

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### Tuesday, Dec. 27

Senior Menu: Potato soup, ham salad sandwich, tomato spoon salad, pineapple tidbits.

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

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

### Wednesday, Dec. 28

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, beets, peaches, dinner roll.

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

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

### Thursday, Dec. 29

Senior Menu: New England ham dinner, fruit cocktail, ice cream, dinner roll.

### Friday, Dec. 30

Senior Menu: Goulash, green beans, baked apples, whole wheat bread.

Girls Basketball hosts Waverley-South Shore (JV at 5 p.m. followed by varsity)

### Saturday, Dec. 31

Wrestling Invitational at Webster, 9:30 a.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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

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

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## Year end quiz

Oh, so you thought you were going to cruise into the new year without a pop quiz, huh? Well, settle down, slackers, and get to work. Look sharp, these scores are going on your permanent record.

1. Why did North Dakota Lt. Gov. Brent Sanford step down?

- One wedgie too many from Doug Burgum
- It's not you, it's me. Both of us, really. But mostly you.
- I need to work on myself.
- Shot a man in Reno just to watch him die

2. North Dakota Rep. Kelly Armstrong's takeaway from Jan. 6 report:

- Still pretty sure it was Antifa
- Pelosi should have been more prepared for Trump's coup attempt.
- I'll still vote for Inmate #666000666 if he runs again.
- Why haven't we seen Hunter Biden's laptop, yet?

3. Why is Tucker Carlson's program so popular in the Kremlin?

- Tokyo Rose died.
- He's the only one telling the truth about Ukraine's invasion of Russia.
- Occasional nudity
- Fox programs broadcast in original Russian.

4. Recent dinner guest at Mar-a-Lago.

- Avowed Nazi
- Avowed anti-Semite
- Avowed Attila the Hun
- Vlad the Impaler

5. Yes, Virginia, there is ...

- A Santa Claus
- An Easter Bunny
- A West Virginia
- Crypto

6. The Jan. 6 Commission referred this charge to the Department of Justice:

- Insurrection
- Introspection
- Infection

d. Left the seat up again

7. Why are eggs so expensive?

- Increasing number of gay chickens
- Fowl play
- Millions of chickens run over trying to cross the road. No one knows why.
- Biden Administration blocking egg pipelines.

8. What do we call a "bomb cyclone" in North Dakota?

- No reason the buses can't run
- A riff-raff keeper-outer
- An opportunity for old-timers to tell stories about walking to school
- An unfortunate bathroom incident

9. What just reached an all time high in North Dakota?

- Lo Mein
- The population
- Price of eggs
- The stoner next door

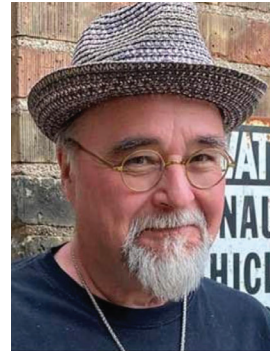
10. The Minnesota Vikings lead the league in:

- Comebacks
- Throw-backs
- Crack-backs
- Boogers

BONUS: Why is there an upsurge in COVID and influenza cases?

- False readings from Microsoft tracking devices
- Entirely too much French kissing
- We're being good Republicans
- Darwinism at work

Okay, let's see how you fared. Answers: 1. b; 2. d; 3. c; 4. c; 5. c; 6. d; 7. b; 8. d; 9. d; 10. d; BONUS c. Grading: 9-11 correct: Your Wordle scores must be through the roof. 6-8 correct: My pet chicken got a 7. 3-5 correct: Don't worry. You could still make a race of it in Georgia. 0-2 correct: Are they still doing lobotomies?



**That's Life**  
by Tony Bender

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## If it sounds too good to be true

At my house, classic TV is a given. My 93-year-old father-in-law enjoys watching reruns of westerns, Perry Mason, Andy Griffith, and Gomer Pyle. With these old favorites come commercials targeting an aging population: Medicare Advantage plans, reverse mortgages, and "miracle solutions" for neuropathy, with free consultations for the first 250 people who call!



Based on Science, Built on Trust



**Debra Johnston, M.D.**

Every time we see one of these neuropathy advertisements, my father-in-law looks at me hopefully.

His neuropathic foot pain has been intractable for decades. All the usual medical solutions have either brought minimal relief, or intolerable side effects. It interferes with his sleep, and the shuffling of his feet in response to the pain literally wore holes in the dining room linoleum.

Any situation without a clear solution leaves an opportunity for the unscrupulous to pounce. As I watch those TV ads, I wonder how many people send in their money or otherwise fall victim to medical quackery.

Years ago, I accompanied a friend to a hair loss "consultation". He was awed by the trappings: white coat, scientific sounding terms, glossy pamphlets with patient testimonials. I was less impressed. What was in their product? They couldn't tell me, it was secret. Where were their studies? They pointed to those patient testimonials. Did they have any published data? That wasn't available yet. I was struck by the scientific babble, too. It sounded impressive, but it didn't make any sense to me.

Today similar organizations offer invitation-only dinners at local establishments, followed by the opportunity to sign up for treatment that may cost you out of pocket because insurance won't cover it. They have professional looking websites with quotes, supposedly from delighted customers, and perhaps a few references to publications doctors might call "throw away" journals, or to decades-old articles, or research that doesn't actually involve the treatment at hand. There might be claims that the treatment is ancient, or brand new, or that "they" (usually doctors, the government, or Big Pharma) don't want you to know about it.

Legitimate medical treatments are not kept secret. They are presented to other professionals, for critique, evaluation, and replication. Researchers try to determine if a treatment might be effective only in certain situations, or more broadly. If it is promising, it becomes widely available, and insurance coverage often follows.

Sadly, neuropathy, like many chronic pain conditions, has a variety of causes, and a variety of often less than satisfactory treatments. It is an easy target for "snake oil" salesmen. As always, talk to your doctor before you try something that sounds too good to be true.

Debra Johnston, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc®...based on science, built on trust, at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **COMMENTARY**

## **Democrats deserve blame for one-party rule**

**Dana Hess**

**DECEMBER 26, 2022 7:00 AM**

The South Dakota legislative session is about two weeks away and it should be an interesting one as it offers impressive dueling tax cut plans.

Gov. Kristi Noem wants to cut the state sales tax on food, while a group of Republican legislators have an idea for cutting property taxes. There is some concern about whether the state could afford either one of the plans, but the budget certainly isn't big enough to absorb both tax cuts. There isn't a crystal ball bright enough to tell us how that's going to work out.

But there are some aspects of the legislative session that are pleasantly predictable. Each afternoon, the session in the House starts with a prayer led by a local minister and then the Pledge of Allegiance led by a House page. Then, just as the pledge is finished, overcome by his love of baseball or his enthusiasm for doing the people's work, some wag in the back of the room will call out, "Play ball!"

Just as predictable, but nowhere near as enthusiastic, is the comment from a Democratic legislator who has seen his latest piece of legislation crash and burn against the big red wall of the Republican majority. At some point, he will blame his bill's failure on "one-party rule."

This isn't just sour grapes. The Legislature is governed by one-party rule. In this coming South Dakota legislative session, the 70-member House will have seven Democrats. The 35-member Senate will have four Democrats. It's this kind of disparity in numbers that has political reporters all over the state wondering whether there's a hyphen in the term "super majority."

The tone of Democratic legislators who have just seen their bill fail in a Republican dominated committee (because in South Dakota they are all dominated by Republicans) seems to place the blame for one-party rule at the feet of the dominant party. But it's not Republicans that are to blame. All they did was show up to get a place on the election ballot.

Just as blameless are voters. They can only vote for those candidates that appear on the ballot. Sadly, in too many cases Democrats were absent from the ballot. The fact that the South Dakota Legislature suffers from one-party rule is the fault of none other than the state's Democratic Party.

In the election held last November, Democrats failed to field 25 candidates for the 35 openings in the Senate. There were 70 seats open in House. In 32 cases, Democrats left a blank spot on the ballot where a candidate's name should have been.

To say that this was a lackluster showing by the state's Democratic Party is an insult to all of those things that lack luster.

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I once heard Sen. George McGovern talk about the time he spent working for the state's Democratic Party. He said he went to each legislative district, visiting with people in their stores and cafes. He asked them who were the best, most honest and respectable people in town. He would then seek out those people and talk to them about the possibility of serving in the Legislature. Once they were convinced, he asked them to consider running for the office as Democrats.

Judging by the lack of Democratic candidates on the ballot, no one in the party is putting forth that kind of effort. It is the kind of effort that the state's political parties owe to the taxpayers of South Dakota.

After all, taxpayers are the ones who foot the bill for their primary elections. They let those political parties use space in the Capitol for their secret party caucuses.

More than that, taxpayers in the state deserve a debate on the issues. Too often these days, the only debate on the issues is during the Republican Party primaries where voters are given a choice between a conservative Republican and an ultra conservative Republican.

That lack of a two-party debate is disenchanting for those citizens who still believe that the Democratic Party has ideals and ideas to offer.

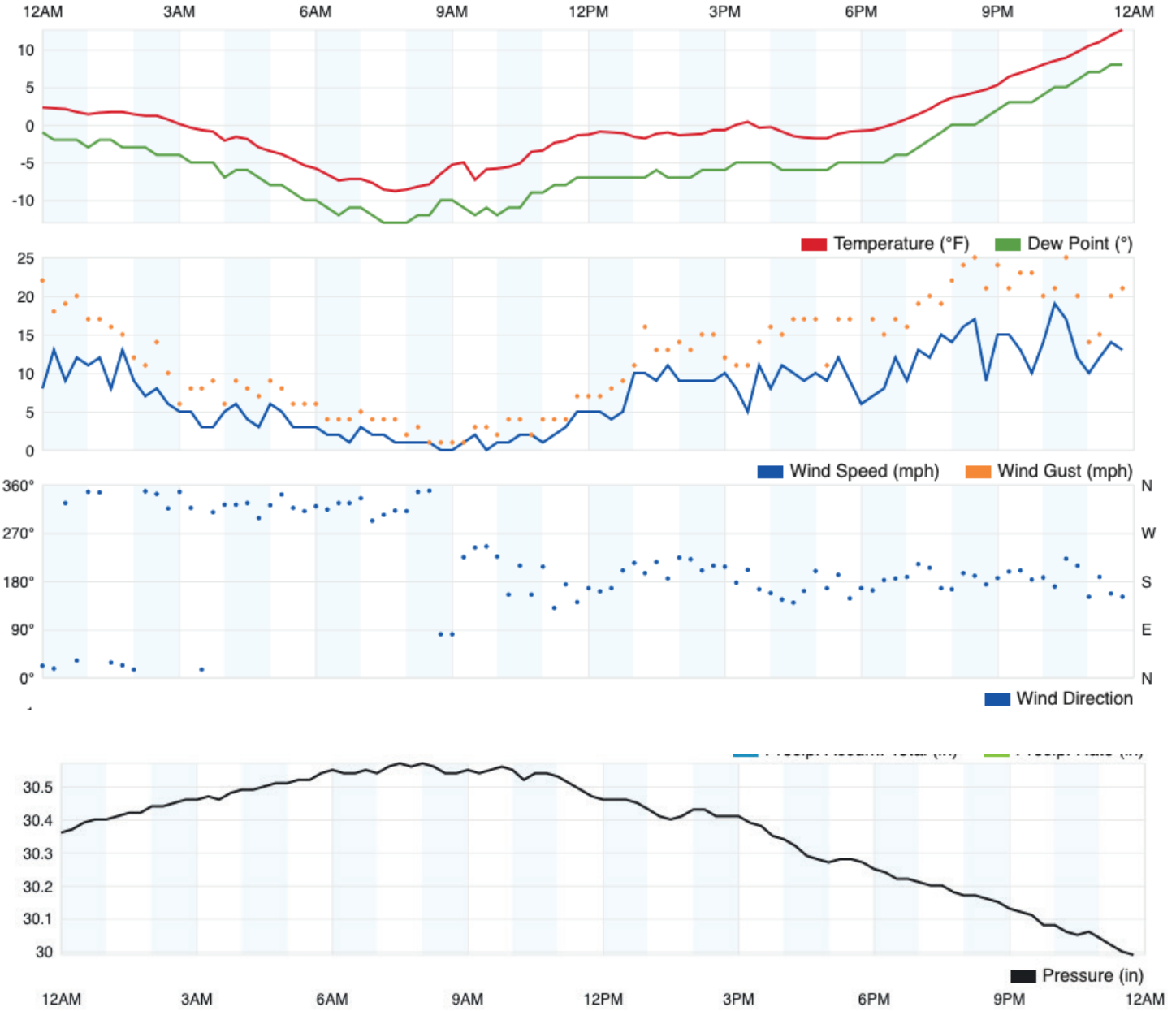
There are two years until the next legislative election. What the Democratic Party in this state needs is a McGovern-like effort to find the best people in each legislative district, sell them on the idea of serving in the Legislature and then ask them to run as Democrats. Only then will South Dakotans get the debate on the issues that they deserve.

*Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

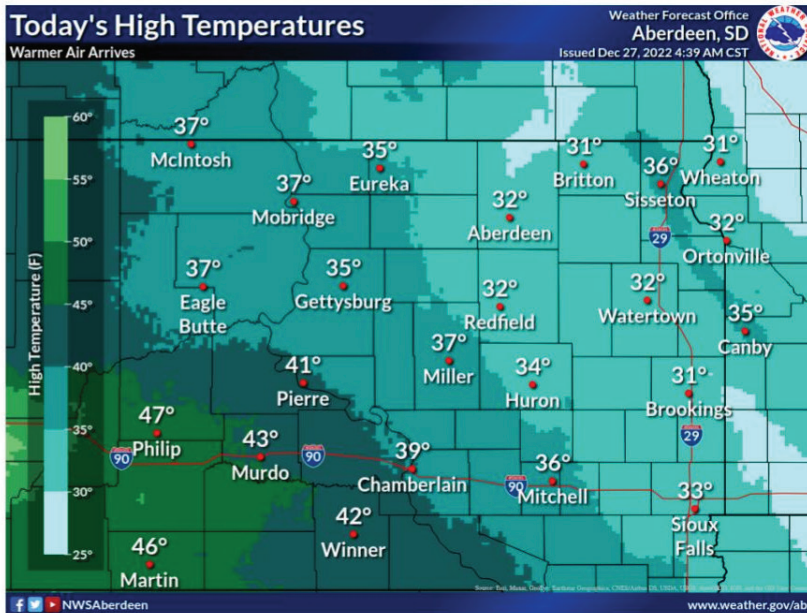
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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
						
Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow	Slight Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 31 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 33 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 30 °F	Low: 6 °F	High: 23 °F



## Warmer Air Arrives Today

December 27, 2022  
4:59 AM



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

A warmer air mass will continue to push into the region today thanks to the passage of a warm front and southerly winds. Readings this afternoon should generally top out about 7 to 10 degrees above normal for late December. Strongest winds will continue to be felt across the lee side of the Prairie Coteau through the morning and midday hours.





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## Today in Weather History

December 27, 1959: Precipitation began as freezing rain on the morning of the 27th throughout the eastern half of South Dakota, changing to snow mixed with occasional sleet late on the 27th, then continued as mostly snow through the late afternoon of the 28th. Glaze caused extensive breakage of tree limbs and power and telephone lines in southeast sections of the state and in scattered communities in the northeast counties. More than 40 communities were without telephone service for more than 24 hours. Highway travel was very dangerous; one man was killed when a tractor skidded on an icy highway and overturned on him in Kingsbury County. Strong winds averaging 20 to 25 mph both dates increased breakage of ice-laded utility wires and caused drifting and blocking of highways by the 3 to 6 inch snowfall. Damage and repair costs to utility lines were estimated at \$400,000.

December 27, 1987: A winter storm gave some freezing rain and snow to southern and eastern South Dakota and southwest and west central Minnesota on the 27th and 28th. In Minnesota, freezing rain began Sunday morning the 27th before changing to heavy snow, which extended into the 28th. The heaviest snowfall was across the high terrain of southwest Minnesota. In southern and eastern South Dakota, six to twelve inches of snow fell. Strong northwest winds of 20-40 mph hampered travel and snow removal. Snow drifts up to 6 feet deep were common. Across many areas of southern Minnesota, visibilities were reduced to zero due to blowing snow. Snowfall amounts in South Dakota included 12 inches in DeSmet; 10 inches in Wessington Springs and Madison; 9 inches in Huron; 8 inches in Pierre, Brookings, Mission and McCook County; 7 inches in Sioux Falls, Kadoka, Pine Ridge, and Martin. 8 inches also fell in Watertown and Highmore, with 7 inches at Bryant and 6 inches in Clear Lake.

1892 - An Atlantic coast storm produced a record 18.6 inches of snow at Norfolk, VA, including 17.7 inches in 24 hours. The storm also produced 9.5 inches of snow at Raleigh NC, and brought snow to northern Florida for the first time in 35 years. (26th- 28th) (The Weather Channel)

1982 - The worst Louisiana rainstorm in more than 100 years came to an end. More than 18 inches fell at Vinton, LA, during the three day storm. Flooding was widespread, and property damage was estimated at 100 to 200 million dollars. President Reagan visited the state and declared ten parishes in northeastern Louisiana disaster areas. (The Weather Channel)

December 27, 1987: Today marks the end of the infamous 2-day ice storm which began as freezing rain and sleet before sunrise on Christmas Day in Oklahoma. This ice storm left parts of Oklahoma without power for over a week. Sleet prevailed across the western and northern parts of Oklahoma City, while freezing rain devastated southern and eastern parts of the metro area. Despite heavy sleet and ice accumulations of up to 2 inches, total snowfall was only a trace.

1988 - Severe thunderstorms developing along a cold front in the south central U.S. spawned a dozen tornadoes in Mississippi between early afternoon and sunrise the following day. A tornado at Harpersville destroyed five chicken homes killing thousands of chickens. Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Rolling Fork MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

December 27, 2001: Typhoon Vamei forms in the South China Sea, about 100 miles north of the Equator. Vamei is the first recorded tropical cyclone to develop within 1.5 degrees of latitude about 104 miles of the equator.

2004 - A major storm system affected parts of the western United States during December 27-29, bringing a variety of weather conditions to the region. Heavy rainfall broke daily precipitation records at some locations in California. Very heavy snow fell across the Sierra Nevada Mountains, with some areas receiving several feet of accumulation. Winds with this weather system gusted over 65 mph at some coastal and mountain locations in California.

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHY FATHERS MATTER

We rarely think of Joseph when we speak of Mary and her son, Jesus. But Joseph was a very special individual as well.

In describing him, Matthew says that he was a "just" or "righteous" man. And, because of that, he was a "decent," "fair" and "righteous" man. When he was faced with an incredibly difficult decision, an angel appeared and advised him to "go ahead with your marriage to Mary."

Initially, Scripture informs us, "that not wanting to disgrace her, he planned to send her away." He was well aware of the fact that stoning was the legal prescription for what people would think of Mary's being pregnant without being married. If he took Mary to be his wife, he could be humiliated or ridiculed by those around him. But he chose to obey the command of the angel to marry her. As a "righteous" man he was also a "merciful" man, a man willing to listen to, hear from, and obey God. Joseph was a man of great character.

But there is more. Not only was he righteous, merciful, and obedient to the voice of God, but he was a man who was sensitive and discrete. Joseph was open to the voice of God and responded immediately when God spoke to him and protected the reputation and honor of Mary – thereby revealing he was a man of integrity.

