

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### 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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## Conde National League

**Dec. 26 Team Standings:** Giants 4, Tigers 3, Braves 3, Cubs 1, Pirates 1, Mets 0

**Men's High Games:** Jeff Lahammer 204, Steve Hargis 191, Brody Sombke 189

**Men's High Series:** Brody Sombke 519, Jeff Lahammer 499, Butch Farmen 493

**Women's High Games:** Vickie Kramp 165, Sam Bahr 151, Venessa Bethke 135

**Women's High Series:** Vickie Kramp 430, Sam Bahr 412, Venessa Bethke 345

## Department of Revenue Provides Update on Title Paper Shortage

The Department of Revenue remains on track to receive an updated shipment of title paper in late January and resume printing all paper titles in mid-February 2023.

South Dakota, like many states, uses paper that includes several security features to protect vehicle owners against title fraud. This issue is a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, when other states decreased the number of titles they issued, and vendors who produce this special paper reduced their supply accordingly.

Throughout this shortage, the Motor Vehicle Division has continued to work with individuals and dealerships who need paper titles. To date, 5,114 requests for a paper title have been submitted since the delay began, and over 76.5% of those reviewed have been approved. The division continues to process titles as they are received from county offices. Individuals and businesses can check to see if their title has been processed on the following website: <https://apps.sd.gov/RV66Renewals/checkvin/NewCheckVIN.aspx>.

Individuals who need a title printed may request one by completing an online form at the following link: <https://sddor.seamlessdocs.com/f/1504>. Individuals who have lost their paper title and need a duplicate need to complete the following form: <https://sddor.seamlessdocs.com/f/1002> to have it printed.

DOR employees continue to work with county officials and motor vehicle dealers to ensure they have the necessary tools to meet the needs of their customers.

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## January 2023 Groton Community Calendar of Events

### Sunday, Jan. 1

Emmanuel Lutheran Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School or Choir.

United Methodist: Conde worship with communion, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship with communion, 10:30 a.m.

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

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

### Monday, Jan. 2

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

### Tuesday, Jan. 3

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots and peas, mixed fruit, whole wheat bread.

Basketball doubleheader in Groton with Warner: Girls JV at 4 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity.

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

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

Emmanuel: Executive Committee Meeting, 7 p.m.  
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

### Wednesday, Jan. 4

Senior Menu: Chicken breast, rice pilaf, broccoli, pineapple strawberry, ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Eggs and breakfast potatoes.

School Lunch: Cheese nachos.

Chamber Board Meeting, noon, at City Hall

Emmanuel: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; No Confirmation.

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

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

### Thursday, Jan. 5

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, green beans, grape juice, apple crisp, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Chicken sandwich, fries.

Girls Basketball hosts Clark/Willow Lake: C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

Emmanuel: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

### Friday, Jan. 6

Senior Menu: Ham and bean soup, egg salad sandwich, fresh fruit, cookie.

School Breakfast: Biscuits and jelly.

School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.

Boys Basketball at Clark: JV game at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

Middle School Wrestling at Milbank, 5 p.m.

### Saturday, Jan. 7

Wrestling at Garretson Invitational, 8 a.m.

Boys Basketball hosts Sioux Falls Lutheran, JV at 2 p.m. followed by varsity.

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

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

### Sunday, Jan. 8

Open Gym: Grades JK-8; 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., Grades 6-12; 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

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

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

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

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.


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**JOHN DEERE**

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## Monday, Jan. 9

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, carrots, frosted brownie, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Middle School Wrestling Invitational at Webster, 5 p.m.

Boys Basketball hosts Sisseton with JV game at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity (Rescheduled from Dec. 15)

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

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

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

## Tuesday, Jan. 10

Senior Menu: Lemmon baked fish, au gratin potatoes, California blend vegetables, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Sausage, egg and cheese wraps.

School Lunch: Old school BBQ sandwiches, tri taters.

Girls Basketball vs. Aberdeen Christian at the Aberdeen Civic Center, JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 7 p.m.

## Wednesday, Jan. 11

Senior Menu: Spaghetti, mixed vegetables, garlic toast, fruit.

School Breakfast: Hashbrown pizza.

School Lunch: Chicken alfredo, cooked broccoli.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

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

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

## Thursday, Jan. 12

Senior Menu: Roast pork, mashed potatoes with gravy, Cauliflower and broccoli, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal with toppings.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.

Basketball Double Header at Tiospa Zina: Girls JV at 5 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity.

## Friday, Jan. 13

Senior Menu: Chili, corn bread, coleslaw, pears.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Pizza, cooked carrots.

Elementary Christmas Concert, 2:30 p.m. (rescheduled from Dec. 22)

## Saturday, Jan. 14

Wrestling at Potter County Tournament, 10 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.

## Sunday, Jan. 15

Open Gym: Grades JK-8; 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., Grades 6-12; 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Avantara worship, 3 p.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

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

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

## DID YOU KNOW . . .

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## Monday, Jan. 16

Senior Menu: Parmesean chicken breast, baked potato with sour cream, wild rice, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Taco salads.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Girls Basketball hosts Langford Area: JV game at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

Middle School Wrestling at Redfield.

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

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

## Tuesday, Jan. 17

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, beets, chocolate cake, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Meatballs, mashed potatoes.

Middle School Wrestling at Aberdeen Civic Arena, 4 p.m.

Wrestling at Willow Lake with Clark/Willow Lake and Hamlin, 6 p.m.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran; Groton Ministerial Meeting at UMC, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde Ad Council.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

## Wednesday, Jan. 18

Senior Menu: Cabbage hot dish, carrots, pears, muffin.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Chicken strips, tri tators.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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

## Thursday, Jan. 19

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potatoes, mixed vegetables, banana, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, baked beans.

Basketball Double Header at Milbank: C girls at 5 p.m. in elementary gym; JV girls at 4 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity.

## Friday, Jan. 20

Senior Menu: Breaded codfish, rice pilaf, pea and cheese salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Eggs and sausage.

School Lunch: Mac and cheese, peas.

Wrestling hosts Deuel at 6 p.m.

## Saturday, Jan. 21

Wrestling at Arlington, 10 a.m.

Girls Basketball at Great Plains Lutheran: C game at 11 a.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.

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

## Sunday, Jan. 22

Open Gym: Grades JK-8; 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., Grades 6-12; 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with Milestones for 6th grade at sophomores, 9 a.m.; Annual Meeting; Sunday School at 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

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

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.



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## Monday, Jan. 23:

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, green beans, Mandarin orange dessert, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Mini pancakes.

School Lunch: Oriental chicken, egg rolls.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, potluck at noon.

Basketball Doubleheader hosting Northwestern: Girls JV at 5 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity.

Middle School Wrestling Invitational at Ipswich, 6 p.m.

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

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

## Tuesday, Jan. 24

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, glazed carrots, apricots, cookie.

School Breakfast: Sausage and cheese egg cups.

School Lunch: Corn dogs, sweet potatoes.

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

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

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

## Wednesday, Jan. 25

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, creamy noodles, California blend, carrot bars, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg and breakfast potatoes.

School Lunch: Grilled cheese, chips.

Emily's Hope Assembly at GHS Arena, 1 p.m., sponsored by Groton Fire & Rescue.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Service Night for Confirmation Students, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

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

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

## Thursday, Jan. 26

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Goulash, fresh baked bun, corn.

Boys Basketball at Webster: Jv at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity.

## Friday, Jan. 27

Senior Menu: Potato soup, chicken salad sandwich, tomato spoon salad, cinnamon apple sauce, whole

wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits and gravy.

School Lunch: Fish and nuggets, spudsters.

Girls Basketball hosts Webster: JV at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity.

## Saturday, Jan. 28

NEC-DAXXII boys basketball clash at Madison.

Groton Area Wrestling Tournament, 10 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.

## Sunday, Jan. 29

Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center

Carnival of Silver Skates, 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

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

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

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

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

## Monday, Jan. 30

Senior Menu: Goulash, corn, garlic breadstick, baked apples.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Peperoni pizza, green beans.

Girls Basketball vs. Florence/Henry at Florence: JV at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity.

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

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

## Tuesday, Jan. 31

Senior Menu: Ham, sweet potatoes, mixed vegetables, tropical fruit, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Pancake on a stick.

School Lunch: Tacos.

Boys Basketball at Langford: JV at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity.

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

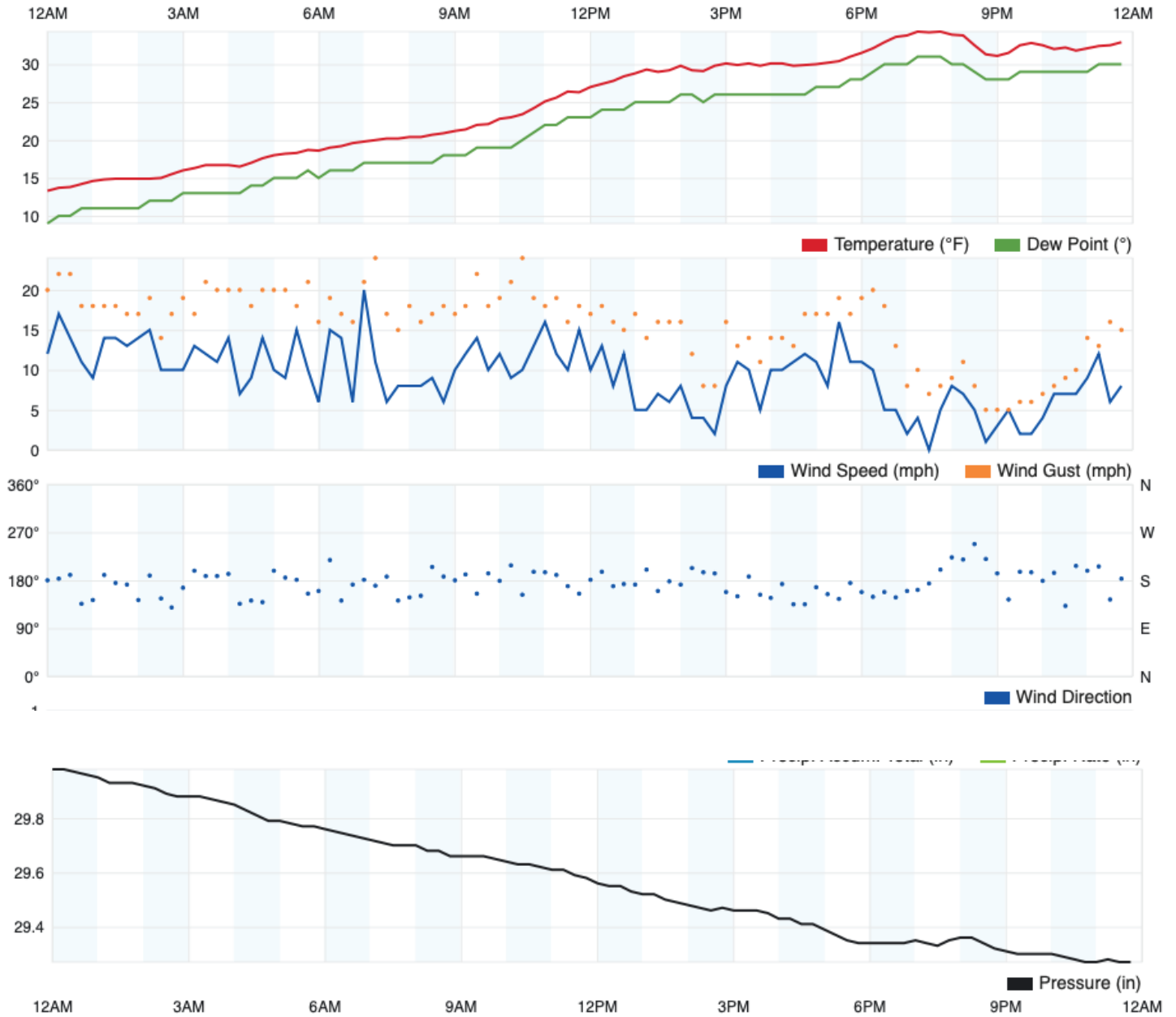
The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 33 °F	Low: 14 °F	High: 18 °F	Low: 8 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: 9 °F	High: 24 °F



## Seasonal Temps into the New Year

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
[www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)  
December 28, 2022 4:01 AM

Today	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
				
31-41°	24-35°	21-36°	22-37°	20-34°

Temperatures will remain around seasonal averages for late December right through the end of the week into the New Year's weekend. A weak system passing to our southeast will bring a chance for some light freezing rain and snow to portions of south-central South Dakota northeastward into parts of northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota, mainly late tonight through Thursday. A few quiet and mild days are expected into the weekend before a more organized system moves closer to the region early next week.



