it dilutes the drink.

"Remember, ice is like the heat for the chef when he is cooking," Calabrese says.

Cracked ice cubes that disintegrate in your palm are a no-go, as is crushed ice for Christmas. "It's not a Tiki night," he jokes. "It is about an elegant night, so make the effort and maybe you can make your own homemade ice."

Also, he advises, plan. Even prepare your cocktail in advance. Especially when a drink is a little complicated.

"Put it in the freezer or in the fridge, so it's nice and cold, so the only thing you have to do is to put it in a mixing glass or, to show off, put it in the shaker and shake," Calabrese says.

Jake Burger, co-owner of The Distillery, a 19th century pub and gin distillery in London's Notting Hill neighborhood, says that knowing when to shake and when to stir is something a lot of home mixologists get wrong.

"It's fun using a cocktail shaker, so people think we should shake everything," he jokes. But it's only really needed when using fruit juices, egg whites or cream, he says. Otherwise, stirring is best.

"As a general rule, if all the ingredients are alcoholic, you probably don't need to shake it," says Burger. "So as an Englishman, it pains me to say it, but James Bond got it wrong. A martini should definitely be stirred, not shaken."

Liana Oster, bar director at The NoMad Hotel London, suggests adding some seasonal luxury by decorating your glasses. She creates a peppermint-bark paint by melting equal parts cacao butter and white chocolate, with a few drops of peppermint essence added in. She then paints a swirl on one side of a cold glass, sprinkles some crushed-up candy cane on it, and then places it in the fridge until needed.

This works particularly well with a heavier cocktail with a lot of body, as it will "mellow it out" on the palate, Oster says.

Alex Girvan, brand ambassador for Masons of Yorkshire, has more ideas on garnishes. For his chocolate orange martini, Girvan explains how he creates simple yet delicious dipped-chocolate candied fruits.

First, dehydrate orange slices by placing them on a baking sheet, sprinkling them with a bit of brown or fine granulated sugar (known in Britain as caster sugar), and then putting them in the oven on low heat for about an hour, until dried out. Then melt some dark chocolate and dip the slices. Place them in the fridge until hard.

To serve, balance them on the side of the glass.

Girvan also suggests a sharing platter of garnishes, "almost like a charcuterie board." By laying out rosemary, orange peel and lemon zest on sticks, "everybody can just pick the one that they like and pop it into their drink, and maybe they'll try something that they've never had before," he says.

"Just make a little effort," Calabrese sums up, "because really, a great cocktail is a great journey from the beginning.

"And when you taste something nice and delicious, the world seems to be a better place."

Four cocktail recipes:

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WINTERTIME NEGRONI, from The Distillery

1 ounce London Dry Gin

1 ounce Campari

0.5 ounces sweet vermouth

0.5 ounces sloe gin

Mix ingredients together over ice and stir. Serve over fresh ice and garnish with an orange wedge studded with cloves.

SCROOGE SOUR, from Common Decency, at The NoMad Hotel London

1 egg white

0.75 ounces simple syrup

0.75 ounces lemon juice

2 ounces Irish whiskey

Pour the egg white into the larger tin of your shaker, and the simple syrup and lemon juice into the smaller tin. Dry shake together in the shaker to emulsify the egg and the alcohol.

Then hard shake with ice and pour over a strainer into your glass.

Add 0.75 ounces mulled wine slowly into the corner of the glass, and then sprinkle edible gold dust over the half of the surface to cover and garnish.

TRUFFLE SAZERAC, from Velvet, at Corinthia London

0.8 ounces Bourbon

1 ounce Cognac

Homemade truffle syrup (you can make your own by heating a few drops of truffle oil with a teaspoon of sugar)

A few drops of orange bitters

Mix ingredients together over ice and stir. Serve over fresh ice and garnish with a slice of fresh truffle.

MASON'S CHOCOLATE ORANGE MARTINI

2 ounces chocolate vodka

1 ounce triple sec

Mix ingredients together over ice and stir. Serve in a martini glass and garnish with a chocolate-dipped, candied orange segment.