Prayer: Lord, we pray for fathers everywhere who will strive to be like the earthly father of Your Son. We ask that You raise up men of integrity to honor You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 1:18-25 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.



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

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
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## Groton Daily Independent

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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Lotto America

04-11-26-49-51, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 3

(four, eleven, twenty-six, forty-nine, fifty-one; Star Ball: ten; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$32,180,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 565,000,000

Powerball

17-41-47-60-61, Powerball: 17, Power Play: 3

(seventeen, forty-one, forty-seven, sixty, sixty-one; Powerball: seventeen; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$215,000,000

### Western NY death toll rises to 28 from cold, storm chaos

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo residents hovered around space heaters, hunted for cars buried in snow drifts and looked for more victims Monday, after 28 people died in one of the worst weather-related disasters ever to hit western New York.

The rest of the United States also was reeling from the ferocious winter storm, with at least another two dozen deaths reported in other parts of the country.

Up to 9 more inches of snow (23 centimeters) could fall in some areas of western New York through Tuesday, the National Weather Service said.

"This is not the end yet," said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz, calling the blizzard "the worst storm probably in our lifetime," even for an area accustomed to punishing snow.

Some people, he noted, were stranded in their cars for more than two days.

President Joe Biden said his prayers were with the victims' families, and offered federal assistance Monday to the hard-hit state.

Those who lost their lives around Buffalo were found in cars, homes and snowbanks. Some died while shoveling snow, others when emergency crews could not respond in time to medical crises.

Melissa Carrick, a doula, said the blizzard forced her to coach a pregnant client through childbirth by telephone. An ambulance crew transported the woman to a hospital about 45 minutes south of Buffalo because none of the closer hospitals were reachable.

"In any other normal Buffalo storm? I would just go because that's what you do — just drive through the snow," she said. "But you knew this was different."

Scientists say the climate change crisis may have contributed to the intensity of the storm. That's because the atmosphere can carry more water vapor, which acts as fuel, said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Victor Gensini, a meteorology professor at Northern Illinois University, likened a single weather event to an "at-bat" — and the climate as your "batting average."

"It's hard to say," Serreze said. "But are the dice a little bit loaded now? Absolutely."

The blizzard roared across western New York Friday and Saturday. With many grocery stores in the Buffalo area closed and driving bans in place, some people pleaded on social media for donations of food and diapers.

"It was like looking at a white wall for 14 to 18 hours straight," Poloncarz, the county official, said.

Relief is coming later this week, as forecasts call for temperatures to slowly rise, said Ashton Robinson

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Cook, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Cook said the bomb cyclone — when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a strong storm — has weakened. It developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions including heavy winds and snow.

Some 3,410 domestic and international flights were canceled Monday as of about 3 p.m. EDT, according to the tracking site FlightAware. The site said Southwest Airlines had 2,497 cancellations — about 60% of its scheduled flights and about 10 times as many as any other major U.S. carrier.

Southwest said the weather was improving, which would “stabilize and improve our situation.”

Based on FlightAware data, airports all across the U.S. were suffering from cancellations and delays, including Denver, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Seattle, Baltimore and Chicago.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul toured the aftermath in Buffalo — her hometown — on Monday, calling the blizzard “one for the ages.” Almost every fire truck in the city became stranded Saturday, she said.

Hochul noted the storm came a little over a month after the region was inundated with another “historic” snowfall. Between the two storms, snowfall totals are not far off from the 95.4 inches (242 centimeters) the area normally sees in an entire winter season.

The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 49.2 inches (1.25 meters) at 10 a.m. Monday. Officials say the airport will be shut through Wednesday morning.

Shahida Muhammad told WKBW that an outage knocked out power to her 1-year-old son’s ventilator. She and the child’s father manually administered breaths from Friday until Sunday when rescuers saw her desperate social media posts and came to their aid. She said her son was doing well despite the ordeal and described him as “a fighter.”

In a makeshift hut in her living room, Trisha LoGrasso was still huddled around a space heater Monday with three of her children and her eldest daughter’s boyfriend. The temperature inside her Buffalo home was 42 degrees (5.5 C). She was without heat because of a gas leak, and burst pipes left her with no running water.

“I’ve lived here my whole life, and this is the worst storm I’ve ever seen,” the 48-year-old said.

Melissa Osmon and her husband James were without power for more than 72 hours in the Buffalo suburb of Williamsville, and would retreat to their car to stay warm for hours at a time.

“We even watched the Buffalo Bills game on our phone,” Osmon said, speaking by phone from her GMC Acadia.

“You can see your breath inside the house,” she said. “That’s how cold it is.”

The storm knocked out power in communities from Maine to Seattle.

Storm-related deaths were reported practically nationwide, including at least eight killed in crashes in Missouri, Kansas and Kentucky. A woman fell through Wisconsin river ice, and there was a fatal fire at a Kansas homeless persons camp.

In Jackson, Mississippi, crews struggled Monday to get water through the capital city’s beleaguered water system, authorities said. Many areas had no water or low water pressure. On Christmas Day, residents were told to boil their drinking water due to water lines bursting in the frigid temperatures.

“The issue has to be significant leaks in the system that we have yet to identify,” the city said in a statement Monday.

## Noem commutes 7 inmates’ sentences to parole

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem has commuted seven prisoners’ sentences to parole.

Noem’s office announced the move Saturday, saying the convicts will be subject to a number of requirements, including electronic monitoring of their locations and alcohol use and supervision plans. Any violations will result in a return to prison.

Noem said that the prisoners have earned a second chance and present a low risk of recidivism. The prisoners are Danielle Blakney; Jamie Christine Bosone; Jerome R. Ferguson; Britni Jean Goodhart; Connie Hirsch; Tammy Kvasnicka; and Whitney Renae Turney.

No one immediately responded to an email The Associated Press sent to the general inbox for Noem's office on Monday morning inquiring about each prisoner's conviction history.

## **Abduction, torture, rape: Conflict in Congo worsens, says UN**

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — The accounts are haunting. Abductions, torture, rapes. Scores of civilians including women and children have been killed by the M23 rebels in eastern Congo, according to a U.N. report

In addition, the M23 rebels have forced children to be soldiers, according to the report by a panel of U.N. experts. The 21-page report based on interviews with more than 230 sources and visits to Rutshuru area of Congo's North Kivu province where the M23 have seized territory, is expected to be published this week.

Conflict has been simmering in eastern Congo for decades where more than 120 armed groups are fighting in the region, most for land and control of mines with valuable minerals, while some groups are trying to protect their communities.

The already volatile situation significantly deteriorated this year when the M23 resurfaced after being largely dormant for nearly a decade.

The M23 first rose to prominence 10 years ago when its fighters seized Goma, the largest city in Congo's east, which sits on the border with Rwanda. The group derives its name from a peace agreement signed on March 23, 2009 which called for the rebels to be integrated into the Congo army. The M23 accuse the government of not implementing the accord.

In late 2021 the reactivated M23 began killing civilians and capturing swaths of territory. M23 fighters raped and harassed women trying to farm family fields in areas controlled by the rebels, according to the report. The rebels accused civilians of spying for the Congolese army, said the report. They were often incarcerated and some were beaten to death, it said.

Not only are populations living under M23 subject to abuse but they are forced to pay taxes, said the panel. At the Bunagana border crossing with Uganda, the rebels earned an average of \$27,000 a month making people carrying goods pay as they entered and left the country, said the UN. Two locals living under M23 who did not want to be named for fear of their safety, told The Associated Press they'd been forced to bring the rebels bags of beans, pay \$5 if they wanted to access their farms and take backroads if they want to leave the village for fear of reprisal.

The M23 did not respond to questions about the allegations, but has previously dismissed it as propaganda.

The violence by the rebels is part of an overall worsening of the crisis in eastern Congo, with fighting by armed groups intensifying and expanding in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces, said the report.

"The security and humanitarian situation in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces significantly deteriorated, despite the continuous enforcement of a state of siege over the past 18 months," and despite military operations by Congo's armed forces, Uganda's military and the U.N. mission in Congo, said the report.

Adding to the difficult situation in eastern Congo, attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces — believed to be linked with the Islamic State group — are increasing, said the report. A nearly year-long joint operation by Uganda and Congo's armies "has not yet yielded the expected results of defeating or substantially weakening the ADF," it said. Since April ADF attacks have killed at least 370 civilians and abducted several hundred more, including a significant number of children, it said. The group also extended its area of operations to Goma and into the neighboring Ituri province.

The fighting is exacerbating eastern Congo's dire humanitarian crisis. Almost 6 million people are internally displaced in Congo with more than 450,000 displaced in North Kivu province since clashes escalated in February. Hundreds of thousands are facing extreme food insecurity and disease is spreading, say aid groups. Cholera cases are spiking in Nyiragongo, a region hosting many of the displaced people in North Kivu, with more than 970 cases of the disease discovered in recent weeks, said Save The Children.

Efforts to stem the violence have yielded little results.

A new regional force deployed to eastern Congo is facing pushback from local residents who say they don't want more armed groups in the area. Tensions are also rising with Congo's neighbor Rwanda, which

it accuses of supporting the M23 rebels, findings backed by the UN.

Earlier this week the M23 said it was retreating from Kibumba, a town near Goma which it held for several weeks, as part of an agreement made last month at a summit in Angola, said Lawrence Kanyuka the M23's political spokesman in a statement. However, residents from Kibumba said the rebels are still there and are still attacking civilians.

"My neighbor was whipped because he refused to let M23 slaughter his goat," said Faustin Kamete a Kibumba resident. "They lied to the international community with their withdrawal," he said.

## **S. Korea military sorry for failing to down North's drones**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president on Tuesday called for stronger air defenses and high-tech stealth drones while the military apologized for failing to shoot down North Korean drones that crossed the border for the first time in five years.

South Korea's military scrambled warplanes and attack helicopters on Monday, but they failed to bring down any of the North Korean drones that flew back home or disappeared from South Korean radars. It raised serious questions about South Korea's air defense network at a time when tensions remain high over North Korea's torrid run of missile tests this year.

On Tuesday, the military again launched fighter jets and attack helicopters after spotting suspicious flight paths at a front-line area. A local county office sent emergency text messages notifying residents of a new batch of North Korean drones. But the military later said it was a flock of birds.

"We have a plan to create a military drone unit tasked with monitoring key military facilities in North Korea. But we'll advance the establishment of the drone unit as soon as possible because of yesterday's incident," President Yoon Suk Yeol said during a regular Cabinet Council meeting. "We'll also introduce state-of-the-art stealth drones and bolster our surveillance capability."

He said that South Korea's military needs more intensive readiness and exercises to cope with threats posed by North Korean drones.

Lt. Gen. Kang Shin Chul, chief director of operation at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in a televised statement the military feels sorry because of its failure to shoot down the North Korean drones and for causing big public concerns.

Kang acknowledged South Korea lacks capacities to detect and strike small surveillance drones with a wingspan of less than 3 meters (9.8 feet) though it has assets to spot and bring down bigger combat drones. Kang said South Korea will establish drone units with various capacities and aggressively deploy military assets to shoot down enemy drones.

It was the first time North Korean drones entered South Korean airspace since 2017. The drone flights came three days after South Korea said North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles, extending its record testing activities this year.

North Korea has touted its drone program, and South Korean officials have previously said the North had about 300 drones. Advanced drones are among modern weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to procure, along with multi-warheads, underwater-launched nuclear missiles and a spy satellite.

Since taking office in May, Yoon, a conservative, has expanded regular military drills with the United States and vowed to sternly deal with North Korean provocations. He's offered massive support plans to North Korea if it abandons its nuclear weapons, but the North has rejected his overture.

On Monday, South Korea sent its own surveillance assets, apparently unmanned drones, across the border as corresponding steps against the North Korean drone flights. South Korea's public confirmation of reconnaissance activities inside North Korea is highly unusual and likely reflects a resolve by Yoon's government to get tough on North Korean provocations.

Yoon used the drone incident to hit at his liberal predecessor's engagement policy with North Korea. He said Tuesday South Korea's military had conducted little anti-drone training since 2017, when Moon Jae-in



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was inaugurated.

"I think our people must have seen well how dangerous a policy relying on the North's good faiths and (peace) agreements would be," he said.

Moon's liberal opposition Democratic Party accused Yoon of shifting his government's "security disaster" to someone else. Party spokesperson Park Sung-joon called on Yoon to thoroughly disclose what he did when the North Korean drones were flying in South Korean territory.

Moon was credited with arranging now-dormant diplomacy on North Korea's nuclear program, but also faced criticism that his appeasement policy allowed North Korea to buy time and boost its nuclear arsenal despite international sanctions. During his campaigning, Yoon described Moon's government as "subservient" to North Korea and accused him of undermining South Korea's seven-decade military alliance with the United States.

Earlier Tuesday, North Korea's state media announced the start of a key ruling Workers' Party meeting the previous day to review past policies and discuss next year's plans.

During the meeting, Kim Jong Un called for stronger efforts to overcome hardships and challenges facing his country. But he still claimed North Korea has reported some successes "in the arduous course" and said his country's national strength has "remarkably" increased in military, economic and other areas, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

Some observers say Kim may need such propaganda-driven claims to draw greater public loyalty to bolster his weapons arsenal and address economic woes while facing U.S.-led sanctions and pressure campaigns to curb his nuclear ambitions.

The North Korean Workers' Party meeting is expected to last several days, and Kim will likely address issues such as his arms buildup, relations with the United States and the economy in later sessions.

## **DOT to probe Southwest cancellations that stranded flyers**

The U.S. Department of Transportation said it will look into flight cancellations by Southwest Airlines that have left travelers stranded at airports across the country amid an intense winter storm that has killed dozens of people.

Many airlines were forced to cancel flights due to the weather, but Southwest was the most affected. About 4,000 domestic U.S. flights were cancelled Monday, according to the tracking website FlightAware, and 2,900 of those were Southwest's. Nearly 2,500 more flights had already been canceled as of 5 a.m. Tuesday and problems are likely to continue at least into Wednesday.

Southwest spokesman Jay McVay said at a press conference in Houston that cancellations snowballed as storm systems moved across the country, leaving flight crews and planes out of place.

"So we've been chasing our tails, trying to catch up and get back to normal safely, which is our number one priority as quickly as we could," he said. "And that's exactly how we ended up where we are today."

Passengers stood in long lines trying to rebook their flights. The Department of Transportation said on Twitter that it was "concerned by Southwest's unacceptable rate of cancellations and delays & reports of lack of prompt customer service." The tweet said the department would look into whether Southwest could have done anything about the cancellations and whether the airline was complying with its customer service plan.

Southwest CEO Bob Jordan told The Wall Street Journal in an interview that the airline would operate just over a third of its usual schedule to allow crews to get back to where they needed to be.

"We had a tough day today. In all likelihood we'll have another tough day tomorrow as we work our way out of this," he said Monday evening. "This is the largest scale event that I've ever seen."

## Companies welcome end to China quarantines for visitors

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Companies welcomed China's decision to end quarantines for travelers from abroad as an important step to revive slumping business activity while Japan on Tuesday announced restrictions on visitors from the country as infections surge.

The ruling Communist Party's abrupt decision to lift some of the world's strictest anti-virus controls comes as it tries reverse an economic downturn. It has ended curbs that confined millions of people to their homes and sparked protests, but hospitals have been flooded with feverish, wheezing patients as the virus spreads.

Monday's announcement that quarantines for travelers from abroad will end Jan. 8 is the biggest step toward ending limits that have kept most foreign visitors out of China since early 2020. Quarantines were reduced last month from seven days to five.

Also Monday, the government downgraded the official seriousness of COVID-19 and dropped a requirement for people with the virus to be quarantined. That added to a rapid drumbeat of steps to dismantle controls that had been expected to stay in place at least through mid-2023.

"It finally feels like China has turned the corner," the chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, Colm Rafferty, said in a statement. He said ending the quarantine "clears the way for resumption of normal business travel."

Business groups have warned companies were shifting investment away from China because foreign executives were blocked from visiting.

The American chamber said more than 70% of companies that responded to a poll this month expect the impact of the latest wave of outbreaks to last no more than three months, ending in early 2023.

The British Chamber of Commerce expressed hope China will restart normal processing of business visas to allow "resumption of crucial people to people exchanges." It said that will "contribute to restoring optimism and reinstating China as a priority investment destination."

The move "will potentially boost business confidence," but companies are likely to "wait to see how the situation on the ground evolves" before making long-term decisions, the European Chamber of Commerce in China said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Japan announced visitors from China will undergo virus tests starting Friday as a "temporary emergency measure."

Visitors who test positive will be quarantined for one week, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced. He said Japan also would reduce a planned increase in the number of flights between Japan and China "just to be safe."

"There are growing worries in Japan," Kishida said.

That follows India's decision last week to begin requiring a negative virus test for travelers from China, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Thailand.

India also randomly tests 2% of airline passengers arriving from abroad. Visitors who test positive or have symptoms will be quarantined.

A foreign ministry spokesman defended China's handling of the latest outbreaks.

"The Chinese government has always followed the principle of science-based and targeted measures," said Wang Wenbin. He called for a "science-based response and coordinated approach" to keep travel safe and "promote a steady and sound recovery of the world economy."

China kept its infection rate low with a "zero COVID" strategy that aimed to stamp out virus transmission by isolating every case. That prompted complaints controls were too extreme and counterproductive.

Starting last month, the ruling party has gradually joined the United States and other governments that are trying to live with the virus by treating infections instead of imposing blanket quarantines on cities or neighborhoods.

The ruling party announced changes Nov. 11 it said were aimed at reducing disruptions after economic activity slid. More changes were announced following protests that erupted Nov. 25 in Shanghai and other cities.

The government has stopped reporting nationwide case numbers but announcements by some cities indicate at least tens and possibly hundreds of millions of people might have been infected since the surge began in early October.

The outbreaks prompted complaints Beijing relaxed controls too abruptly. Officials say the wave began before the changes.

The government "should have done the job in a more meticulous way," said Lu Haoming, a Beijing architect. "Although the death rate of this disease is not as serious as at the beginning, the first shock has still been quite severe."

China only counts deaths from pneumonia or respiratory failure in its official COVID-19 toll, a health official said last week. That excludes many deaths other countries would attribute to COVID-19.

Experts have forecast 1 to 2 million deaths in China through the end of 2023.

The National Health Commission announced a campaign Nov. 29 to raise the vaccination rate among older Chinese. Health experts say that is crucial to avoiding a health care crisis.

On Monday, the National Health Commission downgraded COVID-19 from a Class A infectious disease to a Class B disease and removed it from the list of illnesses that require quarantine. It said authorities would stop tracking down close contacts and designating areas as being at high or low risk of infection.

## Israeli doctors reject Netanyahu ally's anti-LGBTQ remarks

By ISAAC SCHARF Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's largest medical center and healthcare workers from hospitals around the country have spoken out against remarks by allies of Benjamin Netanyahu calling for a law to allow discrimination against LGBTQ people in hospitals and businesses.

It was part of a broader blowback against remarks made this week by Religious Zionism politicians calling for legal discrimination against LGBTQ people.

Netanyahu's new government — the most religious and hard-line in Israel's history — is made up of ultra-Orthodox parties, an ultranationalist religious faction, and his Likud party. It is to be sworn in on Thursday.

Earlier this week, two Netanyahu allies from the ultranationalist Religious Zionism party said that their faction seeks to change an anti-discrimination law in a way that would permit businesses and doctors to deny service to LGBTQ people on the basis of religious belief.