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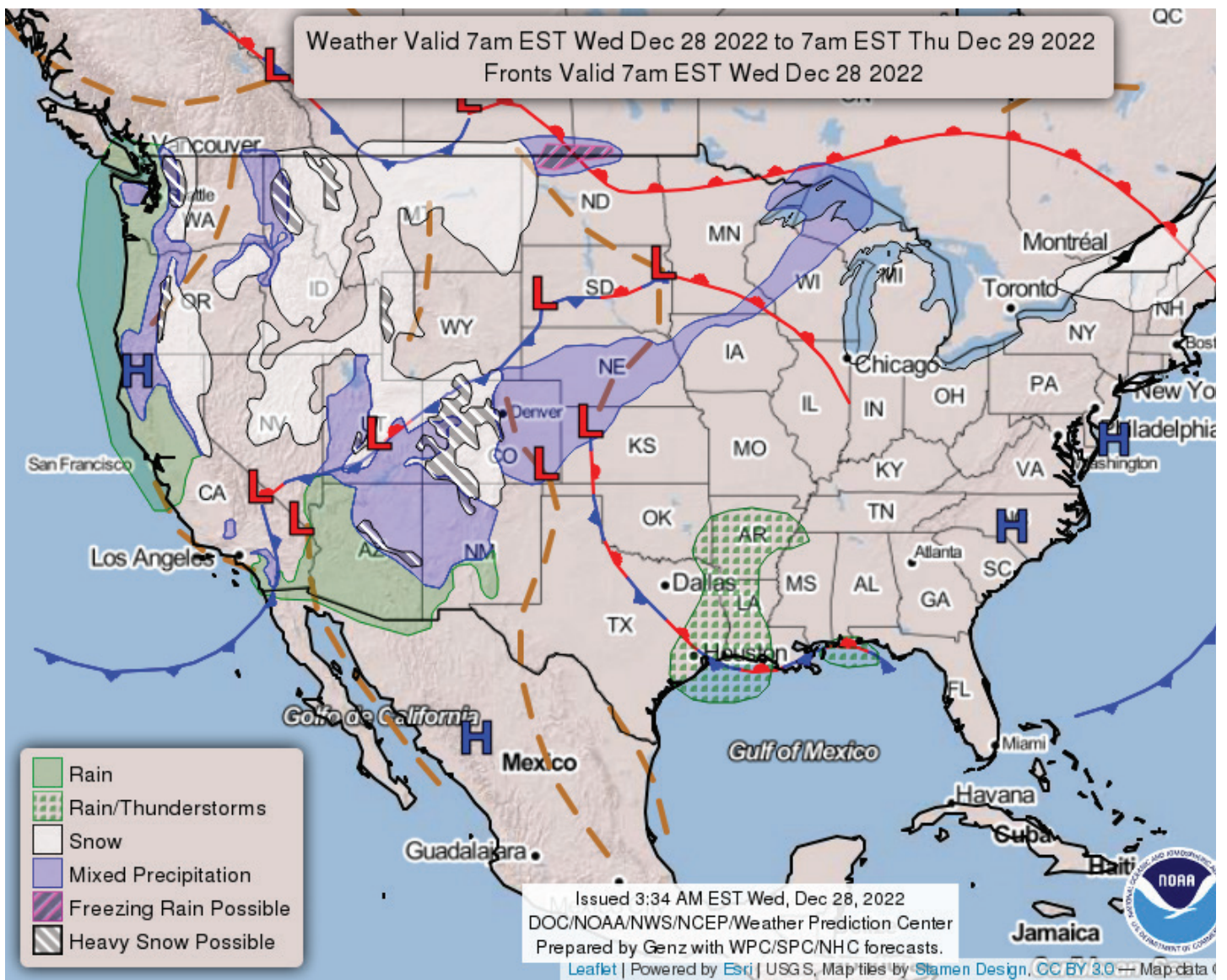
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 34 °F at 7:15 PM**  
**Low Temp: 13 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Wind: 24 mph at 7:10 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.97 (from last batch of snow)**

Day length: 8 hours, 48 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 57 in 1898  
Record Low: -24 in 1924  
Average High: 25°F  
Average Low: 4°F  
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.54  
Precip to date in Dec.: 2.82  
Average Precip to date: 21.75  
Precip Year to Date: 20.32  
Sunset Tonight: 4:58:06 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10:10 AM



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## Today in Weather History

December 28, 2000: Northwest winds of 35 to 50 mph, gusting to around 65 mph, occurred across central and north central South Dakota in the morning. The high winds resulted in blizzard conditions at some locations just east of the Missouri River. Further east, in northeast South Dakota, northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph combined with newly fallen snow to generate blizzard conditions from the morning into the early afternoon hours. Travel was terrible in many places, and many motorists found themselves in ditches. There were also several non-injury accidents.

December 28, 1879: Tay Bridge is the main-line railway across the Tay River in Scotland, between the city of Dundee and the suburb of Wormit in Fife. During the evening hours of December 28, 1879, winds were said to blow at right angles to the bridge. Witnesses said the storm was as severe as they had seen in 20 to 30 years. The winds at Glasgow and Aberdeen were measured at 71 mph. Winds were estimated to be 80 mph in Dundee. A passenger train departed at 7:13 pm was said to disappear three minutes later. The train was found at the bottom of the river, along with the high rafters and much of the ironwork of their supporting piers. There were no survivors. The Court of Inquiry report concluded that "The fall of the bridge was occasioned by the insufficiency of the cross bracing and its fastenings to sustain the force of the gale."

1839 - The third storm in two weeks hit the northeastern U.S. It brought two more feet of snow to Hartford, CT, and Worcester, MA. Whole gales swept the coast causing many wrecks. (David Ludlum)

1897 - The temperature at Dayville, OR, hit 81 degrees to establish a state record for December. (The Weather Channel)

1924 - Iowa experienced its coldest December morning of record. Morning lows averaged 25 degrees below zero for the 104 weather stations across the state.

1955 - Anchorage, AK, was buried under 17.7 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for that location. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1958 - Albuquerque, NM, received 14.2 inches of snow to establish a 24 hour record. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Upper Great Lakes Region. Up to twenty inches of snow buried southern Minnesota, and 20 to 40 mph northwesterly winds produced snow drifts six feet high, and reduced visibilities to near zero at times in blowing snow. There were a thousand traffic accidents in Michigan during the storm, resulting in thirty-five injuries. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds behind a cold front claimed three lives in eastern Pennsylvania, and injured a dozen others in eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Maryland. Winds gusted to 87 mph at Hammon-ton NJ and in the Washington D.C. area. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Squalls continued to bring snow to the Great Lakes Region, with heavy snow reported near Lake Superior and Lake Ontario. Syracuse NY received 8.5 inches of snow to push the total for the month past their previous December record of 57 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A severe snow storm hit northern California and southern Oregon. As much as 2 feet of snow fell along Interstate 5 closing a 150-mile stretch of the interstate, stranding hundreds of travelers. Winds from the storm caused power outages to more than 200,000 customers in California and Oregon. One man died of a heart attack after helping other drivers. (CNN)

2004 - Los Angeles (downtown) broke a daily rainfall record for the month of December (5.55 inches). This was the third wettest calendar day in Los Angeles since records began in 1877.

2005 - An outbreak of severe thunderstorms across portions of the southeast United States on the 28th produced hail, high winds and a few tornadoes. The states of Georgia and Tennessee were the most affected. (NCDC)

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHY PARENTING MATTERS

There is limited information in Scripture that describes the home life of Jesus. Every now and then we get a glimpse of something. But there can be little doubt that God and His teachings were at the center of everything.

We read that "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." No doubt His knowledge of and reverence for the Law and Prophets shaped His life and His reverence and relationship with His Heavenly Father and others.

Luke's Gospel tells us about a family trip to the temple. On the way home, they noticed that He was not with them. When they returned to the temple they found Him listening to and answering questions of the learned teachers. At the tender age of twelve Jesus demonstrated to others the deep understanding of God's Word that obviously came from His parents.

Mary and Joseph realized that they were obligated to God for the welfare and wellbeing of His one and only Son. While He was waiting to begin His public ministry He listened to their teachings and followed their examples of godly living.

Parents can never overlook or underestimate the influence and impact they have on their children. Parents must follow the example of Joseph and Mary in raising their children.

Prayer: We pray, Father, that parents will realize the important gift of a child and the trust You place in them to raise them to know, love, trust, obey and serve You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.



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)

# Groton Daily Independent

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.27.22

9 13 36 59 61 11

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$640,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 19  
DRAW: Mins 18 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.26.22

4 11 26 49 51 10

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$32,180,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 19 Mins 18  
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.27.22

9 19 35 42 43 6

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 49 Mins 18  
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.24.22

2 10 19 31 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$263,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 19 Mins 18  
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.26.22

1 30 52 54 63 26

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 18 Mins 19  
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.26.22

17 41 47 60 61 17

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$215,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 18 Mins 19  
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Burke 47, Jones County 42

Elk Point-Jefferson 68, Irene-Wakonda 47

Grant County/Mott-Regent, N.D. 55, Lemmon 41

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Elk Point-Jefferson 60, Irene-Wakonda 34

Grant County/Mott-Regent, N.D. 47, Lemmon 32

Hamlin 65, Mankato West, Minn. 33

Jones County 52, Burke 19

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

### Ellsworth Air Force Base bomber set for Rose Bowl flyovers

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A bomber out of Ellsworth Air Force Base is scheduled to perform a Rose Bowl flyover next week.

The Rapid City Journal reported Tuesday that the B-1B Lancer will fly over the Tournament of Roses parade and the Rose Bowl football game in Pasadena, California, on Jan. 2. Penn State will face Utah in the game.

The flights are designed to demonstrate the plane's long-range capabilities. The Ellsworth base is located near Rapid City.

The B-1B Lancer is the U.S. Air Force's only supersonic bomber aircraft.

### Staff gives South Dakota governor flamethrower for Christmas

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem got a hot Christmas gift from her staff — literally. Noem's staff gave her a Pulsefire LRT flamethrower with an engraved plate of the state motto "Under God, the people rule," the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported Tuesday.

A video posted to Twitter on Sunday shows Noem, decked out in camouflage, using the flamethrower to torching a pile of cardboard boxes on a snowy farm. She shoots a final spray of flames into the boxes, raises her arm with a flourish and says "Boom, perfect."

According to Tennessee-based ammunitions company MidSouth Shooters, a Pulsefire LRT costs about \$650. Noem spokesperson Ian Fury said no tax dollars went toward the purchase.

The gift comes after a photo on Twitter showing Noem holding a flamethrower with the caption, "Is it too late to add something to my Christmas list?" went viral in 2020.

Some critics on social media have complained that while Noem was burning the boxes, media reports surfaced that thousands of American Indians on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations were trapped without heat during a fierce winter storm. Pine Ridge citizens had to burn clothes after propane deliveries stopped and there was no firewood.

At least one person, a 12-year-old Rosebud Sioux girl, died, because she was unable to receive medical treatment.

Fury noted that the state Department of Public Safety cleared roads on both reservations, coordinated transport for dozens of dialysis patients to Rapid City, helped stranded drivers and delivered food, firewood and propane to communities. Noem also declared a state of emergency and activated the National Guard

to deliver firewood to the Rosebud and Oglala Sioux tribes.

## Riders complete trip to honor victims of mass execution

MANKATO, Minn. (AP) — Dakota tribal members have completed what could be their final annual 330-mile ride on horseback to honor 40 of their ancestors who were killed in the aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune reported that the riders arrived in Mankato on Monday morning after setting out from Lower Brule, South Dakota. The riders endured two snowstorms and frigid days. Hundreds of people cheered the riders' arrival in Mankato.

"I felt the ancestors protected us and were with us all the way," Andrea Eastman said.

The riders have been making the trip each December since 2005 to retrace the route their ancestors took to a reservation in South Dakota. The U.S. government moved tribal members to that state following the mass hanging of 38 tribal members on Dec. 26, 1862, in Mankato. Two others were later captured and hanged.

The executions were designed to punish the tribal members for participating in the war.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz was among the crowd that greeted the riders. He apologized for how the Dakota were treated and said teaching indigenous studies in Minnesota schools is a start toward reconciliation.

Some Minnesota schools require ethnic studies. State lawmakers could consider a bill this session to mandate such studies statewide.

This year's ride will be the last one set up by the original organizers. They say they're stepping away, but Eastman said the rides could resume some time in the future.

"For this ride, it's the last," Eastman said. "But we'll be coming again. Stay tuned."

## China to resume issuing passports, visas as virus curbs ease

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China says it will resume issuing passports for tourism in another big step away from anti-virus controls that isolated the country for almost three years, setting up a potential flood of Chinese going abroad for next month's Lunar New Year holiday.

