

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### 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:

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

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

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

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Planning for your future home takes time.



Contact us now to  
start the planning!

**Happy New Year!**

**Residential ~ Ag & Commercial ~ General Contractor**  
New Construction and Remodeling ~ Concrete Basements ~ Flatwork & Foundations

**Greg Johnson Construction, Inc.**

**Greg Johnson, Owner**

Business: 605/492-3143 ~ Cell: 605/216-3143 ~ Bristol, SD

WE WISH YOU A  
*happy new year*  
2023

We want to express our heartfelt thanks to all  
our fabulous customers and  
we look forward to serving you in 2023!



**Grill & Chill**

Happy New Year from  
Dale, Joyce and the rest of the  
crew at the  
Groton Dairy Queen!

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## Wolves Drop New Year's Eve Battle to NSIC Leading Bulldogs

Duluth, Minn. – The Northern State women's basketball team dropped a tightly contested battle with Minnesota Duluth on Saturday afternoon, falling by a score of 70-63 on New Year's Eve. The Bulldogs had an answer for every comeback attempt by the Wolves, being able to push the lead back to double digits on multiple occasions after Northern clawed back to within three points in the second half.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 63, UMD 70

Records: NSU 7-5 (2-4 NSIC), UMD 10-2 (7-0 NSIC)

### HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State's lone lead of the contest came with the game's opening basket as Alayna Benike made a layup 20 seconds in to give NSU a 2-0 lead; Minnesota Duluth would then go on a 12-2 run to gain an 8-point lead

Four consecutive points by Kailee Oliverson brought Northern back within five points at 15-10, however Duluth led by as many as ten points in the opening period

In a back-and-forth second quarter, jumpers by Benike and Rianna Fillipi once again brought the Wolves back within five points with 1:57 remaining before halftime, however back-to-back 3-pointers in the closing minutes gave the Bulldogs a 39-28 advantage at halftime

After trailing by 12 points early in the third quarter, Oliverson capped a 9-0 run for Northern State to bring the Wolves within three points at 46-43 with 2:24 remaining in the third period

Minnesota Duluth built an 8-point lead in the opening minutes of the fourth quarter, but a 3-pointer by Jordyn Hilgemann brought NSU back within three points moments later

The Bulldogs once again had an answer to push the lead to double digits at 66-56, but one last push for the Wolves cut the lead to five with 56 seconds remaining in the game

NSU out-scored UMD 35-31 in the second half and out-shot the Bulldogs 14-29 (48.3%) compared to 9-30 (30.0%)

The Wolves out-rebounded the Bulldogs 35-28 and held a 36-26 advantage in points in the paint

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Kailee Oliverson: 19 points, 6 rebounds, 3 steals

Rianna Fillipi: 11 points, 2 rebounds, 2 steals

Alayna Benike: 10 points, 5 rebounds, 2 steals

### UP NEXT

Northern State will conclude the holiday weekend with a New Year's Day game this afternoon at St. Cloud State. The Wolves and Huskies are scheduled for a 1 p.m. tip-off at Halenbeck Hall in St. Cloud.

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## Northern State Displays Efficiency in Win Over Ranked Bulldogs

Duluth, Minn. – The Northern State University men's basketball team heading into 2023 with a 9-3 record this season, following their 75-73 victory over No. 21 Minnesota Duluth this afternoon. The Wolves gave up just three turnovers in the game and held the Bulldogs to 9-of-28 from beyond the arc.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 75, UMD 73

Records: NSU 9-3 (5-1 NSIC), UMD 10-3 (6-1 NSIC)

Attendance: N/A

### HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern led 33-27 at the half and held Duluth at bay in the second as the Bulldogs began to storm back
- UMD brought the game within two and head the ball in the final possession of the game, however solid defense by the Wolves led them to victory
- The Wolves shot 40.3% from the floor, 34.3% from the 3-point line, and 52.9% from the foul line, while the Bulldogs shot 41.0% from the floor, 32.1% from the 3-point line, and 60.9% from the foul line
- NSU recorded 33 rebounds, 12 assists, 12 made 3-pointers, eight steals, and four blocks, adding 22 points in the paint and 16 points off turnovers
- Jacksen Moni led four Wolves in double figures with 27 points, while Sam Masten and Jordan Belka each tallied a double-double
- Moni also led the team with five made 3-pointers as six Wolves knocked one down from beyond the arc

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Jacksen Moni: 27 points, 55.6 field goal%, 5 rebounds, 2 blocks
- Sam Masten: 14 points, 10 rebounds, 6 assists, 2 steals
- Jordan Belka: 12 points, 10 rebounds, 2 blocks, 2 steals
- Josh Dilling: 12 points, 50.0 field goal%, 2 assists, 2 rebounds

### UP NEXT

Northern State faces St. Cloud State this afternoon on the road. Tip-off is set for 3 p.m. versus the Huskies.

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## Three wrestlers place at Webster Invite

Three Groton Area grapplers placed at the Webster Invitational Wrestling Tournament held Saturday. Christian Ehresmann placed third at 138 pounds, Walker Zoellner placed fourth at 120 pounds and Cole Bisbee placed fourth at 170 pounds.

### **98: Noah Scepaniak (0-2)**

Champ. Round 1 - Maverick Clausen (Clark/Willow Lake) 2-4 won by fall over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 1:21)

Cons. Round 1 - Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Cade Werdel (Miller) 11-3 won by fall over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 0:39)

### **106 John Bisbee (1-4)**

Champ. Round 1 - John Bisbee (Groton Area) 1-4 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Tacey Miller (Webster Area) 6-3 won by fall over John Bisbee (Groton Area) 1-4 (Fall 0:26)

Cons. Round 2 - Ryker Gauger (Deuel) 4-4 won by fall over John Bisbee (Groton Area) 1-4 (Fall 1:43)

### **120: Walker Zoellner (7-4) placed 4th and scored 11.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 7-4 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 7-4 won by fall over Carson Kampshoff (Hanson County) 1-2 (Fall 5:08)

Semifinal - Ridley Waldo (Aberdeen Central) 10-4 won by fall over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 7-4 (Fall 3:29)

Cons. Semi - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 7-4 won by decision over Tyson Hagberg (Deuel) 3-6 (Dec 6-0)

3rd Place Match - Gage Talsma (Hamlin) 7-5 won by decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 7-4 (Dec 5-0)

### **132: Tristan McGannon (0-2)**

Champ. Round 1 - Tate Huff (Aberdeen Central) 12-5 won by fall over Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 0:58)

Cons. Round 1 - Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Wyatt Wientjes (Mobridge/Pollock) 8-4 won by fall over Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 0:53)

### **138: Christian Ehresmann (4-1) placed 3rd and scored 19.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 4-1 won by fall over Gunnar Knittel (Ipswich-Bowdle-Leola) 3-4 (Fall 1:47)

Quarterfinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 4-1 won by fall over Trace Shoemaker (Webster Area) 2-6 (Fall 0:47)

Semifinal - Landon Coyle (Miller) 7-6 won by disqualification over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 4-1 (DQ)

Cons. Semi - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 4-1 won by fall over Mark Sandquist (Mobridge/Pollock) 7-5 (Fall 2:04)

3rd Place Match - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 4-1 won by major decision over Jude Olson (Border West) 9-5 (MD 10-2)

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## **145: Isaiah Scepaniak (1-4)**

Champ. Round 1 - Gage Baumgarn (Webster Area) 2-4 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-4 (Fall 2:00)

Cons. Round 1 - Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-4 received a bye ( ) (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Blaise McGregor (Webster Area) 1-4 won by decision over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-4 (Dec 6-4)

## **152: Easten Ekern (0-4)**

Champ. Round 1 - Collin Beaner (Britton/Hecla) 8-6 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 0-4 (Fall 1:37)

Cons. Round 1 - Mitchell Guthmiller (Sioux Valley) 3-9 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 0-4 (Fall 0:53)

## **170: Cole Bisbee (2-2) placed 4th and scored 12.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 2-2 received a bye ( ) (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 2-2 won by fall over Clark Mullaney (Sioux Valley) 1-8 (Fall 0:55)

Semifinal - Logan Opitz (Aberdeen Central) 7-7 won by decision over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 2-2 (Dec 7-2)

Cons. Semi - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 2-2 won by major decision over Braeden Johnson (Clark/Willow Lake) 2-7 (MD 9-0)

3rd Place Match - Gunner Brueggeman (Miller) 10-4 won by fall over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 2-2 (Fall 0:31)

## **220: Gavin Englund (2-4).**

Quarterfinal - Bryce Beitelspacher (Aberdeen Central) 9-5 won by fall over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 2-4 (Fall 0:50)

Cons. Round 1 - Jerome Enboden (Clark/Willow Lake) 2-4 won by fall over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 2-4 (Fall 1:29)

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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

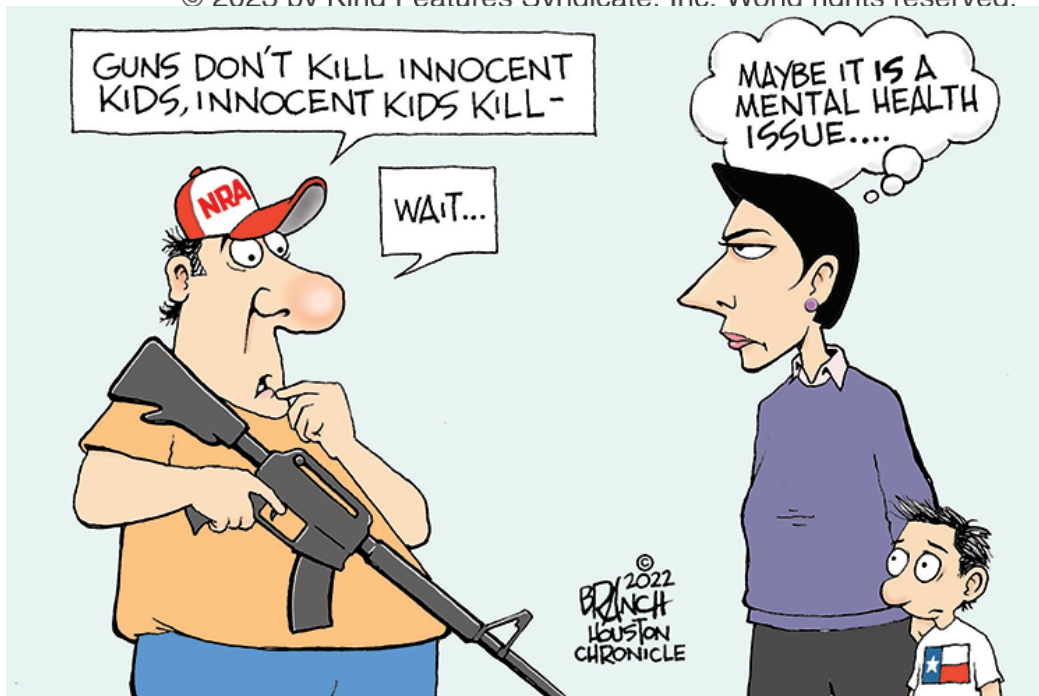


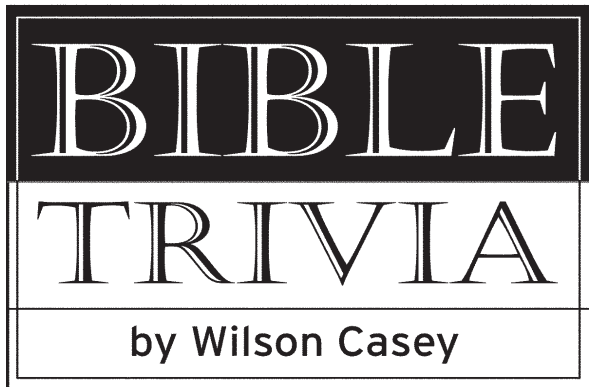
*Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."*

 LUKE 10: 23, 24

*Detail of "Nebuchadnezzar II" by Georg Pencz (1500-1550)*

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1. Is the book of 3 Corinthians (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. Who received the command from God, "Take off your sandals"? *Abraham, Joshua, Aaron, Moses*

3. From John 21, how many times did Jesus ask Peter, "Do you love me"? *2, 3, 7, 10*

4. What Jewish maiden became the wife of King Ahasuerus? *Keturah, Tamar, Puah, Esther*

5. Who's the only Egyptian queen mentioned in the Bible (KJV)? *Sarah, Tahpenes, Ruth, Tamar*

6. What city did David establish as capital of his kingdom? *Antioch, Tarsus, Jerusalem, Gaza*

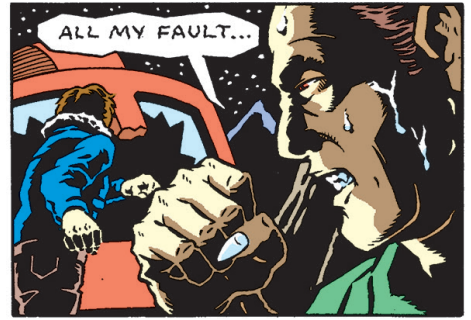
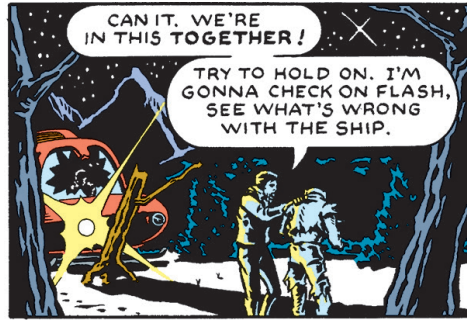
ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Moses, 3) 3, 4) Esther, 5) Tahpenes, 6) Jerusalem (1003 BCE)

*Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online.*



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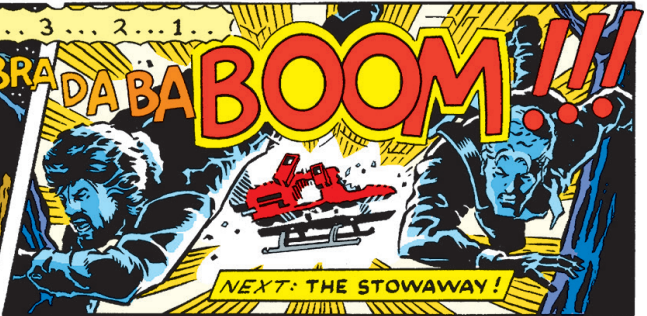
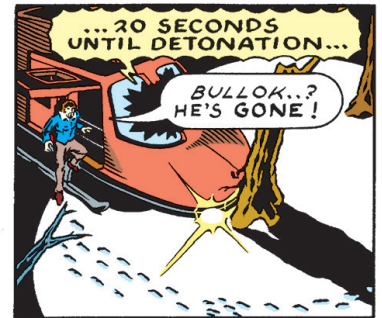
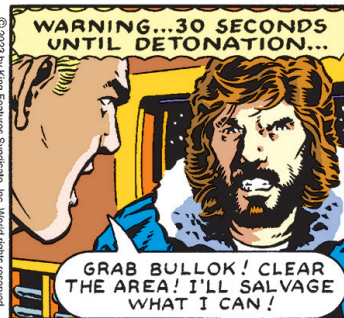
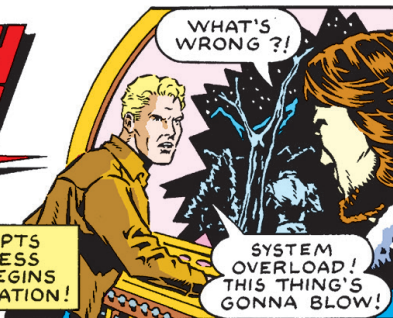
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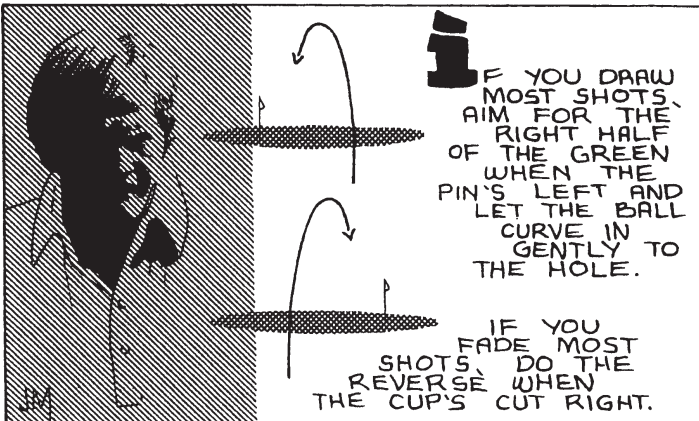
## FLASH GORDON

BY JIM KEEFE 1-1

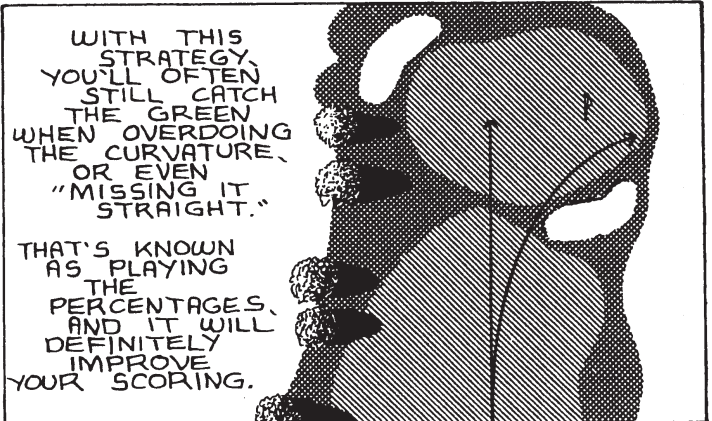
FLASH HASTILY ATTEMPTS TO SEND OUT A DISTRESS SIGNAL AS THE SHIP BEGINS COUNTDOWN TO DETONATION!



## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



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## Supplements Taken at Lower Doses Won't Adversely Affect Health

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** I am a healthy 46-year-old woman who exercises daily for health, strength, and stress relief. I also want to stay relatively lean. In order to maintain muscle mass and control fat, I've been advised consistently (by a Ph.D. nutritionist and a couple of "nutrition coach" trainers) to take 1 g of protein per pound of body weight daily. They also have advised leucine and L-carnitine supplements. I usually have 1 scoop of whey protein (about 25 g) and 1/2 to 1 scoop of plant protein daily. I take about 1 g of leucine per day. My L-carnitine supplement is 500 mg.

My question is, are any, or all, of these supplements safe for long-term use and are there any concerns or possible side effects I should be concerned about? I have read plenty that recommend them, but the goals for taking them are usually short-term.

Other than having extra protein, my diet is slanted away from sugar and toward whole foods and lots of vegetables. I work out seven days a week, including four to five "hard" days of cardio and weightlifting and two to three "light" days of easy cardio. I also stretch and get at least seven hours of sleep daily.

I want to have health, mobility and strength as long as possible and want to make sure I'm not inadvertently hurting the long goal by using supplements now. — *M.*

**ANSWER:** Understanding advice on nutrition and supplements for exercise is difficult because the evidence is often poor-quality and conflicting, probably due to the fact that what is

effective for another.

Carnitine is found naturally in muscle and is important in moving fat into the mitochondria, where it can be used as energy. Carnitine supplementation has been shown to improve exercise tolerance and increase use of body fat stores for energy. It can also improve blood and oxygen flow to the muscle if taken with large amounts of carbohydrates (the study authors used 4 ounces of simple sugar in water — more than it sounds like you take in, and perhaps more than optimal for good health). Carnitine is safe at the dose you are taking: At doses six times that high, it may cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Leucine, like valine and isoleucine, is a branched-chain amino acid. They are "essential," meaning they cannot be synthesized in the body. They are found in red meat and dairy products. They are also found in legumes, nuts, grains and seeds, but a person on a strict vegan diet needs to be careful to mix these appropriately, to get all the essential amino acids they need.

Some claim that branched-chain amino acids reduce fatigue, improve endurance, provide fuel for working muscle and reduce muscle protein breakdown and soreness from exercise, but there is no high-quality evidence that they are effective. A chicken breast contains the equivalent of seven average branched-chain amino acid supplement tablets. Leucine in the dose you are taking should have no adverse effects.