Orit Struck, a Religious Zionist lawmaker, said her party seeks a change to the country's anti-discrimination law that would include allowing religious healthcare providers to refuse to treat LGBTQ patients "so long as there are enough other doctors to provide care."

Sheba Medical Center released a video on Instagram of healthcare workers from around the country on Monday saying "we treat everyone." Similar statements were made by doctors and administrators at Rambam Medical Center in Haifa and Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon.

Netanyahu later rebuked Struck for her remarks, saying there would be no curtailing of LGBTQ rights under the new government.

Yated Neeman, a newspaper affiliated with one of the ultra-Orthodox parties in Netanyahu's coalition, published an editorial against the Religious Zionism politicians, saying they were "defaming Judaism worldwide" and branding the future government as "one that persecutes Arabs, minorities and discriminates against people on the basis of religion and more."

Several Israeli companies said they would not work with businesses that discriminate against clients for religious reasons.

Bank Discount, Israel's third largest bank, said Monday that its board decided that it "would not grant credit to businesses or bodies that discriminate against clients on the basis of religion, race, sex or sexual orientation."

Wiz, an Israeli cybersecurity company, expressed "grave concern" over Religious Zionism politicians' remarks and said it would require companies hiring its services to commit not to discriminate against its clients.

## The AP Interview: Ukraine FM aims for February peace summit

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's foreign minister said Monday that his nation wants a summit to end the war but he doesn't anticipate Russia taking part, a statement making it hard to foresee the devastating invasion ending soon.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told The Associated Press that his government wants a "peace" summit within two months at the United Nations with Secretary-General António Guterres as mediator.

The U.N. gave a very cautious response.

"As the secretary-general has said many times in the past, he can only mediate if all parties want him to mediate," U.N. associate spokesperson Florencia Soto Nino-Martinez said Monday.

Kuleba said Russia must face a war-crimes tribunal before his country directly talks with Moscow. He said, however, that other nations should feel free to engage with Russians, as happened before a grain agreement between Turkey and Russia.

The AP interview offered a glimpse at Ukraine's vision of how the war with Russia could one day end, although any peace talks would be months away and highly contingent on complex international negotiations.

Kuleba also said he was "absolutely satisfied" with the results of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to the U.S. last week, and he revealed that the U.S. government had made a special plan to get the Patriot missile battery ready to be operational in the country in less than six months. Usually, the training takes up to a year.

Kuleba said during the interview at the Foreign Ministry that Ukraine will do whatever it can to win the war in 2023.

"Every war ends in a diplomatic way," he said. "Every war ends as a result of the actions taken on the battlefield and at the negotiating table."

Commenting on Kuleba's proposal, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told the state RIA Novosti news agency that Russia "never followed conditions set by others. Only our own and common sense."

A Kremlin spokesman said last week that no Ukrainian peace plan can succeed without taking into account "the realities of today that can't be ignored" — a reference to Moscow's demand that Ukraine recognize Russia's sovereignty over the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed in 2014, as well as other territorial gains.

Kuleba said the Ukrainian government would like to have the "peace" summit by the end of February.

"The United Nations could be the best venue for holding this summit, because this is not about making a favor to a certain country," he said. "This is really about bringing everyone on board."

At the Group of 20 summit in Bali in November, Zelenskyy made a long-distance presentation of a 10-point peace formula that includes the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, the withdrawal of Russian troops, the release of all prisoners, a tribunal for those responsible for the aggression and security guarantees for Ukraine.

Asked about whether Ukraine would invite Russia to the summit, he said that Moscow would first need to face prosecution for war crimes at an international court.

"They can only be invited to this step in this way," Kuleba said.

About the U.N. Secretary-General's role, Kuleba said: "He has proven himself to be an efficient mediator and an efficient negotiator, and most importantly, as a man of principle and integrity. So we would welcome his active participation."

The U.N. spokesman's office had no immediate comment.

Other world leaders have also offered to mediate, such as those in Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

The foreign minister again downplayed comments by Russian authorities that they are ready for talks.

"They (Russians) regularly say that they are ready for negotiations, which is not true, because everything they do on the battlefield proves the opposite," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed few days ago that his country is ready for talks to end the war in Ukraine, but suggested that the Ukrainians are the ones refusing to take that step. Despite Putin's comments, Moscow's forces have kept attacking Ukraine — a sign that peace isn't imminent.

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Zelenskyy's visit to the U.S. was his first foreign trip since the war started on Feb. 24. Kuleba praised Washington's efforts and underlined the significance of the visit.

Ukraine secured a new \$1.8 billion military aid package, including a Patriot missile battery, during the trip. Kuleba said that the move "opens the door for other countries to do the same."

He said that the U.S. government developed a program for Ukrainian troops to complete training faster than usual "without any damage to the quality of the use of this weapon on the battlefield."

While Kuleba didn't mention a specific time frame, he said only that it will be "very much less than six months." And he added that the training will be done "outside" Ukraine.

During Russia's ground and air war in Ukraine, Kuleba has been second only to Zelenskyy in carrying Ukraine's message and needs to an international audience, whether through Twitter posts or meetings with friendly foreign officials.

On Monday, Ukraine called on U.N. member states to deprive Russia of its status as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council and to exclude it from the world body. Kuleba said they have long "prepared for this step to uncover the fraud and deprive Russia of its status."

The Foreign Ministry says that Russia never went through the legal procedure for acquiring membership and taking the place of the USSR at the U.N. Security Council after the collapse of the Soviet Union. "This is the beginning of an uphill battle, but we will fight, because nothing is impossible," he told the AP.

## Mega Millions Tuesday jackpot surpasses estimated \$565M

By The Associated Press undefined

The holiday shopping season — for Mega Millions lottery ticket buyers, at least — is ramping up as officials say the estimated jackpot for Tuesday night's drawing has surpassed half a billion dollars.

As of late Monday, lottery officials estimate Tuesday's prize at \$565 million — or more than \$293 million if delivered in cash — after there were no lucky winners holding a ticket that matched all six numbers in the last drawing held on Friday.

Tuesday's drawing will be held at 11 p.m. EST.

Tickets sold in California and Florida for an Oct. 14 drawing shared the last Mega Millions jackpot of \$502 million. The lottery's top prize has been building anew over 20 drawings held since then.

Lottery officials say there have been 11 winning jackpots of \$500 million or more since Mega Millions began in 2002. The record Mega Millions jackpot is more than \$1.5 billion, won in 2018, and a jackpot surpassing \$1.3 billion was won in Illinois in July.

The largest U.S. lottery jackpot ever won was \$2.04 billion in November. The winner bought the lucky Powerball ticket in Southern California.

## Manhattan man charged in 2 random knife slashing murders

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Two seemingly isolated and random outdoor murders at the height of the holiday season and of the kind New Yorkers have increasingly feared since the pandemic began were blamed by police officials Monday on a city resident with a criminal record.

James Essig, chief of detectives for the New York Police Department, underscored at a news conference how brief and unplanned were the encounters Roland Codrington is accused of having with two men slashed to death in nighttime killings three days apart, resulting in two murder charges.

It was not immediately clear who would represent Codrington at initial court appearances.

The killings come at a time of increased anxiety citywide over random violence. Mayor Eric Adams recently announced plans for authorities to more aggressively intervene to help people who need mental health treatment, including forcing individuals off streets and subways and into treatment.

Early this year after taking office, Adams said even he didn't feel safe riding the subway, despite boosted police patrols.

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In April, a man was charged with injuring 10 people in Brooklyn when he set off a pair of smoke grenades and then scattered a barrage of random shots inside a train between stations. In May, a 48-year-old man was shot and killed riding a train between Brooklyn and lower Manhattan.

Despite random acts, the number of crimes reported on public transit by September was averaging slightly below pre-pandemic levels, though ridership was also down.

In the arrest announced Monday, Essig said the first killing Codrington was charged with occurred at 1 a.m. on Dec. 19, when 51-year-old James Cunningham, who had just left a bar after drinking a seltzer, was walking several blocks from Union Square when he was approached by Codrington, who was accompanied by his girlfriend.

After a 20-second-long, caught-on-camera dispute, Codrington, 35, slashed Cunningham across the neck with a knife, leaving him to die, Essig said.

At 11:30 p.m. on Dec. 22, Codrington entered a Lower East Side bar with a pit bull and a baseball bat, Essig said. Codrington thought he had been disrespected by employees at the bar a week earlier. He assaulted the bartender and destroyed property, Essig said.

When two customers intervened, they were stabbed with a large knife, incurring non-life threatening wounds, Essig added.

Afterward, Essig said, Codrington went home, then said he'd "cool off" with a walk through the park.

There, he encountered Dr. Bruce Maurice Henry, 60, stabbing him repeatedly after a verbal exchange in which he became enraged, Essig said. The police official said Codrington left the area with his girlfriend in Henry's Mercedes Benz. Henry's body was found at 2:15 a.m. on Dec. 23.

Essig credited three "sharp-eyed police officers" from upper Manhattan with spotting the car at 9:40 p.m. on Dec. 24 and apprehending Codrington without resistance. Codrington, he said, has 12 prior arrests, including four assaults with weapons. Essig said police were investigating whether he's responsible for other random acts.

Asked about the girlfriend, Essig said she's involved in the investigation but "hasn't been charged as of yet."

He said he couldn't explain what the doctor was doing in the park or what the argument was about, but added: "You know, for whatever reason he was in the park at that time, he didn't deserve what he got."

## **Broncos fire rookie head coach Hackett after 4-11 start**

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Pro Football Writer

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP) — The Denver Broncos fired first-year head coach Nathaniel Hackett on Monday with two games left in the season.

Team owner and CEO Greg Penner said he'll lead the search for a new coach with assistance from GM George Paton, in whom he expressed confidence while announcing Hackett's dismissal.

Firing Hackett with two games left in a lost season allows Penner to begin his search for a replacement immediately.

Players were told during a team meeting Monday that senior assistant coach Jerry Rosburg, who was hired by Hackett in September to help him with game operations and clock management, will serve as interim head coach.

The Broncos scheduled a news conference for Tuesday to discuss the changes.

The group involving Walmart heir Rob Walton, his daughter, Carrie Walton Penner, and her husband, Greg Penner, purchased the Broncos for \$4.65 billion last summer, a global record for a professional sports franchise, and Rob Walton said after the league's approval that he aimed to make the Broncos perennial championship contenders again.

On Sunday, the Broncos (4-11) were blown out by the equally downtrodden Los Angeles Rams 51-14 when Russell Wilson threw three interceptions and was sacked six times. The game featured a sideline spat between backup QB Brett Rypien and guard Dalton Risner, and pass rusher Randy Gregory threw a punch at a Rams player after the game.

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In a statement Monday, Penner thanked Hackett for his dedication but said that "following extensive conversations with George and our ownership group, we determined a new direction would ultimately be in the best interest of the Broncos. This change was made now out of respect for everyone involved and allows us to immediately begin the search for a new head coach."

Penner said that "moving forward, we will carefully evaluate every aspect of our football operations and make whatever changes are necessary to restore this franchise's winning tradition."

Hackett replaced Vic Fangio last January but hasn't been able to build an offense suitable to Wilson, who recently turned 34.

Hackett is the third NFL head coach fired during the 2022 season. The Carolina Panthers replaced Matt Rhule with interim head coach Steve Wilks and the Indianapolis Colts fired Frank Reich and replaced him with coaching novice Jeff Saturday.

Many fans thought the Broncos hired Hackett away from the Green Bay Packers, where he was offensive coordinator, to help them land quarterback Aaron Rodgers. But Rodgers decided to re-up with the Packers and the Broncos instead traded for Wilson, who was seen as still in his prime.

Wilson, however, has had an awful first season in Denver after the Broncos sent four premium draft picks and three players to Seattle for the nine-time Pro Bowler. Wilson has 12 touchdown passes with nine interceptions and 49 sacks in 13 starts and has been unable to snap out of a season-long funk.

He is 3-10 as Denver's starter and has missed games with a pulled hamstring and a concussion.

He routinely has ignored open receivers underneath to try for deep throws and he has shown a noticeable dip in his ability to escape from pass rushers this season.

The Broncos have missed the playoffs seven straight seasons and extended their string of losing records to six.

They will try to snap a 14-game losing streak to the Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday and beat Patrick Mahomes for the first time in 11 tries.

## US to let MLB stars play for Cuba in World Baseball Classic

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — The United States will permit Major League Baseball players from Cuba to represent their home country in the World Baseball Classic next year.

The decision announced Saturday in a news release by the Baseball Federation of Cuba (FCB) could be a big step in once again turning Cuba's national team into heavy hitters on an international stage.

Major League Baseball confirmed Monday that the U.S. granted the license to FCB. It clears the way for MLB stars such as José Abreu, Yordan Alvarez, Randy Arozarena, Yoán Moncada and Luis Robert to play for Cuba in the WBC in March if they choose to accept a potential invitation.

It's up to each country's national governing body to pick the players on its WBC team. Final 30-man rosters are due Feb. 7 for the WBC, which begins March 8 with Cuba facing the Netherlands in Taiwan.

While the sport of choice for much of Latin America is soccer, baseball dominates in Cuba. The island has gained fame around the world for its baseball talent.

But in recent years, hundreds of those players have defected from Cuba to play professionally elsewhere. Most notably, many have become United States residents and stars with major league teams in the U.S.

The defections are largely due to a not-so-uncommon geopolitical spat between the two seaside neighbors, leaving Cuban players stuck in the middle.

Cuban athletes competing on the island can't earn a paycheck under the communist government, which prohibited professional sports following the Cuban revolution 60 years ago.

Longtime sanctions by the U.S. make it largely impossible for Cubans to play professionally for an American team without defecting. Meanwhile, Cuba historically has not allowed Cuban players who defected on their national team rosters.

The defections have taken a toll on Cuba's performance in international baseball competitions. For example, the Cuban baseball team failed to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics after years of previously

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winning medals in the sport.

In November, Cuba changed its tune and invited several top players who defected to represent the country in the World Baseball Classic, a tournament that features some of the sport's top players competing in Japan, Taiwan and the U.S.

Weeks later, Cuban officials accused the Biden administration of blocking those players from representing Cuba.

In a statement Saturday, FCB President Juan Reinaldo Pérez Pardo called the permit a "positive step," and said the Cuban federation should have more information about the team's WBC roster once it has more details about the license granted by the U.S.

At the same time, Pérez Pardo also criticized the U.S., tweeting Saturday that "it is arbitrary and discriminatory that a permit from the government of this country (the U.S.) is needed to attend" the WBC.

## Russia says it shot down Ukrainian drone near air base

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The Russian military reported Monday that it shot down a Ukrainian drone approaching an air base deep inside Russia, the second time the facility has been targeted this month — again revealing weaknesses in Russia's air defenses.

Russia's Defense Ministry said debris killed three servicemen at the Engels air base, which houses Tu-95 and Tu-160 nuclear-capable strategic bomber planes that have struck Ukraine with missiles in the 10-month-old war.

Russia's Baza news outlet reported that four people were wounded and said a fire had broken out, with explosions, sirens and flashes on a video it posted on its Telegram channel. The Defense Ministry claimed no Russian aircraft were damaged. It wasn't clear whether the drone had been launched from Ukraine or Russian territory.

If the drone had been launched from Ukraine, it would have traveled more than 600 kilometers (370 miles) to reach Engels, located in Russia's Saratov region on the Volga River. Shooting the drone down after such a long trip inside Russia again raises questions about the effectiveness of Russia's air defenses, particularly those intended to protect its most strategic military assets such as warplanes capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

In keeping with the Kyiv government's long-standing practice of not confirming cross-border attacks but welcoming their results, Ukrainian air force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat didn't directly acknowledge his country's involvement in Monday's incident in an interview on Ukrainian television, but said: "These are the consequences of Russian aggression."

He added: "If the Russians thought that the war wouldn't affect them deep behind their lines, they were deeply mistaken."

Russia has suffered numerous cross-border attacks during the war on its main territory, as well as on the Crimean Peninsula, which it illegally annexed in 2014. The incidents have outraged Russian military bloggers who say they show the country's weak air defenses and security systems in general.

In another cross-border incident that couldn't be independently confirmed, Russia's Tass news agency reported Monday that the country's security forces had killed four Ukrainian saboteurs attempting to enter the Bryansk region from Ukraine. The report claimed the infiltrators carried explosive materials when they were caught Sunday.

The cross-border attacks on Russian military and other strategic sites prompted Russian President Vladimir Putin to order almost weekly missile and weaponized drone attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, causing widespread blackouts that also knocked out heating and water supplies in increasingly frigid weather. The attacks, which began in October across much of the country, have been occurring as ground fighting focused on Ukraine's southern and eastern regions.

In eastern Ukraine on Monday, Luhansk's Ukrainian governor, Serhiy Haidai, said Russian forces have withdrawn from their military command operations post in the town of Kreminna as Ukrainian forces were



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approaching after months of intense fighting. Russia's Defense Ministry didn't comment on the withdrawal claim.

Russian forces relocated to Kreminna and several other areas in September after they pulled back from the Kharkiv region in eastern Ukraine. Kreminna is in the eastern Luhansk region, which is almost entirely under Moscow's control, and is on an important supply route for Russian forces and serves as a gateway for movement into other strategic positions. Earlier, Haidai reported that Russia had withdrawn its occupying government administration from Svatove, 51 kilometers (31 miles) north of Kreminna. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address Monday that "the situation there is difficult, painful. The occupiers are expending all the resources available to them — and they are considerable resources — to squeeze out at least some advance."

Haidai told Ukrainian television on Monday that Russian forces in the region are "suffering huge losses and medical facilities are overwhelmed with wounded soldiers." The Russian army is redeploying paratroopers from the Kherson region to the area, he added.

In neighboring Donetsk region, partially occupied by Russia, fierce battles continue around the city of Bakhmut, which Russian forces have been trying to seize for weeks to consolidate their grip on Ukraine's east. Zelenskyy said last week Bakhmut was the hottest spot on the war's 1,300-kilometer (800-mile) front line.

Ukrainian officials have maintained ambiguity over previous high-profile attacks, including drone strikes on Russian military bases earlier this month.

On Dec. 5, unprecedented drone strikes on Engels and the Dyagilevo base in the Ryazan region in western Russia killed a total of three servicemen and wounded four others. In retaliation, Russia launched a massive missile barrage in Ukraine that struck homes and buildings and killed civilians.

Elsewhere on the battlefield, at least four civilians were wounded in Russian shelling of five Ukrainian southeast regions over the past 24 hours, according to the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko. Overall, the intensity of the shelling from Sunday night into Monday was significantly lower.

For the first time in weeks, Russian forces didn't shell the Dnipropetrovsk region, which borders the partially occupied southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, its governor, Valentyn Reznichenko, reported on Telegram.

"This is the third quiet night in 5.5 months since the Russians started shelling" the areas around the city of Nikopol, Reznichenko wrote. Nikopol is located across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is under the control of Russian forces and whose six reactors are shut down.

Ukrainian-controlled areas of the neighboring Kherson region were shelled 33 times over the past 24 hours, according to Kherson's Ukrainian Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevich. No casualties were reported.

On Sunday, Russian forces attacked the city of Kramatorsk, where Ukrainian forces are headquartered. Three missiles hit an industrial facility and damaged residential buildings, but no casualties were reported, according to local officials.