The announcement Tuesday adds to abrupt changes that are rolling back some of the world's strictest anti-virus controls as President Xi Jinping's government tries to reverse an economic slump. Rules that confined millions of people to their homes kept China's infection rate low but fueled public frustration and crushed economic growth.

The latest decision could send free-spending Chinese tourists to revenue-starved destinations in Asia and Europe for Lunar New Year, which begins Jan. 22 and usually is the country's busiest travel season. But it also presents a danger they might spread COVID-19 as infections surge in China.

Travel services companies Trip.com and Qunar said international ticket bookings and searches for visa information on their websites rose five to eight times after Tuesday's announcement. Top destinations included Japan, Thailand, South Korea, the United States, Britain and Australia.

Japan, India, South Korea and Taiwan have responded to the Chinese wave of infections by requiring virus tests for visitors from China.

China stopped issuing visas to foreigners and passports to its own people at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.

The National Immigration Administration of China said it will start taking applications Jan. 8 for passports for tourists to go abroad.

The agency said it will take applications to extend, renew or reissue visas but gave no indication when they might be issued to first-time applicants.

China will "gradually resume" admitting foreign visitors, the agency said. It gave no indication when tourist travel from abroad might resume.

The changes will "create better conditions for orderly cross-border travel" and "bring more benefits to



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global economic development," said a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin.

China will "work with all countries" to "restore safety and stability to global industrial and supply chains and promote world economic recovery," Wang said.

Health experts and economists expect the ruling Communist Party to keep limits on travel into China until at least mid-2023 while it carries out a campaign to vaccinate millions of elderly people. Experts say that is necessary to prevent a public health crisis.

During the pandemic, Chinese with family emergencies or work travel deemed important could obtain passports, but some students and businesspeople with visas to go to foreign countries were blocked by border guards from leaving. The handful of foreign businesspeople and others who were allowed into China were quarantined for up to one week.

Before the pandemic, China was the biggest source of foreign tourists for most of its Asian neighbors and an important market for Europe and the United States.

The government has dropped or eased most quarantine, testing and other restrictions within China, joining the United States, Japan and other governments in trying to live with the virus instead of stamping out transmission.

Japan and India have begun requiring virus tests for travelers from China. South Korea tests all visitors with elevated temperatures. South Korea says anyone who tests positive will be quarantined at home or in a hotel for a week.

South Korean officials said possible additional measures for arrivals from China will be announced Friday.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to relate internal discussions, said Washington is considering taking similar steps.

Taiwan on Wednesday announced visitors from China will be tested starting Jan. 1.

Hong Kong authorities said Wednesday they would scrap some of the city's COVID-19 restrictions, including PCR tests for all inbound travelers and vaccination requirements to enter certain venues. The easing comes as the southern city prepares for a reopening of borders with mainland China next month.

On Monday, the Chinese government said it would remove quarantine requirements for travelers arriving from abroad, also effective Jan. 8. Foreign companies welcomed the change as an important step to revive slumping business activity.

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

The American Chamber of Commerce in China says 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 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.

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

Also Monday, the government downgraded the official seriousness of COVID-19 and removed it from a list of illnesses that require quarantine. It said authorities would stop tracking close contacts and designating areas as being at high or low risk of infection.

## Vatican says health of retired pope Benedict XVI 'worsening'

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The health of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has worsened due to his age, and doctors are constantly monitoring the 95-year-old's condition, the Vatican said Wednesday.

Vatican spokesperson Matteo Bruni said Pope Francis, who asked the faithful earlier Wednesday to pray for Benedict, went to visit his predecessor in the monastery on Vatican grounds where the retired pontiff has lived since retiring in February 2013.

"Regarding the health conditions of the emeritus pope, for whom Pope Francis asked for prayers at the

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end of his general audience this morning, I can confirm that in the last hours, a worsening due to advanced age has happened," Bruni said in a written statement.

"The situation at the moment remains under control, constantly monitored by doctors," according to the statement.

At the end of his customary Wednesday audience with the public in a Vatican auditorium, Francis departed from his prepared remarks to say that Benedict is "very sick" and asked the faithful to pray for the retired pontiff.

Francis didn't elaborate on the condition of Benedict.

"I'd like to ask all of you for a special prayer for Emeritus Pope Benedict, who, in silence, is sustaining the church," Francis said in remarks near the end of an hour-long audience. "I remind you that he is very sick," Francis said.

"Let's ask the Lord to comfort him and sustain him in this testimony of love to the church to the very end," Francis said.

After the hour-long audience, "Pope Francis went to the Mater Ecclesiae monastery to visit Benedict XVI. Let us all unite with him in prayer for the emeritus pope," Bruni said.

Benedict, who was the first pontiff to resign in 600 years, has become increasingly frail in recent years as he dedicated his post-papacy life to prayer and meditation.

When Benedict turned 95 in April, his longtime secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, said the retired pontiff was in good spirits, adding that "naturally he is physically relatively weak and fragile, but rather lucid."

Francis called on Benedict at the monastery four months ago. The occasion was Francis' latest ceremony elevating churchmen to cardinal rank, and the new "princes of the church" accompanied him for the brief greeting.

The Vatican released a photo at the time that showed a very thin-looking Benedict clasping a hand of Francis as they current and past pontiff smiled at each other.

In his first years of retirement, Benedict attended a couple of cardinal-elevating ceremonies in St. Peter's Basilica. But in recent years, he wasn't strong enough to attend the long service.

## Netanyahu government: West Bank settlements top priority

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Benjamin Netanyahu's incoming hard-line government put West Bank settlement expansion at the top of its list of priorities on Wednesday, a day before it's set to be sworn into office.

Netanyahu's Likud party released the new government's policy guidelines, the first of which is that it will "advance and develop settlement in all parts of the land of Israel — in the Galilee, Negev, Golan Heights, and Judea and Samaria" — the Biblical names for the West Bank.

The commitment could put the new government on a collision course with its closest allies, including the United States, which opposes settlement construction on occupied territories.

Israel captured the West Bank in 1967 along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem. The Palestinians seek the West Bank as the heartland of a future independent state. In the decades since, Israel has constructed dozens of Jewish settlements there that are now home to around 500,000 Israelis living alongside around 2.5 million Palestinians.

Most of the international community considers Israel's West Bank settlements illegal and an obstacle to peace with the Palestinians.

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.

Several of Netanyahu's key allies, including most of the Religious Zionism party, are ultranationalist West Bank settlers.

On Wednesday, incoming finance minister Bezalel Smotrich said in an op-ed published by the Wall Street Journal that there would be no "changing the political or legal status" of the West Bank, running contrary to years of advocating annexation of the entire territory.

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He leveled criticism at the “feckless military government” that manages civilian affairs for Israeli settlers, including himself. Smotrich is set to assume control over the military government in the occupied West Bank under his second role — a newly created position as a minister in the Defense Ministry.

Netanyahu is returning to power after he was ousted from office last year after serving as prime minister from 2009 to 2021. He will take office while on trial for allegedly accepting bribes, breach of trust and fraud, charges he denies.

Netanyahu’s partners are seeking widespread policy reforms that could alienate large swaths of the Israeli public, raise tensions with the Palestinians, and put the country on a collision course with the United States and American Jewry.

The Biden administration has said it strongly opposes settlement expansion and has rebuked the Israeli government for it in the past.

Earlier on Wednesday, Israel’s figurehead president expressed “deep concern” about the incoming government and its positions on LGBTQ rights, racism and the country’s Arab minority in a rare meeting called with Itamar Ben-Gvir, one of the coalition’s most radical members.

President Isaac Herzog met with Ben-Gvir, head of the Jewish Power faction and heir to the outlawed politician Meir Kahane, after members of his party called for the legalization of discrimination against LGBTQ people based on religious belief.

Herzog’s office said the president urged Ben-Gvir to “calm the stormy winds and to be attentive to and internalize the criticism” about the incoming government’s stance on LGBTQ issues, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and a bill to remove a ban on politicians supporting racism and terrorism from serving in the Knesset, Israel’s parliament.

The government platform also mentioned that the loosely defined rules governing holy sites, including Jerusalem’s flashpoint shrine known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, would remain the same.

Ben-Gvir and other Religious Zionism politicians had called for the “status quo” to be changed to allow Jewish prayer at the site, a move that risked inflaming tensions with the Palestinians. The status of the site is the emotional epicenter of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## Minister: Ukraine aims to develop air-to-air combat drones

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine has bought some 1,400 drones, mostly for reconnaissance, and plans to develop combat models that can attack the exploding drones Russia has used during its invasion of the country, according to the Ukrainian government minister in charge of technology.

In a recent interview with The Associated Press, Minister of Digital Transformation Mykhailo Fedorov described Russia’s war in Ukraine as the first major war of the internet age. He credited drones and satellite internet systems like Elon Musk’s Starlink with having transformed the conflict.

Ukraine has purchased drones like the Fly Eye, a small unmanned aerial vehicle used for intelligence, battlefield surveillance and reconnaissance.

“And the next stage, now that we are more or less equipped with reconnaissance drones, is strike drones,” Fedorov said. “These are both exploding drones and drones that fly up to three to 10 kilometers and hit targets.”

He predicted “more missions with strike drones” in the future, but would not elaborate. “We are talking there about drones, UAVs, UAVs that we are developing in Ukraine. Well, anyway, it will be the next step in the development of technologies,” he said.

Russian authorities have alleged several Ukrainian drone strikes on its military bases in recent weeks, including one on Monday in which they said Russian forces shot down a drone approaching the Engels airbase located more than 600 kilometers (over 370 miles) from the Ukrainian border.

Russia’s military said debris killed three service members but no aircraft were damaged. The base houses Tu-95 and Tu-160 nuclear-capable strategic bombers that have been involved in launching strikes on Ukraine.

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Ukrainian authorities have never formally acknowledged carrying out such drone strikes, but they have made cryptic allusions to how Russia might expect retaliation for its war in Ukraine, including within Russian territory.

Ukraine is carrying out research and development on drones that could fight and down other drones, Fedorov said. Russia has used Iranian-made Shahed drones for its airstrikes in Ukrainian territory in recent weeks, in addition to rocket, cruise missile and artillery attacks.

"I can say already that the situation regarding drones will change drastically in February or March," he said.

Fedorov sat for an interview in his bright and modern office. Located inside a staid ministry building, the room contained a vinyl record player, history books stacked on shelves and a treadmill.

The minister highlighted the importance of mobile communications for both civilian and military purposes during the war and said the most challenging places to maintain service have been in the Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa and Kyiv regions in the center and east of the country.

He said there are times when fewer than half of mobile phone towers are functioning in the capital, Kyiv, because Russian airstrikes have destroyed or damaged the infrastructure that power them.

Ukraine has some 30,000 mobile-phone towers, and the government is now trying to link them to generators so they can keep working when airstrikes damage the power grid.

The only alternative, for now, is satellite systems like Starlink, which Ukrainians may rely on more if blackouts start lasting longer.

"We should understand that in this case, the Starlinks and the towers, connected to the generators, will be the basic internet infrastructure," Fedorov said.

Many cities and towns are facing power cuts lasting up to 10 hours. Fedorov said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a decree that instructs mobile phone companies to ensure they can provide signals without electricity for at least three days.

Meanwhile, with support from its European Union partners, his ministry is working to bring 10,000 more Starlink stations to Ukraine, with internet service made available to the public through hundreds of "Points of Invincibility" that offer warm drinks, heated spaces, electricity and shelter for people displaced by fighting or power outages.

Roughly 24,000 Starlink stations already are in operation in Ukraine. Musk's company, SpaceX, began providing them during the early days of the war after Fedorov tweeted a request to the billionaire.

"I just stood there on my knees, begging them to start working in Ukraine, and promised that we would make a world record," he recalled.

Fedorov compared Space X's donation of the satellite terminals to the U.S.-supplied multiple rocket launchers in terms of significance for Ukraine's ability to mount a defense to Russia's invasion.

"Thousands of lives were saved," he said.

As well as the civilian applications, Starlink has helped front-line reconnaissance drone operators target artillery strikes on Russian assets and positions. Fedorov said his team is now dedicating 70% of its time to military technologies. The ministry was created only three years ago.

Providing the army with drones is among its main tasks.

"We need to do more than what is expected of us, and progress does not wait," Fedorov said, scoffing at Russian skill in the domain of drones. "I don't believe in their technological potential at all."

## Jihadi violence hits Benin, shows spread across West Africa

By SAM MEDNICK and VIRGILE AHISSOU Associated Press

COTONOU, Benin (AP) — It's been more than a year since jihadis first stormed Igor Kassah's town in northern Benin but the priest still lives in fear. His once peaceful life is now marked by threatening phone calls and Islamic extremist diatribes tacked on church doors demanding that people leave. He is haunted by the bodies he has seen of those killed in the attacks.