## Faith leaders prep for border changes amid tension, hope

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

REYNOSA, Mexico (AP) — Two long lines of migrants waited for blessings from visiting Catholic priests celebrating Mass at the Casa del Migrante shelter in this border city, just across the bank of the Rio Grande River from Texas.

After services ended last week, several crammed around the three Jesuits again, asking about upcoming U.S. policy changes that would end pandemic-era asylum restrictions. That's expected to result in even more people trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border, adding to the already unusually high apprehension numbers.

"All of you will be able to cross at some point," the Rev. Brian Strassburger told the nearly 100 Mass goers in Spanish while a Haitian migrant translated in Creole. "Our hope is that with this change, it will mean less time. My advice is, be patient."

It is getting harder to deliver that message of hope and patience not only for Strassburger, but also for the Catholic nuns running this shelter and leaders from numerous faith organizations who have long shouldered most of the care for tens of thousands of migrants on both sides of the border.



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Migrants here — mostly from Haiti, but also Central and South America and more recently from Russia — are deeply mistrustful of swirling policy rumors. A judge has ordered the restriction known as Title 42, which only affect certain nationalities, to end Wednesday. But the asylum restriction, which was supposed to lift in May, is still being litigated.

Faith leaders working on the border are wary of what's to come. They expect tensions will keep rising if new restrictions are imposed. And if not, they will struggle to host ever larger numbers of arrivals at already over-capacity shelters and quickly resettle them in a volatile political environment.

"People are coming because it's not long before the bridge will be opened. But I don't think that the United States is going to say, 'OK, all!'" said the Rev. Hector Silva. The evangelical pastor has 4,200 migrants packed in his two Reynosa shelters, and more thronging their gates.

Pregnant women, a staggering number in shelters, have the best chance of legally entering the U.S. to apply for asylum. It takes up to three weeks, under humanitarian parole. Families wait up to eight weeks and it can take single adults three months, Strassburger explained at Casa del Migrante, where he travels from his Texas parish to celebrate Mass twice a week.

Last week, the shelter housed nearly 300 people, mostly women and children, in tightly packed bunk beds with sleeping pads between them. Men wait in the streets, exposed to cartel violence, said Sister Maria Tello, who runs Casa del Migrante.

"Our challenge is to be able to serve all those who keep coming, that they may find a place worthy of them. ...Twenty leave and 30 enter. And there are many outside we can't assist," said Tello, a Sisters of Mercy nun.

Edimar Valera, 23, fled Venezuela with family, including her two-year-old daughter. They crossed the notoriously dangerous Darien Gap, where Valera nearly drowned and went without food. After arriving in Reynosa and escaping a kidnapping, she found refuge at Casa del Migrante, where she's been since November despite having a sponsor ten miles away in McAllen, Texas.

"We need to wait, and it could be good for some and bad for others. One doesn't know what to do," she said, finding some comfort in Mass and daily prayers, where she begs God for help and patience.

So does Eslande, 31, who left Haiti for Chile. She is on her second attempt to cross into the U.S. after not finding there the right help for her young son's learning disability. At Casa del Migrante just a day, she read the Gospel aloud in Creole during Mass, a reminder of happier times when her father distributed Communion.

"I have faith that I will be going in," she said in the Spanish she's learned en route. Like many migrants, she only gave a first name fearing for her safety.

Tensions are rising faster than hope as it's unclear who will be able to cross first.

"Any change could grow the bottleneck," said the Rev. Louie Hotop, dropping off hygiene donations at one of Silva's shelters — a guarded, walled camp with rows of tents pitched tightly together.

Even if Title 42 is lifted and thousands more are allowed to enter the U.S., asylum seekers would still face enormous backlogs and slim approval chances. Asylum is granted to those who cannot return to their countries for fear of persecution on specific grounds — starvation, poverty and violence don't usually count.