On Saturday, a deadly attack on the city of Kherson, which Kyiv's forces recaptured last month, killed and wounded scores of people. Local residents are lining up to donate blood for the wounded, Yanushevich said Monday.

## 4th Washington state electrical substation vandalized

TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — A fourth electrical substation was vandalized late on Christmas Day in Washington state, leaving homes in Kapowsin and Graham temporarily without power, according to the Pierce County Sheriff's Office.

By 7 a.m. Monday, more than 10,500 Puget Sound Energy customers were without electricity across the region, KOMO-TV reported.

The suspects broke into a fenced area and vandalized equipment, causing a fire, officials said. The fire was extinguished and power was later restored, but no suspects are in custody, officials said.

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The attacks come as federal officials are warning that the U.S. power grid needs better security to prevent domestic terrorism and after a large outage in North Carolina earlier this month that took days to repair.

The first substation was vandalized at about 5:30 a.m. Sunday, followed by a second substation, according to Tacoma Public Utilities. The outages affected about 7,300 customers in an area southeast of Tacoma. Just before noon, the utility had restored power to all but 2,700 customers whose power was estimated to be restored at about 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

Meanwhile, just before noon, Puget Sound Energy reported vandalism that had happened at about 2:30 a.m. Sunday caused a power outage at one of its substations. The nearly 7,700 customers who lost power had it restored by 5 a.m., Puget Sound spokesperson Andrew Padula said. The company is investigating, along with authorities, and declined to comment further, according to Padula.

In all four cases, the sheriff's office says someone forced their way into the fenced area surrounding the substations and damaged equipment to cause a power outage.

Power stations have been hit in Washington and Oregon in the last month.

Portland General Electric, the Bonneville Power Administration, Cowlitz County Public Utility District and Puget Sound Energy confirmed six separate attacks on electrical substations in Washington and Oregon in the previous weeks, according to Oregon Public Broadcasting and KUOW-FM in Seattle.

## China to scrap COVID-19 quarantine for incoming passengers

BEIJING (AP) — China will drop a COVID-19 quarantine requirement for passengers arriving from abroad starting Jan. 8, the National Health Commission announced Monday in the latest easing of the country's once-strict virus-control measures.

Currently, arriving passengers must quarantine for five days at a hotel, followed by three days at home. That is down from as much as three weeks in the past.

The scrapping of the quarantine requirement is a major step toward fully reopening travel with the rest of the world, which the government severely curtailed in a bid to keep the virus out.

The restrictions have prevented most Chinese from traveling abroad, limited face-to-face diplomatic exchanges and sharply reduced the number of foreigners in China for work and study.

China's health commission said that steps would be taken to make it easier for some foreigners to enter the country, though it didn't include tourists. It did indicate that Chinese would be gradually allowed to travel abroad for tourism again, an important source of revenue for hotels and related businesses in many countries.

People coming to China will still need a negative virus test 48 hours before departure and passengers will be required to wear protective masks on board, an online post from the health commission said.

China abruptly dropped many of its pandemic restrictions earlier this month, sparking widespread outbreaks that have swamped hospital emergency rooms and funeral homes.

The move followed rare public protests against the restrictions, which have slowed the economy, putting people out of work and driving restaurants and shops out of business.

For more than 2 ½ years, Chinese authorities enforced a strict zero-COVID approach that became a signature policy of leader Xi Jinping.

The arrival of the fast-spreading omicron variant in late 2021 made the strategy increasingly untenable, requiring ever-wider lockdowns that stymied growth and disrupted lives.

## S. Korea launches jets, fires shots after North flies drones

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's military fired warning shots, scrambled fighter jets and flew surveillance assets across the heavily fortified border with North Korea on Monday, after North Korean drones violated its airspace for the first time in five years in a fresh escalation of tensions.

South Korea's military detected five drones from North Korea crossing the border, and one traveled as far as the northern part of the South Korean capital region, which is about an hour's drive away, South

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Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

The military responded by firing warning shots and launching fighter jets and attack helicopters to shoot down the North Korean drones. The attack helicopters fired a combined 100 rounds but it wasn't immediately known if any of the North Korean drones were shot down, according to the Defense Ministry.

There were no immediate reports of civilian damage on the ground in South Korea. One of the North Korean drones returned to the North after three hours in South Korea, while the rest disappeared from South Korean military radars one after another, the Joint Chiefs said.

The North Korean drones and the swift response from the South came three days after the North fired two short-range ballistic missile in the latest in its torrid run of weapons tests this year. Friday's launches were seen as a protest of the South Korean-U.S. joint air drills that North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal.

One of the South Korean fighter jets scrambled on Monday, a KA-1 light attack plane, crashed during takeoff but its two pilots both ejected safely, defense officials said. They said they also requested civilian airports in and near Seoul to halt takeoffs temporarily.

South Korea also sent surveillance assets near and across the border to photograph key military facilities in North Korea as corresponding measures against the North Korean drone flights, the Joint Chiefs said. It didn't elaborate, but some observers say that South Korea likely flew unmanned drones inside North Korean territory.

"Our military will thoroughly and resolutely respond to this kind of North Korean provocation," Maj. Gen. Lee Seung-o, director of operations at the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters.

South Korea's public confirmation of any reconnaissance activities inside North Korea is highly unusual and likely reflects a resolve by the conservative government led by President Yoon Suk Yeol to get tough on North Korean provocations. North Korea could respond with more fiery rhetoric or weapons tests or other provocation, some observers say.

It's the first time for North Korean drones to enter South Korean airspace since 2017, when a suspected North Korean drone was found crashed in South Korea. South Korean military officials said at the time that the drone with a Sony-made camera photographed a U.S. missile defense system in South Korea.

North Korea has touted its drone program, and South Korean officials have previously said the North had about 300 drones. In 2014, several suspected North Korean drones equipped with Japanese-made cameras were found south of the border. Experts said they were low-tech but could be considered a potential security threat.

A White House National Security official said U.S. officials were "consulting closely with the (Republic of Korea) about the nature of this incursion."

"We recognize the need of the ROK to protect its territorial integrity," said the official, who was not authorized to be identified and commented on condition of anonymity. "The U.S. commitment to the defense of the Republic of Korea remains ironclad."

Earlier this month, North Korea claimed to have performed major tests needed to acquire its first spy satellite and a more mobile intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the U.S. mainland. They were among high-tech weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to introduce along with multi-warheads, underwater-launched nuclear missiles, nuclear-powered submarines and hypersonic missiles.

Kim has also called for the development of reconnaissance drones capable of precision surveillance up to 500 kilometers (310 miles) deep into enemy's territory. In 2013, he watched a drone attack drill on a simulated South Korean target, according to the North's state media.

North Korea had earlier released low-resolution photos of South Korean cities as viewed from space, but some experts in South Korea said the images were too crude for surveillance purposes. Such assessments infuriated North Korea, with Kim's powerful sister Kim Yo Jong issuing a series of derisive terms to insult unidentified South Korean experts and express her anger.

North Korea is to hold a key ruling Workers' Party conference this week to review past policies and set policy goals. Some experts say that during the meeting, North Korea will likely reaffirm its push to bolster

nuclear and missile arsenals to cope with what it calls hostile U.S. policies, such as U.S.-led international sanctions and its regular military training with South Korea.

North Korea would eventually use its boosted nuclear capability as a bargaining chip to win international recognition as a legitimate nuclear state, the relaxing of international sanctions and other concessions, analysts say.

## **Protest-backing soccer star's family kept from leaving Iran**

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A prominent former soccer player in Iran who has expressed support for anti-government protests says his wife and daughter were prevented from leaving the country on Monday after their plane made an unannounced stopover en route to Dubai.

Ali Daei, who had his own passport briefly confiscated after returning to the country earlier this year, said his wife and daughter departed from the capital, Tehran, legally before the flight made an unannounced stop on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf, where they were questioned by authorities.

He said his daughter was released but the doors to the flight were closed by then. He said his family had planned to travel to Dubai and return next week.

The flight-tracking website Flightradar24 showed Mahan Air Flight W563 being diverted to Kish Island before traveling onward to Dubai a couple hours later.

There was no comment from the airline or Iranian authorities.

The semiofficial Tasnim news agency, believed to be close to the Revolutionary Guard, said a travel ban was imposed on Daei's wife earlier this month because of her support for the protests. It said she tried to illegally bypass the ban, without elaborating, and that her final destination was the U.S. The reports did not name his wife or daughter, who are not public figures.

Daei is one of several Iranian celebrities who have come out in support of the protests ignited by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in September. The Kurdish woman died after being arrested by Iran's morality police in Tehran for allegedly violating the country's strict dress code.

The protests rapidly spread across the country and escalated into calls for the overthrow of the theocracy established after the 1979 revolution, making it one of the biggest challenges to clerical rule in over four decades.

At least 507 protesters have been killed and more than 18,500 people have been arrested, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that has closely monitored the unrest. Iranian authorities have not released figures for those killed or arrested.

Before his passport was confiscated, Daei, a top international goal scorer and former Iranian team captain, had urged the government on social media to "solve the problems of the Iranian people rather than using repression, violence and arrests." He later said it was returned to him.

The leaderless protesters, rallying under the slogan "women, life, freedom," say they are fed up after decades of social and political repression by a clerical establishment they view as corrupt and out of touch. Iranian authorities have blamed the unrest on foreign adversaries like the U.S. and Israel.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said in a statement Sunday that it had arrested seven individuals in the southeastern city of Kerman with a "direct link" to Britain who were involved in the protests. It said some members of the network had dual nationality, without elaborating.

Iran has arrested a number of Iranians with dual nationality in recent years and convicted them of state security offenses in closed-door trials. Rights groups say such detainees are denied due process and accuse Iran of using them as bargaining chips with the West, something Iranian officials deny.

## **Israeli air force veterans say incoming government a danger**

JERUSALEM (AP) — Over 1,000 senior Israeli air force veterans, including a former Israeli chief of staff, on Monday urged the country's top legal officials to stand tough against the incoming government.

In a letter to the chief of Israel's Supreme Court and other top officials, they said the alliance of reli-

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gious and ultranationalist parties threatens Israel's future. The letter was delivered days before the new government is to take office.

"We come from all strata of society and from across the political spectrum," the letter said. "What we have in common today is the fear that the democratic state of Israel is in danger."

It called the legal officials "the final line of defense" and implored them to "do everything in your reach to stop the disaster that is affecting the country."

Among the nearly 1,200 signatories were Dan Halutz, who served as military chief from 2005-2007; Avihu Ben-Nun, a former commander of the air force and Amos Yadlin, a former head of military intelligence. All three are former fighter pilots.

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ultra-Orthodox and far-right partners captured a parliamentary majority in Nov. 1 elections.

While they have not yet completed coalition negotiations, Netanyahu has reached a series of deals that would grant his far-right partners authority over the national police force and settlement construction in the occupied West Bank.

They are promoting legislation to allow a politician who spent time in prison in a bribery case to serve as a Cabinet minister while on probation for a separate conviction on tax offenses. They also are expected to promote a series of changes in the legal system that critics say will weaken the judiciary and potentially dismiss criminal charges against Netanyahu.

On Sunday, Netanyahu rebuked an ally over anti-LGBTQ comments.

Netanyahu is expected to return to office as head of his new government on Thursday.

## No. 1 Purdue headlines AP Top 25; Miami leaps, UNC returns

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

Purdue remained atop The Associated Press Top 25 men's college basketball poll for a third straight week, while preseason No. 1 North Carolina returned to the rankings and New Mexico cracked the poll for the first time in eight years.

The Boilermakers earned 40 of 60 first-place votes in Monday's latest poll, while fellow unbeaten Connecticut earned the other 20 to sit at No. 2 in an unchanged top.

Purdue had never been ranked No. 1 before a one-week stay there last December, and was unranked to start the season. But the Boilermakers made a rapid rise from No. 24 to No. 5 in a one-week span in late November, then climbed to No. 1 on Dec. 12.

The Boilermakers' win against New Orleans last week marked their first home game with that No. 1 ranking.

"We've not had any handouts. We've had to work for everything," coach Matt Painter said afterward, adding: "But we've earned it. but we've got to keep earning it. This isn't the season. This is just a third of the season."

THE TOP TIER

No. 3 Houston, No. 4 Kansas and No. 5 Arizona held their positions as the top five remained in place for a second straight week.

Texas was next at No. 6, followed by Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas and Gonzaga — the preseason choice at No. 2 that returned to the top 10 after sliding as low as No. 18 earlier this month.

TAR HEELS RETURN

North Carolina is back in the poll at No. 25 after a tumultuous opening to the season.

Returning four starters from last year's unexpected run to the NCAA title game, the Tar Heels started December by becoming only the sixth team to go from preseason No. 1 to unranked since at least the 1961-62 season. That came after a run of four straight losses.

But UNC has won four straight since, the past two coming against Big Ten teams — Ohio State on Dec. 17 and Michigan last week — to regroup.

RISING

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Miami had the week's biggest jump after a win against Virginia, climbing eight spots to No. 14 for its highest ranking since the 2017-18 season. No. 20 Auburn rose three spots. In all, 10 teams moved up from last week.

## SLIDING

Virginia took the week's biggest tumble, falling seven spots to No. 13. Mississippi State was close behind, falling six spots to No. 21. Duke was the only other team to slide, falling three spots to No. 17.

## STATUS QUO

Seven teams held their positions from last week, with No. 12 Baylor and No. 19 Kentucky joining the unchanged top five.

## WELCOME

Xavier and New Mexico are tied at No. 22, while No. 24 West Virginia joined them in new additions to the poll this season. For the Lobos, it marks the first time they've cracked the AP Top 25 since March 2014.

## FAREWELL (FOR NOW)

Illinois (No. 16), Virginia Tech (No. 21), Marquette (No. 24) and Arizona State (No. 25) fell out from last week's poll.

## CONFERENCE WATCH

The Southeastern Conference led all leagues with six ranked teams, followed by the Big 12 with five and the Atlantic Coast Conference with four.

The Big Ten had three ranked teams while the Pac-12 and Big East each had two. The American Athletic, West Coast and Mountain West conferences each had one.

Follow Aaron Beard on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/aaronbeardap>

AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-basketball> and <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-basketball-poll> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## Zach Bryan drops 'All My Homies Hate Ticketmaster' album

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The chorus against Ticketmaster's contentious concert pricing practices is growing, numbering among them Zach Bryan and friends.

The country music artist dropped a live album, "All My Homies Hate Ticketmaster," on Sunday. With it came a statement posted to social media in which he decried "a massive issue with fair ticket prices to live shows lately."

"I've decided to play a limited number of headline shows next year to which I've done all I can to make prices as cheap as possible and to prove to people tickets don't have to cost \$450 to see a good and honest show," Bryan wrote, cautioning that he didn't have control of ticket prices for festivals he'll play.

The statement doesn't mention Ticketmaster by name except in the new album title, though he tagged the company in a separate Instagram post displaying the track listing. A message seeking comment from Ticketmaster was not immediately returned.

Ticketmaster has faced a slew of bad press and scrutiny in recent weeks, notably around the botched rollout of tickets for superstar Taylor Swift's upcoming Eras Tour.

A presale event in mid-November crashed the site and left many fans without tickets; the planned general sale for the stadium tour was subsequently scrapped because the dominant ticketing giant had run out of tickets. The debacle has even led several state attorneys general to open investigations.

Ticketmaster Mexico is also in hot water over a Bad Bunny concert in Mexico City where thousands were left in the cold thanks to fake tickets. Mexico's consumer protection agency announced an investigation, but Ticketmaster Mexico denied the December concert was oversold and instead blamed false tickets bought through unofficial channels and "temporary interruptions in the ticket reading system, which unfortunately momentarily impeded recognition of legitimate tickets."

Experts say the frustration over Ticketmaster's practices could drive political engagement, which Bryan

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alluded to in his statement when criticizing inaction while "huge monopolies sit there stealing money from working class people."

A songwriter "trying to make 'relatable music for the working class man or woman' should pride themselves on fighting for the people who listen to the words they're singing," he added.

As of Monday morning, Bryan enjoyed a one-two punch atop Apple Music's country chart: The 24-track "All My Homies Hate Ticketmaster," a recording of his Nov. 3 show at Colorado's Red Rocks Amphitheatre, is at No. 1, followed by his 2022 major label debut, "American Heartbreak."

Bryan said he would announce a tour soon.

## Final goodbye: Recalling influential people who died in 2022

By BERNARD McGHEE Associated Press

One would have to go back hundreds of years to find a monarch who reigned longer than Queen Elizabeth II.

In her 70 years on the throne, she helped modernize the monarchy across decades of enormous social change, royal marriages and births, and family scandals. For most Britons, she was the only monarch they had ever known.

Her death in September was arguably the most high-profile death this year, prompting a collective outpouring of grief and respect for her steady leadership as well as some criticism of the monarchy's role in colonialism. She likely met more people than anyone in history, and her image — on stamps, coins and bank notes — was among the most reproduced in the world.

Other world leaders who died in 2022 include former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who died in August. His efforts to revitalize the Soviet Union led to the collapse of communism there and the end of the Cold War. He eventually resigned after an attempted coup, just as republics declared independence from the Soviet Union.

The year also saw the assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was fatally shot during a campaign speech in July.

Other political figures who died this year include: former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, former Northern Ireland First Minister David Trimble, former Chinese President Jiang Zemin, former Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk, former Mexico President Luis Echeverría, former Peru President Francisco Morales Bermudez, Cuban diplomat Ricardo Alarcón, former U.S. Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, former Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos, American Indian Movement co-founder Clyde Bellecourt and former U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter.

Among the entertainers who died this year was groundbreaking actor Sidney Poitier, who played roles with such dignity that it helped change the way Black people are portrayed on screen. Poitier, who died in January, became the first Black actor to win the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in the 1963 film "Lilies of the Field."

Others in the world of arts and entertainment who died in 2022 include: director Jean-Luc Godard; filmmaker Ivan Reitman; visual artists Paula Rego and Carmen Herrera; fashion designers Issey Miyake and Hanae Mori; fashion editor André Leon Talley; country singers Loretta Lynn and Naomi Judd; rock star Meat Loaf; Fleetwood Mac singer-songwriter Christine McVie; Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins; Depeche Mode keyboardist Andy "Fletch" Fletcher; Bollywood singer and composer Bappi Lahiri; singer-actors Olivia Newton-John and Irene Cara; "Sesame Street" actor Bob McGrath; jazz pianist Ramsey Lewis; rappers Coolio and Takeoff; singers Ronnie Spector, Judith Durham, Lata Mangeshkar and Gal Costa; and actors Angela Lansbury, Leslie Jordan, Bob Saget, Tony Dow, Kirstie Alley, Nichelle Nichols, Ray Liotta, Irene Papas, Sally Kellerman, Anne Heche, Bernard Cribbins, Yvette Mimieux and June Brown.

Here is a roll call of some influential figures who died in 2022 (cause of death cited for younger people, if available):

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Dan Reeves, 77. He won a Super Bowl as a player with the Dallas Cowboys but was best known for a long coaching career that included four blowout losses in the title game with the Denver Broncos and the Atlanta Falcons. Jan. 1.

Sheikh Saleh bin Mohammed al-Luhaidan, 90. An influential Saudi cleric who once served for years as head of the kingdom's Shariah courts and whose ultraconservative views sparked outcry. Jan. 5.

Peter Bogdanovich, 82. The ascot-wearing cinephile and director of 1970s black-and-white classics like "The Last Picture Show" and "Paper Moon." Jan. 6.