"We no longer have a normal life," the 41-year-old said through text messages to The Associated Press. "It's hard to talk and act confidently because you don't know who's in front of you anymore."

Violence by extremists linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group has wracked much of West Africa's

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inland Sahel region for more than seven years. Now it is spreading into the coastal states with Benin the hardest hit, say experts.

Jihadi attacks in Benin have spiked more than tenfold between July and December compared to the same period last year — from 2 to 25 — according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. This is more than any other coastal state in West Africa. If the extremist violence continues to spread it could have far-reaching consequences, say analysts.

“When you talk about the Sahel, geopolitical interests are limited,” said Kars de Bruijne, senior research fellow with Clingendael, a Dutch-based research organization.

“But it’s different for coastal states, which are economically much stronger and more important to the African Union and Western countries such as England and the United States,” he said. These Western powers might see their interests at stake, which is a key reason why they should be really concerned about the spillover of extremist violence into Benin, he said. The more fronts the jihadis open, the more difficult it will be to effectively respond, he said.

The violence in Benin, a country of 12 million people, is largely a result of what’s happening in neighboring Burkina Faso, where jihadi attacks have killed hundreds and displaced nearly 2 million people. Attacks were initially confined to the border between eastern Burkina Faso and Benin in the W and Pendjari National Parks in the Alibori and Atacora regions, but are now expanding. Incidents have increased since June in populated areas around the parks with jihadis connected to the al-Qaida-linked group known as JNIM, pushing Benin’s military from the border creating a security vacuum and taking control of part of the country, said a recent report by Clingendael.

The jihadi rebels appear to be creating a large area of influence from Niger to Togo in order to keep supply lines open, recruit people and procure material, say analysts. Another aim could be to withstand pressure from the Accra Initiative, a military platform involving Burkina Faso and coastal countries to prevent the further spread of extremism from the Sahel.

Benin’s government has ramped up its response investing nearly \$130 million to create new operating bases, fortify existing ones and recruit nearly 4,000 security forces since last year, Benin’s President Patrice Talon said in a speech earlier this month.

But the government’s increased security is bringing human rights abuses such as arbitrary arrests of those suspected of working with jihadis, particularly the ethnic Fulani who are suspected to be affiliated to Islamic extremists, say locals and rights groups.

“There is a risk that human rights violations will become systematic and worsen, as is the case in neighboring countries that have been fighting the same armed groups for several years,” said Samira Daoud, regional director for West Africa for Amnesty International.

West Africa’s coastal states and the international community haven’t learned enough from the crisis in the Sahel about how to address the insecurity, say regional experts.

“We’re watching the same dynamic play out in Benin and I’m afraid that we are trying the same strategies that failed in the Sahel,” said Laura Sanders, founder of Cetus Global a consulting company based in Benin and focused on conflict prevention in West Africa.

“There’s an opportunity to choose a different route for littoral countries in addressing the crisis, focusing on the drivers of violence and what pushes people into these armed groups, such as unresolved grievances, social marginalization, and poor governance of natural resources,” she said.

To reduce humanitarian suffering as violence increases, it’s urgent to scale up investments now in education, nutrition and health in regions bordering central Sahel countries, say aid groups.

Meanwhile, communities in Benin say they are being forced to accept a life they never thought they’d have to endure.

“We thought for a moment, perhaps because of a certain naivety ... that (we) could escape the situation of threats, of near-daily attacks that (Benin) is undergoing,” said Arnaud Houenou an expert in national security and a professor at Benin’s University of Abomey Calavi.

“Benin has been spared the terrorist war in the Sahel despite its proximity to Nigeria and Burkina Faso,”

he said. "But reality has set in."

## On the ballot in 2023: Southern governors, big-city mayors

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot will be asking voters for a second term leading one of the nation's biggest cities. Republicans will try to take full control of the Virginia Legislature. Governors' mansions are up for election in Louisiana and Mississippi, and a Democratic governor in red-state Kentucky will try to hang on for another term.

While much of the political focus in 2023 is on the emerging presidential race, voters in some states will be weighing in on lower-profile contests that will nonetheless provide fresh insight into their priorities and views on the direction of the country.

Republicans are expected to try to tie Kentucky Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear to President Joe Biden and other national Democrats who tend to be more liberal. Beshear, making his reelection bid in a state that heavily favors Republicans, gently distanced himself from Biden in a recent interview with The Associated Press, saying, "This race isn't going to be about the White House."

"It's going to be what's going on in the homes of each and every Kentuckian," Beshear said. "And I think this last set of elections showed that if you want to be governor, people expect you to have a plan. People expect you to talk to them and not simply use some national talking points."

State GOP spokesperson Sean Southard in a statement earlier this month said the party feels that the "fundamentals are strong for a Republican candidate to defeat him" once the party has a nominee.

About a dozen Republicans have said they are running, including former U.N. Ambassador Kelly Craft, state Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles and Attorney General Daniel Cameron, who has already received former President Donald Trump's endorsement.

The Republican Governors Association did not make someone available for an interview but noted in a statement that the only incumbent governor to lose in 2022 was a Democrat, Steve Sisolak of Nevada, "and the RGA is ready to do it again in 2023."

"Democrat Andy Beshear does not align with Kentucky's values, and we know voters are eager for Republican leadership in Frankfort," RGA spokesperson Joanna Rodriguez said.

New Jersey Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy, who is taking over as chair of the Democratic Governors Association in 2023, said the group's "highest priority, far and away, is to defend and reelect" Beshear.

The group made a controversial but ultimately successful move in 2022 to boost far-right Republican candidates in several states' GOP races, allowing Democratic candidates to face easier-to-beat opponents in the general election.

Murphy would not rule out taking similar steps in 2023, saying: "As long as it is ethical and legal, nothing is off the table."

His party faces a tougher battle in conservative Louisiana, where moderate Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards is term-limited. It's unclear who will emerge as a Democratic candidate, but a large pool of GOP candidates is expected to jump into the race. One of the highest-profile Republicans considering a bid is U.S. Sen. John Kennedy.

In Mississippi, Republican Gov. Tate Reeves will seek a second term. He recently signed into law the state's largest-ever tax cut and plans to push for a full elimination of the state's income tax in 2023. His reelection bid may be complicated, however, by lingering frustrations over the crumbling water system in the capital city of Jackson, which partially failed in August and left the majority-Black city of about 150,000 people waiting in lines for water to drink, bathe, cook and flush toilets.

In Democratic-leaning Virginia, all 140 seats in the politically divided General Assembly will be on the ballot. Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who has been privately weighing a 2024 presidential bid, has pledged to help his party win full control of the legislature, though his plans to further limit abortions in the state could galvanize Democratic voters.

Republicans would need to hold their majority in the House of Delegates and, pending the outcome of

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a January special election, pick up as many as three seats for an outright Senate majority.

In New Jersey, a Democrat-led state where Republicans have been making steady gains in recent years, all 120 seats in the state legislature will be on the ballot, giving the GOP a chance to regain control for the first time in two decades. Democrats currently control 24 of 40 seats in the state Senate and 46 of 80 Assembly seats.

Intraparty differences will be the main feature of the biggest mayoral races of 2023, showcasing the divides between progressives and moderates in Democratic strongholds.

In Chicago, more than a half-dozen candidates are trying to oust Lightfoot. A Feb. 28 election will go to an April runoff if no candidate wins a majority in the officially nonpartisan election.

Lightfoot became the city's first Black woman and first openly gay person to lead Chicago when she was elected in 2019. She first ran for office as a progressive and an outsider who would take on corruption at City Hall, but her first years in office also included a global pandemic and protests against police brutality.

Lightfoot's opponents and other critics say her approach to governing has been too confrontational. She has said the criticism is due mostly to sexism and racism but has started to address it in her campaign, saying in her first campaign ad: "I'm only human. And I guess sometimes it shows. But just because somebody may not always like my delivery doesn't mean we're not delivering."

Crime, which has played a substantial role in mayoral and gubernatorial elections around the country over the past two years, will be a major issue. While homicides have been down in Chicago in 2022 compared with previous years, the number is still higher than when Lightfoot took office. Concerns have grown about carjackings, shootings and other violence, particularly near downtown and other business and tourist areas.

Crime concerns are also dominating the mayoral race in Philadelphia, another Democratic stronghold. Mayor Jim Kenney is term-limited, and a crowded field is shaping up amid a surge of gun violence and a shortage of police officers. So far the Democratic primary field includes five former council members and the city controller, all of whom resigned their seats to run, along with at least one state lawmaker. No Republican has announced yet.

## **Biden arrives in US Virgin Islands to relax between holidays**

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

KINGSHILL, U.S. Virgin Islands (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday traveled to a place very familiar to him — the U.S. Virgin Islands — to enjoy some downtime and warmer weather and to ring in a new year with family.

The president and his wife, first lady Jill Biden, flew from Washington on Tuesday to St. Croix, one of three islands that make up the U.S. territory in the Caribbean. St. John and St. Thomas are the other two islands. The Bidens were joined by their daughter Ashley and her husband, Howard Krein, as well as grandchildren Natalie and Hunter, whose father was the president's late son, Beau.

St. Croix is a tropical getaway that Biden has been getting away to at least since he was vice president, from 2009 to 2017.

"We've missed him the last couple of years," Beth Moss Mahar, a retired attorney and island resident for nearly three decades, said in a telephone interview.

Biden spent the holidays at his home in Delaware in 2020 and 2021, mostly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This week's visit to St. Croix will be his first as president to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"We're tremendously honored," Del. Stacey Plaskett, a Democrat who represents the Virgin Islands in Congress, said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

"In the past, when he and his family have come, of course sightings of President Biden were almost a thing of legend," she said.

Any sightings will now be altered by the fact that Biden is regarded as one of the world's most powerful men. As such, he now travels with a significantly bigger footprint than when he was vice president, including a large contingent of U.S. Secret Service agents, White House staff and journalists covering the trip.

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Biden and his wife enjoy spending the week between Christmas and New Year's Day in a warmer climate, and Jill Biden likes a beach, aides said.

"We always look forward to his coming and we really understand that this is a place of relaxation for him and Jill and whatever other family he may bring with him and so we leave him alone and let him just relax," said Donna Christensen, who was Plaskett's predecessor in Congress.

"He usually says, 'In my next life, I'm living in St. Croix,'" she said in a telephone interview.

Both Plaskett and Christensen expressed hope that attention paid to where Biden spends his year-end vacation will amplify challenges facing the U.S. Virgin Islands and other U.S. territories, such as threats from climate change, including more powerful hurricanes and rising sea levels, as well as problems these governments have coping with aging infrastructure.

Biden was scheduled to return to Washington on Jan. 2. That's the day before the president's Democratic Party cedes control of the House of Representatives to the Republican Party following the November mid-term elections, potentially complicating Biden's legislative agenda for the remaining two years of his term.

Democrats will continue to control the Senate in the Congress that will be seated on Jan. 3.

## US Supreme Court keeps asylum limits in place for now

By REBECCA SANTANA and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is keeping pandemic-era limits on asylum in place for now, dashing hopes of migrants who have been fleeing violence and inequality in Latin America and elsewhere to reach the United States.

Tuesday's ruling preserves a major Trump-era policy that was scheduled to expire under a judge's order on Dec. 21. The case will be argued in February and a stay imposed last week by Chief Justice John Roberts will remain in place until the justices make a decision.

The limits, often known as Title 42 in reference to a 1944 public health law, were put in place under then-President Donald Trump at the beginning of the pandemic, but unwinding it has taken a torturous route through the courts. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention attempted to end the policy in April 2022, but a federal judge in Louisiana sided with 19 Republican-led states in May to order it kept in place. Another federal judge in Washington said in November that Title 42 must end, sending the dispute to the Supreme Court. Officials have expelled asylum-seekers inside the United States 2.5 million times on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Immigration advocates sued to end the policy, saying it goes against American and international obligations to people fleeing to the U.S. to escape persecution. They've also argued that the policy is outdated as coronavirus treatments improve.

The Supreme Court's 5-4 decision comes as thousands of migrants have gathered on the Mexican side of the border, filling shelters and worrying advocates who are scrambling to figure out how to care for them.

"We are deeply disappointed for all the desperate asylum seekers who will continue to suffer because of Title 42, but we will continue fighting to eventually end the policy," said Lee Gelernt, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, which had been arguing to end Title 42's use.

Andrea Rudnik, co-founder of non-profit immigration aid organization Team Brownsville in South Texas, said the situation at the border is a humanitarian crisis. She said there are thousands of migrants camped on cardboard boxes and in makeshift tents near the entrance of the Gateway International Bridge in Matamoros, Mexico, opposite Brownsville, without food, water, clothing or bathrooms.