It's a long, uncertain road ahead even for the roughly 150 migrants at a barebones welcome center in McAllen, Texas, where the Jesuit priests stop after their Reynosa visits. Families legally admitted to the United States, or apprehended and released, rested in the large Catholic Charities-run hall before traveling to join sponsors.

Lugging their Mass kit and heavy speakers, the priests offered migrants spiritual and practical help— like writing "I'm pregnant. Can you ask for a wheelchair to bring me to my gate?" on a paper for a Honduran woman eight months pregnant with her first child and terrified about airport travel.

"It's a way of listening, of supporting, it's not so much resolving the immediate problem," the Rev. Flavio Bravo said. "They bring stories of trauma, of life, that we must give value to."

Sister Norma Pimentel, a prominent migrant rights advocate who first helped border crossers four decades ago and now runs Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, said religious people should push for centrist reform to help migrants — not make them political pawns.

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"Policies don't respond to the realities we're facing," said Pimentel, who opened the welcome center in 2014 for the first big asylum surge of this century. "It's impossible to help everyone ... but who are we to limit the grace of God?"

Now, the busiest crossing is some 800 miles away in El Paso, Texas, and neighboring Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Ronny, 26, turned himself into U.S. authorities there and was flown to McAllen because "around Juarez it was collapsing," he said last week at Pimentel's shelter.

He and his family left Venezuela on foot in September because he opposed his country's regime and his wages were too low to afford food. He has a U.S. immigration appointment next month in New York where his sponsor lives, but no money to get there.

On his first free night in the U.S., he turned to God, following Mass from a distance so he wouldn't leave the thin mat where his children slept.

"We ask God for everything. Always," he said.

## EU accuses Meta of antitrust breaches with classified ads

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

The European Union on Monday accused Facebook parent Meta of breaching antitrust rules by distorting competition in the online classified ads business, the bloc's latest maneuver to curb the power of Big Tech companies.

In its complaint following an investigation launched last year, the EU's executive commission took issue with the tech company tying its online classified ad business, Facebook Marketplace, to Facebook. It's also concerned that Meta imposes unfair trading conditions on rivals "for its own benefit."

Meta disputed the allegations.

"The claims made by the European Commission are without foundation," Tim Lamb, Meta's head of EMEA competition, said in a prepared statement. "We will continue to work with regulatory authorities to demonstrate that our product innovation is pro-consumer and pro-competitive."

The company said it will study the complaints and is fully cooperating with the Commission's investigation.

The commission, the 27-nation bloc's top antitrust enforcer, said that by tying Marketplace to its social network, Facebook users automatically have access to Marketplace "whether they want it or not," raising concerns that competitors are shut out because the tie gives Marketplace an advantage that they can't match.

Meta also unilaterally imposes unfair trading conditions on online classified ad rivals that advertise their services on Facebook or Instagram, the commission said. It does that through "unjustified, disproportionate" terms of service that authorize Meta to use ad-related data generated from competitors to benefit Marketplace.

When the EU and Britain last year opened twin investigations into the company's classified business, the bloc's competition watchdog said it suspected Facebook of collecting "vast troves of data" on its users activities that enabled it to target specific customer groups.

If confirmed, the practices would be in breach of EU rules that prevent "abuse of a dominant market position."

The commission said its preliminary finding is that Meta dominates the EU's social network market as well as the online display advertising on social media in the bloc's national markets.

Companies that breach EU antitrust rules can be hit with fines worth up to 10% of their annual global revenue. There's no deadline to bring the investigation to an end, and companies can plead their case in writing or in an oral hearing.

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## Today in History: December 20, Louisiana Purchase completed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 20, the 354th day of 2022. There are 11 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 20, 1803, the Louisiana Purchase was completed as ownership of the territory was formally transferred from France to the United States.

On this date:

In 1860, South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union as all 169 delegates to a special convention in Charleston voted in favor of separation.

In 1864, Confederate forces evacuated Savannah, Georgia, as Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman nearly completed his "March to the Sea."