The standard guideline recommends that individuals consume 150 g of protein-rich foods daily, for a 2,000 calorie diet. You may be burning more than 2,000 calories with exercise, but you are certainly getting all the protein you need. Excess animal protein may worsen kidney function, but plant protein does not seem to cause that issue.

In my opinion, your diet and exercise, which are remarkable, are much more likely to achieve your goals than your supplements, but I do not think the supplements are harming you.

*Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).*

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"Jurassic World Dominion" (PG-13) -- The third and final installment of the "Jurassic World" trilogy (and the sixth installment in the overall "Jurassic Park" franchise) gets a wider streaming release Jan. 6. Chris Pratt and Bryce Dallas Howard returned to reprise their roles from the first two "Jurassic World" films, but Jeff Goldblum, Sam Neill and Laura Dern also made a return to the franchise. This is the first appearance together since the original 1993 film directed by Steven Spielberg. While the film was a success in the box office, it didn't receive the best reviews; however, the special effects of "Dominion" do make it a marvel to watch. (Prime Video)



**Noah Centineo stars as Owen Hendricks in 'The Recruit.'**  
Courtesy of Netflix

"The Menu" (R) -- Margot Mills (Anya-Taylor Joy) accompanies Tyler Ledford (Nicholas Hoult) to dine at an exclusive restaurant located on a private island. Julian Slowik (Ralph Fiennes), the chef who operates the restaurant, has his customers, 12 in this case, travel by boat to his restaurant for a dining experience worth \$1,250. Once they arrive on the island, Margot senses an odd aura surrounding the restaurant and the staff, and as they begin to get served, the dinner turns quite extreme. Chef Slowik announces that the extremities are simply part of the menu for that night and that, at the end of the night, everyone present at the dinner will be dead. Hong Chau and John Leguizamo also star in this comedy thriller film premiering Jan. 3. (HBO Max)

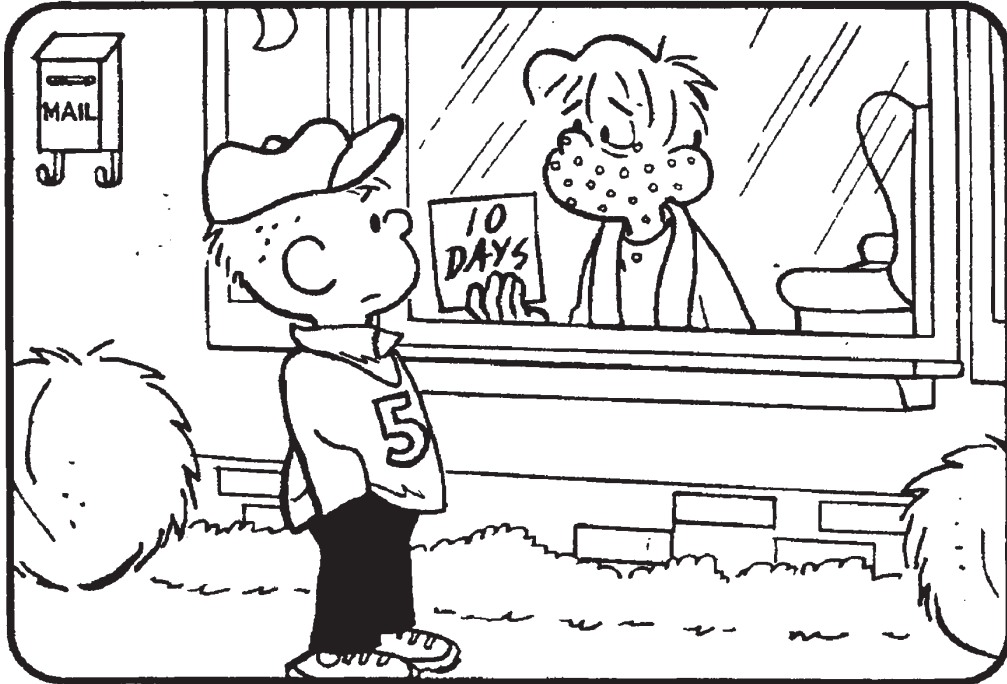
"The Recruit" (TV-MA) -- Netflix rom-com star Noah Centineo, who's most known for his role as Peter Kavinsky in the "To All the Boys" film series, branches out of his usual heartthrob roles to step into a more action-oriented role. In his new series, a spy-adventure Netflix original, Centineo plays CIA lawyer Owen Hendricks, who, during his second day on the job, gets assigned as a liaison to a former CIA asset who is threatening to reveal classified information. Inexperienced but undeniably optimistic, 24-year-old Owen dives headfirst into nail-biting, high-stakes situations while he continues his negotiations with the asset. Out now! (Netflix)

"Back in the Groove" (NR) -- Hosted by Taye Diggs, this eight-episode reality dating show follows three women around the age of 40 who embark on a journey to "get their groove back." When they arrive at The Groove resort in the Dominican Republic, these three women will have the opportunity to expand their dating pool by meeting with men who are half their age. With a variety of 24 men to choose from, the ladies will get to go on a few dates and try to find their best (younger) match, while the remaining men get eliminated. The drama is real with this one! Out now. (Hulu)

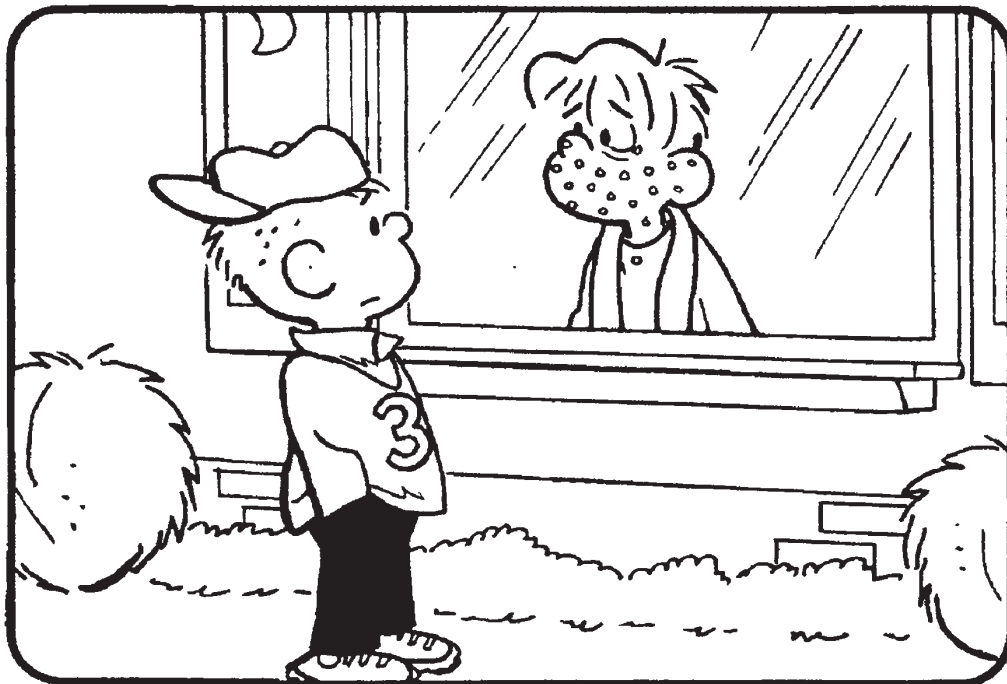


## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Mailbox is missing. 2. Cap is reversed. 3. Number is different. 4. Sign is missing. 5. Bricks are missing. 6. Chair is missing.

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\* To make a nice ice pack, enclose several ice cubes in a plastic, sealable baggie, then wrap in a bandana. You can tie the ends together to keep the cover from slipping. When you want to refreeze, put the baggie in the freezer, and hang the bandana to dry. It will dry very quickly and can be reused soon.

\* Want to get the most bang for your buck at the take-away salad bar? Load up on bacon, walnuts, cheese, meats and dried fruits; go light on green beans, cucumbers, hard-boiled eggs, celery, radishes and chickpeas, which were marked up 200% to 300%.

\* "When you clean out your fish tank, recycle the used water by pouring it on your house or garden plants. I don't know what it is in the water, but it makes shrubs and flow-

ers grow like crazy." -- Patti in Orlando, Florida

\* "The all-time best remedy for a runny nose or sore throat doesn't cost hardly a thing: It's plain old saltwater. Mix a half-teaspoon into a cup of hot water and gargle twice to three times a day. If the taste is off-putting, try swishing a bit of mouthwash in your mouth just before you gargle with the saltwater. This works so well, and even my doctor thinks it's a great idea." -- F.L. in Michigan

\* Use salt to clean out your garbage disposal. Kosher salt has larger grains that work very well. Dump a half-cup in the disposal, run the cold water and hit the switch. The grains scour the inside, leaving a better smelling drain.

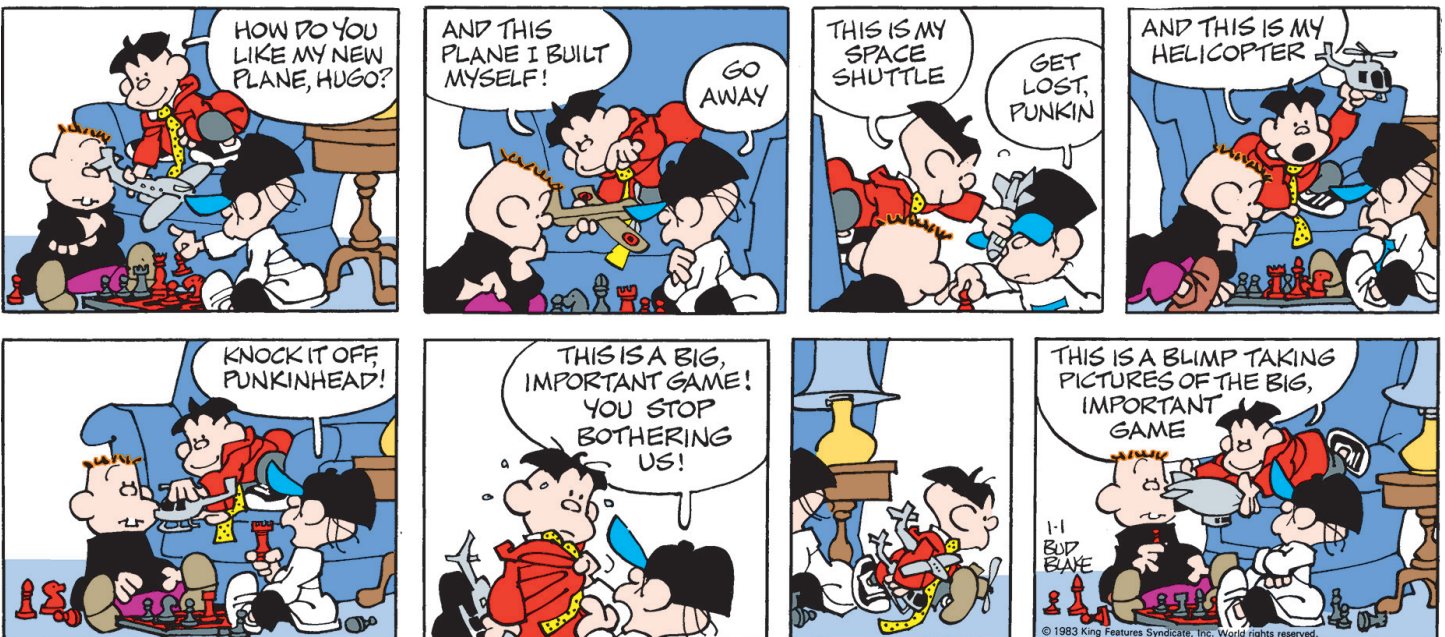
\* "Here's a great after-workout drink I just found out about: chocolate milk. The trainer at my gym prefers it over the fancy and costly "post-workout" drinks at the gym's smoothie bar." -- I.E. in Oregon

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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## TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Justice Dept. agency
- 4 Physician's nickname
- 7 Grating
- 12 Vintage
- 13 Away from WSW
- 14 Mountain crest
- 15 Set afire
- 16 Yosemite peak featured in "Free Solo"
- 18 "CSI" evidence
- 19 Dewy
- 20 Billboard
- 22 Swiss peak
- 23 Bloke
- 27 Author Fleming
- 29 Abrasion
- 31 Planet circlers
- 34 Heart line
- 35 Coffeehouse bill collector
- 37 L-P link
- 38 Utah ski resort
- 39 "Yoo- —!"
- 41 Pottery oven
- 45 Quotable Yogi
- 47 Eastern path
- 48 Bygone Cadillacs
- 52 Copper head?
- 53 Tierney of "The Affair"
- 54 Superlative

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14				
15				16			17					
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				45				46		47		
48	49	50	51							52		
53						54				55		
56						57				58		

- 55 Texter's chuckle
- 56 Velocity
- 57 Irish actor Stephen
- 58 Decade parts (Abbr.)
- DOWN**
- 1 Creates origami
- 2 Russian pancakes
- 3 Luggage attachment
- 4 Consider
- 5 Borrowed
- 6 Director DeMille
- 7 Engrossed
- 8 "Exodus" hero
- 9 Fixed
- 10 Sch. org
- 11 Hankering
- 17 Nile vipers
- 21 Martial arts warrior
- 23 Swindler
- 24 Guffaw syllable
- 25 Suitable
- 26 Green shade
- 28 Simile part
- 30 Paint container
- 31 1959 Kingston Trio hit
- 32 Texas tea
- 33 Choose
- 36 Mother of Zeus
- 37 Gloomy
- 40 Sequence
- 42 Tuscany setting
- 43 Hard work
- 44 Seasonal songs
- 45 Thin nail
- 46 Nick and Nora's dog
- 48 Ambulance initials
- 49 Napkin's place
- 50 Payable
- 51 Mine material

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## — King Crossword —

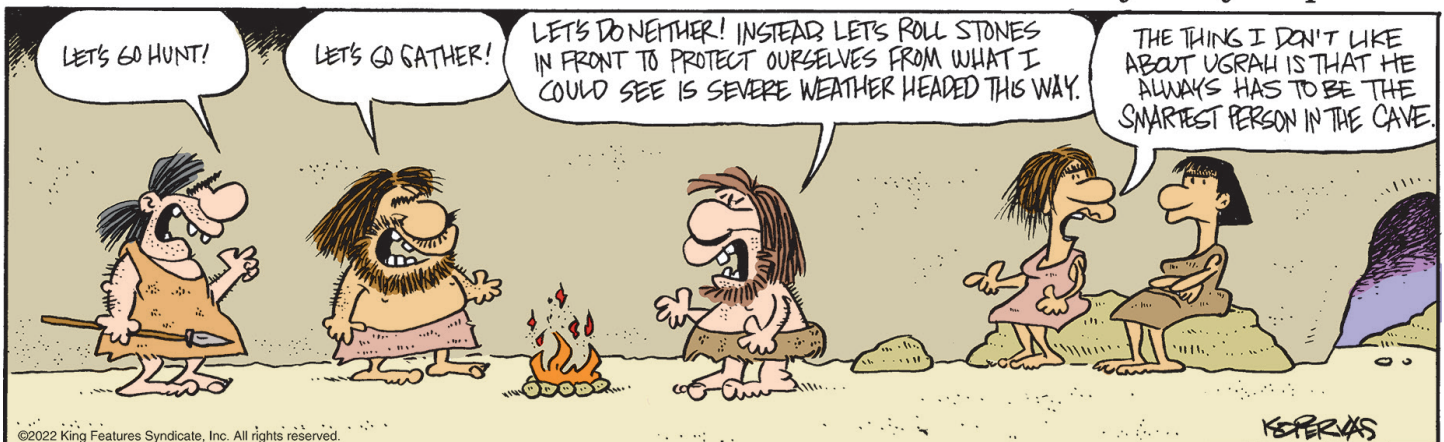
Answers

Solution time: 26 mins.

F	B	I		D	O	C		R	A	S	P	Y	
O	L	D		E	N	E		A	R	E	T	E	
L	I	T		E	L	C	A	P	I	T	A	N	
D	N	A		M	O	I	S	T					
S	I	G	N		A	L	P		C	H	A	P	
				I	A	N		S	C	R	A	P	E
M	O	O	N	S				A	O	R	T	A	
T	I	P	J	A	R		M	N	O				
A	L	T	A		H	O	O		K	I	L	N	
				B	E	R	R	A		T	A	O	
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M	A	U	R	A		E	S	T		L	O	L	
S	P	E	E	D		R	E	A		Y	R	S	

### Out on a Limb

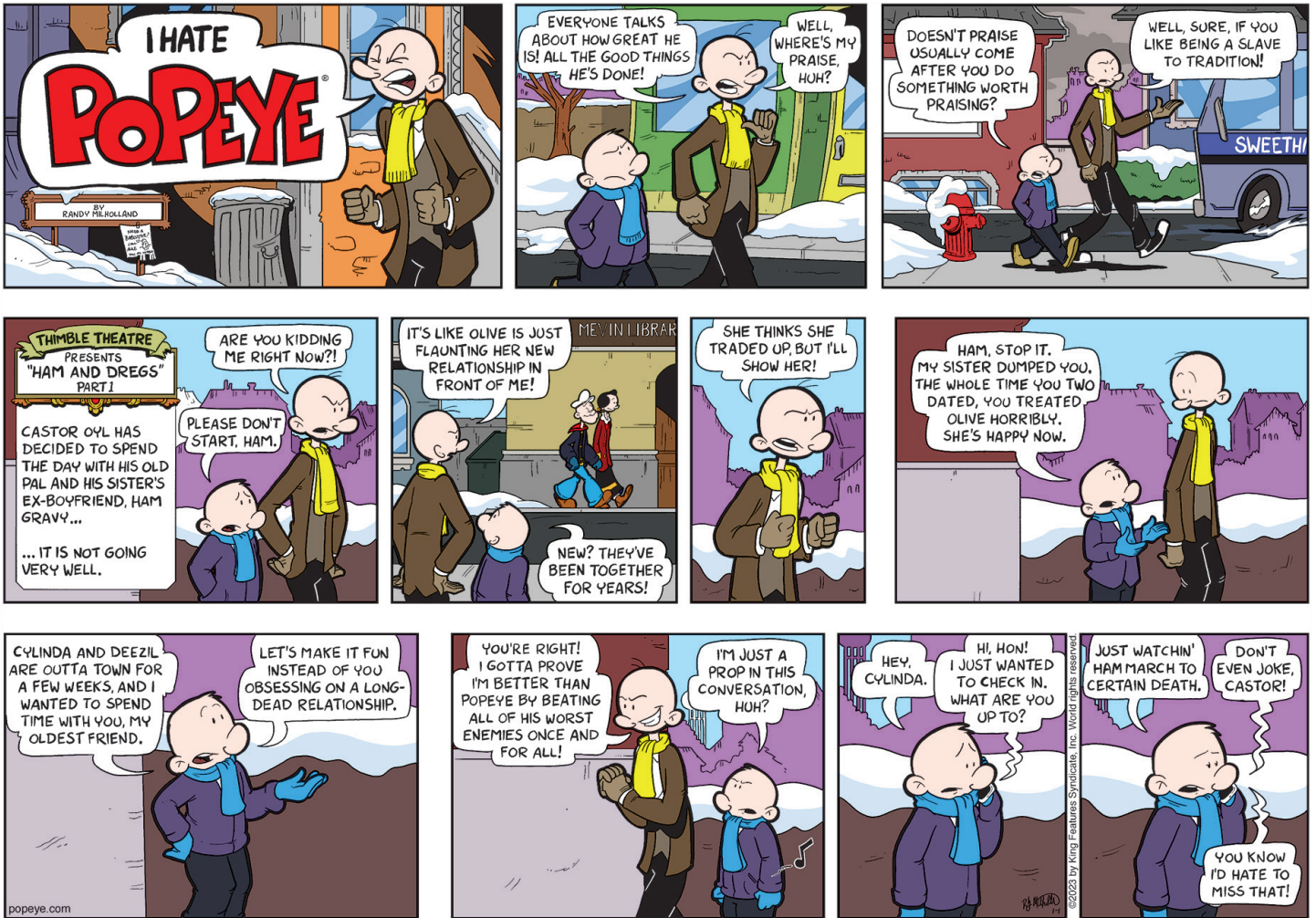
by Gary Kopervas





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## R.F.D.

by Mike Marland

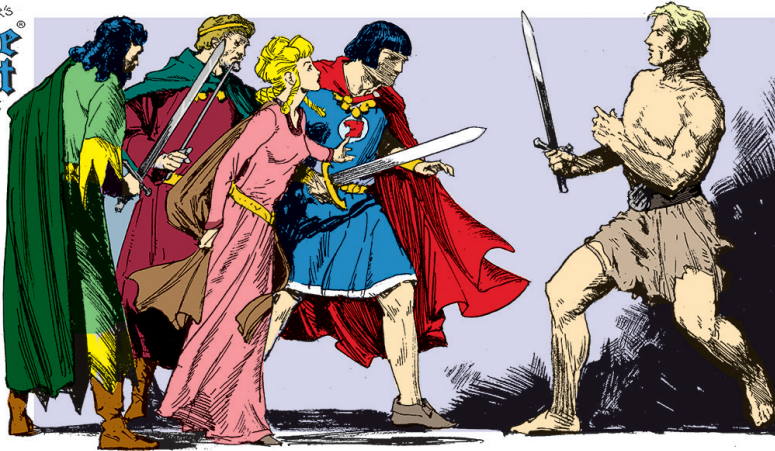


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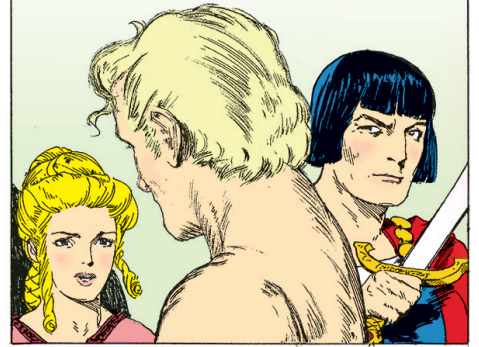
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Hal Foster's  
**Prince Valiant**  
By Gianni and Schultz

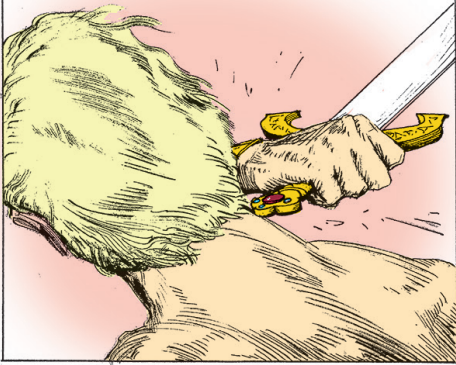
THE STRANGER IS CUNNING - HE WRESTS THE SWORD FROM A GUARD AND SEEMS INTENT ON GAINING FREEDOM OR DEATH WHEN ALETA ENTERS. "YOU!" SHE GASPS. "YOU!" THE SURPRISED STRANGER NIMBLY RETORTS.