"It is very readily becoming a dangerous situation because there's no toilets," Rudnik said. "Get that many people together with no bathrooms and you know what you have got."

States that wanted Title 42 kept in place hailed the outcome. In a press release Tuesday, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds praised the court's decision while saying it's not a permanent solution to the country's immigration woes.

"I'm grateful that Title 42 remains in place to help deter illegal entry at the US southern border. But make no mistake — this is only a temporary fix to a crisis that President Biden and his administration have



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ignored for two years," she said.

The Supreme Court's decision said that the court will review the issue of whether the states have the right to intervene in the legal fight over Title 42. Both the federal government and immigration advocates have argued that the states waited too long to intervene and — even if they hadn't waited so long — that they don't have sufficient standing to intervene.

In the dissent, Justices Neil Gorsuch and Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote that even if the court were to find the states have the right to intervene and Title 42 was lawfully adopted "... the emergency on which those orders were premised has long since lapsed."

The justices said the "current border crisis is not a COVID crisis."

"And courts should not be in the business of perpetuating administrative edicts designed for one emergency only because elected officials have failed to address a different emergency. We are a court of law, not policymakers of last resort," the justices wrote.

Justices Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor also voted to deny the stay but did not sign a dissent.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Tuesday that President Joe Biden's administration "will, of course, comply with the order and prepare for the Court's review."

"At the same time, we are advancing our preparations to manage the border in a secure, orderly, and humane way when Title 42 eventually lifts and will continue expanding legal pathways for immigration," Jean-Pierre added. "Title 42 is a public health measure, not an immigration enforcement measure, and it should not be extended indefinitely."

In November, a federal judge sided with advocates and set a Dec. 21 deadline to end the policy. Conservative-leaning states appealed to the Supreme Court, warning that an increase in migration would take a toll on public services and cause an "unprecedented calamity" that they said the federal government had no plan to deal with.

Roberts, who handles emergency matters that come from federal courts in the nation's capital, issued a stay to give the court time to more fully consider both sides' arguments.

The federal government asked the Supreme Court to reject the states' effort while also acknowledging that ending the restrictions abruptly would likely lead to "disruption and a temporary increase in unlawful border crossings."

The precise issue before the court is a complicated, largely procedural question of whether the states should be allowed to intervene in the lawsuit. A similar group of states won a lower court order in a different court district preventing the end of the restrictions after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced in April that it was ending use of the policy.

Until the judge's November order in the advocates' lawsuit, the states had not sought to take part in that case. But they say that the administration has essentially abandoned its defense of the Title 42 policy and they should be able to step in. The administration has appealed the ruling, though it has not tried to keep Title 42 in place while the legal case plays out.

The Biden administration still has considerable leeway to enforce Title 42 as aggressively or as leniently as it chooses. For example, when a judge ordered last year that Trump's "Remain in Mexico" policy to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court be reinstated, it did so with such limited scope that it had little impact. That policy ended in August after the administration prevailed in the Supreme Court.

The Biden administration's use of Title 42 includes an opaque, bewildering patchwork of exemptions that are supposed to be for migrants deemed most vulnerable in Mexico, perhaps for gender identity or sexual orientation, or for being specifically threatened with violence. U.S. Customs and Border Protection works with partners it doesn't publicly identify and doesn't say how many slots are made available to each.

Mexico is another wild card. The use of Title 42 to quickly expel migrants depends largely on Mexico's willingness to accept them. Right now Mexico takes expelled migrants from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Venezuela, in addition to Mexico, but not other countries, such as Cuba. Most asylum seekers who cannot be sent to Mexico are not expelled.

Biden is scheduled meet with Mexican President Andres Manuel López Obrador in Mexico City next month.

## Southwest cancels more flights, draws federal investigation

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Southwest Airlines scrubbed thousands of flights again Tuesday in the aftermath of the massive winter storm that wrecked Christmas travel plans across the U.S., and the federal government said it would investigate why the company lagged so far behind other carriers.

A day after most U.S. airlines had recovered from the storm, Southwest called off about 2,600 more flights on the East Coast by late afternoon. Those flights accounted for more than 80% of the 3,000 trips that got canceled nationwide Tuesday, according to tracking service FlightAware.

And the chaos seemed certain to continue. The airline also scrubbed 2,500 flights for Wednesday and nearly 1,400 for Thursday as it tried to restore order to its mangled schedule.

At airports with major Southwest operations, customers stood in long lines hoping to find a seat on another flight. They described waiting hours on hold for help, only to be cut off. Some tried to rent cars to get to their destinations sooner. Others found spots to sleep on the floor. Luggage piled up in huge heaps.

Conrad Stoll, a 66-year-old retired construction worker in Missouri, planned to fly from Kansas City to Los Angeles for his father's 90th birthday party until his Southwest flight was canceled early Tuesday. He said he won't get to see his 88-year-old mother either.

"I went there in 2019, and she looked at me and said, 'I'm not going to see you again.'" Stoll said. "My sister has been taking care of them, and she's just like, 'They're really losing it really quick.'"

Stoll hopes to get another chance to see his parents in the spring, when the weather is warmer.

In a video that Southwest posted late Tuesday, CEO Robert Jordan said Southwest would operate a reduced schedule for several days but hoped to be "back on track before next week."

Jordan blamed the winter storm for snarling the airline's "highly complex" network. He said Southwest's tools for recovering from disruptions work "99% of the time, but clearly we need to double down" on upgrading systems to avoid a repeat of this week.

"We have some real work to do in making this right," said Jordan, a 34-year Southwest veteran who became CEO in February. "For now, I want you to know that we are committed to that."

The problems began over the weekend and snowballed Monday, when Southwest called off more than 70% of its flights.

That was after the worst of the storm had passed. The airline said many pilots and flight attendants were out of position to work their flights. Leaders of unions representing Southwest pilots and flight attendants blamed antiquated crew-scheduling software and criticized company management.

Casey Murray, president of the Southwest Airlines Pilots Association, said the airline failed to fix problems that caused a similar meltdown in October 2021.

"There is a lot of frustration because this is so preventable," Murray said. "The airline cannot connect crews to airplanes. The airline didn't even know where pilots were at."

Murray said managers resorted this week to asking pilots at some airports to report to a central location, where they wrote down the names of pilots who were present and forwarded the lists to headquarters.

Lyn Montgomery, president of the Transport Workers Union representing Southwest flight attendants, said she and other labor leaders have repeatedly told management that the airline's scheduling technology is not good enough.

"This has been something we have seen coming," she said. "This is a very catastrophic event."

The airline is now drawing unwanted attention from Washington.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, who has criticized airlines for previous disruptions, said his agency would examine the causes of Southwest's widespread cancellations and whether the airline was meeting its legal obligations to stranded customers.

"While we all understand that you can't control the weather, this has clearly crossed the line from what is an uncontrollable weather situation to something that is the airline's direct responsibility," Buttigieg told

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"NBC Nightly News." He said Southwest should at least pay cash refunds for canceled flights and cover stranded passengers' hotel and meal costs.

In Congress, the Senate Commerce Committee also promised an investigation. Two Senate Democrats called on Southwest to provide "significant" compensation for stranded travelers, saying that the airline has the money because it plans to pay \$428 million in dividends next month.

Bryce Burger and his family were supposed to be on a cruise to Mexico departing from San Diego on Dec. 24, but their flight from Denver was canceled without warning. The flight was rebooked through Burbank, California, but that flight was canceled while they sat at the gate.

"It's horrible," Burger said Tuesday by phone from Salt Lake City, where the family decided to drive after giving up the cruise.

The family's luggage is still at the Denver airport, and Burger doesn't know if he can get a refund for the cruise because the flight to California was booked separately.

The size and severity of the storm created havoc for many airlines, although the largest number of canceled flights Tuesday were at airports where Southwest is a major carrier, including Denver, Chicago Midway, Las Vegas, Baltimore and Dallas.

Spirit Airlines and Alaska Airlines both canceled about 10% of their flights, with much smaller cancellation percentages at American, Delta, United and JetBlue.

Kristie Smiley planned to return home to Los Angeles until Southwest canceled her Tuesday flight, so she waited at the Kansas City airport for her mother to pick her up. Southwest can't put her on another plane until Sunday, New Year's Day.

Smiley said the airline kept blaming the weather after the storm passed and didn't tell passengers why planes couldn't take off.

"They like acted like (Tuesday's flight) was going to go until they started saying, 'Oh, five more minutes. Oh, 10 more minutes.' I'm not sure what's up with them. It seems a little off," she said.

Danielle Zanin vowed never to fly Southwest again after it took four days, several canceled flights and sleeping in the airport before she, her husband and their two young children got home to Illinois from Albuquerque, New Mexico. They made stops at airports in Denver and Phoenix and reached Chicago only after ditching Southwest and paying \$1,400 for four one-way tickets on American Airlines.

"I remember saying, 'Oh my God, we're getting on a plane!' I was honestly shocked because I thought we were stuck in airports forever," she said.

Zanin plans to ask Southwest to be reimbursed for part of their original tickets plus the new ones on American, and extra spending on rental cars, parking, an Uber ride and food — about \$2,000 in all.

"I don't have good faith that they will do much of anything," she said.

## Mexico's president asks residents to reject drug gang gifts

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's president appealed to the country's citizens Tuesday not to accept holiday handouts and gifts from drug gangs, after videos posted online showed garish pickup trucks handing out loads of gifts while bystanders described the drivers as members of the Jalisco drug cartel.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador confirmed that some drug gangs were looking to resume such giveaways — often seen years ago — to gain the support of the local population.

López Obrador said in his morning press briefing that local residents in some communities have tried to protect traffickers, stop drug seizures or oppose the installation of National Guard bases intended to fight drug trafficking.

Authorities have not confirmed the source of the gifts — mostly toys — in the Dec. 21 handout in a low-income neighborhood in the city of Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco state.

A convoy of trucks carrying inflatable Santa decorations and Christmas lights drove through the neighborhood, blaring "narco corrido" songs praising the Jalisco cartel and a local leader of the gang, known by the alias "RR."

A bystander in one video clip is heard saying, "All RR's people. Who says they don't give you anything?"

Why doesn't the government do the same?"

Asked about the videos Tuesday, López Obrador conceded the practice was re-emerging; in the 2010s, such cartel Christmas gift rounds were common in the northern border state of Tamaulipas. López Obrador said it was part of a strategy by criminal gangs to win popular support.

"Since the start of this administration, we knew, it was obvious, it was public record, that criminal gangs were relying a lot on social bases, on people in the communities," the president said. "They use the people as (human) shields."

"Lately, some groups are trying to revive this (gift-giving) method by getting people to support them," López Obrador said. "When there is a cocaine seizure, communities come out and defend the traffickers, and even try to abduct members of the army and (National) Guard, to prevent the seizure of the cocaine."

Local residents in three states have also held demonstrations against the construction of barracks for the National Guard. López Obrador attributed what he described as "three or four cases" of local opposition to cartel influence. However, in the case of demonstrations in Mexico City, residents have said they view the barracks as unnecessary, environmentally damaging or likely to increase violence in the neighborhood.

Mexico's most massive show of local support for criminal gangs has come for fuel-theft gangs that drill into government pipelines to steal gasoline and diesel. Because the fuel thieves let local people also collect gas from the illegal taps, many communities fought raids by police and the army.

But López Obrador said his campaign against fuel theft has weakened that type of collaboration with criminals.

"There was this type of support, all of that has been disappearing because people know it is illegal and they shouldn't protect criminals," the president said. "What I tell people is that they shouldn't let themselves be manipulated, they shouldn't protect these gangs."

## **In El Salvador, a tough anti-gang crackdown proves popular**

By MARCOS ALEMAN Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Nine months into a state of emergency declared by President Nayib Bukele to fight street gangs, El Salvador has seen more than 1,000 documented human rights abuses and about 90 deaths of prisoners in custody. And Bukele's popularity ratings have soared.

For decades, El Salvador's main street gangs, Barrio 18 and the MS-13, have extorted money from nearly everyone and taken violent revenge against those who don't pay. The gangs, which have been estimated to count some 70,000 members, have long controlled swaths of territory and extorted and killed with impunity.

Bukele, who was elected in 2019, began sealing off certain sectors of Salvadoran cities earlier this year, surrounding them with police and soldiers who check anyone entering or leaving. Bukele requested that Congress grant him the extraordinary powers after gangs were blamed for 62 killings in just one day, March 26.

More than 60,000 people have been arrested under the measures, which suspend the right of association, the right to be informed of the reason for an arrest and access to a lawyer. The government also can intervene in the telephone calls and mail of anyone it considers a suspected gang member. The time someone can be held without charge has been extended from three days to 15 days.