Sidney Poitier, 94. He played roles of such dignity and intelligence that he transformed how Black people were portrayed on screen, becoming the first Black actor to win an Oscar for best lead performance and the first to be a top box-office draw. Jan. 6.

Marilyn Bergman, 93. The Oscar-winning lyricist who teamed with husband Alan Bergman on "The Way We Were," "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?" and hundreds of other songs. Jan. 8.

Bob Saget, 65. The actor-comedian known for his role as beloved single dad Danny Tanner on the sitcom "Full House" and as the wisecracking host of "America's Funniest Home Videos." Jan. 9.

Dwayne Hickman, 87. The actor and network TV executive who despite numerous achievements throughout his life would always be remembered fondly by a generation of baby boomers for his role as Dobie Gillis. Jan. 9.

Robert Durst, 78. The wealthy New York real estate heir and failed fugitive dogged for decades with suspicion in the disappearance and deaths of those around him before he was convicted last year of killing his best friend. Jan. 10.

David Sassoli, 65. An Italian journalist who worked his way up in politics while defending the downtrodden and oppressed to become president of the European Union's parliament. Jan. 11.

Clyde Bellecourt, 85. A leader in the Native American struggle for civil rights and a founder of the American Indian Movement. Jan. 11.

Ronnie Spector, 78. The cat-eyed, bee-hived rock 'n' roll siren who sang such 1960s hits as "Be My Baby," "Baby I Love You" and "Walking in the Rain" as the leader of the girl group the Ronettes. Jan. 12.

Iraj Pezeshkzad, 94. An Iranian author whose bestselling comic novel, "My Uncle Napoleon," lampooned Persian culture's self-aggrandizing and paranoid behavior as the country entered the modern era. Jan. 12.

Fred Parrish, 85. The lead singer of the 1950s harmony group the Five Satins and composer of the classic doo-wop ballad "In the Still of the Night." Jan. 13.

Ralph Emery, 88. He became known as the dean of country music broadcasters over more than a half-century in both radio and television. Jan. 15.

Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, 76. The former president of Mali who took office in a landmark election held after a destabilizing coup only to be ousted in another military takeover nearly seven years later. Jan. 16.

Charles McGee, 102. A Tuskegee Airman who flew 409 fighter combat missions over three wars and later helped to bring attention to the Black pilots who battled racism at home to fight for freedom abroad. Jan. 16.

Birju Maharaj, 83. A legend of classical Indian dance and among the country's most well-known performing artists. Jan. 17.

Yvette Mimieux, 80. The blond and blue-eyed 1960s film star of "Where the Boys Are," "The Time Machine" and "Light in the Piazza." Jan. 17.

André Leon Talley, 73. A towering and highly visible figure of the fashion world who made history as a rare Black editor in an overwhelmingly white industry. Jan. 18.

Meat Loaf, 74. The rock superstar loved by millions for his "Bat Out of Hell" album and for such theatrical, dark-hearted anthems as "Paradise By the Dashboard Light," "Two Out of Three Ain't Bad," and "I'd Do Anything for Love (But I Won't Do That)." Jan. 20.

Louie Anderson, 68. His four-decade career as a comedian and actor included his unlikely, Emmy-winning performance as mom to twin adult sons in the TV series "Baskets." Jan. 21.



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Thich Nhat Hanh, 95. The revered Zen Buddhist monk who helped spread the practice of mindfulness in the West and socially engaged Buddhism in the East. Jan. 22.

Olavo de Carvalho, 74. A leading light of Brazil's conservative movement who stirred passions among both devotees and detractors. Jan. 24.

Fatma Girik, 79. A beloved Turkish screen actress of the 1960s and 1970s and one-time district mayor. Jan. 24.

Diego Verdaguer, 70. An Argentine singer-songwriter whose romantic hits such as "Corazón de papel," "Yo te amo" and "Volveré" sold nearly 50 million copies. Jan. 27.

Howard Hesseman, 81. He played the radio disc jockey Dr. Johnny Fever on the sitcom "WKRP in Cincinnati" and the actor-turned-history teacher Charlie Moore on "Head of the Class." Jan. 29.

Cheslie Kryst, 30. The winner of the Miss USA pageant and a correspondent for the entertainment news program "Extra." Jan. 30. Died by suicide.

## FEBRUARY

Shintaro Ishihara, 89. A fiery nationalist politician remembered as Tokyo's gaffe-prone governor who provoked a spat with China by calling for Japan's purchase of disputed islands in the East China Seas. Feb. 1.

Robin Herman, 70. A gender barrier-breaking reporter for The New York Times who was the first female journalist to interview players in the locker room after an NHL game. Feb. 1.

Monica Vitti, 90. The versatile movie star of Michelangelo Antonioni's "L'Avventura" and other Italian alienation films of the 1960s, and later a leading comic actress. Feb. 2.

Ashley Bryan, 98. A prolific and prize-winning children's author and illustrator who told stories of Black life, culture and folklore in such acclaimed works as "Freedom Over Me," "Beautiful Blackbird" and "Beat the Story-Drum, Pum-Pum." Feb. 4.

Lata Mangeshkar, 92. A legendary Indian singer with a prolific, groundbreaking catalog and a voice recognized by more than a billion people in South Asia. Feb. 6.

Douglas Trumbull, 79. A visual effects master who showed movie audiences indelible images of the future and of space in films like "2001: A Space Odyssey," "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" and "Blade Runner." Feb. 7.

Luc Montagnier, 89. A French researcher who won a Nobel Prize in 2008 for discovering the HIV virus and more recently spread false claims about the coronavirus. Feb. 8.

Betty Davis, 77. A bold and pioneering funk singer, model and songwriter of the 1960s and '70s who was credited with inspiring then-husband Miles Davis' landmark fusion of jazz and more contemporary sounds. Feb. 9.

Ivan Reitman, 75. The influential filmmaker and producer behind many of the most beloved comedies of the late 20th century, from "Animal House" to "Ghostbusters." Feb. 12.

Carmen Herrera, 106. A Cuban-born artist whose radiant color palette and geometric paintings were overlooked for decades before the art world took notice. Feb. 12.

P.J. O'Rourke, 74. The prolific author and satirist who re-fashioned the irreverence and "Gonzo" journalism of the 1960s counterculture into a distinctive brand of conservative and libertarian commentary. Feb. 15.

Bappi Lahiri, 69. A popular Bollywood singer and composer who won millions of fans with his penchant for feet-tapping disco music in the 1980s and 1990s. Feb. 15.

Gail S. Halvorsen, 101. A U.S. military pilot known as the "Candy Bomber" for his candy airdrops during the Berlin Airlift after World War II ended. Feb. 16.

Jamal Edwards, 31. A British music entrepreneur who championed U.K. rap and grime and helped launch the careers of artists including Ed Sheeran, Jessie J and Stormzy. Feb. 20.

Dr. Paul Farmer, 62. A U.S. physician, humanitarian and author renowned for providing health care to millions of impoverished people worldwide and who co-founded the global nonprofit Partners in Health. Feb. 21.

Mark Lanegan, 57. The singer whose raspy baritone and darkly poetic songwriting made Screaming Trees

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an essential part of the early Seattle grunge scene and brought him an acclaimed solo career. Feb. 22.

Sally Kellerman, 84. The Oscar and Emmy nominated actor who played Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan in director Robert Altman's 1970 film "MASH." Feb. 24.

John Landy, 91. An Australian runner who dueled with Roger Bannister to be the first person to run a four-minute mile. Feb. 24.

Shirley Hughes, 94. A British children's author and illustrator best known for her popular "Alfie" series and classic picture book "Dogger." Feb. 25.

## MARCH

Alan Ladd Jr., 84. The Oscar-winning producer and studio boss who as a 20th Century Fox executive greenlit "Star Wars." March 2.

Autherine Lucy Foster, 92. The first Black student to enroll at the University of Alabama. March 2.

Shane Warne, 52. He was regarded as one of the greatest players, most astute tacticians and ultimate competitors in the long history of cricket. March 4.

Inge Deutschkron, 99. A Holocaust survivor who hid in Berlin during the Third Reich to escape deportation to Nazi death camps and later wrote an autobiography. March 9.

Emilio Delgado, 81. The actor and singer who for 45 years was a warm and familiar presence in children's lives and a rare Latino face on American television as fix-it shop owner Luis on "Sesame Street." March 10.

Mario Terán, 80. The Bolivian soldier who pulled the trigger to execute famed revolutionary guerrilla Ernesto "Che" Guevara. March 10.

Traci Braxton, 50. A singer who was featured with her family in the reality television series "Braxton Family Values." March 12.

William Hurt, 71. His laconic charisma and self-assured subtlety as an actor made him one of the 1980s foremost leading men in movies such as "Broadcast News," "Body Heat" and "The Big Chill." March 13.

Brent Renaud, 50. An acclaimed filmmaker who traveled to some of the darkest and most dangerous corners of the world for documentaries that transported audiences to little-known places of suffering. March 13. Killed in Ukraine when Russian forces opened fire on his vehicle.

Eugene Parker, 94. A physicist who theorized the existence of solar wind and became the first person to witness the launch of a spacecraft bearing his name. March 15.

Lauro F. Cavazos Jr., 95. A Texas ranch foreman's son who rose to become the first Latino to serve in a presidential Cabinet as U.S. Secretary of Education during the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. March 15.

Don Young, 88. The Alaska congressman was the longest-serving Republican in the history of the U.S. House. March 18.

Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, 94. One of the most influential leaders in Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. March 18.

Madeleine Albright, 84. A child refugee from Nazi- and then Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe who rose to become the first female secretary of state and a mentor to many current and former American statesmen and women. March 23.

Dagny Carlsson, 109. Dubbed the world's oldest blogger, who wrote about her life in Sweden based on the attitude that you should never think you are too old to do what you want to do. March 24.

Taylor Hawkins, 50. For 25 years, he was the drummer for Foo Fighters and best friend of frontman Dave Grohl. March 25.

Noam Shalit, 68. The father of a captive Israeli soldier who battled for five years to free his son from his Hamas captors. March 30.

Richard Howard, 92. A Pulitzer Prize-winning poet celebrated for his exuberant monologues of historical figures and a prolific translator who helped introduce readers to a wide range of French literature. March 31.

## APRIL

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Estelle Harris, 93. She hollered her way into TV history as George Costanza's short-fused mother on "Seinfeld" and voiced Mrs. Potato Head in the "Toy Story" franchise. April 2.

June Brown, 95. She played the chain-smoking Cockney matriarch Dot Cotton on the British soap opera "EastEnders" for 35 years. April 3.

Bobby Rydell, 79. A pompadoured heartthrob of early rock 'n roll who was a star of radio, television and the movie musical "Bye Bye Birdie." April 5.

Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, 75. The Russian nationalist leader was a senior lawmaker whose sulphurous rhetoric and antics alarmed the West but appealed to Russians' aggrievement and wounded pride. April 6.

Mimi Reinhard, 107. A secretary in Oskar Schindler's office who typed up the list of Jews he saved from extermination by Nazi Germany. April 8.

Gilbert Gottfried, 67. The actor and legendary standup comic known for his raw, scorched voice and crude jokes. April 12.

Letizia Battaglia, 87. An Italian photographer who documented the arrests of Mafia bosses and the bodies of their victims. April 13.

Liz Sheridan, 93. She played doting mom to Jerry Seinfeld on his hit sitcom. April 15.

Rosario Ibarra, 95. Her long struggle to learn the fate of her disappeared son helped develop Mexico's human rights movement and led her to become the country's first female presidential candidate. April 16.

Harrison Birtwistle, 87. The creator of daringly experimental modern music who was recognized as one of Britain's greatest contemporary composers. April 18.

Dede Robertson, 94. The wife of religious broadcaster Pat Robertson and a founding board member of the Christian Broadcasting Network. April 19.

Romeo Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, 93. An award-winning Texas author who began in the 1970s writing a series of novels that told the stories of people living in a fictional county along the Texas-Mexico border. April 19.

Robert Morse, 90. An actor who won a Tony Award as a hilariously brash corporate climber in "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" and a second one a generation later as the brilliant, troubled Truman Capote in "Tru." April 20.

Orrin G. Hatch, 88. The longest-serving Republican senator in history who was a fixture in Utah politics for more than four decades. April 23.

Dr. Morton Mower, 89. A former Maryland-based cardiologist who helped invent an automatic implantable defibrillator that has helped countless heart patients live longer and healthier. April 25.

Naomi Judd, 76. Her family harmonies with daughter Wynonna turned them into the Grammy-winning country stars The Judds. April 30. Died by suicide.

Ron Galella, 91. The photographer known for his visceral celebrity shots and his dogged pursuit of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who sued him and won a restraining order. April 30.

Ricardo Alarcón, 84. For years, he was the head of Cuba's parliament and one of the country's most prominent diplomats. April 30.

MAY

Kathy Boudin, 78. A former Weather Underground radical who served more than two decades behind bars for her role in a fatal 1981 armored truck robbery and spent the latter part of her life helping people who had been imprisoned. May 1.

Meda Mladkova, 102. A Czech arts collector, patron and historian who was an impassioned promoter of Frantisek Kupka and supported artists in communist Czechoslovakia while she was in exile behind the Iron Curtain. May 3.

Norman Mineta, 90. He broke racial barriers for Asian Americans serving in high-profile government posts and ordered commercial flights grounded after the 9/11 terror attacks as the nation's federal transporta-

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tion secretary. May 3.

Stanislav Shushkevich, 87. He steered Belarus to independence during the breakup of the Soviet Union and served as its first leader. May 4.

Mickey Gilley, 86. A country singer whose namesake Texas honky-tonk inspired the 1980 film "Urban Cowboy" and a nationwide wave of Western-themed nightspots. May 7.

Ray Scott, 88. A consummate promoter who helped launch professional bass angling and became a fishing buddy to presidents while popularizing the conservation practice of catching and releasing fish. May 8.

Fred Ward, 79. A veteran actor who brought a gruff tenderness to tough-guy roles in such films as "The Right Stuff," "The Player" and "Tremors." May 8.

Midge Decter, 94. A leading neoconservative writer and commentator who in blunt and tenacious style helped lead the right's attack in the culture wars as she opposed the rise of feminism, affirmative action and the gay rights movement. May 9.

Leonid Kravchuk, 88. He led Ukraine to independence amid the collapse of the Soviet Union and served as its first president. May 10.

Bob Lanier, 73. The left-handed big man who muscled up beside the likes of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as one of the NBA's top players of the 1970s. May 10.

Shireen Abu Akleh, 51. A correspondent who became a household name synonymous with Al Jazeera's coverage of life under occupation during her more than two decades reporting in the Palestinian territories. May 11. Fatally shot during an Israeli raid in the West Bank.

Randy Weaver, 74. The patriarch of a family that was involved in an 11-day Idaho standoff with federal agents 30 years ago that left three people dead and helped spark the growth of antigovernment extremists. May 11.

Robert C. McFarlane, 84. The former White House national security adviser was a top aide to President Ronald Reagan who pleaded guilty to charges for his role in an illegal arms-for-hostages deal known as the Iran-Contra affair. May 12.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, 73. The United Arab Emirates' long-ailing ruler and president who oversaw much of the country's blistering economic growth and whose name was immortalized on the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa. May 13.

Uri Savir, 69. A prominent Israeli peace negotiator and dogged believer in the need for a settlement with the Palestinians. May 13.

Rosmarie Trapp, 93. Her Austrian family the von Trapps was made famous in the musical and beloved movie "The Sound of Music." May 13.

Vangelis, 79. The Greek electronic composer who wrote the unforgettable Academy Award-winning score for the film "Chariots of Fire" and music for dozens of other movies, documentaries and TV series. May 17.

Ray Liotta, 67. The actor best known for playing mobster Henry Hill in "Goodfellas" and baseball player Shoeless Joe Jackson in "Field of Dreams." May 26.

Andy "Fletch" Fletcher, 60. Keyboardist for British synth pop giants Depeche Mode for more than 40 years. May 26.

Cardinal Angelo Sodano, 94. A once-powerful Italian prelate who long served as the Vatican's No. 2 official but whose legacy was tarnished by his support for the pedophile founder of an influential religious order. May 27.

Ronnie Hawkins, 87. A brash rockabilly star from Arkansas who became a patron of the Canadian music scene after moving north and recruiting a handful of local musicians later known as the Band. May 29.

Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, 83. An elderly leader of the former Cali cartel that smuggled vast amounts of cocaine from Colombia to the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. May 31. Died in a U.S. prison.

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## JUNE

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Ann Turner Cook, 95. Her cherubic baby face was known the world over as the original Gerber baby. June 3.

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George Lamming, 94. A giant of post-colonial literature whose novels, essays and speeches influenced readers and peers in his native Barbados and around the world. June 4.

Valery Ryumin, 82. A veteran Russian cosmonaut who set space endurance records on Soviet missions, then returned to orbit after a long absence to fly on a U.S. space shuttle. June 6.

Jim Seals, 80. He teamed with fellow musician "Dash" Crofts on such 1970s soft-rock hits as "Summer Breeze," "Diamond Girl" and "We May Never Pass This Way Again." June 6.

Paula Rego, 87. A Portuguese-British artist who created bold, visceral works inspired by fairy tales, her homeland and her own life. June 8.

Song Hae, 95. A South Korean TV presenter who was beloved for decades as the warm-humored emcee of a nationally televised singing contest. June 8.

Jean-Louis Trintignant, 91. A French film legend and amateur race car driver who earned acclaim for his starring role in the Oscar-winning film "A Man and a Woman" half a century ago and went on to portray the brutality of aging in his later years. June 17.

Mark Shields, 85. A political commentator and columnist who shared his insight into American politics and wit on "PBS NewsHour" for decades. June 18.

Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, 80. He was Denmark's foreign minister for more than 10 years from the early 1980s and was considered one of the Nordic region's key politicians in the end phase of the Cold War. June 18.

Clela Rorex, 78. A former Colorado county clerk considered a pioneer in the gay rights movement for being the first public official to issue a same-sex marriage license in 1975. June 19.

Józef Walaszczyk, 102. A member of the Polish resistance who rescued dozens of Jews during the Nazi German occupation of Poland during World War II. June 20.

Tony Siragusa, 55. The charismatic defensive tackle who was part of one of the most celebrated defenses in NFL history with the Baltimore Ravens. June 22.

Leonardo Del Vecchio, 87. He founded eyewear empire Luxottica in a trailer and turned an everyday object into a global fashion item, becoming one of Italy's richest men in the process. June 27.

Yehuda Meshi-Zahav, 62. A prominent member of Israel's ultra-Orthodox community who founded a volunteer paramedic service before his reputation came crashing down in a series of sexual abuse allegations. June 29.

Hershel W. "Woody" Williams, 98. The last remaining Medal of Honor recipient from World War II, whose heroics under fire over several crucial hours at the Battle of Iwo Jima made him a legend in his native West Virginia. June 29.

Sonny Barger, 83. The leather-clad fixture of 1960s counterculture and figurehead of the Hells Angels motorcycle club who was at the notorious Rolling Stones concert at Altamont Speedway. June 29.

## JULY

Bradford Freeman, 97. The last survivor of the famed Army unit featured in the World War II oral history book and miniseries "Band of Brothers." July 3.

James Caan, 82. The curly-haired tough guy known to movie fans as the hotheaded Sonny Corleone of "The Godfather" and to television audiences as both the dying football player in the classic weeper "Brian's Song" and the casino boss in "Las Vegas." July 6.