VAL DOES NOT LOOK GIFT HORSES IN THE MOUTH. IF HIS OPPONENT IS DISTRACTED BY THE SIGHT OF HIS WIFE - WITH WHOM HE DOES APPEAR FAMILIAR...



... QUESTIONS CAN BE ASKED LATER. RIGHT NOW, A WELL-PLACED BLOW TO THE SIDE OF THE HEAD IS IN ORDER.



BUT THEN ALETA FLINGS HERSELF PROTECTIVELY OVER THE STUNNED GIANT.

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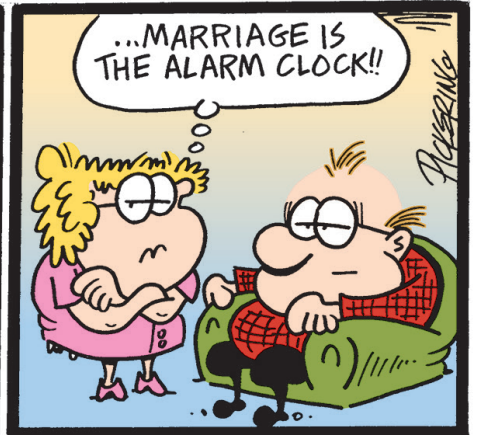
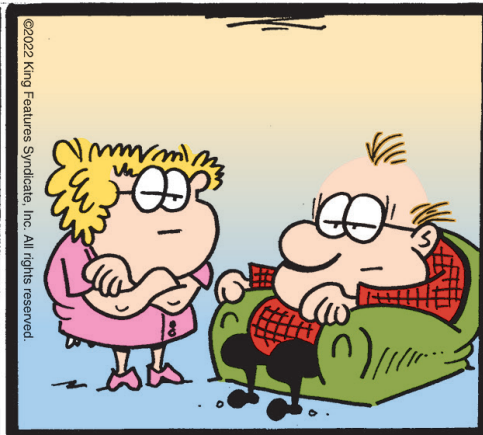
"HOLD! I TELL YOU, I KNOW THIS MAN! HE SAVED MY LIFE, IN A PLACE AND TIME FAR, FAR FROM HERE!"

NEXT:  
**Half-remembered**

Gianni  
1-16-11

## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### A Heads Up at the Grocery Store

The time has come to study the labels of foods you buy, even if you've used those same products for a long time. Not only are manufacturers changing the size of the containers, they're changing the ingredients. At this point we need to take a very close look at what we're actually eating.

Changes to the ingredients in products we've always trusted might well be blamed on supply chain problems. If a manufacturer can't easily get one ingredient, they might substitute something else.

But it means that what you assumed you were getting might no longer be true.

If, for example, you have to keep an eye on your sodium levels, you might discover that the amount of salt in a particular food has increased. You might have to adjust how much you eat or look for a different product.

We can no longer grab a dozen eggs and assume all will be well. If you're baking, too-small eggs won't work in your baked goods recipes. You need to open the carton and look at them. If you're watching your cholesterol, you need to squint and read the fine print on the nutrition panel.

However, a warning: At the beginning of the pandemic, the Food and Drug Administration issued a temporary respite to food manufacturers. To help them keep producing food, the FDA said manufacturers didn't have to put certain new information on labels when "minor formulation changes" were made to food. The policy, started in January 2020, was intended to remain in effect only for the duration of the Covid pandemic and has been renewed every 90 days. It was to expire January 2023. Since they have to give 60 days notice to end the designation, it's not likely that it will end until April, if that.

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1. He played cornerback for the New York Giants (1992-99) and Dallas Cowboys (2000). His daughter, Jordin, won Season 6 of "American Idol." Who is he?

2. What British boxer, a former welterweight and light-welterweight champion, had a pro record of 43-0 before suffering his first defeat against Floyd Mayweather Jr. in 2007?

3. Running back Deuce McAllister played eight NFL seasons (2001-08) as a member of what team?

4. What Brazilian soccer star was transferred from FC Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain for a record \$263 million in 2017?

5. What charity, established by college golfer Amy Bockerstette and her family in 2019, provides golf instruction and opportunities for people with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities?

6. Name the Baseball Hall of Fame catcher who was selected by the Los Angeles Dodgers in the 62nd round (1,390th overall) of the 1988 Major League Baseball draft.

7. Former Oklahoma Sooners quarterback Josh Heupel was named the head coach of what college football team in January 2021?



by Ryan A. Berenz

## Answers

1. Phillippi Sparks.
2. Ricky Hatton.
3. The New Orleans Saints.
4. Neymar.
5. The I Got This Foundation.
6. Mike Piazza.
7. The Tennessee Volunteers.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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## Should You Pay for Dog Training?

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I love my new puppy, Star. He is so easy to train, listens to my commands, and his potty training is going well. Still, I'm wondering if we should also work with a professional trainer. He has some resistance issues to certain commands, and he is a bit reactive to other dogs. Is this normal, or should I pay for training? -- Ricardo G., Orlando, Florida

DEAR RICARDO: A good trainer can look at the most obedient dog in the world and find behaviors to work on. That's because no dog is perfect, and

neither are we.

It sounds like you're doing a great job with Star, and you want to continue to level up his behavior training. This is a caring and responsible thing to do.

You've got a few training options to consider. While I personally prefer to train alongside my dog in a group or one-on-one training session, I have friends who send their dog to day camp where they receive obedience training and socialization while they're away at work. Others send their dogs to intensive one-to two-week programs.

You'll want to check out a potential trainer or training school carefully before committing. Dog training can take a chunk out of your budget, so you'll want to be sure that Star is getting the training he needs. Meet with a trainer in person, with Star beside you, to chat with them about what you'd like to achieve in training and get a feel for how well the trainer works with Star.

Best of luck! I know that Star will do great.

Share your tips on professional dog training at [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

Seattle. No one knew who filled it, but sadly, in 2018, it vanished as suddenly as it came, with an explanatory note saying it "went for a walk."

\* The first women's boots were designed for and worn by Queen Victoria.

\* "Ergophobia" is the fear of work or the workplace. Psychologists attribute the condition to a combination of concerns about failing at tasks, public speaking and social anxiety.

\* A 59-year-old man with no previous criminal record held up a bank for the measly sum of just \$1. So what was he actually after? A prison sentence, so he could get free health care.

\* Red is the first color a baby sees.

\* If diamonds really are a gal's best friend, she might like to pay a visit to the planet known as 55 Cancri e, which is believed to be principally covered in graphite and diamond. Of course, she would also need to bring enough rocks back home to cover the cost of the \$12 million spaceship she'd need to get there.

\* There are more historic artifacts under the sea than in all of the world's museums.

\*\*\*

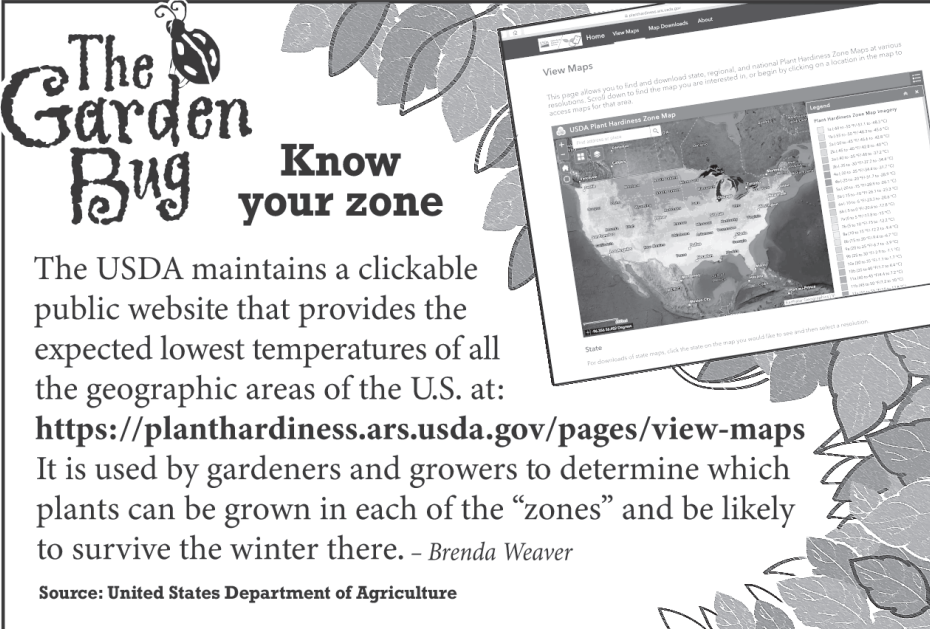
Thought for the Day: "I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear." -- Rosa Parks

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\* A Cornish milkman named Steve Leech was making his rounds when he saw a shop on fire. Using 320 pints of milk, he not only extinguished the flames, but saved seven other stores in the process, earning a "Hero Milkman of the Millennium" award from the National Dairymen's Association.

\* An albatross typically spends the first six years of its life flying over the ocean without ever setting foot on the ground.

\* In the 1990s, a mysterious soda vending machine dispensing rare and discontinued drinks appeared in



**The Garden Bug Know your zone**

The USDA maintains a clickable public website that provides the expected lowest temperatures of all the geographic areas of the U.S. at: <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/pages/view-maps>

It is used by gardeners and growers to determine which plants can be grown in each of the "zones" and be likely to survive the winter there. - Brenda Weaver

Source: United States Department of Agriculture

The advertisement includes a screenshot of the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map website, showing a map of the United States with various hardiness zones and a legend on the right side. The legend lists temperature ranges for each zone, such as Zone 1 (below -40°F) and Zone 13 (above 40°F).



by Freddy Groves

## Get Your Money Faster With Direct Deposit

If you've ever had anything stolen out of your mailbox, or if a check has just failed to show up, you know the angst, trouble and problems that follow because of that missing money.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has a way to safeguard the benefit money that comes to you. The Veterans Benefits Banking Program, for veterans and beneficiaries, will do a direct deposit into your

account.

According to the VA, if receiving a paper check, you're 16 times more likely to have it lost or stolen. You're 22 times more likely to have it go missing altogether and need to file a claim for it, which of course takes time. They say that since many veterans are using direct deposit, fraud has gone down by 93%.

And with direct deposit, you'll get your money faster. It suddenly just appears in your account, on time, every time, not making its way through the postal system.

Through the banking program, there are 43 banking institutions that have signed up to provide low or no-cost checking and savings accounts. You can find those banks here: [veteransbenefitsbanking.org/financial-institutions](http://veteransbenefitsbanking.org/financial-institutions). (Don't miss the FAQ. A lot of questions are answered.) Scroll down to the list of banks. (I'm a fan of USAA.) If you already have a bank account (or credit union) and you like them, you can set up a direct deposit right into your account. Call the VA at 800-827-1000 and find more information at [www.va.gov/change-direct-deposit](http://www.va.gov/change-direct-deposit).

It can take a little while to think about this kind of change if you've never had direct deposit. But it can be rather disconcerting to have a neighbor from a block away show up at your door with a check that was mistakenly delivered to them.

You can eliminate a big source of worry and potential problems if you consider signing up for direct deposit for your benefit payment.

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## Wishing Well®

8	6	2	4	8	6	4	8	6	8	7	2	7
D	C	Y	B	O	H	E	Y	A	O	U	O	N
6	8	2	7	5	2	5	4	7	6	5	4	2
N	U	U	S	B	G	E	C	E	G	E	H	A
8	5	6	7	2	3	2	7	5	8	3	4	6
R	N	E	L	I	I	N	F	E	V	M	E	I
5	8	4	2	8	3	5	4	5	8	3	5	3
R	E	E	S	R	P	G	R	E	Y	O	T	R
6	7	5	8	6	2	5	6	4	7	8	2	6
N	I	I	B	H	T	C	O	F	S	E	R	M
8	7	3	8	3	6	3	6	2	4	3	2	7
S	H	T	T	A	E	N	L	E	U	T	N	A
3	2	6	2	4	2	6	7	6	3	7	3	3
M	G	I	T	L	H	F	I	E	A	D	I	L

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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- HISTORY:** What is the name of the ancient trade route that connected the East and West?
- LITERATURE:** What was playwright Anton Chekhov's other profession?
- TELEVISION:** Who are the next-door neighbors in TV's sitcom "Laverne & Shirley"?
- GEOGRAPHY:** Which continent has the most countries?
- MUSIC:** What does the shortened term K-pop stand for?
- FOOD & DRINK:** What is another name for a kiwi?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** From which Roman god did the month of January get its name?
- MEDICAL TERMS:** If you suffer from medial tibial stress syndrome, what is the condition commonly called?
- PSYCHOLOGY:** What irrational fear is represented in the condition called ablutophobia?
- ANIMAL KINGDOM:** What is a baby turkey called?

### Answers

- The Silk Road.
- Physician.
- Lenny and Squiggy.
- Africa.
- Korean popular music.
- Chinese gooseberry.
- Janus, the god of beginnings and endings.
- Shin splints.
- Fear of bathing.
- A poult.

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## **Always Ready, Always There**

The men and women in our National Guard serve with excellence. They take their job seriously, so I take my responsibility to them as their Commander in Chief very seriously.

This week, I visited our 109th Regional Support Group at Fort Hood, Texas. They are staging to ship out to the Middle East in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. They will support troops on the ground in a wide variety of missions. Normally, we'd hold a deployment ceremony to say farewell and Godspeed, but the winter storms made that ceremony impossible for these troops. I thought it was important for them to know that I have their back – that while they're defending Freedom over there, I'll do my part to defend Freedom here.

While they're gone, they will be in harm's way. They'll have families here at home concerned about them but so proud of their service. And when they come home, they'll return to a grateful state and nation.

Speaking of the winter storms, our National Guard has been responding to those, too, particularly with assistance to our Native American tribes. We've put out into the field 6 payloaders, 3 snowblowers, 2 refuelers, 2 contact trucks, 2 wreckers, 9 semis and trailers, and 5 dump trucks full of firewood to help the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and Oglala Sioux Tribe deal with the effects of the winter storm.

I want to remind us why our troops serve us, and I'm going to borrow from America's great orator, President Abraham Lincoln. In August 1964, as the Civil War continued on, President Lincoln thanked the 166th Ohio Regiment with these famous words:

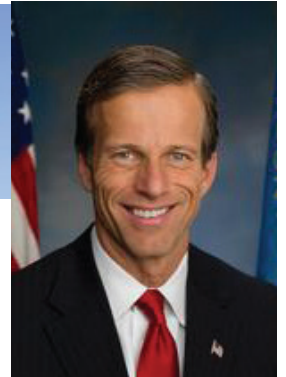
"For the service you have done in this great struggle in which we are engaged, I present you sincere thanks for myself and the country... It is not merely for today, but for all time to come that we should perpetuate for our children's children this great and free government, which we have enjoyed all our lives. I beg you to remember this, not merely for my sake, but for yours... The nation is worth fighting for, to secure such an inestimable jewel."

We ask a lot of our Guard. We ask them to help keep our nation the "inestimable jewel" that we know and love. And they give us more than what we ask. They're real American heroes. I am humbled to serve as their Commander in Chief, and I am grateful for their service every single day. God bless our troops!

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**John Thune**  
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



## Principles for Putting South Dakota First

It's humbling to begin another term representing South Dakota in the U.S. Senate. Though many of the issues have changed since I first took the oath of office, the principles that guide my work have remained the same: work hard, fight for what matters, and listen to my top advisors – you, the people of South Dakota.

I've put these principles to work to deliver for South Dakotans over the last year. When agriculture producers were facing challenges getting container ships to bring their products to market, I worked on a bipartisan fix to help resolve these issues and make our supply chains more efficient. As Ellsworth Air Force Base prepares to host the B-21 Raider mission, I'm proud to have secured funding for investments in the facilities and other infrastructure that it needs for the new mission and the additional military families who will make the Black Hills home. And when Democrats tried to sneak through a multi-billion dollar tax increase on small- and medium-sized businesses as part of the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, I forced a vote – which passed – to remove this new tax hike from the bill. I also had bipartisan legislation signed into law that will provide South Dakota school districts participating in the Impact Aid Program with additional flexibility and financial certainty as they deal with temporary enrollment fluctuations on the back end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I'm proud of the work we've done, and as 2023 gets underway, there's much more still to do. With Republicans now in control of the House of Representatives, I'm hopeful that President Biden and Senate Democrats will focus on bipartisan priorities and seek consensus with Republicans on key issues. It would be a mistake for President Biden to sideline congressional Republicans and resort to governing by executive order. The American people deserve better.

As always, I'll be advocating for the issues that matter to South Dakotans and ensuring our priorities receive the national attention and solutions they deserve. Among these priorities is South Dakota agriculture, the lifeblood of our state. One of the most important things Congress will do in 2023 is consider the next farm bill, which sets policy for farm programs. In preparation for the farm bill, I've already held roundtables with farmers and ranchers across the state to get their input on the effectiveness of farm policy. As a longtime member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, their feedback is invaluable, and it will ultimately inform my priorities as we draft the 2023 farm bill.

Working families also continue to be top of mind, especially as families' budgets are strained by higher prices month after month. We need to get our economy back on track, which we can do by restoring the pro-growth economic environment we had before the pandemic. I'll continue working to protect families, small businesses, and farms from unnecessary tax hikes and burdensome regulations, like those Democrats have proposed these past two years, and I'll continue to advocate for new market access opportunities. It is also time for the United States to unleash domestic energy production and pursue an all-of-the-above energy strategy. Producing energy in America lowers prices, creates jobs, and secures our energy and national security.