Rights activists say young men are frequently arrested just based on their age, on their appearance or whether they live in a gang-dominated slum. The country's human rights official, Raquel Caballero, said 2,100 people have been released after arrest because they had no ties to the street gangs.

But Bukele, who is seeking re-election in 2024, has reveled in recent polls that suggest approval ratings of near 90% for both himself and his gang crackdown.

"I don't care what the international organizations say," Bukele said earlier this year of criticism of his measures. "They can come and take the gang members. If they want them we will give them all of them."

Why are Salvadorans putting up with seemingly unending renewals of one-month emergency decrees that limit constitutional rights and allow police and soldiers wide latitude in searches, arrests and pre-trial

detention?

Thanya Pastor, a lawyer and political analyst, says years of unchecked crime and violence have made Salvadorans desperate for a solution.

"People at this moment are not going to listen to anything about human rights, anything about democracy or authoritarianism. What they are interested in is their safety and the opportunity to live a free life," Pastor said.

Pastor says he supports the crackdown. But he says Bukele's government must still be held responsible for abuses and give an accounting of those who died in custody.

The brutal crackdown appears to have caught the street gangs by surprise.

"They weren't expecting it, they were caught unaware and they rounded almost all of them up," said Manuel Torres, who works in a factory in the San José El Pino neighborhood of San Salvador, the capital. The neighborhood was once controlled by the MS-13.

Torres looked around worriedly, afraid to be caught for openly speaking about the gangs. "There are still several of them left," he says.

Cristóbal Benítez, a 55-year-old street vendor, says the change has been striking.

"The gangs ruled here, they had their turf well marked. You either paid up or they killed you," said Benítez. "But now, the government appears to be in control again."

Juan Pappier, the acting associate director for the Americas at Human Rights Watch, said it was an error to think that "you can achieve success based on massive violations of human rights," arguing that mass roundups won't dismantle the gangs' organizational structures.

Bukele is defiant in the face of such criticisms, writing in his Twitter account: "They are afraid we will be successful, and that other governments will want to copy it."

## Military police enforce driving ban in snow-stricken Buffalo

By CAROLYN THOMPSON and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — State and military police were sent Tuesday to keep people off Buffalo's snow-choked roads, and officials kept counting fatalities three days after western New York's deadliest storm in at least two generations.

Even as suburban roads and most major highways in the area reopened, Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz warned that police would be stationed at entrances to Buffalo and at major intersections because some drivers were flouting a ban on driving within New York's second-most populous city.

More than 30 people are reported to have died in the region, officials said, including seven storm-related deaths announced Tuesday by Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown's office. The toll surpasses that of the historic Blizzard of 1977, blamed for killing as many as 29 people in an area known for harsh winter weather.

Greg Monett turned to social media to beg for help shoveling a 6-foot (1.8-meter) pile of snow from the end of his Buffalo driveway so he could get dialysis treatment Tuesday.

"This has been a nightmare," he said in an interview Monday. Power had been out for a time at his family's home, he said, so relatives ran a gas stove to keep warm, a practice he acknowledged was dangerous.

"We had to do what we had to do," said Monett, 43. "We would have froze to death in here."

His loved ones called 911 when his blood sugar dipped dangerously low and he nearly passed out Sunday night, but they were told it would take hours to get to the home, Monett said. He eventually recovered on his own.

Officials have said at news briefings that it was impossible to respond to emergency calls at the time.

Monett ultimately made it to dialysis after climbing through the snow and having neighbors help dig out his buried vehicle, sister Maria Monett said.

A Facebook group originally created in 2014, when Buffalo was buried under deep snow, has become a lifeline, seeking to help thousands seeking food, medicine, shelter and rescue in the latest storm. Currently managed by five women, the group swelled to at least 68,000 people as of Tuesday.

"We are seeing a lot of desperation," said Erin Aquilina, founder of the original group, in an online in-

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terview.

The National Weather Service predicted that as much as 2 inches (2.5 to 5 centimeters) more snow could fall Tuesday in Erie County, which includes Buffalo and its 275,000 residents. County Emergency Services Commissioner Dan Neaverth Jr. said officials also were somewhat concerned about possible flooding later in the week when milder weather begins melting the snow.

The rest of the United States also was reeling with at least an additional two dozen storm deaths reported elsewhere around the country, and power outages in communities from Maine to Washington state.

On the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's reservation in South Dakota, snowmobiles were dispatched Tuesday to reach residents after food boxes were delivered by helicopter and trucks over the weekend, the tribe said. Ohio officials assessed water damage in the Statehouse after a pipe burst amid the freezing weather.

Even in central Florida, temperatures plunged as low as 27 degrees (minus 2.7 Celsius) over the weekend. Growers' groups were relieved Tuesday not to find widespread damage to the fruit and vegetable crops that supply much of the U.S. with fresh winter produce.

In Buffalo, the dead were found in cars, homes and snowbanks. Some perished while shoveling snow, others when emergency crews could not respond in time to medical crises. Poloncarz, a Democrat, called the blizzard "the worst storm probably in our lifetime," even for an area known for heavy snow. More bodies are expected to be found as the snow is cleared or melts.

The winter blast stranded some people in cars for days, shuttered the city's airport and left some residents shivering without heat. More than 4,000 homes and businesses were still without power late Tuesday morning.

President Joe Biden offered federal assistance Monday to New York, allowing for reimbursement of some storm-relief efforts. Gov. Kathy Hochul toured the aftermath in Buffalo, her hometown, and called the blizzard "one for the ages." Almost every fire truck in the city became stranded Saturday, she said.

Hochul, a Democrat, 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 said the airport will be shut through Wednesday morning.

Roughly 3,000 domestic and international U.S. flights were canceled Tuesday as of about 2 p.m. Eastern time, according to the tracking site FlightAware.

The U.S. Department of Transportation said it will look into Southwest Airlines flight cancellations that left travelers stranded at airports across the country amid the winter storm. Many airlines were forced to call off flights, but Southwest was by far the leader.

## Co-leader of Whitmer kidnapping plot gets 16 years in prison

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press/Report for America

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — The co-leader of a plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer was sentenced Tuesday to 16 years in prison for conspiring to abduct the Democrat and blow up a bridge to ease an escape.

Adam Fox's sentence is the longest of anyone convicted in the plot so far, though it's significantly shorter than the life sentence that prosecutors sought.

Fox, 39, returned to federal court four months after he and Barry Croft Jr. were convicted of conspiracy charges at a second trial in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

They were accused of organizing a wild plot to whip up anti-government extremists just before the 2020 presidential election. Their arrest, as well as the capture of 12 others, was a stunning coda to a tumultuous year of racial strife and political turmoil in the U.S.

The government said Croft offered bomb-making skills and ideology while Fox was the "driving force urging their recruits to take up arms, kidnap the governor and kill those who stood in their way."

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But Judge Robert J. Jonker said that while Fox's sentence was needed as a punishment and deterrent to future similar acts, the government's request for life in prison is "not necessary to achieve those purposes."

"It's too much. Something less than life gets the job done in this case," Jonker said, later adding that 16 years behind bars "is still in my mind a very long time."

Jonker said he also considered the emotional baggage Whitmer has to carry due to the plot.

"It undoubtedly affects other people who are in public office or are considering public office," he said. "They have to count the cost. That does need a forceful sentence from the court."

In addition to the prison sentence, Fox will have to serve five years of supervised release. He'll also get credit for more than two years in custody since his arrest.

"Responding to domestic terrorism plots has been a priority for the Department of Justice since its founding and we're going to continue to spare no expense to make sure we disrupt plots like these," U.S. Attorney Andrew Birge told reporters outside the courthouse following the sentencing.

Fox wore orange prison clothes with long slicked-back hair and a full beard. He showed little reaction when the sentence was read.

Daniel Harris, who was acquitted by a jury earlier this year for his involvement in the plot, sat next to Fox's mother in the gallery and hugged her after the sentencing was read. Fox looked into the gallery multiple times, often mouthing words.

He shook his head and repeatedly smirked while Assistant U.S. Attorney Nils Kessler spoke. Kessler said Fox's smirking was a sign that he showed no regret.

Fox and Croft were convicted at a second trial in August, months after a different Grand Rapids jury couldn't reach a verdict but acquitted Harris and one other man. Croft, a trucker from Bear, Delaware, will be sentenced Wednesday.

In 2020, Fox and Croft met with like-minded provocateurs in Ohio, trained with weapons in Michigan and Wisconsin and took a ride to "put eyes" on Whitmer's vacation home with night-vision goggles, according to evidence.

"People need to stop with the misplaced anger and place the anger where it should go, and that's against our tyrannical ... government," Fox declared that spring, boiling over COVID-19 restrictions and perceived threats to gun ownership.

Whitmer wasn't physically harmed. The FBI, which was secretly embedded in the group, broke things up by fall.

"They had no real plan for what to do with the governor if they actually seized her. Paradoxically, this made them more dangerous, not less," Kessler said in a court filing ahead of the hearing.

At the time, Fox was living in the basement of a Grand Rapids-area vacuum shop, the site of clandestine meetings with members of a paramilitary group and an undercover FBI agent. His lawyer, Christopher Gibbons, said he was depressed, anxious and smoking marijuana daily.

Gibbons had said a life sentence would be extreme.

"My client stands on the record, maintains his innocence and he looks forward to getting it all before the panel at the Court of Appeals," Gibbons told reporters after Tuesday's sentencing.

Jonker said there was nothing that made him think of Fox as a "natural leader," but said conspiracies like the plot to kidnap Whitmer take "a lot of fuel" and that Fox "provided it."

"It's important to recognize the likelihood of this ever happening, thank God, was low because law enforcement was on it early," Jonker said. "I think the chances of this actually happening were incredibly remote."

In arguing Tuesday for a life sentence, Kessler said, "I think you could say that none of this would have happened if Mr. Fox was not involved."

"They wanted a second civil war or revolution," Kessler said of the conspirators. "They wanted to ruin everything for everybody. This wasn't about masks or about vaccines. They were talking about overthrowing the government before the coronavirus pandemic. They had enough guns and armor for a small war."

Fox was regularly exposed to "inflammatory rhetoric" by FBI informants, especially Army veteran Dan Chappel, who "manipulated not only Fox's sense of 'patriotism' but also his need for friendship, acceptance and male approval," Gibbons said.

Two men who pleaded guilty to conspiracy and testified against Fox and Croft received substantial breaks of between 2 1/2 years and four years behind bars.

Three members of a paramilitary group that trained with Fox were convicted in October of providing material support for a terrorist act. Their sentences, handed down earlier this month in state court, ranged between 7 to 12 years.

Five more are awaiting trial in Antrim County, where Whitmer's vacation home is located.

When the plot was extinguished, Whitmer blamed then-President Donald Trump, saying he had given "comfort to those who spread fear and hatred and division." In August, Trump called the kidnapping plan a "fake deal."

## After presidency, unclear fate for Brazil's brash Bolsonaro

By CARLA BRIDI Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Jair Bolsonaro told supporters that the future could only bring him three possibilities: arrest, death or a second term as Brazil's president.

None of those outcomes came to pass. And his Oct. 30 loss to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva set off two months of relative silence for the self-styled standard-bearer of the Brazilian conservative movement.

Bolsonaro's oft-cited motto is "God, Family, Country," and as president he handed more power to the armed forces and loosened gun restrictions. Many of Bolsonaro's far-right supporters remain in his thrall and have camped outside military buildings, pleading futilely for army intervention that would keep the president in power.

But Bolsonaro authorized his chief-of-staff to preside over the transition process, and moving trucks have started showing up at the presidential palace and residence. Personal items were spotted being removed, especially art given as gifts by supporters — including life-size wooden sculptures of Bolsonaro and a motorcycle.

A seven-term fringe lawmaker before winning his presidential campaign in 2018, Bolsonaro has discussed holding a salaried position in his Liberal Party, a party executive involved in discussions told The Associated Press, asking not to be identified because plans haven't been announced.

Bolsonaro addressed backers in the capital, Brasilia, once after he lost the vote, saying briefly that the armed forces were under his control. A second time, he stood in silence as backers prayed for him.

Some supporters insist that Bolsonaro would not let them down by giving up the fight but others have started to decamp from important sites. According to Bolsonaro's official daily agenda, he worked just over an hour each day from the election until Dec. 23.

The Liberal Party will be the biggest party in both the Lower House and Senate. It has declared its opposition to Lula's incoming government and Bolsonaro is expected to lead the effort within the party, the party executive said.