Shinzo Abe, 67. Japan's longest serving prime minister, he was also perhaps the most polarizing, complex politician in recent Japanese history. July 8. Fatally shot during a campaign speech.

José Eduardo dos Santos, 79. He was once one of Africa's longest-serving rulers who during almost four decades as president of Angola fought the continent's longest civil war and turned his country into a major oil producer as well as one of the world's poorest and most corrupt nations. July 8.

Tony Sirico, 79. He played the impeccably groomed mobster Paulie Walnuts in "The Sopranos" and brought his tough-guy swagger to films including "Goodfellas." July 8.

Larry Storch, 99. The rubber-faced comic whose long career in theater, movies and television was capped by his "F Troop" role as zany Cpl. Agarn in the 1960s spoof of Western frontier TV shows. July 8.

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Luis Echeverria, 100. A former Mexican president who tried to cast himself as a progressive world leader but was blamed for some of Mexico's worst political killings of the 20th century. July 8.

Ann Shulgin, 91. Together with her late husband Alexander Shulgin, she pioneered the use of psychedelic drugs in psychotherapy and co-wrote two seminal books on the subject. July 9.

Ivana Trump, 73. A skier-turned-businesswoman who formed half of a publicity power couple in the 1980s as the first wife of former President Donald Trump and mother of his oldest children. July 14. Injuries suffered in an accident.

Eugenio Scalfari, 98. He helped revolutionize Italian journalism with the creation of La Repubblica, a liberal daily that boldly challenged Italy's traditional newspapers. July 14.

Francisco Morales Bermudez, 100. The former president was an army general credited with paving the way for Peru's return to civilian government — but also convicted abroad of involvement in dirty war crimes. July 14.

William "Pookie" Hart, 77. A founder of the Grammy-winning trio the Delfonics who helped write and sang a soft lead tenor on such classic "Sound of Philadelphia" ballads as "La-La (Means I Love You)" and "Didn't I (Blow Your Mind This Time)." July 14.

Taurean Blacque, 82. An Emmy-nominated actor who was known for his role as a detective on the 1980s NBC drama series "Hill Street Blues." July 21.

Stuart Woods, 84. An author of more than 90 novels, many featuring the character of lawyer-investigator Stone Barrington. July 22.

Tim Giago, 88. The founder of the first independently owned Native American newspaper in the United States. July 24.

Diana Kennedy, 99. A tart-tongued British food writer devoted to Mexican cuisine. July 24.

Paul Sorvino, 83. An imposing actor who specialized in playing crooks and cops like Paulie Cicero in "Goodfellas" and the NYPD sergeant Phil Cerreta on "Law & Order." July 25.

David Trimble, 77. A former Northern Ireland first minister who won the Nobel Peace Prize for playing a key role in helping end Northern Ireland's decades of violence. July 25.

James Lovelock, 103. The British environmental scientist whose influential Gaia theory sees the Earth as a living organism gravely imperiled by human activity. July 26.

Tony Dow, 77. As Wally Cleaver on the sitcom "Leave It to Beaver," he helped create the popular and lasting image of the American teenager of the 1950s and 60s. July 27.

Bernard Cribbins, 93. A beloved British entertainer whose seven-decade career ranged from the bawdy "Carry On" comedies to children's television and "Doctor Who." July 27.

Nichelle Nichols, 89. She broke barriers for Black women in Hollywood as communications officer Lt. Uhura on the original "Star Trek" television series. July 30.

Pat Carroll, 95. A comedic television mainstay for decades, Emmy-winner for "Caesar's Hour" and the voice of Ursula in "The Little Mermaid." July 30.

Bill Russell, 88. The NBA great who anchored a Boston Celtics dynasty that won 11 championships in 13 years — the last two as the first Black head coach in any major U.S. sport — and marched for civil rights with Martin Luther King Jr. July 31.

Ayman al-Zawahri, 71. An Egyptian surgeon who became a mastermind of jihad against the West and who took over as al-Qaida leader after Osama bin Laden's death in a U.S. raid. July 31. Killed by a U.S. drone strike in Afghanistan.

Fidel Valdez Ramos, 94. The former Philippine president was a U.S.-trained ex-general who saw action in the Korean and Vietnam wars and played a key role in a 1986 pro-democracy uprising that ousted a dictator. July 31.

AUGUST

Vin Scully, 94. A Hall of Fame broadcaster who called thousands of games involving the Brooklyn and

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Los Angeles Dodgers during his 67 years in the booth. Aug. 2.

Roy Hackett, 93. The British civil rights campaigner was a leader of a bus boycott that played a key role in ending legal racial discrimination in the U.K. Aug. 3.

Albert Woodfox, 75. A former inmate who spent decades in isolation at a Louisiana prison and then became an advocate for prison reforms after he was released. Aug. 4.

Issey Miyake, 84. He built one of Japan's biggest fashion brands and was known for his boldly sculpted pleated pieces as well as former Apple CEO Steve Jobs' black turtlenecks. Aug. 5.

Judith Durham, 79. Australia's folk music icon who achieved global fame as the lead singer of The Seekers. Aug. 5.

Bert Fields, 93. For decades, he was the go-to lawyer for Hollywood A-listers including Tom Cruise, Michael Jackson, George Lucas and the Beatles, and a character as colorful as many of his clients. Aug. 7.

Olivia Newton-John, 73. The Grammy-winning superstar who reigned on pop, country, adult contemporary and dance charts with such hits as "Physical" and "You're the One That I Want" and won countless hearts as everyone's favorite Sandy in the blockbuster film version of "Grease." Aug. 8.

Lamont Dozier, 81. He was the middle name of the celebrated Holland-Dozier-Holland team that wrote and produced "You Can't Hurry Love," "Heat Wave" and dozens of other hits and helped make Motown an essential record company of the 1960s and beyond. Aug. 8.

Raymond Briggs, 88. A British children's author and illustrator whose creations include "The Snowman" and "Fungus the Bogeyman." Aug. 9.

Hanae Mori, 96. A designer known for her elegant signature butterfly motifs, numerous cinema fashions and the wedding gown of Japan's empress. Aug. 11.

Jean-Jacques Sempé, 89. A French cartoonist whose simple line drawings tinted with humor graced the covers of The New Yorker magazine and granted him international acclaim. Aug. 11.

Wolfgang Petersen, 81. The German filmmaker whose World War II submarine epic "Das Boot" propelled him into a blockbuster Hollywood career that included the films "In the Line of Fire," "Air Force One" and "The Perfect Storm." Aug. 12.

Anne Heche, 53. The Emmy-winning film and television actor whose dramatic Hollywood rise in the 1990s and accomplished career contrasted with personal chapters of turmoil. Aug. 14. Injuries suffered in a car crash.

Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, 62. A veteran stock market investor and Indian billionaire nicknamed India's own Warren Buffett. Aug. 14.

Dr. Nafis Sadik, 92. A Pakistani doctor who championed women's health and rights and spearheaded the breakthrough action plan adopted by 179 countries at the 1994 United Nations population conference. Aug. 14.

Svika Pick, 72. A pillar of Israel's music industry who gained international attention after his song won the Eurovision Song Contest. Aug. 14.

Jerry Allison, 82. An architect of rock drumming who played and co-wrote songs with childhood friend Buddy Holly and whose future wife inspired the classic "Peggy Sue." Aug. 22.

Len Dawson, 87. The Hall of Fame quarterback whose unmistakable swagger in helping the Kansas City Chiefs to their first Super Bowl title earned him the nickname "Lenny the Cool." Aug. 24.

Kazuo Inamori, 90. He was the founder of Japanese ceramics and electronics maker Kyocera who also became a philanthropist singing the virtues of fairness and hard work. Aug. 24.

Bob LuPone, 76. As an actor, he earned a Tony Award nomination in the original run of "A Chorus Line" and played Tony Soprano's family physician, and also helped found and lead the influential off-Broadway theater company MCC Theater for nearly 40 years. Aug. 27.

Charlbi Dean, 32. The South African actor and model who had a breakout role in "Triangle of Sadness," which won this year's top prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Aug. 29. Sudden illness.

Mikhail Gorbachev, 91. The last leader of the Soviet Union, he set out to revitalize it but ended up unleashing forces that led to the collapse of communism, the breakup of the state and the end of the Cold

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War. Aug. 30.

## SEPTEMBER

Barbara Ehrenreich, 81. The author, activist and self-described "myth buster" who in such notable works as "Nickel and Dimed" and "Bait and Switch" challenged conventional thinking about class, religion and the very idea of an American dream. Sept. 1.

Moon Landrieu, 92. A former New Orleans mayor whose early, lonely stand against segregationists in the Louisiana legislature launched a political career at the forefront of sweeping changes on race. Sept. 5.

Bernard Shaw, 82. CNN's chief anchor for two decades and a pioneering Black broadcast journalist best remembered for calmly reporting the beginning of the Gulf War in 1991 as missiles flew around him in Baghdad. Sept. 7.

Marsha Hunt, 104. One of the last surviving actors from Hollywood's so-called Golden Age of the 1930s and 1940s who worked with performers ranging from Laurence Olivier to Andy Griffith in a career disrupted for a time by the McCarthy-era blacklist. Sept. 7.

Lance Mackey, 52. The four-time Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race winner was one of mushing's most colorful and accomplished champions but also suffered from health and drug issues. Sept. 7.

Queen Elizabeth II, 96. Britain's longest-reigning monarch and a rock of stability across much of a turbulent century. Sept. 8.

Ramsey Lewis, 87. A renowned jazz pianist whose music entertained fans over a more than 60-year career that began with the Ramsey Lewis Trio and made him one of the country's most successful jazz musicians. Sept. 12.

Jean-Luc Godard, 91. The iconic "enfant terrible" of the French New Wave who revolutionized popular cinema in 1960 with his first feature, "Breathless," and stood for years among the film world's most influential directors. Sept. 13.

Ken Starr, 76. A former federal appellate judge and a prominent attorney whose criminal investigation of Bill Clinton led to the president's impeachment and put Starr at the center of one of the country's most polarizing debates of the 1990s. Sept. 13.

Irene Papas, 93. The Greek actor and recording artist renowned for her dramatic performances and austere beauty that earned her prominent roles in Hollywood movies as well as in French and Italian cinema over six decades. Sept. 14.

Henry Silva, 95. A prolific character actor best known for playing villains and tough guys in "The Manchurian Candidate," "Ocean's Eleven" and other films. Sept. 14.

Dave Foreman, 74. A self-proclaimed eco-warrior who was a prominent member of the radical environmentalism movement and a co-founder of Earth First! Sept. 19.

Sylvia Wu, 106. Her famed Southern California restaurant drew Hollywood's biggest stars for four decades. Sept. 19.

Dr. Valery Polyakov, 80. The Soviet cosmonaut who set the record for the longest single stay in space. Sept. 19.

Louise Fletcher, 88. A late-blooming star whose riveting performance as the cruel and calculating Nurse Ratched in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" set a new standard for screen villains and won her an Academy Award. Sept. 23.

Pharoah Sanders, 81. The influential tenor saxophonist revered in the jazz world for the spirituality of his work. Sept. 24.

Meredith Tax, 80. A prominent activist and writer of second-wave feminism who challenged herself, her peers and the world at large to rethink long-held ideas about gender, race and class. Sept. 25.

Youssef al-Qaradawi, 96. An Egyptian cleric who was seen as the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and became the Islamist "voice of revolution" during the popular uprisings around the Arab world more than a decade ago. Sept. 26.



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Coolio, 59. The rapper was among hip-hop's biggest names of the 1990s with hits including "Gangsta's Paradise" and "Fantastic Voyage." Sept. 28.

Kevin Locke, 68. An acclaimed Native American flute player, hoop dancer, cultural ambassador and educator. Sept. 30.

## OCTOBER

Antonio Inoki, 79. A popular Japanese professional wrestler and lawmaker who faced boxing great Muhammad Ali in a mixed martial arts match in 1976. Oct. 1.

Sacheen Littlefeather, 75. The actor and activist who declined Marlon Brando's 1973 Academy Award for "The Godfather" on his behalf in an indelible protest of Hollywood's portrayal of Native Americans. Oct. 2.

Jerzy Urban, 89. A spokesman for Poland's communist-era government in the 1980s who masterminded state propaganda and censorship for the regime in the final years before its collapse. Oct. 3.

Charles Fuller, 83. The Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright of the searing and acclaimed "A Soldier's Play" who often explored and exposed how social institutions can perpetuate racism. Oct. 3.

Loretta Lynn, 90. The Kentucky coal miner's daughter whose frank songs about life and love as a woman in Appalachia pulled her out of poverty and made her a pillar of country music. Oct. 4.

Judy Tenuta, 72. A brash standup who cheekily styled herself as the "Love Goddess" and toured with George Carlin as she built her career in the 1980s golden age of comedy. Oct. 6.

Jody Miller, 80. Her hit "Queen of the House" won the 1966 Grammy Award for best country performance by a woman. Oct. 6.

Toshi Ichyanagi, 89. An avant-garde pianist and composer who studied with John Cage and went on to lead Japan's advances in experimental modern music. Oct. 7.

Nikki Finke, 68. The veteran reporter who became one of Hollywood's top journalists as founder of the entertainment trade website Deadline.com and whose sharp-tongued tenacity made her the most-feared columnist in show business. Oct. 9.

Anita Kerr, 94. A Grammy-winning singer and composer whose vocal group the Anita Kerr Singers provided the lush backdrop to the Nashville Sound. Oct. 10.

Angela Lansbury, 96. The scene-stealing British actor who kicked up her heels in the Broadway musicals "Mame" and "Gypsy" and solved endless murders as crime novelist Jessica Fletcher in the long-running TV series "Murder, She Wrote." Oct. 11.

James A. McDivitt, 93. He commanded the Apollo 9 mission testing the first complete set of equipment to go to the moon. Oct. 13.

Robbie Coltrane, 72. The baby-faced comedian and character actor whose hundreds of roles included a crime-solving psychologist on the TV series "Cracker" and the gentle half-giant Hagrid in the "Harry Potter" movies. Oct. 14.

Benjamin R. Civiletti, 87. A former U.S. attorney general who investigated President Jimmy Carter's brother while in the administration and who later became one of the nation's most expensive private attorneys. Oct. 16.

Joanna Simon, 85. An acclaimed mezzo-soprano, Emmy-winning TV correspondent and one of the three singing Simon sisters who include pop star Carly. Oct. 19.

Lucy Simon, 82. The composer who received a Tony nomination in 1991 for her work on the long-running Broadway musical "The Secret Garden." Oct. 20.

Zilli Schmidt, 98. A survivor of the Auschwitz, Lety and Ravensbrueck concentration camps who became a vocal advocate for the recognition of the Nazi genocide of Sinti and Roma. Oct. 21.

Dietrich Mateschitz, 78. The Austrian billionaire was the co-founder of energy drink company Red Bull and founder and owner of the Red Bull Formula One racing team. Oct. 22.

Ash Carter, 68. A former defense secretary who opened combat jobs to women and ended a ban on transgender people serving in the military. Oct. 24.

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Leslie Jordan, 67. The Emmy-winning actor whose wry Southern drawl and versatility made him a comedy and drama standout on TV series including "Will & Grace" and "American Horror Story." Oct. 24.

Julie Powell, 49. A food writer who became an internet darling after blogging for a year about making every recipe in Julia Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking," leading to a book deal and a film adaptation. Oct. 26.

Jerry Lee Lewis, 87. The untamable rock 'n' roll pioneer whose outrageous talent, energy and ego collided on such definitive records as "Great Balls of Fire" and "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" and sustained a career otherwise upended by personal scandal. Oct. 28.

The Rev. Calvin O. Butts III, 73. He fought poverty and racism and skillfully navigated New York's power structure as pastor of Harlem's historic Abyssinian Baptist Church. Oct. 28.

## NOVEMBER

Takeoff, 28. A rapper best known for his work with the Grammy-nominated trio Migos. Nov. 1. Killed in a shooting.

George Booth, 96. A prize-winning cartoonist for The New Yorker who with manic affection captured the timeless comedy of dogs and cats and the human beings somehow in charge of their well being. Nov. 1.

Ibrahim Munir, 85. The former acting leader of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Nov. 4.

Aaron Carter, 34. The singer-rapper who began performing as a child and had hit albums starting in his teen years. Nov. 5.

Archbishop Chrysostomos II, 81. The outspoken leader of Cyprus' Greek Orthodox Christian Church whose forays into the country's complex politics and finances fired up supporters and detractors alike. Nov. 7.

Leslie Phillips, 98. The British actor best known for his roles in the bawdy "Carry On" comedies and as the voice of the Sorting Hat in the "Harry Potter" movies. Nov. 7.

Jeff Cook, 73. The guitarist who co-founded the country group Alabama and steered them up the charts with such hits as "Song of the South" and "Dixieland Delight." Nov. 8.

Gal Costa, 77. The singer was an icon in the Tropicalia and Brazilian popular music movements and enjoyed a nearly six-decade career. Nov. 9.

Paul Schrade, 97. A labor union leader who was shot in the head during the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy and spent decades convinced that Sirhan Sirhan wasn't the killer. Nov. 9.

Kevin Conroy, 66. The prolific voice actor whose gravely delivery on "Batman: The Animated Series" was for many Batman fans the definitive sound of the Caped Crusader. Nov. 10.

Gallagher, 76. The long-haired, smash-'em-up comedian who left a trail of laughter, anger and shattered watermelons over a decadeslong career. Nov. 11.

John Aniston, 89. The Emmy-winning star of the daytime soap opera "Days of Our Lives" and father of actress Jennifer Aniston. Nov. 11.

Robert Clary, 96. A French-born survivor of Nazi concentration camps during World War II who played a feisty prisoner of war in the improbable 1960s sitcom "Hogan's Heroes." Nov. 16.

Carol Leigh, 71. A San Francisco activist who is credited with coining the term "sex work" and who sought for decades to improve conditions for prostitutes and others in the adult entertainment business. Nov. 16.

Jason David Frank, 49. He played the Green Power Ranger Tommy Oliver on the 1990s children's series "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers." Nov. 19.

Hebe de Bonafini, 93. She became a human rights campaigner when her two sons were arrested and disappeared under Argentina's military dictatorship. Nov. 20.

Wilko Johnson, 75. The guitarist with British blues-rock band Dr. Feelgood who had an unexpected career renaissance after being diagnosed with terminal cancer. Nov. 21.

Pablo Milanés, 79. The Latin Grammy-winning balladeer who helped found Cuba's "nueva trova" movement and toured the world as a cultural ambassador for Fidel Castro's revolution. Nov. 22.

Irene Cara, 63. The Oscar, Golden Globe and two-time Grammy winning singer-actor who starred and

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sang the title cut from the 1980 hit movie "Fame" and then belted out the era-defining hit "Flashdance ... What a Feeling" from 1983's "Flashdance." Nov. 25.

Doddie Weir, 52. A former Scotland rugby player whose diagnosis with Lou Gehrig's disease led to a widely praised campaign for more research into ALS. Nov. 26.

Freddie Roman, 85. The comedian was a former dean of The Friars Club and a staple of the Catskills comedy scene. Nov. 26.

Jiang Zemin, 96. He led China out of isolation after the army crushed the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests in 1989 and supported economic reforms that led to a decade of explosive growth. Nov. 30.

Christine McVie, 79. The British-born Fleetwood Mac vocalist, songwriter and keyboard player whose cool, soulful contralto helped define such classics as "You Make Loving Fun," "Everywhere" and "Don't Stop." Nov. 30.