South Dakotans also deserve a government that is accountable. I recently launched an initiative to ensure federal broadband investments are being effectively deployed to achieve their stated goal of expanding broadband access to unserved areas. Without proper oversight of broadband funding, taxpayer dollars may be wasted and Americans may still be left disconnected. I will also continue to fight for much-needed oversight and accountability of the unprecedented \$80 billion that Democrats recently gave to the IRS in their partisan spending bill. The IRS should have to answer to the American people and their elected representatives, not Washington bureaucrats.

It is an honor to represent South Dakota in the U.S. Senate. As I get to work on these priorities and others this year, the values I learned growing up in Murdo and that are reflected around our state will continue to guide me. Thank you for the opportunity to serve – now let's get to work.

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CONGRESSMAN  
**DUSTY JOHNSON**  
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



## What to Expect

While many are planning their new year's resolutions, getting ready to go back to school, and soaking up the last days of the holidays, Congress is gearing up for a shift in majority.

The top of many minds and news stories is the race for House Speaker. While there has been some uncertainty of a Speaker Kevin McCarthy (CA), I believe he will prevail. We have much more important things to focus on—like the border, inflation, China, and crime—so I am hopeful the Speaker vote will move quickly.

Here's a few things to expect from a Republican-led House of Representatives:

### Fiscal Responsibility-

America is more than \$32 trillion in debt. This is not a problem to be ignored and left to our children to solve. A Republican-led House will be able to block any additional reckless spending by the Biden Administration and Congressional Democrats. Doing so will help slow inflation. Over the past two years, I have opposed more than \$13 trillion in Democrat spending packages and will continue to do the same.

### China-

China is not our friend. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continues to expand its authoritarian regime in multiple spheres of our lives. Their negative influence of TikTok content for American youth and increased purchases American farmland and ag businesses poses a geopolitical threat to our national security. Next Congress, Republicans will establish a Select Committee on China to investigate the CCP's actions and propose policies to ensure America is prepared to tackle this security threat.

### Border Security-

The situation at the southern border is a crisis—a humanitarian crisis, national security crisis, and public safety crisis. I'm grateful the end of Title 42 was delayed, preventing a greater influx of migrants at our border that is already under stress. I'm hopeful for bipartisan support in this area to secure our border and increase public safety.

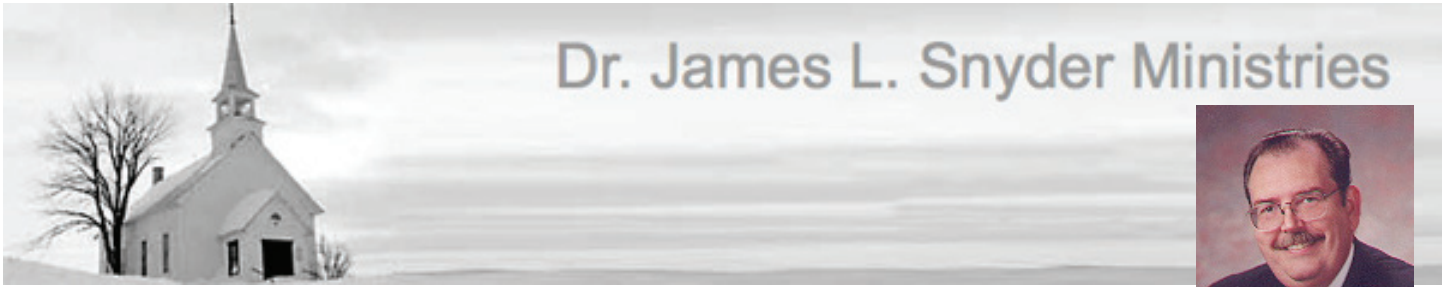
### Farm Bill-

Every five years, the Farm Bill gets reauthorized. The last Farm Bill was authorized in 2018, which means it needs adjusted and passed again in 2023. Some titles that are included are conservation, crop insurance, and nutrition programs. I'm hopeful to be a chairman of a subcommittee within the House Agriculture Committee, giving me a lead role in drafting parts of this bill.

The next Congress will be pretty busy, and I am looking forward to bringing home more wins for South Dakota.

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## The Misconception of a New Year

Christmas is the best time of the year, especially when it involves family. It's the one time of the year that families get together to celebrate together.

Of course, at least from my perspective, it is also the most hectic time of the year. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has an entirely different perspective regarding family get-together time.

This year, we had a special new family member, our second great-grandchild, born a week before Christmas.

As you might imagine, that little one was the center of everybody's attention. Therefore, everybody had to hold the little one at least once.

I could see the little one had absolutely no idea what was happening. Although these were wonderful memories for us, that little one will never remember this time together. But there will be other times, I assure you.

One daughter was taking pictures of just about everyone, which is important. The one picture she took, and I probably was the only one who understood, was between The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and that little great-granddaughter.

The beauty of that picture was there was the oldest and the youngest person in our family together. Don't let her know that I said this because I may not get any older.

It was a fun time, and when it was all over, everybody went home, even the family's newest member. The mother of the new baby had to spend a lot of time wrestling her from the great-grandmother.

That night my wife and I sat together reflecting on our family get-together. As usual, it was a wonderful time, and I'm glad I've lived long enough to enjoy it. Whether I get to another Christmas or not is anybody's guess.

As we sat together drinking hot apple cider, we reflected on the past year, which was a transitional year for us. It's hard for me to pick out the greatest time this past year but if I had to pick one it would be Christmas.

Sighing deeply, I said, "It sure has been a great year, hasn't it?"

Thinking deeply, which is the beginning of trouble, my wife said, "It was a great year." Then, after more deep thought, she continued, "But the New Year is going to be so much better."

Not learning from the past, I replied, "What's so new about the new year?"

She looked at me as though she had never seen me before, and with one of her sarcastic tones, she said, "It's a new year, and everything is going to be new."

"What do you think is going to be new about this coming New Year?" I responded.

"Everything will be new this coming year, and I can't wait to see all the new stuff."

Pausing for a moment, she then said, "Last year, we didn't even know at this time that we were going to have a great-granddaughter. She is new in our family."

Well, she had me on that one for sure. Maybe she was expecting another new great-grandchild this coming year. So I didn't pursue that.

"So," I said rather slowly, "what will be new this coming year?"

"Everything is going to be new this coming year." She said with a smile dancing on her face.

"Except for a new family member," I said to her, "everything this next year is going to be the same."

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She could not let me get away with that and said most vehemently, "Everything is going to be new. Trust me."

I had her just about where I wanted her and was very careful in my next steps.

"So, tell me, how many months will there be this coming year?"

Looking at me, she smirked and said, "There will be 12 months this coming year. What are you talking about?"

"Well," I stuttered a little, "weren't there 12 months this past year? This next year we will have the same 12 months as we had last year."

Looking at me, she said, "I think you're getting a little goofy here."

"And," I pursued a little more, "how many days of the week will there be in this new year? Will there be any more than last year?"

She stared at me, not knowing what to say.

"Also, there will still be 24 hours in every day. That's not going to change either."

I paused for a moment and then said, "When is your birthday this coming year?"

She told me and said, "It's the same as it was the last year, you silly boy."

"Oh," I said rather thoughtfully, "your birthday this year is the same as last year, so your birthday isn't new this year."

"But," she replied, "I will be a year older."

Looking at her I replied, "Weren't you a year older this year?"

Finally, she began to understand what I was saying, and looking at me very quizzically, she said, "You sure have a stupid way of looking at things, don't you?"

Then she said something rather startling, "I guess you are right in this."

Well, I was rather stunned because that was new.

Pondering this conversation I was reminded of what wise old Solomon said. "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

The secret to a happy life is enjoying what I have right now.

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## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What's on the Supreme Court's docket in terms of cases with any bearing on nature, wildlife or the environment? Historically has the Court tended to be friend or foe to the environment? — S. Jackson, Miami, FL

There has been little consistency in Supreme Court rulings on environmental protection over the years, mainly because such protections are not directly addressed in the Constitution. That said, all of the Court's recent decisions have leaned conservative. In June of 2022, the Court ruled 6-3 in *West Virginia v. EPA* that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not have the ability to regulate carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. This decision gutted many regulations designed to fight climate change. However, Congress' subsequent passage of the Inflation Reduction Act in November 2022 circumvented the contentious ruling by specifically earmarking funding for domestic energy production and renewable energy. The bill defines CO<sub>2</sub> as a pollutant, which puts these emissions back under the EPA's purview.

Several cases on the Court's docket with environmental tie-ins are likely to be decided in 2023. To wit, in *Sackett v. EPA*, Chantell and Michael Sackett are suing the EPA for ordering them to cease building an unpermitted house on a lot which contains wetlands. The Sacketts argue that this is "overreach" since their proposed home, although next to a tributary of Idaho's Priest Lake, is intended to be a few hundred feet from the lake itself. The EPA says that the wetlands are under its jurisdiction because of the "significant nexus" test to determine how federal waters would be impacted by development. This test can be hard to define and understand because hydrology varies in different locations. The Court seems likely to try to create a new measurement, which could have consequences far beyond rural Idaho.

Another as yet undecided case is *National Pork Producers v. Ross*, concerning California's Animal Farm Confinement Initiative, which prohibits the knowing sale of pork from facilities that confine sows in less than 24 square feet. The initiative is designed to prevent animal cruelty and decrease the risk of zoonotic (animal to human) diseases. The National Pork Producers Council argues that this is, in effect, regulation of pork production outside the state, in violation of the Constitution's "dormant commerce" clause. The 2023 ruling will have ramifications for animal welfare, but it may also open up challenges to states' environmental regulations depending on the Court's interpretation.

Several historic cases have had significant impacts on environmental policy. One was 1920's *Missouri v. Holland*, in which the Court ruled that an international treaty protecting some migratory birds did not violate the 10th amendment, overruling states' rights in the process. Another landmark environmental case is 1972's *Sierra Club v. Morton* in which the Court rejected a Sierra Club lawsuit to block the development of a ski resort at Mineral King in the Sierra Nevada mountains as the plaintiff did not allege any direct injury. Justice William O. Douglas wrote a famous dissent which still inspires environmental and animal rights advocates to this day arguing that ecological features should be given the protection of legal personhood.



**While the Supreme Court has not been consistent on environmental rulings over the years, lately its decisions have skewed conservative.** Credit: Lara Jameson, Pexels.

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## South Dakota COVID-19 Report

New Cases\*

423  
-201

Total Cases\*

271,856

Currently Hospitalized

62  
-21

New Hospitalizations

24

Total Hospitalized

12,213

[Click to Visit](#)

[SD COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage](#)

New Deaths

2

Total Deaths

3,118

[Click to Visit](#)

[COVID-19 Community Levels](#)

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## #569 in a series Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

There's been a lot of wonkiness in the numbers for the past week—wild swings up and down, even in the usually even-tempered averages. When Christmas produces a three- or four-day weekend, typically a period when there is no reporting at all, that's going to happen. What's more, we're heading into another three-day weekend, and I expect that to further disrupt things. When you add to this the effects of all that holiday travel and all those family gatherings followed by a whole lot of partying tomorrow night, I don't think we're going to have a clear picture of where we're headed until at least mid-week next week, maybe a bit later depending on incubation periods. What I'm seeing at the moment is a seven-day new-case average as of mid-day today that is below 60,000 for the first time this month and dropping (at the moment), even while daily counts are north of 100,000. That average today is 58,354, which is well below the 66,045 we had on Christmas. I'm not yet prepared to trust this reporting at all, as much as I'd like to. Pandemic total cases are up to 100,436,935. BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 together account for 63.1 percent of new case reports and XBB accounts for 18.3 percent. BA.5 is now at 6.9 percent and BF.7 and BN.1 for just under four percent each. None of this is much changed from last week's report; we'll have a look at that too next week and see where we are.

Hospitalizations, as has been true since the beginning of this thing, are more reliable and less subject to reporting artifacts, and that's holding pretty steady at a current 40,364. With the growth in respiratory virus infections including Covid-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and influenza virus, more than 70 percent of in-patient beds are occupied these days.

The seven-day deaths average, also a less volatile figure, has been trending downward somewhat over the past week and is now at 355, down from 428 on Christmas. We can sincerely hope this one is a real trend; we should know once we get some figures over the next few weeks. Total pandemic deaths are now 1,099,285.

In the Things to Worry About files, let's consider the exploding case rates in China, now that the government there has quite abruptly abandoned its harsh lock-down policies—hasn't anyone there ever heard of a step-down process? If anything will yield mutations that could produce some dangerous new variant, this huge surge in an enormous population is just that sort of thing. With very low rates of booster uptake and vaccines far inferior to those available in the West, they are seeing a whole lot of transmission. The virus's evolutionary pattern in China, due to the immunity profile of its population, may be quite different from what we've seen so far in this pandemic, and this is a serious concern. Dr. Stuart Campbell Ray, infectious disease scientist at Johns Hopkins University told the AP, "China has a population that is very large and there's limited immunity. And that seems to be the setting in which we may see an explosion of a new variant. When we see big waves of infection, it's often followed by new variants being generated." Of further concern is that the government of China has not been particularly forthcoming about what its genomic surveillance has revealed about how this virus is evolving in the country. This could leave the rest of the world blind-sided if and when a new variant makes its way to other countries, pretty much an inevitability if something bad pops up there. I will note here that many countries, are imposing testing requirements for travelers from China and that the testing programs already in place are discovering that more than half of those prospective travelers are testing positive for Covid-19. These are fairly terrifying numbers.

Why is the high transmission rate in China such a big problem for those of us who don't live there? We've talked a lot in the past couple of years about transmission effects on mutation and their role in driving the pandemic. If you haven't been with us all along or need a refresher, you may wish to have a look at



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my Update #377 posted March 6, 2021, at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/pfbid-02NANK1XZxKR8rSzDoHx8q9QnzzufAmpWBN9JJFszjYfwVzrkuDJTrogk7z28mvav7l>. In that, I discussed how mutation works in real life and what a high transmission rate has to do with the likelihood of mutations. Additionally, a partially immune population like China's produces selection pressure that is highly likely to drive viral mutation in a more immune-evasive direction, something none of us wants. It is a particular worry that the BF.7 subvariant of Omicron is driving this wave of new cases in China. While BF.7 is only at 3.9 percent of new cases in the US at the moment, this subvariant is very adept at evading our immunity, so is a serious matter for concern. We don't have enough data at the moment to determine whether it causes more severe disease, but it is important to remember that all viral evolution does not necessarily lead to milder disease. I think we've sort of forgotten that, expecting the virus will just continue to produce milder and milder disease; and that is a bad bet.

I've read a sort of roundup of developments regarding long-Covid or post-acute sequelae of Covid (PASC), that syndrome characterized by persistent or recurring symptoms after the acute infection has resolved. Current estimates are that around 30 percent of cases will develop long-Covid, and that this is more likely in women, in the obese, and in those with more severe disease. Most of those folks will recover within three months or so, but among those still experiencing symptoms at that point, some 15 percent will continue to have symptoms at least to the one-year mark, some far longer. We don't know the upper bound of duration at this point because we do have some people who have not yet recovered, even after two years or more.

The persistence of symptoms in the obese may be linked to recently-discovered evidence that the virus seems to be able to take up residence and reproduce in fat cells, which means these cells may be acting as a reservoir of virus on an ongoing basis. There is a hormone produced by fat cells, leptin, which influences immune responses and promotes inflammation, a feature of long-Covid; so this may be a component of what's going on in obese patients. There is some work being done on a lab-produced antibody that may reduce leptin levels, which may in turn reduce inflammation and long-Covid symptoms. Studies are pretty preliminary, but it's a start.

Women seem to be more at risk for a couple of reasons. One is that women have more fat cells than men; even fit women who are not overweight have more fat cells than fit men; that additional fat is important to reproductive capability in females, so it's not going to be the sort of thing many women will necessarily want to eliminate, even if they could. Additionally, women's immune systems are generally more robust than men's, producing more marked responses to pathogens and higher rates of autoimmune diseases, which are basically conditions where you have unwanted immune responses. There is also work being done to explore the role of female hormones and their fluctuating levels in elevated risk. Another factor we cannot dismiss is that women are more likely to pay attention to changes in their bodies and to seek health care when they notice something amiss, so perhaps they're simply going in for diagnosis more often.

Another area of study is the role of viruses other than SARS-CoV-2 in promoting long-Covid. Herpesviruses are a class of virus that tend to linger latent in the body after an infection has resolved. A common one, estimated to have infected 90 percent of us at some point, is Epstein-Barr, responsible for infectious mononucleosis, but also responsible for a great many asymptomatic or mild infections that might just be written off as a cold. For the record, Epstein-Barr is also associated with a number of hyperproliferative lymphoid conditions which may or may not be malignant, including Burkitt's and Hodgkin's lymphomas, and some non-lymphoid cancers too. There is a strong suspicion it is also associated with chronic fatigue syndrome, which is similar in character to many cases of long-Covid, and with some autoimmune diseases including lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, Sjögren's syndrome, and multiple sclerosis as well, so it's a versatile little bugger. There is evidence of Epstein-Barr reactivation in long-Covid patients, so that

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tracks with a relationship to this virus. There is work along these lines being done with other herpesviruses as well. Much of this is quite preliminary too, but we need starting places, plenty of them.

There still isn't much available in the way of direct benefit to long-Covid sufferers, and that's very discouraging nearly three years on. Since the condition can be thoroughly debilitating, we need answers; sooner would be better. I remain concerned, both about individuals who are suffering and about our society as a whole, which will continue to see workforce and economic effects, as well as a continuing burden on the health care system, from this condition.

Considering almost everyone I know has now been diagnosed with Covid-19 at some point and I don't think I'm unique in this, we should talk about what you should do if you're diagnosed. First off, the single best therapy available is Paxlovid. It is still available at no cost irrespective of your insurance coverage, but that is likely to come to an end fairly early next year as the government-purchased supply is depleted and no further Covid relief funds are forthcoming from Congress. For now though, you can obtain the drug free. If you're at low risk for severe disease, then you're probably not going to qualify for Paxlovid; if you're older (50 or older), are unvaccinated, or have predisposing conditions (obesity, high blood pressure, coronary or chronic lung disease, immunosuppression), you may qualify. That said, the drug is significantly underutilized at present: Only some 20 percent of elderly who qualify for it receive it. This appears to be due to a combination of physicians' reluctance to prescribe it (no idea why) and patients' unawareness of its usefulness and availability.

The prescribing guidelines call for a five-day course undertaken within five days of onset; if it's started later, then it is largely ineffective. You should have your prescribing provider review your medications because there is a fair number of drug interactions that must be managed; but it is often possible to stay off or reduce the dosage of a problematic drug for several days during your Paxlovid treatment. It is wise to keep an up-to-date list of any medications you take on a regular basis so you can provide this to your health care provider when you're diagnosed. If your doctor doesn't mention it, bring it up and discuss the possibility that you may be a good candidate. You may need to be proactive. If your doctor refuses to write a prescription and you believe you qualify (and I know of situations in which this has occurred), make an appointment with another provider who may be more amenable to writing the prescription.

There are some side-effects to consider: a metallic taste in your mouth and gastrointestinal distress, including diarrhea. These seem like a small price to pay to receive a therapy that can significantly reduce your risk for hospitalization and death. Additionally, some people will experience rebound effects, a recurrence of symptoms—and maybe also positive tests—but these do not seem to confer additional risk of the worst outcomes. We are also not at all sure there isn't the same risk for rebound in people who do not receive Paxlovid.

If you do not qualify for Paxlovid and your health care provider is unwilling to write a prescription for it, then your options are limited. All of our previously-authorized monoclonal antibodies are now off the table; their emergency use authorizations (EUAs) have been withdrawn. What's left is remdesivir, which requires an infusion given on three consecutive days, and molnupiravir, which is far less effective than Paxlovid—in the range of 30 percent. Additionally, some physicians are prescribing convalescent plasma for immunocompromised patients; I'm not sure of its efficacy, but in a bind, I'd give it a shot if I were compromised and infected.