But many of the Liberal Party's members are neither fully loyal to Bolsonaro nor ideologically aligned with him, and they will have incentives to work with the new administration, said Guilherme Casarões, political analyst and professor at Getulio Vargas Foundation in São Paulo. The Liberal Party is considered centrist and is known for making deals with the sitting government.

"That makes it harder to have the ideological fidelity that Bolsonaro likes to maintain," said Casarões. "If he doesn't manage to have total control over the Liberal Party, we are going to see a new split."

Bolsonaro got 49% of the presidential vote, fuelling the possibility of a presidential run in 2026 and making him a possible aid to candidates in the 2024 municipal elections, said Eduardo Grin, political analyst and professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation.

However, Grin noted there is a history of strong Brazilian candidates failing to sustain support in subsequent years. And the governors of Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais, Brazil's two most populous states, could prove more palatable options to conservative voters.

The customary final act for outgoing presidents is handing over the presidential sash to their successor. Bolsonaro's office didn't respond to requests for comment on whether he will attend Lula's inauguration.



The last time a president declined to hand over the sash was in 1985, marking the end of the nation's two-decade military dictatorship and the return of democracy.

Either way, the inauguration will come as a blow to Bolsonaro's backers, said analyst Mario Sérgio Lima, from Medley Advisors.

"As his supporters are used to radicalism, they are expecting catharsis. When they see Lula being sworn in, they will feel betrayed, like he (Bolsonaro) had the power in his hands and did nothing," said Lima. "For them, it is a sign of weakness."

Bolsonaro also faces swirling legal threats. The Supreme Court is investigating him on suspicion of illegally spreading lies about topics including COVID-19 vaccines, Supreme Court justices, releasing confidential information from an ongoing investigation and interfering improperly with the Federal Police. The Supreme Court is the only government body that can investigate a sitting president or federal lawmaker.

As of Jan. 1, Bolsonaro will no longer enjoy the legal protection of sitting leaders, and could face fresh charges in lower courts. After Lula was convicted of corruption and money laundering by lower courts in 2018, he was deemed ineligible to run in that year's presidential election and spent more than a year in jail. His convictions were later annulled on the grounds that he was tried in a court without proper jurisdiction.

"But Lula had an entire party behind him to bring him up again, and that isn't the case for Bolsonaro," said Lima, adding that Bolsonaro would struggle to maintain allies fighting for his cause.

And any eventual conviction could jeopardize a possible 2026 run by Bolsonaro to return to his former job, in addition to all the other challenges he faces.

"The political fate of Bolsonaro and Brazil's extreme right has more stumbling blocks than it appears," said Grin. "There will be more difficulties than ease."

## Israeli doctors reject Netanyahu allies' anti-LGBTQ remarks

By ISAAC SCHARF and ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's largest medical center and health care 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 health care 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 health care 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.

The uproar could be a sign of what lies ahead for Netanyahu and his new government. His partners are seeking widespread changes that could alienate large swaths of the Israeli public, raise the risk of conflict with the Palestinians and put Israel on a collision course with some of its closest supporters, including the United States and the American Jewish community.

Netanyahu has sought to portray himself as the responsible adult in the coalition and already issued a series of statements guaranteeing to protect the rights of LGBTQ people. But his partners hold great leverage because they support new legislation that could ultimately freeze or dismiss criminal charges

against Netanyahu.

The long-time leader, who served 12 consecutive years before he was ousted last year, already has agreed to put a hard-line politician known for his anti-Arab views in charge of the national police force and put another hard-line settler leader in charge of West Bank settlement policies.

A third religious lawmaker who opposes LGBTQ rights has been given widespread authority over the national education system, and Netanyahu reportedly also has agreed to increase unpopular subsidies to ultra-Orthodox men who do not work or serve in the army.

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.

## Making pig livers humanlike in quest to ease organ shortage

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — The ghostly form floating in a large jar had been the robust reddish-brown of a healthy organ just hours before. Now it's semitranslucent, white tubes like branches on a tree showing through.

This is a pig liver that's gradually being transformed to look and act like a human one, part of scientists' long quest to ease the nation's transplant shortage by bioengineering replacement organs.

The first step for workers in this suburban Minneapolis lab is to shampoo away the pig cells that made the organ do its work, its color gradually fading as the cells dissolve and are flushed out. What's left is a rubbery scaffolding, a honeycomb structure of the liver, its blood vessels now empty.

Next human liver cells -- taken from donated organs unable to be transplanted -- will be oozed back inside that shell. Those living cells move into the scaffolding's nooks and crannies to restart the organ's functions.

"We essentially regrow the organ," said Jeff Ross, CEO of Miromatrix. "Our bodies won't see it as a pig organ anymore."

That's a bold claim. Sometime in 2023, Miromatrix plans first-of-its-kind human testing of a bioengineered organ to start trying to prove it.

If the Food and Drug Administration agrees, the initial experiment will be outside a patient's body. Researchers would place a pig-turned-humanlike liver next to a hospital bed to temporarily filter the blood of someone whose own liver suddenly failed. And if that novel "liver assist" works, it would be a critical step toward eventually attempting a bioengineered organ transplant — probably a kidney.

"It all sounds science fiction-ey but it's got to start somewhere," said Dr. Sander Florman, a transplant chief at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, one of several hospitals already planning to participate in the liver-assist study. "This is probably more of the near future than xenotransplantation," or directly implanting animal organs into people.

More than 105,000 people are on the U.S. waiting list for an organ transplant. Thousands will die before it's their turn. Thousands more never even get put on the list, considered too much of a long shot.

"The number of organs we have available are never going to be able to meet the demand," said Dr. Amit Tevar, a transplant surgeon at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. "This is our frustration."

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That's why scientists are looking to animals as another source of organs. A Maryland man lived two months after receiving the world's first heart transplant from a pig last January — an animal genetically modified so its organs didn't trigger an immediate attack from the human immune system. The FDA is considering whether to allow additional xenotransplantation experiments using kidneys or hearts from gene-edited pigs.

Bioengineering organs is markedly different -- no special pigs required, just leftover organs from slaughterhouses.

"That is something that in the long term may very likely contribute to the development of organs we can use in humans," said Pittsburgh's Tevar. He's not involved with Miromatrix -- and cautioned that the planned outside-the-body testing would be only an early first step.

The Miromatrix approach stems from research in the early 2000s, when regenerative medicine specialist Doris Taylor and Dr. Harald Ott, then at the University of Minnesota, pioneered a way to completely decellularize the heart of a dead rat. The team seeded the resulting scaffolding with immature heart cells from baby rats that eventually made the little organ beat, garnering international headlines.

Fast forward, and now at university spinoff Miromatrix sit rows of large jugs pumping fluids and nutrients into livers and kidneys in various stages of their metamorphosis.

Stripping away the pig cells removes some of the risks of xenotransplantation, such as lurking animal viruses or hyper-rejection, Ross said. The FDA already considers the decellularized pig tissue safe for another purpose, using it to make a type of surgical mesh.

More complex is getting human cells to take over.

"We can't take billions of cells and push them into the organ at once," Ross said. When slowly infused, "the cells crawl around and when they see the right environment, they stick."

The source of those human cells: donated livers and kidneys that won't be transplanted. Nearly a quarter of kidneys donated in the U.S. last year were discarded because hospitals often refuse to transplant less than perfect organs, or because it took too long to find a matching recipient.

As long as enough cells still are functioning when donation groups offer up an organ, Miromatrix biologists isolate usable cells and multiply them in lab dishes. From one rescued human organ the company says it can grow enough cells to repopulate several pig liver or kidney scaffolds, cells responsible for different jobs -- the kind that line blood vessels or filter waste, for example.

In 2021, researchers with Miromatrix and the Mayo Clinic reported successfully transplanting a version of bioengineered livers into pigs.

That set the stage for testing a "liver-assist" treatment similar to dialysis, using bioengineered livers to filter the blood of people in acute liver failure, a life-threatening emergency. Doctors now have little to offer except supportive care unless the person is lucky enough to get a rapid transplant.

"If you can just get over the hump, then you might actually recover" -- because the liver is the only organ that can repair itself and regrow, said Mount Sinai's Florman. "I'll be excited when they get their first patient enrolled and I hope that it's with us."

It's not clear how soon that testing can begin. The FDA recently told Miromatrix it has some questions about the study application.

If the outside-the-body liver experiment works, what's next? Still more research aimed at one day attempting to transplant a bioengineered organ — likely a kidney, because a patient could survive with dialysis if the operation failed.

While regrowing kidneys isn't as far along, "I was completely stunned" at the progress so far, said Dr. Ron Shapiro, a kidney transplant expert at Mount Sinai.

He treats many older patients on dialysis who "will wait for years and years to get a kidney and likely die waiting on the list who would be perfect" for such experiments -- if they come in time.

## Women's sports saw pivotal growth in deals, interest in 2022

By ALANIS THAMES AP Sports Writer

South Carolina coach Dawn Staley has been around women's basketball long enough to see the growing pains of a young WNBA league gradually shifting to increased interest in the sport at all levels.

"We probably are bursting at the seams for the people that are decision-makers in our game to allow us to be just that," said Staley, who led the Gamecocks to their second women's hoops title this year.

Popularity across women's sports has grown steadily over the past few years, but 2022 marked a pivotal moment as several sports saw increases in viewership and ratings, sponsorship deals and prime-time coverage.

This past WNBA regular season was the most watched since 2006. And storylines were plentiful as the league contended with the detainment of Phoenix Mercury center and two-time Olympic gold medalist Brittney Griner and the retirement of one of the league's most popular players in Seattle Storm point guard Sue Bird.

According to ESPN, which aired 25 regular-season games and the entire postseason, the 2022 playoffs averaged 456,000 viewers — up 22% over 2021's postseason — making it the most-viewed WNBA postseason since 2007. The WNBA draft averaged 403,000 viewers, which was the most since Diana Taurasi was the top pick in 2004.

WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said her league and the women's college game build off each other.

Engelbert said the NCAA Women's Tournament, which had the most viewed championship game in nearly two decades, built momentum for the women's game heading into the WNBA season. Now she wants to see how far that growth can go.

"I'm never satisfied," Engelbert said. "My team is like 'Ask for more.' When you're in hyper growth mode that's how you have to do it. We don't rest. We have to take advantage of the momentum when you have it. ... You have to keep pushing, too.

"We're underinvested and undervalued."

The league has a deal with ESPN/ABC through 2025 where the company paid the WNBA \$27 million in 2021 and \$28.5 million this past season. That number goes up \$1.5 million per season until it hits \$33 million in 2025.

At the collegiate level, division I football players continue to exponentially out-earn athletes in all other sports. But name, image and likeness (NIL) deals have been a game changer for female collegiate athletes, particular in non-revenue producing sports. NIL allows women to take advantage of large social media followings and earn sponsorships with brands like Champs and Adidas.

Olivia Dunne, a gymnast at LSU, has over 8 million followers across all of her social media platforms, more than any other female collegiate athlete. Her sponsorships include deals with the clothing brand Vuori and American Eagle.

From the July 2021 inception of NIL through November, women's sports occupied six of the top 10 highest-earning sports by NIL compensation, according to the NIL technology and marketing company Opendorse.

"The student-athletes are using social media to build their own audiences, which is driving more interest and tune in to their sports," said Blake Lawrence, CEO at Opendorse. "The industry is feeding itself ... the more marketable the women's sports athletes, the more engaged their audience will be, the more engaged the audience will be, the more marketable the athletes become."

Women's soccer has also enjoyed a boost in 2022.

The sport has seen increased global revenue from sponsorships and broadcast deals, according to a survey by FIFA, the sports' governing body. In an October report, the organization found that clubs reported year-on-year commercial revenue growth of 33% — indicating growing interest from sponsors; 77% of leagues had a title sponsor in 2021, up from 66% the previous year.

That structural growth was coupled with unprecedented overall interest in the game.

An August friendly between the United States and England at Wembley sold out in a day and drew nearly 78,000 fans. That was after 87,192 people watched England defeat Germany 2-1 in the European Championship finals. It was the biggest attendance for a European Championship match, men's or women's.

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"The number and the types of different platforms that are highlighting women's sports, not just women's soccer, it's just showing overall that there is interest," said Kate Markgraf, the general manager of the U.S. Women's National Team.

In the United States, the National Women's Soccer League saw growing popularity amid the backdrop of a league-wide abuse scandal.

In August, an independent investigation commissioned by U.S. Soccer found that emotional abuse and sexual misconduct in its pro league were systemic, impacting multiple teams, coaches and players.

Still, the NWSL title game on Oct. 29 averaged 915,000 viewers on CBS in prime time, a league record.

As the sport gains global momentum ahead of next summer's Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, U.S., Markgraf expects this year's trend to continue for the foreseeable future, and she wants the success and popularity of women's soccer to impact fans personally.