## DECEMBER

Gaylord Perry, 84. The Baseball Hall of Famer and two-time Cy Young Award winner was a master of the spitball who wrote a book about using pitch. Dec. 1.

Julia Reichert, 76. The Oscar-winning documentary filmmaker behind "American Factory" — often called the "godmother of American independent documentaries" — whose films explored themes of race, class and gender, often in the Midwest. Dec. 1.

Dorothy Pittman Hughes, 84. A pioneering Black feminist, child welfare advocate and lifelong community activist who toured the country speaking with Gloria Steinem in the 1970s and appears with her in one of the most iconic photos of the second-wave feminist movement. Dec. 1.

Bob McGrath, 90. An actor, musician and children's author widely known for his portrayal of one of the first regular characters on the children's show "Sesame Street." Dec. 4.

Kirstie Alley, 71. A two-time Emmy winner whose roles on the TV megahit "Cheers" and in the "Look Who's Talking" films made her one of the biggest stars in American comedy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Dec. 5.

Angelo Badalamenti, 85. The composer best known for creating otherworldly scores for many David Lynch productions, from "Blue Velvet" and "Twin Peaks" to "Mulholland Drive." Dec. 11.

Abigail Kinoiki Kekaulike Kawānanakoa, 96. She was the so-called last Hawaiian princess whose lineage included the royal family that once ruled the islands and an Irish businessman who became one of Hawaii's largest landowners. Dec. 11.

Mike Leach, 61. The gruff, pioneering and unfiltered college football coach who helped revolutionize the game with the Air Raid offense. Dec. 12.

Stephen "tWitch" Boss, 40. The longtime and beloved dancing DJ on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and a former contestant on "So You Think You Can Dance." Dec. 13. Died by suicide.

Shirley Eikhard, 67. The singer-songwriter who supplied songs for Cher, Emmylou Harris, Anne Murray, Chet Atkins and found lasting fame penning Bonnie Raitt's Grammy-winning 1991 hit "Something to Talk About." Dec. 15.

Franco Harris, 72. The Hall of Fame running back whose heads-up thinking authored the "Immaculate Reception," considered the most iconic play in NFL history. Dec. 20.

Thom Bell, 79. The Grammy-winning producer, writer and arranger who helped perfect the "Sound of Philadelphia" of the 1970s with the inventive, orchestral settings of such hits as the Spinners' "I'll Be Around" and the Stylistics' "Betcha by Golly, Wow." Dec. 22.

## Holiday sales up 7.6% despite the squeeze of inflation

Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Holiday sales rose this year as American spending remained resilient during the critical shopping season despite surging prices on everything from food to rent, according to one measure.

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Holiday sales rose 7.6, a slower pace than the 8.5% increase from a year earlier when shoppers began spending the money they had saved during the early part of the pandemic, according to Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks all kinds of payments including cash and debit cards.

Mastercard SpendingPulse had expected a 7.1% increase. The data released Monday excludes the automotive industry and is not adjusted for inflation, which has eased somewhat but remains painfully high.

U.S. sales between Nov. 1 and Dec. 24, a period that is critical for retailers, were fueled by spending at restaurants and on clothing.

By category, clothing rose 4.4%, while jewelry and electronics dipped roughly 5%. Online sales jumped 10.6% from a year ago and in-person spending rose 6.8%. Department stores registered a modest 1% increase over 2021.

"This holiday retail season looked different than years past," Steve Sadove, the former CEO and chairman at Saks and a senior advisor for Mastercard, said in a prepared statement. "Retailers discounted heavily, but consumers diversified their holiday spending to accommodate rising prices and an appetite for experiences and festive gatherings post-pandemic."

Some of the increase reflected the impact of higher prices across the board.

Consumer spending accounts for nearly 70% of U.S. economic activity, and Americans have remained resilient ever since inflation first spiked almost 18 months ago. Cracks have begun to show, however, as higher prices for basic necessities take up an increasingly large share of everyone's take-home pay.

Inflation has retreated from the four-decade high it reached this summer, but it's still sapping the spending power of consumers. Prices rose 7.1% in November from a year ago, down from a peak of 9.1% in June.

Overall spending has slowed from the pandemic-infused splurges and shifted increasingly toward necessities like food, while spending on electronics, furniture, new clothes and other non-necessities has faded. Many shoppers been trading down to private label goods, which are typically less expensive than national brands. They've been going to cheaper stores like dollar chains and big box stores like Walmart.

Consumers also waited for deals. Stores expected more procrastinators to hit stores in the last few days before Christmas compared with a year ago when people began shopping earlier due to a global disruption of the supply chain that created thousands of product shortages.

"Consumers are trying to spread out their budget, and they are evaluating and shopping at different stores," said Katie Thompson, the lead of consultancy Kearney's Consumer Institute.

In November, shoppers cut back sharply on retail spending compared with the previous month. Retail sales fell 0.6% from October to November after a sharp 1.3% rise the previous month, the government said in mid-December. Sales fell at furniture, electronics, and home and garden stores.

A broader picture of how Americans spent their money arrives next month when the National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, comes out with its combined two-month results based on November-December sales figures from the Commerce Department.

The trade group expects holiday sales growth will slow to a range of 6% to 8%, compared with the blistering 13.5% growth of a year ago.

Analysts will also be dissecting fourth-quarter financial results from major retailers in February.

## China sends 71 warplanes, 7 ships toward Taiwan in 24 hours

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China's military sent 71 planes and seven ships toward Taiwan in a 24-hour display of force directed at the self-ruled island, Taiwan's Defense Ministry said Monday, after China expressed anger at Taiwan-related provisions in a U.S. annual defense spending bill.

China's military harassment of Taiwan, which it claims is its own territory, has intensified in recent years, and the Communist Party's People's Liberation Army has sent planes or ships toward the island on a near-daily basis.

Between 6 a.m. Sunday and 6 a.m. Monday, 47 of the Chinese planes crossed the median of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial boundary once tacitly accepted by both sides, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense.

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Among the planes China sent towards Taiwan were 18 J-16 fighter jets, 11 J-1 fighters, 6 Su-30 fighters and drones.

Taiwan said it monitored the Chinese moves through its land-based missile systems, as well as on its own navy vessels.

"This is a firm response to the current U.S.-Taiwan escalation and provocation," said Shi Yi, the spokesman for the PLA's Eastern Theater Command, in a statement on Sunday night. It announced that the PLA was holding joint combat patrols and joint strike drills in the waters around Taiwan.

Shi was referring to the U.S. defense spending bill, which calls China a strategic challenge. With regard to the Indo-Pacific region, the legislation authorizes increased security cooperation with Taiwan and requires expanded cooperation with India on emerging defense technologies, readiness and logistics.

In Washington, an official of the White House National Security Council said China's military activity near Taiwan was "destabilizing, risks miscalculations, and undermines regional peace and stability."

The official, who was not authorized to be identified and commented on condition of anonymity, said: "The United States has an abiding interest in peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability in line with our long-standing commitments and consistent with our one-China policy."

China's military has often used large military exercises as a demonstration of force in response to U.S. government actions in support of Taiwan.

It conducted large live-fire military exercises in August in response to U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. Beijing views visits from foreign governments to the island as de facto recognition of the island as independent and a challenge to China's claim of sovereignty.

## **New this week: 'White Noise,' 21 Savage and Kennedy Honors**

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

— Don DeLillo's 1985 novel "White Noise" has long been said to be "unfilmable." But Noah Baumbach's energetic movie, streaming Friday on Netflix, makes a spirited argument for its adaptation. In Baumbach's "White Noise," Adam Driver stars as Jack Gladney, a college professor with a teeming suburban family (Greta Gerwig co-stars as his wife, Babette). When an "airborne toxic event" consumes their town and sends residents fleeing, a new fear of death pierces Jack's middle-class existence. In my review, I praised the film's "giddy gloom" and wholehearted embrace of the book's dizzying, dense intensity. Be sure to stay for the LCD Soundsystem-soundtracked supermarket dance finale.

— For some, New Year's Eve was made for movie nights. And to ring in the new year, Turner Classic Movies is programming a festive run of the beloved, martini-swilling detectives Nick and Nora Charles. Beginning at 8 p.m. EST on Saturday, TCM will run a minimarathon of 1934's "The Thin Man," 1936's "After the Thin Man" and 1939's "Another Thin Man." As the sophisticated husband-and-wife murder-solving team, William Powell and Myrna Loy remain delightfully fizzy company to cheers with.

— AP Film Writer Jake Coyle

### MUSIC

— It's the number one movie in the land so it makes sense it should be something you're also listening to. The 22-track soundtrack for "Avatar: The Way of Water" includes the original song "Nothing is Lost (You Give Me Strength)" written and performed by The Weeknd, and "The Songcord," performed by star Zoë Saldana. The soundtrack is by Grammy Award-winning composer Simon Franglen, who worked with composer James Horner on the original "Avatar" film and picked up where Horner left off following his 2015 death. For super-fans, there's also a new release — "Avatar: The Way of Water (Original Score)" — that includes 11 additional score cues from the film not available on the soundtrack.

— 21 Savage is the final performer for the 2022 season of Amazon Music Live. Streaming live on Thurs-

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day night and hosted by hip-hop star 2 Chainz, the new weekly concert series has featured some of the hottest musical acts, like A\$AP Rocky, Anitta, Lil Baby, Megan Thee Stallion, Lil Wayne and Kane Brown. 21 Savage's concert is expected to include cuts from "Her Loss," his collaborative album with Drake.

— Some Broadway royalty — including Christopher Jackson, Mandy Gonzalez and Joaquina Kalukango — are part of the third annual national PBS concert, "United in Song" alongside Grammy-winning singer Renée Fleming. The special also features Natalie Grant, Matt Doyle, Brett Young and more with the American Pops Orchestra as well as a newly commissioned performance by New York City Ballet principal dancer Tiler Peck and soloist Roman Mejia. The special premieres Saturday on PBS, PBS.org, and the PBS Video App.

## TELEVISION

— CBS will air the 45th annual Kennedy Center Honors, which this year recognized actor George Clooney, the band U2, singers Gladys Knight and Amy Grant and composer Tania León. The Kennedy Center Honors is a lifetime achievement award given to performers for their impact on American culture through the arts. The event was filmed in early December and presenter Julia Roberts wore a custom dress featuring prints of various photos of her good pal Clooney. The Kennedy Center Honors show broadcasts Wednesday night.

— The long-running, feel-good British series "Call the Midwife" premiered its annual Christmas-themed episode this past Sunday on PBS. "Call the Midwife" follows a group of midwives and nuns in east London. Although it takes place in the 1950's and 1960's, the series tackles important subjects including infertility, racism, and unwanted pregnancies. "Call the Midwife" is based on a memoir by Jennifer Worth and is narrated by Vanessa Redgrave. Season 12 debuts in March on PBS.

— Alicia Rancilio

## Parties are back, but how to dress? A holiday guide

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The season's triple-virus threat notwithstanding, parties are back, and they've brought with them the potential for some dress code chaos.

White tie, black tie, black tie creative/festive, semiformal: It might take some extra re-entry energy to figure out these pre-pandemic guidelines in an exhausted world more used to sweats and sneakers.

Invitations sometimes don't specify attire, leaving it until the RSVP phase or expecting guests to infer based on experience or an event's description. That was perhaps easier pre-pandemic, but many people are ready to take on the challenge, shed their cozy, casual duds and dress up once again.

"The stories I'm hearing from people is that they're happy for an opportunity to get out of the sweat-pants," said Lizzie Post, Emily Post's great-great-granddaughter and co-author of a rejuvenated new edition of "Emily Post's Etiquette" to mark the book's centennial.

With help from the Posts, a rundown from the most formal to the least formal attire:

### WHITE TIE

This, the most formal traditional attire, involves a white bow tie, black jacket with tails, matching trousers and white vests for evening. Swap in a morning coat for day.

Think royal events, ultra-galas or super formal weddings.

"I think the thing that people are most unsure about is formal attire because most of us have few occasions to ever wear it," Post said. "That's one most people get stressed about, but it's a category that's pretty well-defined."

By well-defined, she means: trousers with a satin or braid stripe; plain-front, wing-collar, French cuff shirts; stiff white pique vests; cuff links or studs; black or white braces; black socks; and black patent-leather pumps or lace-up Oxfords. Studs for buttons or covered buttons are options.

Chesterfield coats, which are formal, dark-colored and knee-length with velvet collars, are suitable as outerwear for cold weather, as opposed to one's down parka.

Gowns are floor length, or possibly VERY formal two-piece outfits, with optional gloves of varying lengths. A dress-pant combo is rare.

### BLACK TIE

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It's the next most formal attire, and means tuxedos in black or midnight blue. Collars can be wing or regular in white. Bow ties are black. So are braces or suspenders. Vests are optional, but forget the cummerbund if a vest is worn.

Not any cummerbund will do. Make sure it matches bow tie and lapel fabrics. Footwear is the same as white tie. White dinner jackets are acceptable in the summer or warm climates.

Gowns are floor length here, too, but can be more casual than white tie in materials and structure. A very formal cocktail dress might do if the hemline is at or below the knee.

Black tie is far more familiar to many than white tie, Post said.

## BLACK TIE/CREATIVE/FESTIVE

Attire is the same as black tie but with colors or embellishment added for a bit more dazzle.

For dresses and two-piece outfits, there's some wiggle room to experiment with color, texture and accessories, Post said.

"It's where you get the groomsman of a wedding wearing flip-flops instead of shoes because the wedding is at the beach and everything's going to be on the sand," she said.

"It's sometimes worn to celebrate a particular holiday or something like that. If I was invited to a festive, black-tie Christmas event, I'm searching for a bow tie and cummerbund that have Santa Claus or reindeer or something on them," Post added.

Be sensitive to other people's cultures and holidays, she added.

## SEMIFORMAL

Expect suits, jackets and ties with slacks, dress tops, dress pants, and maxi-length hems that are long but not full-on formal gowns. Tea-length, knee-length or two-piece outfits fit here.

Think maxi dresses in a casual jersey knit for a beach wedding, or a jacket with corduroy pants and suede shoes for a gallery opening.

It goes by other labels, too, such as "creative" semiformal when a "diamonds and denim" theme or a "dressy Western" vibe is noted, for instance.

Semiformal events cover a lot of ground, from office holiday parties and charity events to retirement parties and milestone birthdays or anniversaries.

"Given our day and age, people really like to be explicit on invitations for semiformal. Cocktail attire is a subset of this," Post said.

## BUSINESS ATTIRE

Dressing for work varies widely, but when business attire shows up on an invitation, tradition may kick in.

The safest bet is suits and ties, button dress shirts, belts and dress shoes. Dress slacks or trousers with a dressy top are acceptable, along with a conservative dress (nothing too low-cut, short or luxurious), and close-toed shoes, all depending on how fashion-forward the crowd is expected to be.

"It's still important to be you," Post urged.

## BUSINESS CASUAL

Things get confusing here, too.

Many who have returned to work are living in this zone, but what it means depends on the industry or company environment. It could mean a suit or seasonal jacket worn with no tie and trousers, or dress jeans with button-down or polo shirts or sweaters.

Dress slacks or trousers with a more casual top might do the trick. The same is true of a skirt-and-top combo, though nothing too short or low cut, depending on the event.

If an invitation says business casual, it may be up to you to figure out what's acceptable.

## DRESSY CASUAL

A little less tricky, but still dizzying.

It can mean jeans and a sweater or a casual button shirt. It also means dress pants and a casual top, or casual pants and a dress top.

Comfortable dresses or skirt-and-top combos also work. The best part: any shoes.

"You want to feel out any event to make sure," Post said.

## CASUAL

Almost anything goes. Almost.

Jeans, shorts, T-shirts, pullovers, hoodies, tank tops, dress or skirt with any top, any shoes.

There are lines that can be crossed, however. Casual doesn't mean unkempt. Leave the stained T-shirt at home, and perhaps the ripped jeans, too.

"I think we're all out of practice with these delineations, for sure," Post said. "There's been a gray haze of attire for most of us."

## **EXPLAINER: 2023 tax credits for EVs will boost their appeal**

By HOPE YEN and TOM KRISHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Starting Jan. 1, many Americans will qualify for a tax credit of up to \$7,500 for buying an electric vehicle. The credit, part of changes enacted in the Inflation Reduction Act, is designed to spur EV sales and reduce greenhouse emissions.

But a complex web of requirements, including where vehicles and batteries must be manufactured to qualify, is casting doubt on whether anyone can receive the full \$7,500 credit next year.

For at least the first two months of 2023, though, a delay in the Treasury Department's rules for the new benefit will likely make the full credit temporarily available to consumers who meet certain income and price limits.

The new law also provides a smaller credit for people who buy a used EV.

Certain EV brands that were eligible for a separate tax credit that began in 2010 and that will end this year may not be eligible for the new credit. Several EV models made by Kia, Hyundai and Audi, for example, won't qualify at all because they are manufactured outside North America.

The new tax credit, which lasts until 2032, is intended to make zero-emission vehicles affordable to more people. Here is a closer look at it:

### WHAT'S NEW FOR 2023?

The credit of up to \$7,500 will be offered to people who buy certain new electric vehicles as well as some plug-in gas-electric hybrids and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles. For people who buy a used vehicle that runs on battery power, a \$4,000 credit will be available.

But the question of which vehicles and buyers will qualify for the credits is complicated and will remain uncertain until Treasury issues the proposed rules in March.

What's known so far is that to qualify for the credit, new EVs must be made in North America. In addition, caps on vehicle prices and buyer incomes are intended to disqualify wealthier buyers.

Starting in March, complex provisions will also govern battery components. Forty percent of battery minerals will have to come from North America or a country with a U.S. free trade agreement or be recycled in North America. (That threshold will eventually go to 80%.)

And 50% of the battery parts will have to be made or assembled in North America, eventually rising to 100%.

Starting in 2025, battery minerals cannot come from a "foreign entity of concern," mainly China and Russia. Battery parts cannot be sourced in those countries starting in 2024 — a troublesome obstacle for the auto industry because numerous EV metals and parts now come from China.

There also are battery-size requirements.

### WHICH VEHICLES ARE ELIGIBLE?

Because of the many remaining uncertainties, that's not entirely clear.

General Motors and Tesla have the most EVs assembled in North America. Each also makes batteries in the U.S. But because of the requirements for where batteries, minerals and parts must be manufactured, it's likely that buyers of those vehicles would initially receive only half the tax credit, \$3,750. GM says its eligible EVs should qualify for the \$3,750 credit by March, with the full credit available in 2025.



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Until Treasury issues its rules, though, the requirements governing where minerals and parts must be sourced will be waived. This will allow eligible buyers to receive the full \$7,500 tax incentive for qualifying models early in 2023.

The Energy Department says 29 EV and plug-in models were manufactured in North America in the 2022 and 2023 model years. They're from Audi, BMW, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Ford, GMC, Jeep, Lincoln, Lucid, Nissan, Rivian, Tesla, Volvo, Cadillac, Mercedes and Volkswagen. Yet because of price limits or battery-size requirements, not all these vehicle models will qualify for credits.

## WHAT ABOUT PRICE?

To qualify, new electric sedans cannot have a sticker price above \$55,000. Pickup trucks, SUVs and vans can't be over \$80,000. This will disqualify two higher-priced Tesla models. Though Tesla's top sellers, the models 3 and Y, will be eligible, with options, those vehicles might exceed the price limits.