So if you have symptoms, test. You're not going to get a prescription for Paxlovid if you have not tested positive, and so it's worth establishing that diagnosis. If you have home tests that have expired, check them to see whether their expiration date has been extended; you can do this at <https://www.fda.gov/>

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emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-legal-regulatory-and-policy-framework/expiration-dating-extension.

If you've been waiting to get the new bivalent booster, here are the guidelines. It should be given to anyone five years old or older who is at least two months past their last vaccination or booster shot. Children between six months and five years who have completed the primary series of vaccination can also receive a bivalent booster if it has been at least six months since the primary vaccination or the last booster. Pregnancy is not an obstacle to vaccination; in fact, a booster during pregnancy offers protection to you and your fetus. If you've received a primary series of vaccine of any type, but no booster, you also qualify for the Novavax booster. While boosters do not offer much in the way of long-term protection against infection, they do offer robust protection against severe disease. I encourage you to receive the booster if you qualify; it could be the difference between a no-big-deal infection and a devastating case of Covid-19. If you are not at high risk, it's fine to wait for the booster up to four to six months since your last vaccination or active infection; but you should seriously consider not skipping it.

If you need Covid-19 tests, we do have another shot at free tests paid for with federal funds. While Congress has failed to appropriate additional funding for Covid-19, the administration reallocated existing funds to tests, so you can get another four free tests per household. It's not much, but it's something; so if you need them, put in your order at <https://www.covid.gov/tests>. So far this year, 350 million tests have been sent out to 70 million households; we can hope this round of free tests helps to stem any upcoming surge in cases.

On Wednesday, we hit the two-year anniversary of Covid-19 vaccinations in the US. I remember looking impatiently at the earliest recipients with envy even as I understood why they were in line ahead of me. I also remember the heady days after receiving my doses, thinking this had solved my risk problems, and the unsettling realization as new variants emerged, especially Omicron last November, that I was not completely protected. I remember the letdown—and the ongoing precautions I so badly want to, but cannot yet, abandon. (No one hates masking more than I do.) Amid this disappointment, this is probably a good time to review just what these vaccines have brought us.

Modeling indicates these vaccines have prevented 3.2 million deaths in the US; considering the pandemic total deaths are now at just over one million, this is a big, big deal. Additionally, the model shows we've avoided some 18.5 million hospitalizations as of the end of last month. That said, we also need to recognize that more vaccinated than unvaccinated people have died from Covid-19 between April and August of this year. Those vaccinated dead people include those who received only the primary series and people who received the boosters up to, but not including, the new bivalent one. (That's because the bivalent booster was not yet available in August.) So what's going on?

We need to talk statistical concepts to understand what we have here. First, while it is true that more vaccinated than unvaccinated people have died from Covid-19 since vaccines have been available, we have to account for the relative numbers of vaccinated and unvaccinated folks. In September of this year, of the 12,593 people who died of Covid-19, 61 percent were vaccinated.

The first statistical concept we want to discuss is something called the base rate fallacy, the idea that the base numbers of vaccinated and unvaccinated people play a role in assessing who's dying. We need to account for the numbers who were vaccinated in analyzing this number; and it turns out that while there were 38 deaths per million people in September, the rate among unvaccinated people was 95 per million, about 2.5 times as many as in vaccinated people. So when the base rate of vaccinated people is high (we're at around 79 percent of the adult population right now), the number of deaths in the vaccinated is expected to be higher.

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The second statistical concept is something called Simpson's Paradox. Simpson's Paradox occurs when a trend you see in data separated into groups reverses itself when you aggregate the data into a single group. It can happen when your groups are of substantially different size, and it can also indicate you're missing a factor that affects the groups, a so-called confounding variable. (Confounded means confused, and a confounding variable confuses things—and researchers sometimes.)

I think that definition is difficult to even understand without seeing it in action, so have a look at the image (inserted in a comment below—wonky, but the only way I can get the table to reproduce here; I recommend opening it in a separate window, then toggling between there and here as you read), which I borrowed from a mathematician named Ken Ross. In the table, you see the batting averages for two Major League Baseball players, Derek Jeter and David Justice, for the 1995 and 1996 seasons. Note that Justice has a better batting average than Jeter in 1995 and again in 1996; but when you look at the two years combined, Jeter has a better batting average over that two-year period. Weird, huh?

Now let's lay that against the definition of Simpson's Paradox: We have a trend in the data (Justice has a better batting average) which shows up in the groups (each year considered separately), but reverses itself (now Jeter has a better batting average) when you aggregate them (looking at both seasons combined).

So what's going on here? How can Justice be both better and worse than Jeter? This is an example where different-sized groups causes the Paradox all by themselves. Look at their at-bats: rookie Jeter spent most of the 1995 season at AAA, so he had only 48 at-bats and a pretty low batting average, whereas in 1996, he saw 582 at-bats. Now when we combine the two seasons, his very good 1996 batting average from all those at-bats is going to weigh far more heavily in determining his overall batting average than 1995 does. In fact, when you look at the combined number, .310, it's very close to his 1996 number of .314 and quite far from his 1995 number of .250. Just what we'd expect.

Justice, on the other hand, played throughout the 1995 season with 411 at-bats and then separated his shoulder early in the 1996 season and got only 140 at-bats that year, so his much lower 1996 batting average with all of those at-bats is going to weigh more heavily in his overall batting average than his better but fewer 1996 at-bats. And again, that's just what we see: His overall .270 is far closer to his 1995 number of .253 than to his 1996 number of .321.

When you're comparing things of very different size, you can end up with Simpson's Paradox. Now in a case like this, the kind of thing a baseball fan might pull out to answer the question of who was the better hitter, I'd think combining seasons will give a fairer assessment of these two players (and of course, in real life, outside the confines of a statistical example, we'd compare career numbers).

So now, let's confound things (sorry, couldn't resist) a bit by introducing a confounding variable—sometimes known as a lurking variable—and adding it to our different-size problem. Here, we have a study of a drug intended to reduce the risk of heart attack. (I shamelessly borrowed this example from *The Book of Why*, a book on understanding causation, by Judea Pearl.) This table is also in a comment below—same reason. A group of 60 men and 60 women were offered the drug. The control group is people who chose not to take the new drug, and the treatment group is people who took it. The results, in term of numbers who did have a heart attack during the study period, appear in the table below. Please note that when we look at men and women separately, the drug seems to be associated with more heart attacks, but when we look at the combined group, it seems to be associated with fewer. What's going on here? Is this a good drug or a bad one?

We actually have two lurking variables—women were more likely to choose to take the drug (which yields

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different sample sizes and sets us up for trouble of the Simpson's variety) and men are substantially more likely to have heart attacks. Think back to our batting average example above: The seasons with more at-bats weighed more heavily in the combined outcome, right? So here the larger number of women, weigh more heavily in the combined outcome, enough for their overall far lower risk to swamp the data from the higher-risk men and obscure what's really going on, which is that this is a bad drug for women and for men. While it made sense to look at the combined data when the problem was batting average, it makes sense here to look at the separate data to get a true picture of just what's going on.

So back to Covid-19 and death risk, what's more likely to lead to death? Old age and lack of vaccination. And if the vaccination rate is high enough in older groups (and it is), then they're going to swamp the data from younger folks, even when the vaccine is protective.

The way to look at these deaths numbers is to account for age and to analyze the deaths rate (deaths per 100,000) in the vaccinated and unvaccinated populations. This overcomes the skewing effects of the very high risk and very high vaccination rates in the elderly. With that in mind, note that in the week of September 25, deaths in unvaccinated people 12 and over were 1.32 per 100,000, whereas death in vaccinated people 12 and over were 0.26 per 100,000. Deaths in the vaccinated-and-boosted were just 0.07 per 100,000. In those 80 and above, deaths were 14.16 per 100,000 unvaccinated, 3.69 per 100,000 for vaccinated, but not boosted, and 0.0 for those who were vaccinated and boosted. The overall reduction in death rate for vaccinated-and-boosted was nearly 19-fold. So even though more vaccinated people are dying, it is clear vaccination and boosting is saving lives—lots and lots of them. The lesson here is to be sure you understand the data you're seeing and hearing; there are plenty of people who seek to mislead you by citing numbers reported by reputable sources like the CDC. Those numbers might not be telling you what you think—what someone wants you to think—they're telling you.

That said, there has been a trend toward more breakthrough infections in the vaccinated. Vaccine efficacy keeps moving downward as antibodies are evaded by new subvariants. Omicron really changed the calculus of protection from either vaccination or prior infection; yet these vaccines and boosters are still highly protective against the worst outcomes. Your best bet is still to be vaccinated and boosted with the latest vaccine. It is, in fact, more important to be vaccinated and boosted than ever before as the new subvariants show ever-greater transmissibility; your risk for infection is soaring. Particularly with the resurgence of RSV and influenza virus, we need, more than before, to protect ourselves against needing hospitalization and utilizing resources that are more strained than they have been for some months.

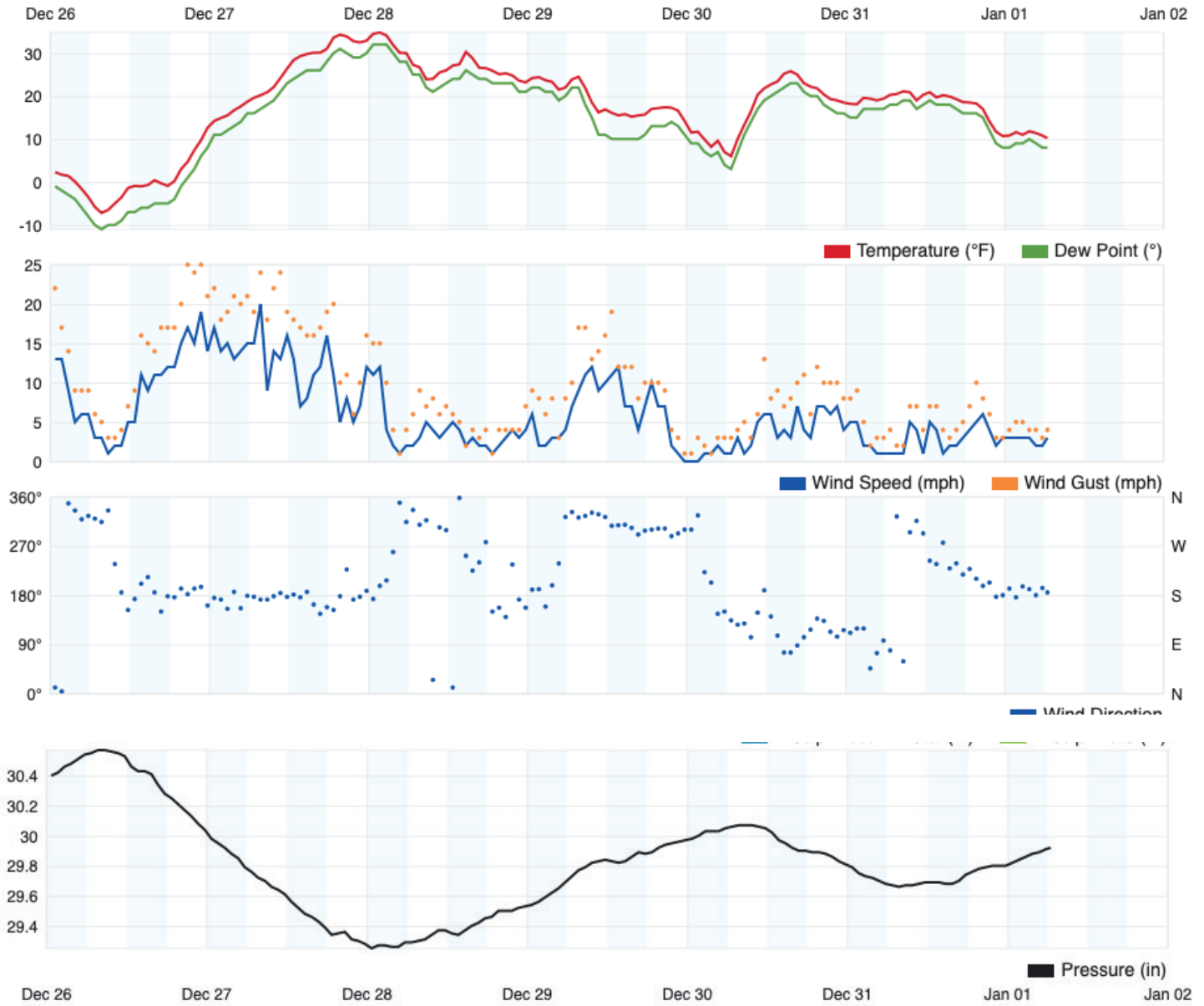
With that, we'll wrap up for the day—and for the year since we won't talk again until 2023. I hope you had a satisfying holiday. Keep yourself safe as we ring in the new year. We'll talk again.

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## Past Week's Groton Weather Graphs

December 26, 2022 - January 1, 2023



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New Year's Day	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Pachy Fog	Pachy Fog then Cloudy	Chance Snow	Chance Snow	Slight Chance Snow and Pachy Blowing Snow	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 23 °F	Low: 8 °F	High: 20 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 18 °F	Low: 3 °F	High: 12 °F

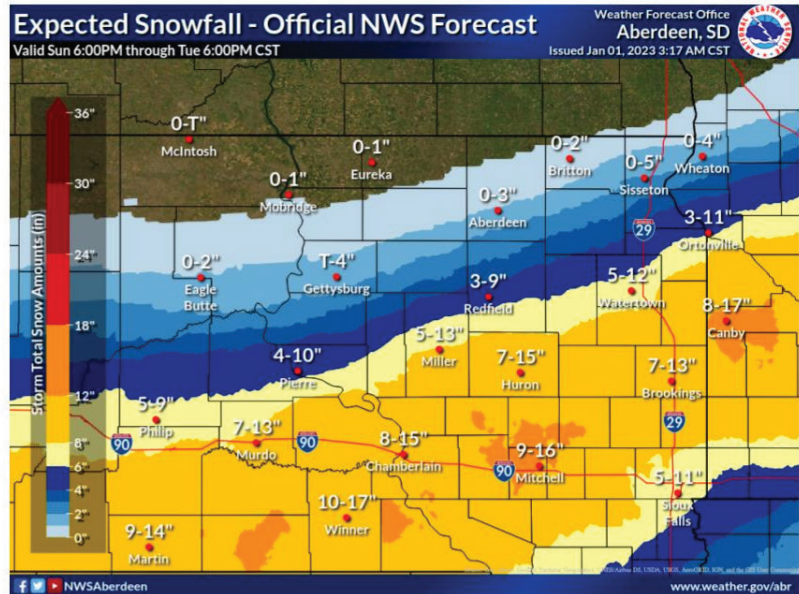


## Snowfall Forecast

January 1, 2023  
6:15 AM

Highest Confidence Over Southern South Dakota

- Large spreads in predicted snowfall amounts (i.e. 5-12 inches) suggest lower confidence in the forecast.
- \*\*\* If you have travel plans Monday and/or Tuesday, keep up-to-date with the latest forecasts.\*\*\*



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

South central over to east central South Dakota is still the target area for the heaviest snowfall, where amounts over 8 inches are becoming more likely. Further north, amounts will taper off drastically, depending on where the heaviest band sets up. Snowfall forecast ranges are still rather large, unfortunately, due to remaining uncertainty in subtle shifts of the axis of heaviest snowfall.

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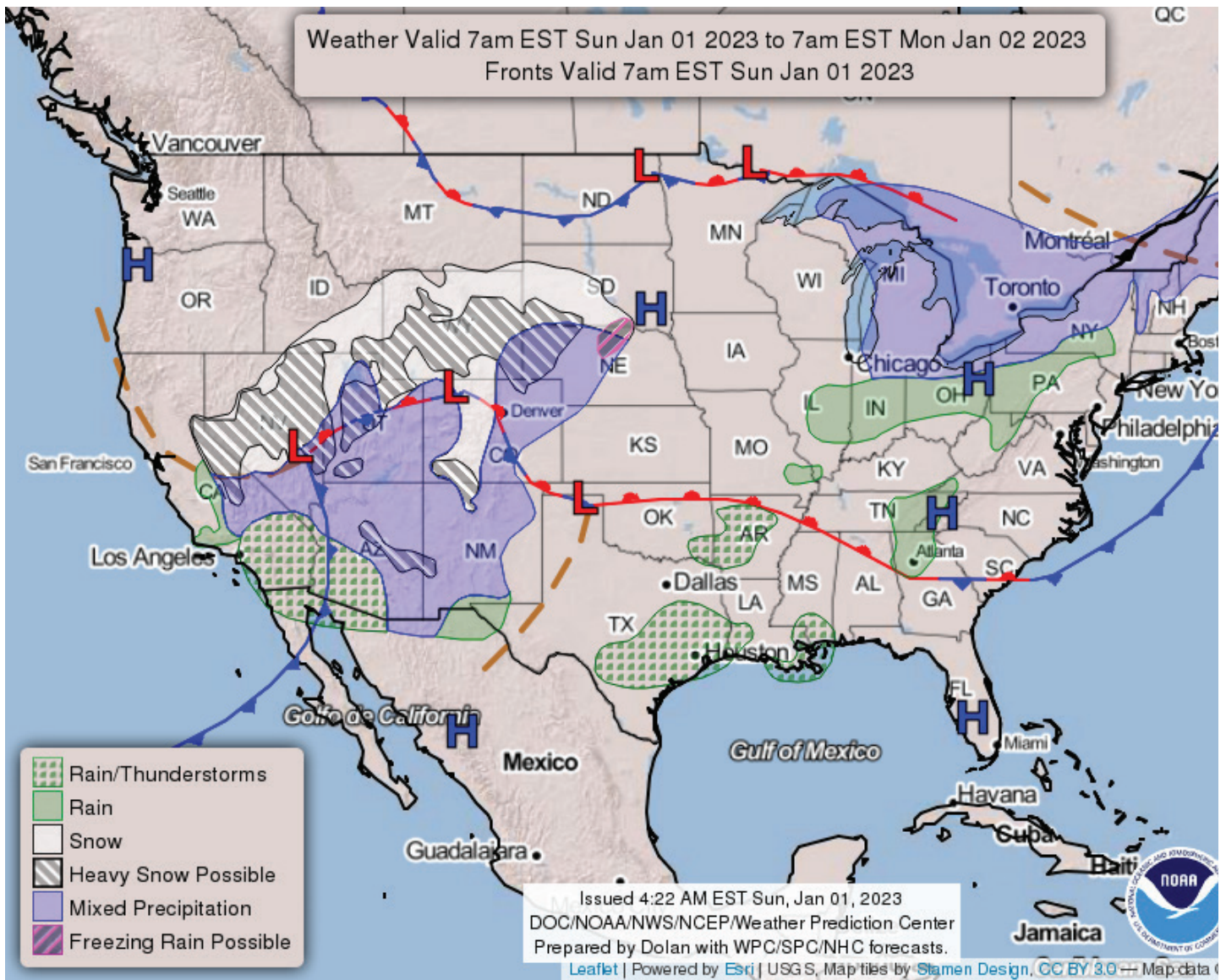
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 21 °F at 8:34 AM**  
**Low Temp: 9 °F at 11:50 PM**  
**Wind: 10 mph at 7:11 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 8 hours, 51 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 53 in 1998  
Record Low: -32 in 2018  
Average High: 26°F  
Average Low: 5°F  
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.02  
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 0.02  
Precip Year to Date: 0.00  
Sunset Tonight: 5:01:28 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10:29 AM





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## Today in Weather History

January 1, 1960: The winter storm began on New Year's Eve as a low-pressure center moved from Colorado northeast to the Great Lakes. Snowfall ranged from 5 to 10 inches across central and northeast South Dakota. High winds on the 1st and 2nd caused low visibilities and drifted highways over affecting holiday travel. There were scattered power and telephone outages due to breakage from wind and ice. The storm winded down in the afternoon of the 2nd.

1767: The morning temperature in Boston was -8°F!