"When you go to a game and you watch it, it's like, huh, and you leave changed," she said. "And the more frequently they happen, the longer they resonate. ... That's the goal of U.S. soccer, is to be one of the preeminent sports in our country."

## The Year of the Slap: Pop culture moments in 2022

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

Taylor Swift was up. Elon Musk was in, out, in and maybe out again. Tom Cruise was back. BTS stepped aside, and so did Serena Williams, and Tom Brady too — oops, scratch that.

But the slap? The slap was everywhere.

Ok, so maybe it wasn't on the level of a moon landing, or selection of a pope. But henceforth all you need say is "the slap" and people will know what you mean — that moment Will Smith smacked Chris Rock at the Oscars and a global audience said, "Wait, did that happen?" Even in the room itself — maybe especially in the room itself — there was a sense everyone had imagined it, which helps explain why things went on as normal, for a bit.

The pandemic was over, phew! Well, of course it wasn't. But live entertainment pushed forward in 2022, with mask mandates dropping and people rushing to buy things like, oh, Taylor Swift tickets!

We'll take any segue to mention Swift, who already had a big year in 2021, but just got bigger — heck, she broke Billboard records and then she broke Ticketmaster. (No word if she got her scarf back).

It was a year of celebrity #MeToo cases like Harvey Weinstein (again), R. Kelly (again), Kevin Spacey, Paul Haggis, Danny Masterson. And the Johnny Depp-Amber Heard defamation trial, its every excruciating turn captured on TV.

On the big screen, there were big comebacks. Mourning its dearly missed star, Chadwick Boseman, "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" was a box office triumph. James Cameron's "Avatar" made a splashy December return.

Then there was Cruise, turning 60 in '22 just like the Rolling Stones, swooping into Cannes with his most successful movie and showing, like those still-touring rockers, that when they tell you "The end is inevitable," as they do in "Top Gun: Maverick," you can always reply: "Maybe so, sir, but not today."

Will audiences one day find Cruise — or the Stones, for that matter — too wrinkled and past the sell-by date? Maybe so, but not this year.

Our annual, totally selective journey through a year in pop culture:

JANUARY

It's GOLDEN GLOBES time. But is a Globes with no telecast, boozy celebs or red carpet a Globes at all? The embattled Hollywood Foreign Press Association, reeling from stunning failures over diversity, holds a private event and plans a comeback next year. Hey, remember the original wardrobe malfunction? Well, JANET JACKSON says she and JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE have moved on, and so should we. The New York Times buys Wordle, and we're all thinking in five-letter words (though W-O-R-D-L-E is six, just saying.) Meanwhile, it's a month of loss, heading off a year of loss: pioneering Black actor, director and activist SIDNEY POITIER dies at 94.

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## FEBRUARY

What would a year in pop culture be without BRITNEY? Just months after her liberation from her restrictive conservatorship, Spears is reported to have signed a mammoth book deal, but at year's end we're still waiting for news. RIHANNA is pregnant! TOM BRADY retires! (Stay tuned, on that one.) TAYLOR watch: JAKE GYLLENHAAL speaks out, saying he really has nothing to do with that song.

## MARCH

Quick, who wins Oscars this month? Well, "CODA" does, a feel-good drama with a largely deaf cast, and TROY KOTSUR becomes the first deaf actor to win an acting Oscar. Alas, all anyone can talk about is — you know. SMITH, who wins the best actor award not long after slapping Rock over a joke about his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, won't truly address the issue until the end of the year, so keep reading. KARDASHIAN watch: Kim K is declared legally single again in her ongoing divorce with YE, the rapper formerly known as KANYE WEST. And BRADY, retired for 40 days, says, "Never mind!"

## APRIL

It's GRAMMY time, and JON BATISTE wins big, taking five statuettes. The musician's huge year will later include performing at the first state dinner of the Biden administration, for French President Emmanuel Macron. The next day Macron will meet with MUSK (thanks for the segue, Monsieur le President) who begins his acquisition of TWITTER this month, leading to untold — and still unfolding — changes at the social media giant.

## MAY

So imagine you're sipping cocktails at the MET GALA and a musician comes sauntering through, playing the melodica — of course it's BATISTE, because the Met Gala's that kind of crazy party. The biggest splash of the night, though, is KARDASHIAN, on the arm of boyfriend PETE DAVIDSON, wearing the same sequined, skin tight gown MARILYN MONROE wore to sing "Happy Birthday" to JFK in 1962. In movies, "Top Gun: Maverick" opens, the highest-grossing domestic debut in CRUISE'S career, and his first to surpass \$100 million on opening weekend. HARRY STYLES fans rejoice! His album, "Harry's House," is here.

## JUNE

Stunning news for the global fanbase of BTS as the K-pop supergroup announces it's taking a break to focus on members' solo projects. On the legal front, a Virginia jury hands DEPP a victory in his very messy libel case over allegations of domestic abuse, finding that former wife HEARD defamed him in a 2018 op-ed. On a happier note, Britney gets married....

## JULY

Only one wedding, Britney? BENNIFER has two! Maybe what happens in Vegas usually stays in Vegas, but not when you have 227 million followers on Instagram. With a winking reference to being a "Sadie" (married lady) JENNIFER LOPEZ directs fans to her newsletter where she shares pics of her quickie wedding to BEN AFFLECK. "Love is beautiful," she writes. "And it turns out love is patient." Speaking of patience, fans of BEYONCÉ are rewarded for theirs with the release of her long-awaited "Renaissance," her first solo album in six years.

## AUGUST

So, we were saying ... Bennifer's second wedding, on Affleck's compound in Georgia, is bigger and fancier. One wedding, one split: KARDASHIAN and DAVIDSON are no longer. In other summer news, the world remembers PRINCESS DIANA, whose shocking death happened 25 years ago, and whose life is being rehashed for a new generation in the current season of "The Crown." Only days after the anniversary, that same Netflix series will pause production as a mark of respect for QUEEN ELIZABETH II as Britain — and the world — mourn the beloved monarch, who dies at age 96 after more than 70 years on the throne.

## SEPTEMBER

Mounting political intrigue in Europe, and by that we mean, did spit fly at the Venice premiere of "Don't Worry Darling"? Either way the movie, directed by OLIVIA WILDE and starring her boyfriend (alleged spitter STYLES), is saddled — or blessed? — with more than its share of extracurricular drama. At the EMMYS, behold SHERYL LEE RALPH, who wins for "Abbott Elementary" and schools the crowd on the power of dreams and self-belief. "This is what believing looks like," she says. You know what else believing looks

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like? Rachel Berry from "Glee" – aka LEA MICHELE – at last getting to play Fanny Brice in "Funny Girl" on Broadway. In sports, with four rueful words that resonate with working moms everywhere, SERENA WILLIAMS says she's stepping aside from tennis, because "something's got to give."

## OCTOBER

The second HARVEY WEINSTEIN trial opens in Los Angeles. ADIDAS drops YE, part of a cascade of companies that will sever ties with the rapper over his antisemitic and other troubling comments. The MUSK era begins at TWITTER as the world's richest man carries a sink into the office, to "let that sink in." HEIDI KLUM's Halloween costume is a slimy, glistening rain worm. But before the month worms away from us, let's cede it to SWIFT for dropping her new album, "Midnights" (Spotify's most-streamed album in a single day), then adding seven bonus tracks, then becoming the first artist to occupy all top 10 slots on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. Let THAT sink in! P.S. Celebrity divorce watch: BRADY and )GISELE BUNDCHEN split.

## NOVEMBER

Did we say LAST month was Taylor Swift month? Well now, millions of eager fans crowd a presale for her much-awaited Eras Tour, resulting in crashes and endless waits. Ticketmaster cancels the general sale, citing insufficient stock. Multiple state attorneys general announce investigations. Takeaway: People want Taylor Swift tickets. At the multiplex, they also want their Wakanda. "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" meets the double challenge of following up one of the biggest blockbusters in history and losing its biggest star.

## DECEMBER

Love 'em or hate 'em, here come HARRY and MEGHAN again, with a Netflix documentary watched very closely by royalty across the pond. Over at Twitter, MUSK says he'll step down as CEO — after polling users — once he finds someone "foolish" enough to replace him. Cameron's "AVATAR" sequel finally appears, 13 years after the original broke records, and yes, moviegoers flock to Pandora once again. And bringing the year full circle, SMITH emerges to promote his new film, "EMANCIPATION," hoping people will forget about ... what was it? ... at least enough to check out the movie.

In this year of comebacks, will Smith's be the biggest?

Check back with us in 2023.

## Foreign firms: China 'turns corner' by ending quarantine

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Foreign 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 joined India in announcing 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.

The announcement late Monday 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

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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."

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."

But he agreed with the decision to open up. "You have to import and export, right?" Lu said. "Although we did a good job of epidemic control this year, the economy was greatly harmed."

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.

## Today in History: December 28, Afghan war formally ends

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 28, the 362nd day of 2022. There are three days left in the year.



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Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 28, 2014, the war in Afghanistan, fought for 13 bloody years and still raging, came to a formal end with a quiet flag-lowering ceremony in Kabul that marked the transition of the fighting from U.S.-led combat troops to the country's own security forces.

On this date:

In 1612, Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei observed the planet Neptune, but mistook it for a star. (Neptune wasn't officially discovered until 1846 by Johann Gottfried Galle.)

In 1895, the Lumiere brothers, Auguste and Louis, held the first public showing of their movies in Paris.

In 1908, a major earthquake followed by a tsunami devastated the Italian city of Messina, killing at least 70,000 people.

In 1912, San Francisco's Municipal Railway began operations with Mayor James Rolph Jr. at the controls of Streetcar No. 1 as 50,000 spectators looked on.

In 1945, Congress officially recognized the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1972, Kim Il Sung, the premier of North Korea, was named the country's president under a new constitution.

In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was signed into law by President Richard Nixon.

In 1981, Elizabeth Jordan Carr, the first American "test-tube" baby, was born in Norfolk, Virginia.

In 1991, nine people died in a crush of people trying to get into a rap celebrity basketball game at City College in New York.

In 2007, Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was laid to rest as the country's army tried to quell a frenzy of rioting in the wake of her assassination.

In 2015, a grand jury in Cleveland declined to indict a white rookie police officer in the killing of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, a Black youngster who was shot while playing with what turned out to be a pellet gun.

In 2016, film star Debbie Reynolds, who lit up the screen in "Singin' in the Rain" and other Hollywood classics, died at age 84 a day after losing her daughter, Carrie Fisher, who was 60.

Ten years ago: Dockworkers along the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico agreed to extend their contract for more than a month, averting a strike that could have crippled major ports from Boston to Houston and bottled up billions of dollars' worth of cargo. (A new contract was ratified in April 2013.) Russia's President Vladimir Putin signed a law banning Americans from adopting Russian children.

Five years ago: Twelve people died in a Bronx apartment building fire; officials said it was caused by a 3-year-old boy playing with stove burners. (A 13th victim died of his injuries days later.) Officials in Alabama certified Democrat Doug Jones as the winner of a special U.S. Senate election over Republican Roy Moore, who charged that the election was "fraudulent." Rose Marie, who began her career in show business as a child in the 1920s and co-starred on "The Dick Van Dyke Show" in the 1960s, died at her Los Angeles-area home at the age of 94. Apple apologized for secretly slowing down older iPhones, a move it said was necessary to avoid unexpected shutdowns due to battery fatigue.

One year ago: Former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid died at his Nevada home of complications from pancreatic cancer; the Democrat was 82. Hall of Fame football coach and broadcaster John Madden died at 85; his exuberant calls had provided a weekly soundtrack to NFL games for three decades. Los Angeles Angels two-way superstar Shohei Ohtani was named the Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Dame Maggie Smith is 88. Former Democratic Sen. Tim Johnson of South Dakota is 76. Rock singer-musician Edgar Winter is 76. Actor Denzel Washington is 68. TV personality Gayle King is 68. Actor Chad McQueen is 62. Country singer-musician Marty Roe (Diamond Rio) is 62. Actor Malcolm Gets is 59. Actor Mauricio Mendoza is 53. Actor Elaine Hendrix is 52. Political commentator Ana Navarro is 51. Talk show host Seth Meyers is 49. Actor Brendan Hines is 46. Actor Joe Manganiello is 46. Actor Vanessa Ferlito is 45. R&B singer John Legend is 44. Rapper-musician-producer Terrace Martin is 44. Actor Andre Holland is 43. Actor Sienna Miller is 41. Actor Beau Garrett (TV: "The Good Doctor") is 40. Actor Thomas Dekker is 35. Actor Mackenzie Rosman is 33. Pop singer David Archuleta is 32. Actor Mary-Charles Jones (TV: "Kevin Can Wait") is 21. Actor Miles Brown is 18.