Kelley Blue Book says the average EV now costs over \$65,000, though lower-priced models are coming.

## WILL I QUALIFY FOR THE CREDITS?

It depends on your income. For new EVs, buyers cannot have an adjusted gross income above \$150,000 if single, \$300,000 if filing jointly and \$225,000 if head of a household.

For used EVs, buyers cannot earn more than \$75,000 if single, \$150,000 if filing jointly and \$112,500 if head of household.

## HOW WILL THE CREDIT BE PAID?

At first, it will be applied to your 2023 tax return, which you file in 2024. Starting in 2024, consumers can transfer the credit to a dealership to lower the vehicle price at purchase.

## WILL THE CREDITS BOOST EV SALES?

Yes, but it probably will take a few years, says Mike Fiske, associate director for S&P Global Mobility. The credit may cause a bump in sales early next year because of Treasury's delay in issuing the stricter requirements. But most automakers are now selling all the EVs they build and cannot make more because of shortages of parts, including computer chips.

And automakers may have trouble certifying the sources of battery minerals and parts, a requirement for buyers to receive the full credit. Automakers have been scrambling to move more EV supply chains to the U.S.

## HOW DOES THE USED-EV CREDIT WORK?

Consumers can receive tax credits of up to \$4,000 — or 30% of the vehicle price, whichever is less — for buying EVs that are at least two years old. But the used EV must cost less than \$25,000 — a tall order given the starting prices for most EVs on the market. A search on Autotrader.com shows that the Chevy Bolt, the Nissan Leaf and other relatively economical used EVs are listed at \$26,000 or more for models dating back to 2019.

On the other hand, used EVs need not be made in North America or comply with the battery-sourcing requirements. That means that, for instance, a 2022 Kia EV6 that's ineligible for the new-vehicle credit because it's made in South Korea can qualify for a used-car credit if its price falls below \$25,000.

"The real effects where these tax credits will have a big impact will be in the 2026-to-2032 period — a few years into the future — as automakers gear up and volumes increase," said Chris Harto, a senior policy analyst for Consumer Reports magazine.

## WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT OFFERING THE CREDITS?

The credits are part of roughly \$370 billion in spending on clean energy — America's largest investment to fight climate change — that was signed into law in August by President Joe Biden. EVs now make up about 5% of U.S. new-vehicle sales; Biden has set a goal of 50% by 2030.

Sales of EVs have been climbing, particularly as California and other states have moved to phase out gas-

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powered cars. The rise of lower-cost competitors to Tesla, such as the Chevy Equinox, with an expected base price of around \$30,000, are expected to broaden the EVs' reach to middle-class households. S&P Global Mobility expects EVs' share of auto sales to reach 8% next year, 15% by 2025 and 37% by 2030.

## COULD REQUIREMENTS BE EASED TO MAKE MORE EVs ELIGIBLE?

That's not clear yet. Some U.S. allies are upset over North American manufacturing requirements that disqualify EVs made in Europe or South Korea.

The requirements knock Hyundai and Kia out of the credits, at least in the short term. They plan to build new EV and battery plants in Georgia, but those won't open until 2025. European Union countries fear that the tax credits could make their automakers move factories to the U.S.

The Treasury Department said it would release information by year's end on the "anticipated direction" of the battery sourcing and mineral requirements. A loosening of rules to address U.S. allies' concerns would make more EVs eligible. But it also risks extending U.S. reliance on foreign supply chains.

## ARE THERE CREDITS FOR CHARGING STATIONS?

If you install an EV charger at home, credits may be available. The new law revives a federal tax credit that had expired in 2021; it provides 30% of the cost of hardware and installation, up to \$1,000. It adds a requirement that the charger must be in a low-income or non-urban area. Businesses that install new EV chargers in those areas can receive tax credits of as much as 30% — up to \$100,000 per charger.

Residential EV chargers can range in cost from \$200 to \$1,000; installation can add several more hundred dollars.

## SO SHOULD I BUY NOW OR WAIT?

That's entirely a personal decision.

If you've grown tired of volatile gasoline prices and are considering an EV, you might want to go ahead. Buying a qualifying EV in January or February could net you the full \$7,500 tax break before more stringent requirements take effect in March. Additional state credits also may be available.

But if you're still on the fence, there's no urgency. Consumers who rush to buy now, when relatively few qualifying EVs are available, may face dealer price markups. Within a few years, technology will improve, and more EVs will qualify for full credits.

## **GOP stumbles with independents contributed to midterm woes**

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. (AP) — As Republican Tyler Kistner's closing ad aired last month in one of the most competitive congressional districts in the U.S., Vickie Klang felt that something was missing.

The 58-year-old veterinary technician and self-described independent voter watched as the 30-second spot showed grainy black-and-white images of President Joe Biden with two-term Democratic Rep. Angie Craig superimposed alongside him. The narrator ominously described life in America as "dangerous and unaffordable" because of an alliance between the two Democrats.

Absent from the ad, Klang thought, was anything close to a solution beyond electing Kistner.

"You're never telling me what you're going to do for the state or the country," Klang recalled. "That's a huge turnoff."

Klang ultimately backed Craig, contributing to a 5 percentage point win for a Democratic incumbent whom Republicans spent more than \$12 million to unseat. From Maine to California, Republicans faced similar unexpected setbacks with the small but crucial slice of voters who don't identify with either major party, according to AP VoteCast, a sweeping national survey of the electorate.

Republican House candidates nationwide won the support of 38% of independent voters in last month's midterm elections, VoteCast showed. That's far short of the 51% that Democrats scored with the same group in 2018 when they swept into power by picking up 41 seats. The GOP's lackluster showing among

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independents helps explain why Republicans flipped just nine seats, securing a threadbare majority that has already raised questions about the party's ability to govern.

Some Republican strategists say the finding is a sign that messages that resonate during party primaries, including searing critiques of Biden, were less effective in the general election campaign because independent voters were searching for more than just the opposition.

"You've got to tell them what you're going to do," said David Winston, a Republican pollster and senior adviser to House Republicans who had been critical of GOP candidates' messaging strategy this year. "Somehow the Republican campaigns managed not to do that. And that's a real serious problem."

In the northern reaches of Minnesota's 2nd congressional district, a swath of lakes and onetime farm country teeming with development near the Twin Cities, more than a dozen independent voters echo Winston's assessment.

Unlike Klang, who grew up in a union Democratic household, Steve Stauff of Shakopee, 20 miles (32 kilometers) west, was raised in a rural, conservative Republican home. The two share a recent history of voting for Republican and Democratic statewide candidates, as well as for independent candidate for governor Jesse Ventura in 1998.

But Kistner's message, like those of other losing Republican challengers in targeted races, appeared aimed more at Republicans than swing voters: simply linking Craig with Biden, whose job disapproval ratings had outpaced approval, and Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, widely unpopular with Republicans.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy came out with a campaign proposal in September titled "Commitment to America," billed as a GOP agenda. However, the proposal, a collection of repackaged goals such as increased domestic petroleum production, was light on details and mentioned little during the campaign.

"We were just being told, 'Pelosi bad, Biden bad, therefore Craig bad,' instead of hearing 'This is my plan to represent this district,'" said Stauff, a 42-year-old sales representative. "If you don't bring me solutions to whatever problems you think we have, how can I take you seriously?"

VoteCast suggests that independent voters distinguished between the problems facing the U.S. and Biden's culpability for them. While few independents said the economy is doing well and about two-thirds disapproved of Biden's handling of it, independents were slightly more likely to say inflation is the result of factors outside Biden's control than that Biden is to blame, 51% to 47%, according to the survey.

But that nuance was often missing from the GOP's political message.

An October Kistner ad included the claim, "Feeling hopeless? Thank Joe Biden and Angie Craig," a point that failed to land with Kathy Lewis, an independent voter from Lakeville, Minnesota.

"I understand how that is so hard on people," said Lewis, a 71-year-old school board member in the Republican-leaning exurb southwest of St. Paul. "I've never really believed the president, no matter who it is ... ever really controlled the inflation. They may have had an effect on it, but they didn't really control it one way or the other."

Democrats did significantly better among true independents and those who lean toward a party than they have in recent midterms when they have also held the White House, according to analysis of Pew Research Center post-election surveys of self-identified voters in 2014, 2010 and 1998.

While questions remained into the fall about the role the Supreme Court's June decision overturning the 1973 landmark abortion rights precedent *Roe v. Wade* would play in the election, several 2nd District Minnesota independents cited it as a driving issue in their support for Craig.

About 7 in 10 independent voters who don't side with either party think abortion should be legal in most or all cases, according to VoteCast, which also found many voters across party lines were hesitant to support candidates who were considered extreme.

Pamela Olson, an independent from rural Farmington, Minnesota, said she doesn't typically vote on a single issue. Nor did she vote for Craig in 2020. That changed with the court's decision, in light of Craig's support for abortion rights and Kistner's opposition in most cases.

"It's about freedoms in this country. And I think it is completely up to a woman and her doctor," said Olson, a 56-year-old engineer. "There needs to be a choice for those individuals, not for somebody else

to tell you what to do.”

Besides the contention that GOP candidates did not focus on independents, Winston suggests that independent voters might be hesitating to lurch toward the alternative after the turmoil of Donald Trump's presidency.

“Change has to be something they are willing to vote for, as opposed to just the kneejerk reaction that ‘this is bad so I’m just going to go another direction,’” Winston said.

## **Long COVID: Could mono virus or fat cells be playing roles?**

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

A British historian, an Italian archaeologist and an American preschool teacher have never met in person, but they share a prominent pandemic bond.

Plagued by eerily similar symptoms, the three women are credited with describing, naming and helping bring long COVID into the public's consciousness in early 2020.

Rachel Pope, of Liverpool, took to Twitter in late March 2020 to describe her bedeviling symptoms, then unnamed, after a coronavirus infection. Elisa Perego in Italy first used the term “long COVID,” in a May tweet that year. Amy Watson in Portland, Oregon, got inspiration in naming her Facebook support group from the trucker cap she'd been wearing, and “long hauler” soon became part of the pandemic lexicon.

Nearly three years into the pandemic, scientists are still trying to figure out why some people get long COVID and why a small portion — including the three women — have lasting symptoms.

Millions of people worldwide have had long COVID, reporting various symptoms including fatigue, lung problems, and brain fog and other neurological symptoms. Evidence suggests most recover substantially within a year, but recent data show that it has contributed to more than 3,500 U.S. deaths.

Here's some of the latest evidence:

### **WOMEN MORE AT RISK?**

Many studies and anecdotal evidence suggest that women are more likely than men to develop long COVID.

There could be biological reasons.

Women's immune systems generally mount stronger reactions to viruses, bacteria, parasites and other germs, noted Sabra Klein, a Johns Hopkins professor who studies immunity.

Women are also much more likely than men to have autoimmune diseases, where the body mistakenly attacks its own healthy cells. Some scientists believe long COVID could result from an autoimmune response triggered by the virus.

Women's bodies also tend to have more fat tissue and emerging research suggests the coronavirus may hide in fat after infection. Scientists also are studying whether women's fluctuating hormone levels may increase the risks.

Another possible factor: Women are more likely than men to seek health care and often more attuned to changes in their bodies, Klein noted.

“I don't think we should ignore that,” she said. Biology and behavior are probably both at play, Klein said.

It may thus be no coincidence that it was three women who helped shine the first light on long COVID.

Pope, 46, started chronicling what she was experiencing in March 2020: flu-like symptoms, then her lungs, heart and joints were affected. After a month she started having some “OK” days, but symptoms persisted.

She and some similarly ill colleagues connected with Perego on Twitter. “We started sort of coming together because it was literally the only place where we could do that,” Pope said. “In 2020, we would joke that we'd get together for Christmas and have a party,” Pope said. “Then obviously it went on, and I think we stopped joking.”

Watson started her virtual long haulers group that April. The others soon learned of that nickname and embraced it.

### **MONO VIRUS**

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Several studies suggest the ubiquitous Epstein-Barr virus could play a role in some cases of long COVID. Inflammation caused by coronavirus infection can activate herpes viruses, which remain in the body after causing an acute infection, said Dr. Timothy Henrich, a virus expert at the University of California, San Francisco.

Epstein-Barr virus is among the most common of these herpes viruses: An estimated 90% of the U.S. population has been infected with it. The virus can cause mononucleosis or symptoms that may be dismissed as a cold.

Henrich is among researchers who have found immune markers signaling Epstein-Barr reactivation in the blood of long COVID patients, particularly those with fatigue.

Not all long COVID patients have these markers. But it's possible that Epstein-Barr is causing symptoms in those who do, although scientists say more study is needed.

Some scientists also believe that Epstein-Barr triggers chronic fatigue syndrome, a condition that bears many similarities to long COVID, but that also is unproven.

## OBESITY

Obesity is a risk factor for severe COVID-19 infections and scientists are trying to understand why.

Stanford University researchers are among those who have found evidence that the coronavirus can infect fat cells. In a recent study, they found the virus and signs of inflammation in fat tissue taken from people who had died from COVID.

Lab tests showed that the virus can reproduce in fat tissue. That raises the possibility that fat tissue could serve as a "reservoir," potentially fueling long COVID.

Could removing fat tissue treat or prevent some cases of long COVID? It's a tantalizing question, but the research is preliminary, said Dr. Catherine Blish, a Stanford infectious diseases professor and a senior author of the study.

Scientists at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center are studying leptin, a hormone produced by fat cells that can influence the body's immune response and promote inflammation.

They plan to study whether injections of a manufactured antibody could reduce leptin levels — and in turn inflammation from coronavirus infections or long COVID.

"We have a good scientific basis together with some preliminary data to argue that we might be on the right track," said Dr. Philipp Scherer.

## DURATION

It has been estimated that about 30% of people infected with the coronavirus will develop long COVID, based on data from earlier in the pandemic.

Most people who have lingering, recurrent or new symptoms after infection will recover after about three months. Among those with symptoms at three months, about 15% will continue to have symptoms for at least nine more months, according to a recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Figuring out who's at risk for years-long symptoms "is such a complicated question," said Dr. Lawrence Purpura, an infectious disease expert at Columbia University.

Those with severe infections seem to be more at risk for long COVID, although it can also affect people with mild infections. Those whose infections cause severe lung damage including scarring may experience breathlessness, coughing or fatigue for more than a year. And a smaller group of patients with mild initial COVID-19 infections may develop neurologic symptoms for more than a year, including chronic fatigue and brain fog, Purpura said.

"The majority of patients will eventually recover," he said. "It's important for people to know that."

It's small consolation for the three women who helped the world recognize long COVID.

Perego, 44, developed heart, lung and neurologic problems and remains seriously ill.

She knows that scientists have learned a lot in a short time, but she says "there is a gap" between long COVID research and medical care.

"We need to translate scientific knowledge into better treatment and policy," she said.

Watson, approaching 50, says she has "never had any kind of recovery." She has had severe migraines,

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plus digestive, nerve and foot problems. Recently she developed severe anemia.

She wishes the medical community had a more organized approach to treating long COVID. Doctors say not knowing the underlying cause or causes makes that difficult.

"I just want my life back," Watson said, "and it's not looking like that's all that possible."

## Today in History: December 27, Soviets take Afghanistan

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 27, the 361st day of 2022. There are four days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 27, 1979, Soviet forces seized control of Afghanistan. President Hafizullah Amin (hah-FEE'-zoo-lah ah-MEEN'), who was overthrown and executed, was replaced by Babrak Karmal.

On this date:

In 1822, scientist Louis Pasteur was born in Dole, France.

In 1831, naturalist Charles Darwin set out on a round-the-world voyage aboard the HMS Beagle.

In 1904, James Barrie's play "Peter Pan: The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up" opened at the Duke of York's Theater in London.

In 1932, New York City's Radio City Music Hall first opened.

In 1945, 28 nations signed an agreement creating the World Bank.

In 1958, American physicist James Van Allen reported the discovery of a second radiation belt around Earth, in addition to one found earlier in the year.

In 1985, Palestinian gunmen opened fire inside the Rome and Vienna airports in terrorist attacks that killed 19 people; four attackers were slain by police and security personnel. American naturalist Dian Fossey, 53, who had studied gorillas in the wild in Rwanda, was found hacked to death.

In 1995, Israeli jeeps sped out of the West Bank town of Ramallah, capping a seven-week pullout giving Yasser Arafat control over 90 percent of the West Bank's 1 million Palestinian residents and one-third of its land.

In 1999, space shuttle Discovery and its seven-member crew returned to Earth after fixing the Hubble Space Telescope.

In 2001, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld announced that Taliban and al-Qaida prisoners would be held at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In 2002, a defiant North Korea ordered U.N. nuclear inspectors to leave the country and said it would restart a laboratory capable of producing plutonium for nuclear weapons; the U.N. nuclear watchdog said its inspectors were "staying put" for the time being.

In 2016, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (shin-zoh AH'-bay), accompanied by President Barack Obama, visited Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, where he offered his "sincere and everlasting condolences to the souls of those who lost their lives" in Japan's 1941 attack; Abe did not apologize, but conceded his country "must never repeat the horrors of war again." Actor Carrie Fisher died in a hospital four days after suffering a medical emergency aboard a flight to Los Angeles; she was 60.

Ten years ago: An Indian-born man, Sunando Sen, was shoved to his death from a New York City subway platform; suspect Erika Menendez later pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to 24 years in prison. (Authorities say Menendez pushed Sen because she thought he was Muslim; Sen was Hindu.) Retired Army general Norman Schwarzkopf, 78, died in Tampa, Florida.

Five years ago: Freezing temperatures and below-zero wind chills socked much of the northern United States. Houston Astros star second baseman Jose Altuve was named AP Male Athlete of the Year after leading the team to its first World Series title. A power outage struck parts of Disneyland in California, forcing some guests to be escorted from stalled rides.

One year ago: U.S. health officials cut isolation restrictions for asymptomatic Americans infected with the coronavirus from 10 to five days, and similarly shortened the time that close contacts needed to quarantine;

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officials said the guidance was in keeping with growing evidence that people with the coronavirus were most infectious in the two days before and the three days after symptoms developed. Defense officials said a U.S. Navy warship, the USS Milwaukee, remained in port in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, with about two dozen sailors – or nearly a quarter of its crew – testing positive for COVID-19.

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Amos is 83. Rock musician Mick Jones (Foreigner) is 78. Singer Tracy Nelson is 78. Actor Gerard Depardieu is 74. Jazz singer-musician T.S. Monk is 73. Singer-songwriter Karla Bonoff is 71. Rock musician David Knopfler (Dire Straits) is 70. Actor Tovah Feldshuh is 69. Journalist-turned-politician Arthur Kent is 69. Actor Maryam D'Abo is 62. Actor Ian Gomez is 58. Actor Theresa Randle is 58. Actor Eva LaRue is 56. Wrestler and actor Bill Goldberg is 56. Bluegrass singer-musician Darrin Vincent (Dailey & Vincent) is 53. Rock musician Guthrie Govan is 51. Musician Matt Slocum is 50. Actor Wilson Cruz is 49. Actor Masi Oka is 48. Actor Aaron Stanford is 46. Actor Emilie de Ravin is 41. Actor Jay Ellis is 41. Christian rock musician James Mead (Kutless) is 40. Rock singer Hayley Williams (Paramore) is 34. Country singer Shay Mooney (Dan & Shay) is 31. Actor Timothee Chalamet is 27.