1864: A historic cold blast of air charged southeast from the Northern Plains to Ohio Valley. Chicago had a high temperature of -16°. A farmer near Hometown, Indiana, reported the same high temperature as Chicago, with a low of 21 degrees below zero. He remarked "rough day" in his weather diary. Minneapolis had a temperature of 25 degrees below zero at 2 PM. St. Louis, Missouri, saw an overnight low of 24 degrees below zero. The Mississippi was frozen solid with people able to cross it.

1886: Norway's coldest night on record occurred as the low temperature dropped to -60.5°F at Karasjok.

1888: The Signal Corps office opened in Rapid City, South Dakota, on January 1, 1888. It was located in the Sweeney Building at the corner of 7th and Main Streets. The high and low temperature that day was 6 and -17°F.

1935: The Associated Press Wire Photo Service made its debut, delivering the great weather maps twice each day to newspapers across the country. The first photo transmitted was a plane crash in the Adirondack of New York on this day. The plane crashed during the evening hours on December 28, but the rescue did not occur until New Year's Day.

1961: A three-day-long ice storm was beginning over northern Idaho, which produced an accumulation of ice eight inches thick, a U.S. record. Dense fog, which blanketed much of northern Idaho from Grangeville to the Canadian border, deposited the ice on power and phone lines, causing widespread power outages.

1964: A snowstorm struck the Deep South on December 31st, 1963, through January 1st, 1964. Meridian MS received 15 inches of snow, 10.5 inches blanketed Bay St Louis MS, and 4.5 inches fell at New Orleans, LA. The University of Alabama Head Football Coach "Bear" Bryant said that the only thing that could have messed up his team's chances in the Sugar Bowl against Ole Miss in New Orleans, LA was a freak snowstorm. Well, much to his chagrin, 4.5 inches of snow fell the night before the big game. Alabama won the game 12-7 anyway. Freezing temperatures then prevailed for New Year's Day.

1999: The start of 1999 was ushered in with snow, ice, and freezing weather across central and south-central Nebraska. On New Year's Day, a steady snowfall along and north of Interstate 80 dumped from 1 to 5 inches of snow. By late morning, freezing drizzle developed southeast of Hastings and eventually coated area roads with a layer of ice. Light snow later that evening made travel even more treacherous. Several accidents occurred on the Interstates and Highway 30. Once the ice and snow ended, arctic air spilled across the area abroad 20 to 30 mph north winds. Blowing and drifting of the fallen snow caused reduced visibilities for a time on the 2nd. Temperatures dropped to 5 to 15 below zero through midday the 3rd.

2011: Southern and central Mississippi saw 11 tornadoes during the night of December 31st into the morning hours of January 1st. Of the 11, two were EF-3 with two more EF-2. Six were EF-1 with one EF-0. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the NWS Office in Jackson, Mississippi.

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### NO ONE CAN HIDE

"Ladies Bible Study" was a weekly event when I was a child. My mother always wanted me to be present but with certain limitations. "Larry," she would remind me from time to time, "children are to be seen and not heard." My role, unless called upon to say something, was to sit silently in a chair, smile occasionally, and not wiggle. Impossible for a small child.

But the "be seen" always put pressure on me. I had to wear a shirt and tie, make sure my shoes were shined and my pants had a "sharp crease" in them. And, I still follow those rules to this day whenever I attend a meeting or appear in public. So, things worked then and still do!

"Even small children are known by their actions," wrote Solomon, "so is their conduct really pure and upright?" The word "actions" implies "patterns of behavior that become second nature and last a lifetime." It's called "second nature" for a reason: behaviors become routine and are done without much thinking. And this captures the idea of this verse: What is in our behavior is a reflection of our character. Or, what's on the inside will be seen on the outside.

The words "Even small children" may lead us to the wrong conclusion if we do not look carefully at what Solomon is saying. "Even" means "in addition to" adults. We see patterns in children that reveal what is at the center of their hearts. Without being aware or even thinking about it, our behaviors are very consistent, from childhood through adulthood. They do not vary, and we do what we do because it "gets" us what we want!

When we stand back and look at our lives and ask: "Is my life what I want it to be? Am I pleasing God and honoring Him?" If the answer is "No," - it's time to turn to the Lord and ask for His mercy, grace, and forgiveness. We must never give up on ourselves or others!

Prayer: Lord, help us to focus on how we think and then act. May we be careful in everything we say and do. May we reflect You, Your love, and grace and in all things. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Even small children are known by their actions," wrote Solomon, "so is their conduct really pure and upright? Proverbs 20:11



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

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## 2022-23 Community Events

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.30.22

1 3 6 44 51 7

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$785,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.31.22

9 29 30 35 42 8

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$33,450,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.31.22

2 5 37 39 40 14

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 36 Mins 37 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.31.22

3 13 19 22 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.31.22

1 25 29 54 56 9

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

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.31.22

18 37 44 50 64 11

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$265,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

## Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Hill City 73, New Underwood 44

Red Cloud 62, Todd County 47

Winner 65, Sully Buttes 38

Entringer Classic=

Dell Rapids 64, Hamlin 52

Dell Rapids St. Mary 68, Waverly-South Shore 35

Estelline/Hendricks 72, Garretson 34

Sioux Valley 67, DeSmet 58

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Pierre 63, Sturgis Brown 45

Red Cloud 71, Todd County 20

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

## South Dakota St. top St. Thomas behind Dentlinger

By The Associated Press undefined

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Matt Dentlinger scored 22 points as South Dakota State beat St. Thomas 71-64 on Saturday.

Dentlinger was 9 of 10 shooting and 4 of 4 from the free throw line for the Jackrabbits (7-8). Zeke Mayo added 12 points while going 4 of 15 (2 for 7 from distance), and they also had 11 rebounds and five assists. Alex Arians was 4 of 12 shooting (1 for 4 from distance) to finish with 10 points, while adding nine rebounds.

The Tommies (11-6) were led in scoring by Brooks Allen, who finished with 30 points and two steals. St. Thomas also got 10 points from Kendall Blue. Andrew Rohde also had eight points and three steals.

NEXT UP

Both teams next play Thursday. South Dakota State visits North Dakota State while St. Thomas hosts Denver.

## Noem taps diocese chancellor as new social services leader

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem has appointed a Catholic administrator as the state's next social services secretary.

Noem announced Friday that she has picked Diocese of Sioux Falls Chancellor Matt Althoff to replace outgoing Social Services Secretary Laurie Gill, the Argus Leader reported. Gill plans to retire on Jan. 8. She has served as secretary since 2019.

Althoff has worked as the diocese's chancellor for the past 13 years. He helped develop the Bishop Dudley Hospitality House, which helps homeless people in the Sioux Falls area.

Althoff told the Yankton Press & Dakotan in a 2017 interview that he also worked on a \$16.2 million restoration project at St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown Sioux Falls.

He holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Notre Dame and a master's degree in education from the University of Portland. He ran cross country for Notre Dame and told the Press & Dakotan in the 2017 interview that he still ran still ran every day at 4:45 a.m.

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"I don't run anymore for distance," he said then. "I run for time with God."  
He will begin his stint as social services secretary on Jan. 23.

## Taliban: Kabul checkpoint bomb blast kills, wounds several

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A bomb exploded near a checkpoint at Kabul's military airport Sunday morning killing and wounding "several" people, a Taliban official said, the first deadly blast of 2023 in Afghanistan.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group — known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province — has increased its attacks since the Taliban takeover in 2021. Targets have included Taliban patrols and members of Afghanistan's Shiite minority.

The military airport is around 200 meters (219 yards) from the civilian airport and close to the Interior Ministry, itself the site of a suicide bombing last October that killed at least four people.

Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Nafi Takor said the blast left several people dead and wounded. He gave no exact figures or further information about the bombing, saying details of an investigation will be shared later.

Although Taliban security forces prevented photography and filming directly at the blast site, the checkpoint appeared damaged but intact. It is on Airport Road, which leads to high-security neighborhoods housing government ministries, foreign embassies and the presidential palace.

A spokesman for the Kabul police chief, Khalid Zadran, was not immediately available for comment.

## Pope marks New Year as Vatican prepares to mourn Benedict

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis prayed for his predecessor's passage to heaven and again expressed thanks for a lifetime of service to the church, during New Year's Day appearances a day after Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI died in retirement at the Vatican.

St. Peter's Basilica, where Francis presided over a mid-morning New Year's Mass, will host Benedict's coffin starting on Monday. Thousands of faithful are expected to file by the coffin in three days of viewing.

Benedict, 95, died Saturday morning in the Vatican monastery where he had lived since retirement. He was the first pope in centuries to resign, citing his increasing frailty.

On Sunday, Benedict's body lay on a burgundy-colored bier in the chapel of the monastery. He was dressed in a miter, the headgear of a bishop, and a red cloak-like vestment. A rosary was placed in his hand. Behind him — visible in photos released by the Vatican — was the chapel's altar, and a decorated Christmas tree.

Francis looked weary and sat with his head bowed as Mass began on the first day of the year, an occasion the Catholic church dedicates to the theme of peace.

He departed briefly from reading his homily, with its emphasis on hope and peace, to pray aloud for Benedict.

"Today we entrust to our Blessed Mother our beloved Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, so that she may accompany him in his passage from this world to God," he said.

Later, Francis delivered more remarks about the retired pontiff when he offered New Year's greetings to thousands gathered in St. Peter's Square

Referring to Mary, Francis said that "in these hours, we invoke her intercession, in particular for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who, yesterday morning, left this world."

"Let us unite all together, with one heart and one soul, in giving thanks to God for the gift of this faithful servant of the Gospel and of the church," said Francis, speaking from a window of the Apostolic Palace to pilgrims and tourists below.

The square will be the setting for Benedict's funeral led by Francis on Thursday morning. That rite will be a simple one, the Vatican has said, in keeping with the wishes of Benedict, who for decades as a German cardinal had served as the Church's guardian of doctrinal orthodoxy before he was elected pope in 2005.

In the last years, Francis has hailed Benedict's stunning decision to become the first pope to resign in

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600 years and has made clear he'd consider such a step as an option for himself.

Hobbled by knee pain, Francis, 86, on Sunday arrived in the basilica in a wheelchair, before taking his place in a chair for the Mass, which was being celebrated by the Vatican's secretary of state.

Francis, who has repeatedly decried the war in Ukraine and its devastation, recalled those who are victims of war, passing the year-end holidays in darkness, cold and fear.

"At the beginning of this year, we need hope, just as the Earth needs rain," Francis said in his homily.

When addressing the faithful in St. Peter's Square, Francis cited the "intolerable" war in Ukraine, which began in February of last year with Russia's attacks and invasion, and in other places in the world.

Yet, Francis said, "let us not lose hope" that peace will prevail. "In the entire world, in all peoples, a cry is rising, 'no to war, no to re-armament' but (may) the resources go to development, health, food, education, work."

## Trump rings in 2023 facing headwinds in his White House run

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump began 2022 on a high. Primary candidates were flocking to Florida to court the former president for a coveted endorsement. His rallies were drawing thousands. A bevy of investigations remained largely under the radar.

One year later, Trump is facing a very different reality.

He is mired in criminal investigations that could end with indictments. He has been blamed for Republicans' disappointing performance in the November elections. And while he is now a declared presidential candidate, the six weeks since he announced have been marked by self-inflicted crises. Trump has not held a single campaign event and he barely leaves the confines of his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

Instead of staving off challengers, his potential 2024 rivals appear ever more emboldened. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, fresh off a resounding reelection victory, increasingly is seen as Trump's most formidable competition.

Trump's subdued campaign announcement has left even former stalwarts wondering whether he is serious about another run for the White House.

"There was a movie called 'Failure to Launch.' I think that's what Donald Trump's process of running has been so far. He had the announcement, and he hasn't done anything to back it up since then," said Michael Biundo, a GOP operative who advised Trump's 2016 campaign but is steering clear this time.

"What campaign?" asked longtime GOP donor Dan Eberhart, who gave \$100,000 to Trump's 2020 reelection effort but is now gravitating to DeSantis. "Trump's early launch seems more a reaction to DeSantis' overperformance and a legal strategy against prosecution than a political campaign."

Trump campaign officials insist they have been spending the weeks since his Nov. 15 announcement methodically building out a political operation. Trump, they note, announced just before the holiday season, when politicians typically lie low, and he did so unusually early, giving him plenty of time to ramp up.

"This is a marathon and our game plan is being implemented by design," said Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung.

"We're also assembling top-level teams in early voting states and expanding our massive data operation to ensure we dominate on all fronts," he said. "We are not going to play the media's game that tries to dictate how we campaign."

Trump also defended criticism of his campaign's slow start. "The Rallies will be bigger and better than ever (because our Country is going to Hell), but it's a little bit early, don't you think?" he wrote on his social media site.

While he has eschewed campaign events, the former president has nonetheless courted controversy.

There was his dinner with a white nationalist and the rapper formerly known as Kanye West, who has been spouting antisemitic tropes and conspiracies; his suggestions that parts of the Constitution be terminated to return him to power; and the "major announcement" that turned out to be the launch of \$99 digital trading cards that do not benefit his campaign.



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Since his announcement, he has also faced a series of legal losses, including the appointment of a special counsel to oversee the Justice Department's investigation into the presence of classified documents at Trump's Florida estate as well as key aspects of a separate inquiry involving Trump's efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election. Trump's namesake company was convicted of tax fraud last month for helping executives dodge taxes on extravagant perks. In Georgia, a special grand jury appears to be wrapping up its work investigating his efforts to remain in power.

Trump's potential rivals have spent months laying the groundwork for their own campaigns, visiting early-voting states, speaking before conservative groups and building the kinds of relationships that could benefit them down the line.

Bob Vander Plaats, the president and CEO of The Family Leader, an Iowa-based conservative group, pointed to Republicans such as former Vice President Mike Pence, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, who have made repeat visits to the state.

"They've done the early work that is needed to be out in front of Iowans and they're very well received," he said, noting the period since Trump announced his candidacy has been "unusually quiet. In a lot of ways, it kind of feels like it's the announcement that didn't even happen or doesn't feel like it happened because there was no immediate buzz. ... I don't hear from people on the ground, 'I can't wait for Trump to run.' 'Did you hear Trump's announcement?'"

He called the poor performance of some Trump-backed candidates in the 2022 midterms a "caution flag" and said that even Trump supporters are open to backing someone else in the 2024 contest.

"For the president, I think he's definitely going to have to earn the nomination," he said.

Despite his vulnerabilities, Trump remains the early GOP front-runner. While he is seen as potentially beatable in a one-on-one matchup, he is likely to benefit from a crowded field that splits the anti-Trump votes, just as he did when he ran and won in 2016.

But Biundo, the former Trump campaign adviser, said that after watching likely candidates such as Pence pay visits to early voting states, he too, believes the field is wide open.

"I don't think Donald Trump has it locked up. I don't think Ron DeSantis has it locked up. I don't think anyone has it locked up," he said. "At this point, it's an open primary."

## Benedict leaves German homeland with complicated legacy

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Pope Benedict XVI leaves his homeland with a complicated legacy: pride in a German pontiff but a church deeply divided over the need for reforms in the wake of a sexual abuse scandal in which his own actions of decades ago were faulted.

Benedict has long drawn mixed reviews in Germany, a country where Christians are roughly evenly split between Catholics and Protestants and where many struggled with his conservative stance.

The day after the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected as the first German pope for centuries in 2005, best-selling newspaper Bild's front page screamed "We are the Pope!" The left-leaning Tageszeitung countered with the headline "Oh, my God!"

Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that "as the 'German' pope, Benedict XVI was a special church leader for many, not just in this country." He paid tribute to the late pontiff as "a formative figure of the Catholic Church, a combative personality and a wise theologian."

"As the church in Germany, we think with gratitude of Pope Benedict XVI: He was born in our country, his homeland was here, and he helped shape church life here as a theological teacher and bishop," said the head of the German Bishops' Conference, Limburg Bishop Georg Baetzing.

Still, a decade after his resignation, deep divisions are apparent in the German church between traditionalists in Benedict's mold and relative liberals.

"The German pope filled many with pride, but above all with hope," said Irme Stetter-Karp, the head of an influential lay organization, the Central Committee of German Catholics, or ZdK. "For some, this hope was richly fulfilled. For others, there remained an unfulfilled longing to find a way ... for their Christianity

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to succeed in the 21st century.”

Since 2019, German Catholic bishops and representatives from the ZdK have been engaged in a potentially trailblazing reform process — the “Synodal Path” — that is addressing calls to allow blessings for same-sex couples, married priests and the ordination of women as deacons.

German church leaders insist that the process won’t lead to a schism and vow to see it through, even as they face pressure from suspicious Vatican officials.

Illustrating both the pressure for reform and the divisions it faces, a Synodal Path assembly in September failed to approve a text calling for a liberalization of sexual teaching because, while it won 82% backing overall, it failed to get the required support of two-thirds of German bishops.

The retired pope himself stayed out of the fray though his longtime secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, has signaled his own strong skepticism about the Synodal Path.

The process was launched in response to the abuse scandal that has rocked the church in Germany and elsewhere in recent years, something that has contributed to large numbers of Germans formally leaving the church.

In 2018, a church-commissioned report concluded that at least 3,677 people were abused by clergy in Germany between 1946 and 2014. More than half of the victims were 13 or younger, and nearly a third served as altar boys.

Various dioceses tasked law firms or others to put together reports on their own past. That has led to massive and unresolved tensions in the Cologne diocese, where the archbishop, Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki, drew widespread criticism for his handling of a report he commissioned. His offer of resignation has been pending with Pope Francis for months.

An independent report in the Munich and Freising archdiocese, where Benedict served as archbishop from 1977 to 1982, turned the spotlight on the retired pope himself last January. Its examination of decades of abuse cases faulted their handling by a string of church officials past and present, including the then-Cardinal Ratzinger in four cases.

Benedict asked forgiveness for any “grievous faults” in his handling of clergy sex abuse cases, but denied any personal or specific wrongdoing. Reform advocates and victim support groups criticized what they saw as a tone-deaf response.

The bishops’ conference head, Baetzing, said Saturday that “he asked for forgiveness from those who were affected; still, questions remained open.” But he stressed Benedict’s role in turning around the church’s approach to clergy sexual abuse as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and later as pope.

The pro-reform group We are Church said that Benedict’s response to the abuse report did serious damage to his reputation and was generally critical of him as an “implacable reactionary.”

As pontiff, Benedict — who left his homeland for the Vatican in 1982 — made three visits to Germany, including a trip to his native Bavaria in 2006 and a 2011 trip in which he became the first pope to address the German parliament.

His only known trip outside Italy since his retirement also took him to Germany. He returned to Bavaria for a few days in June 2020 to see his elder brother, the Rev. Georg Ratzinger, shortly before the latter’s death.

The governor of Bavaria, Markus Soeder, said that “he always carried his homeland in his heart” and that many there “will remember him gratefully not just as Pope Benedict XVI, but also as a humble pastor.”

“He gave many people strength and orientation,” Soeder said. “But at the same time, he also had to face responsibility for difficult phases in his work.”

In his “spiritual will,” released by the Vatican Saturday, Benedict wrote: “I pray for our country to remain a country of faith and urge you, dear compatriots: do not let yourselves be deterred from the faith.”

## NKorea's Kim orders 'exponential' expansion of nuke arsenal

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered the "exponential" expansion of his country's nuclear arsenal and the development of a more powerful intercontinental ballistic missile, state media reported Sunday, after he entered 2023 with another weapons launch following a record number of testing activities last year.

Kim's moves are in line with the broad direction of his nuclear program. He has repeatedly vowed to boost both the quality and quantity of his arsenal to cope with what he calls U.S. hostility. Some experts say Kim's push to produce more nuclear and other weapons signals his intention to continue a run of weapons tests and ultimately solidify his future negotiating power and win greater outside concessions.

"They are now keen on isolating and stifling (North Korea), unprecedented in human history," Kim said at a recently ended key ruling party meeting, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. "The prevailing situation calls for making redoubled efforts to overwhelmingly beef up the military muscle."

During the six-day meeting meant to determine new state objectives, Kim called for "an exponential increase of the country's nuclear arsenal" to mass produce battlefield tactical nuclear weapons targeting South Korea. He also presented a task to develop a new ICBM missioned with a "quick nuclear counter-strike" capability — a weapon he needs to strike the mainland U.S. He said the North's first military reconnaissance satellite will be launched "at the earliest date possible," KCNA said.