In 1945, the Office of Price Administration announced the end of tire rationing, effective Jan. 1, 1946.

In 1963, the Berlin Wall was opened for the first time to West Berliners, who were allowed one-day visits to relatives in the Eastern sector for the holidays.

In 1987, more than 4,300 people were killed when the Dona Paz (DOHN'-yuh pahz), a Philippine passenger ship, collided with the tanker Vector off Mindoro island.

In 1989, the United States launched Operation Just Cause, sending troops into Panama to topple the government of Gen. Manuel Noriega.

In 1995, an American Airlines Boeing 757 en route to Cali, Colombia, slammed into a mountain, killing all but four of the 163 people aboard. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, NATO began its peacekeeping mission, taking over from the United Nations.

In 1999, the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that homosexual couples were entitled to the same benefits and protections as wedded heterosexual couples.

In 2001, the U.N. Security Council authorized a multinational force for Afghanistan.

In 2002, Trent Lott resigned as Senate Republican leader two weeks after igniting a political firestorm with racially charged remarks.

In 2005, a federal judge ruled that "intelligent design" could not be mentioned in biology classes in a Pennsylvania public school district, delivering a stinging attack on the Dover Area School Board.

In 2016, President Barack Obama designated the bulk of U.S.-owned waters in the Arctic Ocean and certain areas in the Atlantic Ocean as indefinitely off limits to future oil and gas leasing. Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova was injured in her playing hand by a knife-wielding attacker at her Czech Republic home and underwent surgery. (The attacker was sentenced to 11 years in prison.)

Ten years ago: The State Department acknowledged major weaknesses in security and errors in judgment exposed in a scathing independent report on the deadly Sept. 11, 2012 assault on a U.S. diplomatic mission in Libya. The National Hockey League, in a labor fight with its players, announced the cancellation of the 2012-13 regular-season schedule through Jan. 14, 2013.

Five years ago: The House gave final congressional approval to a \$1.5 trillion tax overhaul, the biggest package of tax changes in a generation and the first major legislative achievement of President Donald Trump and House and Senate Republicans; some Republicans warned of a potential backlash against an overhaul that offered corporations and wealthy taxpayers the biggest benefits. Cardinal Bernard Law, the disgraced former archbishop of Boston, died in Rome at the age of 86; his failure to stop child molesters in the priesthood had triggered a crisis in American Catholicism.

One year ago: In a major step to fight climate change, the Biden administration raised vehicle mileage standards to significantly reduce emissions of planet-warming greenhouse gases. Warning that extremism in the ranks was increasing, Pentagon officials issued detailed new rules prohibiting service members from actively engaging in extremist activities. Federal health officials said the omicron variant had accounted for an estimated 73% of new U.S. coronavirus infections in the preceding week. CBS and Universal Television said actor Chris Noth would no longer be part of the CBS series "The Equalizer" in the wake of sexual as-

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sault allegations against him; Noth had vehemently denied the allegations.

Today's Birthdays: Original Mouseketeer Tommy Cole (TV: "The Mickey Mouse Club") is 81. R&B singer-musician Walter "Wolfman" Washington is 79. Rock musician-music producer Bobby Colomby is 78. Rock musician Peter Criss is 77. Former U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue is 76. Psychic/illusionist Uri Geller is 76. Producer Dick Wolf ("Law & Order") is 76. Rock musician Alan Parsons is 74. Actor Jenny Agutter is 70. Actor Michael Badalucco is 68. Actor Blanche Baker is 66. Rock singer Billy Bragg is 65. Rock singer-musician Mike Watt (The Secondmen, Minutemen, FIREHOSE) is 65. Actor Joel Gretsch is 59. Country singer Kris Tyler is 58. Rock singer Chris Robinson is 56. Actor Nicole deBoer is 52. Movie director Todd Phillips is 52. Singer David Cook ("American Idol") is 40. Actor Jonah Hill is 39. Actor Bob Morley is 38. Singer JoJo is 32. Actor Colin Woodell is 31.