"Kim's comments from the party meeting reads like an ambitious — but perhaps achievable — New Year's resolution list," said Soo Kim, a security analyst at the California-based RAND Corporation. "It's ambitious in that Kim consciously chose to spell out what he hopes to accomplish as we head into 2023, but it also suggests a dose of confidence on Kim's part."

Last month, North Korea claimed to have performed key tests needed for the development of a new strategic weapon, a likely reference to a solid-fueled ICBM, and a spy satellite.

Kim's identification of South Korea as an enemy and the mention of hostile U.S. and South Korean policies is "a reliable pretext for the regime to produce more missiles and weapons to solidify Kim's negotiating position and concretize North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons power," Soo Kim said.

Later Sunday, South Korea's Defense Ministry reiterated a warning that any attempt to use nuclear weapons by North Korea "will lead to the end of the Kim Jong Un government." The U.S. military has previously made similar warnings.

"The new year started but our security situation is still very grave," South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol told top military officers during a video conference. "Our military must resolutely punish any provocation by the enemy with a firm determination that we dare to risk fighting a battle."

Senior diplomats from South Korea, the U.S. and Japan spoke by phone and agreed that provocations by North Korea would only deepen its international isolation and prompt their trilateral security cooperation. They still reaffirmed that the door to dialogue with North Korea remains open, according to the South Korean Foreign Ministry.

Since his high-stakes summitry with then-President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019 due to wrangling over U.S.-led sanctions, Kim Jong Un has refused to return to talks with Washington and taken steps to enlarge his arsenal. Some observers say Kim would eventually want to make North Korea a legitimate nuclear power so as to win the lifting of international sanctions and the end of the regular U.S.-South Korean military drills that he views as a major security threat.

"It was during his 2018 New Year's speech that (Kim) first ordered the mass production of warheads and ballistic missiles, and he's doubling down on that quantitative expansion goal in the coming year," said Ankit Panda, an expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Panda said the reference to a new ICBM appears to concern a solid-propellant system, which could be tested soon. He said a satellite launch could take place in April, a month that includes a key state anniversary.

Worries about North Korea's nuclear program have grown since the North last year approved a new law that authorized the preemptive use of nuclear weapons in a broad range of situations and openly

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threatened to use its nuclear weapons first. During last week's party meeting, Kim reiterated that threat.

Earlier Sunday, South Korea's military detected a short-range ballistic missile launched from the North's capital region. It said the weapon traveled about 400 kilometers (250 miles) before falling into the water between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said that the U.S. commitments to defend South Korea and Japan "remain ironclad."

North Korea test-fired more than 70 missiles last year, including three short-range ballistic missiles detected by South Korea on Saturday. The testing spree indicates the country is likely emboldened by its advancing nuclear program. Observers say the North was also able to continue its banned missile tests because China and Russia have blocked the U.S. and others from toughening U.N. sanctions at the Security Council.

KCNA confirmed Sunday that the country conducted the test-firings of its super-large multiple rocket launcher on Saturday and Sunday. Kim Jong Un said the rocket launcher puts all of South Korea within striking distance and is capable of carrying a tactical nuclear warhead, according to KCNA.

"Its recent missile launches were not technically impressive. Instead, the high volume of tests at unusual times and from various locations demonstrate that North Korea could launch different types of attack, anytime, and from many directions," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

Animosities between the rival Koreas have further deepened since early last week, when South Korea accused North Korea of flying drones across their heavily fortified border for the first time in five years and responded by sending its own drones toward the North.

## **Benedict's 2013 resignation shook a routine Vatican ceremony**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Veteran reporter Giovanna Chirri was starting to doze off in the Vatican press room on a slow holiday when all of a sudden the Latin she learned in high school made her perk up — and gave her the scoop of a lifetime.

It was Feb. 11, 2013, and Chirri was watching closed-circuit television coverage of Pope Benedict XVI presiding over a pro-forma meeting of cardinals to set dates for three upcoming canonizations.

But at the end of the ceremony, rather than stand up and leave the Consistory Hall of the Apostolic Palace, Benedict remained seated, took out a single sheet of paper and began to read.

"I have convoked you to this consistory, not only for the three canonizations, but also to communicate to you a decision of great importance for the life of the Church," Benedict said quietly in his German-clipped Latin.

Chirri followed along but only began to realize the import of what was unfolding when she heard Benedict then utter the words "ingravescente aetate." The term is Latin for "advanced age," and is the title of a 1970 Vatican regulation requiring bishops to retire when they turn 75.

Knowing both Latin and Vatican regulations well, Chirri slowly began to realize that Benedict had just announced he too would be retiring, at the end of the month, because he believed he was getting too old for the job.

It was the first papal resignation in 600 years, and Chirri, the Vatican correspondent for the authoritative ANSA news agency, was about to report the news to the world.

"Hearing this 'ingravescente aetate' I started to feel sick physically, a really, really violent reaction," Chirri recalled years later.

Her head felt like it was a balloon inflating. Her left leg began to shake so uncontrollably that she had to hold it down with one hand as she started making phone calls to her Vatican sources to check that she had heard Benedict correctly.

After finally receiving confirmation from the Vatican spokesman, Chirri sent the flash headline on ANSA at 11:46 a.m.

"The pope is leaving the pontificate beginning 2/28," it read.

Benedict died Saturday, almost a decade after that momentous day.

Years later, Chirri still searches for the right words to express the emotional, physical, professional and

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intellectual combustion that that headline, and all it implied, caused her.

"I was terrified by news that was unthinkable to me," she said.

Aside from the fact that she truly liked Benedict as a pope, Chirri couldn't comprehend that the conservative German theologian who spent his life upholding church rules and doctrine would take the revolutionary step of resigning.

"Now eight years have passed and we're used to it," she said in an interview in 2021. "But eight years ago, the idea that the pope might resign was beyond (reality). It was a theoretical hypothesis" that was technically possible but had been rejected repeatedly by popes over the centuries.

Chirri won accolades for having had both the intellectual capacity to understand what had transpired, and the steely nerves to report it first and accurately among mainstream news organizations — no small feat considering the near-official authority that an ANSA headline carries in reporting Vatican news.

It was a holiday in the Vatican that day — the anniversary of the Lateran Accords between Italy and the Vatican — and only a handful of other reporters were even in the press room to hear the in-house broadcast of the ceremony.

But Chirri was there, the right person in the right place at the right time.

"Certainly, if I hadn't been an Italian who studied Latin in the 1970s in Italy, I never would have understood a thing," Chirri said of Italy's classics-heavy public high school curriculum.

"Also, because the pope was reading so calmly, it was like he was telling us what he had had for breakfast that morning," she added.

Only later, would it emerge that Benedict had been planning to retire for months. A nighttime fall during a 2012 trip to Mexico confirmed to him that he no longer had the strength for the globe-trotting rigors of the 21st century papacy.

Benedict knew well what was required to make the announcement legitimate: Though only a handful of popes had done it before, canon law allows for a papal resignation as long as it is "freely made and properly manifested."

Some traditionalists and conspiracy theorists would later quibble with the grammatical formula Benedict used, claiming it rendered the announcement null and that Benedict was still pope.

But Benedict fulfilled both requirements under the law: He stated that he had come to the decision freely, made it public in a Vatican ceremony using the official language of the Holy See, and repeated it for years to come to remove any doubt.

"As far as canon law is concerned, it's impeccable," Chirri said.

And for anyone paying attention, Benedict had hinted about his intentions for years.

In 2009, during a visit to the earthquake-ravaged city of L'Aquila, Benedict prayed at the tomb of Pope Celestine V, the hermit pope who stepped down in 1294 after just five months in office. Benedict left on Celestine's tomb a pallium — the simple white woolen stole that is a symbol of the papacy.

No one thought much of it at the time. But in retrospect, a pope leaving behind a potent symbol of the papacy on the tomb of a pope who had resigned carried a message.

One year later, in a 2010 book-length interview, Benedict said point-blank that popes not only could but should resign under certain circumstances, though he stressed that retirement was not an option to escape a particular burden.

"If a pope clearly realizes that he is no longer physically, psychologically and spiritually capable of handling the duties of his office, then he has a right, and under some circumstances, also an obligation to resign," Benedict said in "Light of the World."

He essentially laid out that same rationale to his cardinals on that chilly February morning.

"After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine (St. Peter) ministry," he said.

He said that in modern world, "strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me."

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Closing out his remarks, Benedict thanked the cardinals for their love and service and begged their forgiveness for his defects.

And in a promise he kept to the very end, he vowed to continue serving the church "through a life dedicated to prayer."

## Though faulted, Benedict turned Vatican around on sex abuse

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI is rightly credited with having been one of the 20th century's most prolific Catholic theologians, a teacher-pope who preached the faith via volumes of books, sermons and speeches. But he rarely got credit for another important aspect of his legacy: having done more than anyone before him to turn the Vatican around on clergy sexual abuse.

As cardinal and pope, Benedict pushed through revolutionary changes to church law to make it easier to defrock predator priests, and he sacked hundreds of them. He was the first pontiff to meet with abuse survivors. And he reversed his revered predecessor on the most egregious case of the 20th century Catholic Church, finally taking action against a serial pedophile who was adored by St. John Paul II's inner circle.

But much more needed to be done, and following his death Saturday, abuse survivors and their advocates made clear they did not feel his record was anything to praise, noting that he, like the rest of the Catholic hierarchy, protected the image of the institution over the needs of victims and in many ways embodied the clerical system that fueled the problem.

"In our view, Pope Benedict XVI is taking decades of the church's darkest secrets to his grave with him," said SNAP, the main U.S.-based group of clergy abuse survivors.

Matthias Katsch of Eckiger Tisch, a group representing German survivors, said Benedict will go down in history for abuse victims as "a person who was long responsible in the system they fell victim to," according to the dpa news agency.

In the years after Benedict's 2013 resignation, the scourge he believed encompassed only a few mostly English-speaking countries had spread to all parts of the globe. Benedict refused to accept personal or institutional responsibility for the problem, even after he himself was faulted by an independent report for his handling of four cases while he was Munich bishop. He never sanctioned any bishop who covered up for abusers, and he never mandated abuse cases be reported to police.

But Benedict did more than any of his predecessors combined, and especially more than John Paul, under whose watch the wrongdoing exploded publicly. And after initially dismissing the problem, Pope Francis followed in Benedict's footsteps and approved even tougher protocols designed to hold the hierarchy accountable.

"He (Benedict) acted as no other pope has done when pressed or forced, but his papacy (was) reactive on this central issue," said Terrence McKiernan, founder of the online resource BishopAccountability, which tracks global cases of clergy abuse and cover-up.

As prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for a quarter-century, the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger saw first-hand the scope of sex abuse as early as the 1980s. Cases were arriving piecemeal to the Vatican from Ireland, Australia and the U.S., and Ratzinger tried as early as 1988 to persuade the Vatican legal department to let him remove abuser priests quickly.

Vatican law at the time required long and complicated canonical trials to punish priests, and then only as a last resort if more "pastoral" initiatives to cure them failed. That approach proved disastrous, enabling bishops to move their abusers around from parish to parish where they could rape and molest again.

The legal office turned Ratzinger down in 1988, citing the need to protect the priest's right to defense.

In 2001, Ratzinger persuaded John Paul to let him take hold of the problem head on, ordering all abuse cases be sent to his office for review. He hired a relatively unknown canon lawyer, Charles Scicluna, to be his chief sex crimes prosecutor and together they began taking action.

"We used to discuss the cases on Fridays; he used to call it the Friday penance," recalled Scicluna,

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Ratzinger's prosecutor from 2002 to 2012 and now the archbishop of Malta.

Under Ratzinger's watch as cardinal and pope, the Vatican authorized fast-track administrative procedures to defrock egregious abusers. Changes to church law allowed the statute of limitations on sex abuse to be waived on a case-by-case basis; raised the age of consent to 18; and expanded the norms protecting minors to also cover "vulnerable adults."

The changes had immediate impact: Between 2004 and 2014 — Benedict's eight-year papacy plus a year on either end — the Vatican received about 3,400 cases, defrocked 848 priests and sanctioned another 2,572 to lesser penalties, according to the only Vatican statistics ever publicly released.

Nearly half of the defrockings occurred during the final two years of Benedict's papacy.

"There was always a temptation to think of these accusations of this scourge as something that was contrived by the church's enemies," said Cardinal George Pell of Australia, where the allegations hit early and hard and where Pell himself was accused of abuse and of dismissing victims.

"Pope Benedict realized very, very clearly that there is an element of that, but the problem was much, much deeper, and he moved effectively toward doing something about it," said Pell, who was eventually acquitted of an abuse conviction after serving 404 days in solitary confinement in a Melbourne lockup.

Among the first cases on Ratzinger's agenda after 2001 was gathering testimony from victims of the Rev. Marcial Maciel, the founder of the Mexico-based Legionaries of Christ religious order. Despite volumes of documentation in the Vatican dating from the 1950s showing Maciel had raped his young seminarians, the priest was courted by John Paul's Curia because of his ability to bring in vocations and donations.

"More than the hurt that I received from Maciel's abuse, later on, stronger was the hurt and the abuse of power from the Catholic Church: the secrecy, ignoring my complaints," said Juan Vaca, one of Maciel's original victims who along with other former seminarians filed a formal canonical case against Maciel in 1998.

Their case languished for years as powerful cardinals who sat on Ratzinger's board, including Cardinal Angelo Sodano, John Paul's powerful secretary of state, blocked any investigation. They claimed the allegations against Maciel were mere slander.

But Ratzinger finally prevailed and Vaca testified to Scicluna on April 2, 2005, the very day that John Paul died.

Ratzinger was elected pope two weeks later, and only then did the Vatican finally sanction Maciel to a lifetime of penance and prayer.

Benedict then took another step and ordered an in-depth investigation into the order that determined in 2010 that Maciel was a religious fraud who sexually abused his seminarians and created a cult-like order to hide his crimes.

Even Francis has credited Benedict's "courage" in going after Maciel, recalling that "he had all the documentation in hand" in the early 2000s to take action against Maciel but was blocked by others more powerful than he until he became pope.

"He was the courageous man who helped so many," Francis said.

That said, Benedict's protocol-bending courage only went so far.

When the archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn, publicly criticized Sodano for having blocked the Vatican from investigating yet another high-profile serial abuser — his predecessor as Vienna archbishop — Benedict summoned Schoenborn to Rome for a dressing down in front of Sodano. The Vatican issued a remarkable reprimand taking Schoenborn to task for having dared speak the truth.

And then an independent report commissioned by his former diocese of Munich faulted Benedict's actions in four cases while he was bishop in the 1970s; Benedict, by then long retired as pope, apologized for any "grievous faults" but denied any personal or specific wrongdoing.

In Germany on Saturday, the We are Church pro-reform group said in a statement that, with his "implausible statements" about the Munich report, "he himself seriously damaged his reputation as a theologian and church leader and as an 'employee of the truth.'"

"He was not prepared to make a personal admission of guilt," it added. "With that, he caused major damage to the office of bishop and pope."

The U.S. survivors of the Road to Recovery group said Benedict as cardinal and pope was part of the

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problem. "He, his predecessors, and current pope have refused to use the vast resources of the church to help victims heal, gain a degree of closure, and have their lives restored," the group said in a statement calling for transparency.

But Benedict's longtime spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, says Benedict's action on sex abuse was one of the many underappreciated aspects of his legacy that deserves credit, given that it paved the way for even more far-reaching reforms.

Lombardi recalled the prayers Ratzinger composed in 2005 for the Good Friday Via Crucis procession at Rome's Colosseum as evidence that the future pope knew well — earlier and better than anyone else in the Vatican — just how bad the problem was.

"How much filth there is in the church, especially among those who, in the priesthood, are supposed to belong totally to him (Christ)," Ratzinger wrote in the meditations for the high-profile Holy Week procession.

Lombardi said he didn't understand at the time the experience that informed Ratzinger's words.

"He had seen the gravity of the situation with far more lucidity than others," Lombardi said.

## Time zone by time zone, another new year sweeps into view

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New Year's celebrations swept across the globe, ushering in 2023 with countdowns and fireworks — and marking an end to a year that brought war in Europe, a new chapter in the British monarchy and global worries over inflation.

The new year began in the tiny atoll nation of Kiribati in the central Pacific, then moved across Russia and New Zealand before heading deeper, time zone by time zone, through Asia and Europe and into the Americas.

The ball dropped on New York City's iconic Times Square as huge crowds counted down the seconds into 2023, culminating in raucous cheers and a deluge of confetti glittering amid jumbo screens, neon, pulsing lights and soggy streets.

A man wielding a machete attacked three police officers near the celebration, authorities said, striking two of them in the head before an officer shot the man in the shoulder about eight blocks from Times Square, just outside the high-security zone. The two officers were hospitalized, one with a fractured skull and the other with a bad cut, but expected to recover. The 19-year-old suspect was also expected to recover.

Across the world, at least for a day, thoughts focused on possibilities, even elusive ones like world peace, and mustering — finally — a resolve to keep the next array of resolutions.

In a sign of that hope, children met St. Nicholas in a crowded metro station in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

Yet Russian attacks continued New Year's Eve. At midnight, the streets of the capital, Kyiv, were desolate. The only sign of a new year came from local residents shouting from their balconies, "Happy New Year!" and "Glory to Ukraine!" And only half an hour into 2023, air raid sirens rang across Ukraine's capital, followed by the sound of explosions.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko reported an explosion in Holosiivskyi district, and authorities reported that fragments of a missile that had been shot down had damaged a car in a central district.

In Paris, thousands celebrated on the Champs Elysees, while French President Emmanuel Macron pledged continuing support for Ukraine in a televised New Year's address. "During the coming year, we will be unfailingly at your side," Macron said. "We will help you until victory and we will be together to build a just and lasting peace. Count on France and count on Europe."

Big Ben chimed as more than 100,000 revelers gathered along the River Thames to watch a spectacular fireworks show around the London Eye. The display featured a drone light display of a crown and Queen Elizabeth II's portrait on a coin hovering in the sky, paying tribute to Britain's longest-serving monarch who died in September.

Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach welcomed a small crowd of a few thousand for a short fireworks display, and several Brazilian cities canceled celebrations this year due to concern about the coronavirus. The Brazilian capital's New Year's bash usually drew more than 2 million people to Copacabana before the



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pandemic.

Turkey's most populous city, Istanbul, brought in 2023 with street festivities and fireworks. At St. Antuan Catholic Church, dozens of Christians prayed for the new year and marked former Pope Benedict XVI's passing. The Vatican announced Benedict died Saturday at age 95.

In New York, rain that was fierce at times did not deter the crowd at a dazzling Saturday night spectacle kicking off celebrations across the United States. The Times Square party culminated with the descent from One Times Square of a glowing sphere 12 feet (3.6 meters) in diameter and comprised of nearly 2,700 Waterford crystals.

"I just wish everyone a lot of prosperity peace and love," reveler Tina Wright, who was visiting from the Phoenix area, said after the countdown. "And let's just get things moving in the world right now."

Last year, a scaled-back crowd of about 15,000 in-person mask-wearing spectators watched the ball descend while basking in the lights and hoopla. Because of pandemic rules, it was far fewer than the tens of thousands of revelers who usually descend on the world-famous square.

Before the ball dropped, there were heavy thoughts about the past year and the new one to come.

"2023 is about resurgence — resurgence of the world after COVID-19 and after the war in Ukraine. We want it to end," said Arjun Singh as he took in the scene at Times Square.

In Australia, more than 1 million people crowded along Sydney's waterfront for a multi-million dollar celebration based around the themes of diversity and inclusion. More than 7,000 fireworks were launched from the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and another 2,000 from the nearby Opera House.

"We have had a couple of fairly difficult years; we're absolutely delighted this year to be able to welcome people back to the foreshores of Sydney Harbor for Sydney's world-famous New Year's Eve celebrations," Stephen Gilby, the city's producer of major events and festivals, told The Sydney Morning Herald.

In Auckland, New Zealand, large crowds gathered below the Sky Tower, where a 10-second countdown to midnight preceded fireworks. The celebrations in New Zealand's largest city returned after COVID-19 forced them to be canceled a year ago.

Chinese cautiously looked forward to 2023 after a recent easing of pandemic restrictions unleashed the virus but also signaled a return to normal life. Like many, salesperson Hong Xinyu stayed close to home over the past year in part because of curbs on travel.

"As the new year begins, we seem to see the light," he said at a countdown show that lit up the towering structures of a former steel mill in Beijing. "We are hopeful that there will be more freedom in the future."

Concerns about the Ukraine war and the economic shocks it has spawned across the globe were felt in Tokyo, where Shigeki Kawamura has seen better times but said he needed a free, hot meal this New Year's.

"I hope the war will be over in Ukraine so prices will stabilize," he said.

## 'Atmospheric river' dumps heavy rain, snow across California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A powerful storm brought drenching rain or heavy snowfall to much of California on Saturday, snarling traffic and closing highways as the state prepared to usher in a new year.

In the high Sierra Nevada, as much as 2 feet (0.6 meters) of snow could accumulate into early Sunday. The National Weather Service in Sacramento warned about hazardous driving conditions and posted photos on Twitter showing traffic on snow-covered mountain passes, where vehicles were required to have chains or four-wheel drive.

The so-called atmospheric river storm was pulling in a long and wide plume of moisture from the Pacific Ocean. Flooding and rock slides closed portions of roads across Northern California.

A Sacramento Municipal Utility District online map showed more than 153,000 customers were affected by power outages on Saturday. "SMUD crews are responding to outages across the region during this powerful winter storm," the utility said in a Twitter message, adding that it was preparing additional resources while working to restore power.

"Too many road closures to count at this point," the weather agency in Sacramento said in an afternoon tweet. Sacramento County urged residents in the unincorporated community of Wilton to evacuate, warn-

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ing that flooded roadways could "cut off access to leave the area."

Rainfall in downtown San Francisco on Saturday topped 5 inches (12.7 centimeters) at midafternoon, making it the second-wettest day on record, behind a November 1994 deluge. With rain continuing to fall, it could threaten the nearly three-decade old record.

The California Highway Patrol said a section of U.S. 101 — one of the state's main traffic arteries — was closed indefinitely south of San Francisco because of flooding. Videos on Twitter showed mud-colored water streaming along San Francisco streets, and a staircase in Oakland turned into a veritable waterfall by heavy rains.

Weather service meteorologist Courtney Carpenter said the storm could drop over an inch of rain in the Sacramento area before moving south. One ski resort south of Lake Tahoe closed chair lifts because of flooding and operational problems, and posted a photo on Twitter showing one lift tower and its empty chairs surrounded by water.

"We're seeing a lot of flooding," Carpenter said.

The Sacramento agency released a map of 24-hour precipitation through Saturday morning, showing a wide range of totals in the region, from less than an inch (2.54 centimeters) in some areas to more than 5 inches (12.7 centimeters) in the Sierra foothills.

The Mammoth Mountain Ski Area reported numerous lift closings, citing high winds, low visibility and ice.

The Stockton Police Department posted photos of a flooded railroad underpass and a car that appeared stalled in more than a foot (30 centimeters) of water.

The rain was welcomed in drought-parched California, but much more precipitation is needed to make a significant difference. The past three years have been California's driest on record.

A winter storm warning was in effect into Sunday for the upper elevations of the Sierra from south of Yosemite National Park to north of Lake Tahoe, where as much as 5 feet (1.5 meters) of snow is possible atop the mountains, the National Weather Service said in Reno, Nevada.

A flood watch was in effect across much of Northern California through New Year's Eve. Officials warned that rivers and streams could overflow and urged residents to get sandbags ready.

Some rainfall totals in the San Francisco Bay Area topped 4 inches (10 centimeters).

The state transportation agency reported numerous road closures, including Highway 70 east of Chico, which was partially closed by a slide, and the northbound side of Highway 49, east of Sacramento, which was closed because of flooding. In El Dorado County, east of Sacramento, a stretch of Highway 50 was closed because of flooding.

Humboldt County, where a 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck on Dec. 20, also saw roadways begin to flood, according to the National Weather Service's Eureka office. A bridge that was temporarily closed last week due to earthquake damage may be closed again if the Eel River, which it crosses, gets too high, officials said.

It was the first of several storms expected to roll across California over the next week. The current system is expected to be warmer and wetter, while next week's storms will be colder, said Hannah Chandler-Cooley, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Sacramento.

The Sacramento region could receive a total of 4 to 5 inches (10 to 13 centimeters) of rain over the span of the week, Chandler-Cooley said.

"Strong winds could cause tree damage and lead to power outages and high waves on Lake Tahoe may capsized small vessels," the weather service in Reno said.

Avalanche warnings were issued in the backcountry around Lake Tahoe and Mammoth Lakes south of Yosemite.

On the Sierra's eastern front, flood watches and warnings were issued into the weekend north and south of Reno, Nevada, where minor to moderate flooding was forecast along some rivers and streams.

In Southern California, moderate-to-heavy rain was falling Saturday. The region will begin drying out on New Year's Day, with no rainfall expected during Monday's Rose Parade in Pasadena.

Another round of heavy showers was forecast for Tuesday or Wednesday, the National Weather Service

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in Oxnard said.

## No. 3 TCU upsets No. 2 Michigan 51-45 in wild CFP semifinal

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

GLENDALE, Ariz. (AP) — TCU's wild ride has one more stop.

The Horned Frogs are headed to Sofi Stadium in Inglewood, California, about 10 miles from Hollywood, just about the perfect place to end a storybook season for the most improbable College Football Playoff team.

Max Duggan accounted for four touchdowns, TCU returned two interceptions for scores and the third-ranked Horned Frogs withstood a frenetic second-half surge by No. 2 Michigan to win the Fiesta Bowl semifinal 51-45 on Saturday night.

TCU (13-1) will face No. 1 Georgia, a 42-41 semifinal winner over No. 4 Ohio State, on Jan. 9 for the national championship.

Coming off a losing 2021 season and picked to finish seventh in the Big 12 in Sonny Dykes' first year as coach, the Horned Frogs will now play for the program's first national championship since 1938.

"They just played really tough football, hard-nosed football. Believed in each other, believed in their teammates, and just found a way to overcome and persevere," Dykes said. "It's kind of what we've done all year. We did it tonight. That's who we are."

It took the Frogs a month to get ranked this season, and they were doubted almost every step on the way their first playoff appearance.

"At some point, you just kind of quit listening to what everybody says," Dykes said.

Duggan and the Frogs will inevitably be underdogs in the title game — again. That didn't matter much against Michigan (13-1) as they took it to the big, bad Big Ten champions and turned the Fiesta Bowl into circa-2010, Big 12-style scorefest.

"We heard all week how they were going to out-physical us," TCU linebacker Dee Winters said.

It was the highest-scoring Fiesta Bowl ever and the second highest-scoring CFP game behind Georgia's 54-48 Rose Bowl victory against Oklahoma on Jan. 1, 2018.

Maybe it was fitting.

TCU, the little private school from Forth Worth, Texas, that was left out of the Big 12 when it first formed in the mid-1990s, became the first team from the conference to win a CFP game and will be the first to play for a national title since Texas in 2009.

This one was 34-16 after Winters' 29-yard pick-6 with 2:46 left in the third quarter. The Hypnotoads, a nickname borrowed for the animated TV show "Futurama," and their purple-clad fans were drowning out the Michigan supporters at State Farm Stadium, sensing the dream was still alive.

Of course, nothing comes easy for these Frogs. During their unbeaten regular season, they won seven straight games by 10 points or fewer.

What followed was five touchdown drives — with a TCU turnover tucked in between — each taking less than a minute.

Duggan said the Frogs' next-play mentality helped them stay poised through the pandemonium.

"I think that's kind of our mindset, which helped us kind of fight through some of the momentum swings," Duggan said.

Roman Wilson's 18-yard touchdown run on a reverse and a 2-point conversion pulled Michigan within 41-38 with 14:13 left in the fourth quarter.

"The winner was football," Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh said.

Back came the Frogs, unleashing their best weapon. Future first-round draft pick Quentin Johnston took a short crosser from Duggan and turned it up the sideline for a 76-yard score that put the Frogs up 10.

Duggan threw for 225 yards and two interceptions and ran for 57. Johnston had six catches for 163 yards and Emari Demercado, picking up the slack for an injured Kendre Miller, ran for 150. All of that against a defense that ranked third in the nation coming in.

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TCU finally got a stop on Michigan's next possession and turned it into a 33-yard field goal by Griffin Kell to go up 51-38 with 10:02 left.

After the Frogs and Wolverines combined for 62 points in 20 second-half minutes, the pace was throttled back. Michigan cut the lead to six with 3:14 left on J.J. McCarthy's 5-yard TD pass to Wilson.

McCarthy was spectacular at times with 343 yards passing, 52 rushing and three touchdowns. He also made two killer mistakes, tossing pick-6s in each half.

"Titanic effort. Phenomenal effort by J.J.," Harbaugh said.

TCU couldn't ice it and Michigan got one more shot, starting from its 25 with 52 seconds left — but couldn't get a first down.

Before TCU could line up in victory formation, there was an officials' review for targeting on the Frogs. What was another minute or so of drama in a season filled with stress for TCU?

The play was clean. Duggan, the Heisman Trophy runner-up, took one last snap and a knee and the exhausted Frogs rushed the field and celebrated under cloud of purple and white confetti.

The Frogs hopped out to a 14-0 lead in the first quarter, with safety Bud Clark making two of the biggest plays of the game. First, he chased down Michigan's Donovan Edwards to prevent a long touchdown on the very first play from scrimmage.

TCU then used a goal line stand — stymieing a Philly Special-style fourth down play by Michigan — to keep the Wolverines off the board.

On Michigan's next possession, Clark broke fast on a throw to the sideline by McCarthy and raced 41 yards with a pick-6 that put TCU up 7-0.

Duggan completed a long touchdown drive with a 1-yard plunge with 2:27 left in the first quarter and the Frogs were up 14-0 on touchdown-favorite Wolverines.

"There's a lot of things that we could have done better," said McCarthy, the second-year quarterback. "But we'll be back, and I promise that."

## THE TAKEAWAY

TCU: How the Frogs' 3-3-5 defense, ostensibly built to counter spread offenses with speed, held up against Michigan's power was the biggest Xs and Os question coming into the Fiesta Bowl.

The answer: Pretty good for a half. TCU had three sacks — all by Dylan Horton — among six tackles for loss in the first half as the Frogs took a 21-6 lead.

Michigan: Harbaugh's Wolverines put up a better showing in their second straight CFP semifinal appearance, but will lament the missed opportunities. Their first three first-and-goal situations produced three points, including a fumble at the goal line.

Michigan fell to 1-6 in bowl games under Harbaugh.

"Told my team: 'You don't quit. You don't give up,'" he said. "Really proud of the fight."

## UP NEXT

TCU: The Frogs are a combined 1-9-1 all-time against Georgia and Ohio State.

Michigan: The Wolverines open next season in the Big House against East Carolina.

## Lula set for inauguration to preside over polarized Brazil

By DIANE JEANTET and CARLA BRIDI Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Brazil's President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will be sworn in Sunday in the capital of Brasilia and assume office for the third time, marking the culmination of a political comeback sure to thrill supporters and enrage opponents in a fiercely polarized nation.

But Lula's presidency is unlikely to be like his previous two mandates, coming after the tightest presidential race in more than three decades in Brazil and resistance to his taking office by some of his opponents, political analysts say.

The leftist defeated far-right President Jair Bolsonaro in the Oct. 30 vote by less than 2 percentage points. For months, Bolsonaro had sown doubts about the reliability of Brazil's electronic vote and his loyal supporters were loath to accept the loss.

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Many have gathered outside military barracks since, questioning results and pleading with the armed forces to prevent Lula from taking office.

His most die-hard backers resorted to what some authorities and incoming members of Lula's administration labeled acts of "terrorism" – something the country had not seen since the early 1980s, and which have prompted growing security concerns about inauguration day events.

"In 2003, the ceremony was very beautiful. There wasn't this bad, heavy climate," said Carlos Melo, a political science professor at Insper University in Sao Paulo, referring to the year Lula first took office. "Today, it's a climate of terror."

Tanya Albuquerque, a student, flew from Sao Paulo to Brasilia and had tears in her eyes as she heard local leftists celebrating incoming visitors at Brasilia's airport. She decided to attend after seeing pictures of Lula's first inauguration.

"Maybe we won't have 300,000 people tomorrow like then; these are different and more divisive times. But I knew I wouldn't be happy in front of a TV," Albuquerque, 23, said on Saturday.

Lula has made it his mission to heal the divided nation. But he will have to do so while navigating more challenging economic conditions than he enjoyed in his first two terms, when the global commodities boom proved a windfall for Brazil.

At the time, his administration's flagship welfare program helped lift tens of millions of impoverished people into the middle class. Many Brazilians traveled abroad for the first time. He left office with a personal approval rating of 83%.

In the intervening years, Brazil's economy plunged into two deep recessions — first, during the tenure of his handpicked successor, and then during the pandemic — and ordinary Brazilians suffered greatly.

Lula has said his priorities are fighting poverty, and investing in education and health. He has also said he will bring illegal deforestation of the Amazon to a halt. He sought support from political moderates to form a broad front and defeat Bolsonaro, then tapped some of them to serve in his Cabinet.

Given the nation's political fault lines, however, it is highly unlikely Lula ever reattains the popularity he once enjoyed, or even sees his approval rating rise above 50%, said Maurício Santoro, a political science professor at Rio de Janeiro's State University.

Furthermore, Santoro said, the credibility of Lula and his Workers' Party were assailed by a sprawling corruption investigation. Party officials were jailed, including Lula -- until his convictions were annulled on procedural grounds. The Supreme Court then ruled that the judge presiding over the case had colluded with prosecutors to secure a conviction.

Lula and his supporters have maintained he was railroaded. Others were willing to look past possible malfeasance as a means to unseat Bolsonaro and bring the nation back together.

But Bolsonaro's backers refuse to accept someone they view as a criminal returning to the highest office. And with tensions running hot, a series of events has prompted fear that violence could erupt on inauguration day.

On Dec. 12, dozens of people tried to invade a federal police building in Brasilia, and burned cars and buses in other areas of the city. Then on Christmas Eve, police arrested a 54-year-old man who admitted to making a bomb that was found on a fuel truck headed to Brasilia's airport.

He had been camped outside Brasilia's army headquarters with hundreds of other Bolsonaro supporters since Nov. 12. He told police he was ready for war against communism, and planned the attack with people he had met at the protests, according to excerpts of his deposition released by local media. The next day, police found explosive devices and several bulletproof vests in a forested area on the federal district's outskirts.

Lula's incoming Justice Minister, Flávio Dino, this week called for federal authorities to put an end to the "antidemocratic" protests, calling them "incubators of terrorists."

In response to a request from Lula's team, the current justice minister authorized deployment of the national guard until Jan. 2, and Supreme Court justice Alexandre de Moraes banned people from carrying firearms in Brasilia during these days.

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"This is the fruit of political polarization, of political extremism," said Nara Pavão, who teaches political science at the Federal University of Pernambuco. Pavão stressed that Bolsonaro, who mostly vanished from the political scene since he lost his reelection bid, was slow to disavow recent incidents.

"His silence is strategic: Bolsonaro needs to keep Bolsonarismo alive," Pavão said.

Bolsonaro finally condemned the bomb plot in a Dec. 30 farewell address on social media, hours before flying to the U.S.. His absence on inauguration day will mark a break with tradition and it remains unclear who, instead of him, will hand over the presidential sash to Lula at the presidential palace.

Lawyer Eduardo Coutinho will be there. He bought a flight to Brasilia as a Christmas present to himself.

"I wish I were here when Bolsonaro's plane took off, that is the only thing that makes me almost as happy as tomorrow's event," Coutinho, 28, said after singing Lula campaign jingles on the plane. "I'm not usually so over-the-top, but we need to let it out and I came here just to that. Brazil needs this to move on."

## Chief justice: Judges' safety 'essential' to court system

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With security threats to Supreme Court justices still fresh memories, Chief Justice John Roberts on Saturday praised programs that protect judges, saying that "we must support judges by ensuring their safety."

Roberts and other conservative Supreme Court justices were the subject of protests, some at their homes, after the May leak of the court's decision that ultimately stripped away constitutional protections for abortion. Justice Samuel Alito has said that the leak made conservative justices "targets for assassination." And in June, a man carrying a gun, knife and zip ties was arrested near Justice Brett Kavanaugh's house after threatening to kill the justice, whose vote was key to overturning the court's Roe v. Wade decision.

Roberts, writing in an annual year-end report about the federal judiciary, did not specifically mention the abortion decision, but the case and the reaction to it seemed clearly on his mind.

"Judicial opinions speak for themselves, and there is no obligation in our free country to agree with them. Indeed, we judges frequently dissent — sometimes strongly — from our colleagues' opinions, and we explain why in public writings about the cases before us," Roberts wrote.

Polls following the abortion decision show public trust in the court is at historic lows. And two of Roberts' liberal colleagues who dissented in the abortion case, Justices Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor, have said the court needs to be concerned about overturning precedent and appearing political.

After the leak and threat to Kavanaugh, lawmakers passed legislation increasing security protection for the justices and their families. Separately, in December, lawmakers passed legislation protecting the personal information of federal judges including their addresses.

The law is named for the son of U.S. District Judge Esther Salas, 20-year-old Daniel Anderl, who was killed at the family's New Jersey home by a man who previously had a case before her.

Roberts thanked members of Congress "who are attending to judicial security needs." And he said programs that protect judges are "essential to run a system of courts."

In writing about judicial security, Roberts told the story of Judge Ronald N. Davies, who in September 1957 ordered the integration of Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas. Davies' decision followed the Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education ruling that segregated schools were unconstitutional and rejected Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus' attempt to stop school integration.

Davies "was physically threatened for following the law," but the judge was "uncowed," Roberts said.

"A judicial system cannot and should not live in fear. The events of Little Rock teach about the importance of rule by law instead of by mob," he wrote.

Roberts noted that officials are currently working to replicate the courtroom Davies presided over in 1957. Roberts said the judge's bench used by Davies and other artifacts from the courtroom have been preserved and will be installed in the re-created courtroom in a federal courthouse in Little Rock "so that these important artifacts will be used to hold court once again."

Before that happens, however, the judge's bench will be on display as part of an exhibit at the Supreme

Court beginning in the fall and for the next several years, he said.

"The exhibit will introduce visitors to how the system of federal courts works, to the history of racial segregation and desegregation in our country, and to Thurgood Marshall's towering contributions as an advocate," Roberts said. Marshall, who argued *Brown v. Board of Education*, became the Supreme Court's first Black justice in 1967.

The Supreme Court is still grappling with complicated issues involving race. Two cases this term deal with affirmative action, and the court's conservative majority is expected to use them to reverse decades of decisions that allow colleges to take account of race in admissions. In another case, the justices could weaken the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, the crown jewel of the civil rights movement.

The justices will hear their first arguments of 2023 on Jan. 9.

## Suspect in Idaho killings plans to waive extradition hearing

By REBECCA BOONE, MARC LEVY and MIKE BALSAMO Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A suspect arrested in connection with the slayings of four University of Idaho students plans to waive an extradition hearing so he can be quickly brought to Idaho to face murder charges, his defense attorney said Saturday.

Bryan Kohberger, a 28-year-old Ph.D. student and teaching assistant in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Washington State University, was taken into custody early Friday morning by the Pennsylvania State Police at his parents' home in Chestnuthill Township, authorities said.

"We believe we've got our man," Moscow Police Department Captain Anthony Dahlinger told The Associated Press on Saturday.

Investigators obtained samples of Kohberger's DNA directly from the suspect after he was arrested, Dahlinger said.

"He's the one that we believe is responsible for all four of the murders," he said.

Bill Thompson, a prosecutor in Latah County, Idaho, said during a press conference Friday that investigators believe Kohberger broke into the University of Idaho students' home near campus "with the intent to commit murder." The bodies of the students — Kaylee Goncalves, Madison Mogen, Xana Kernodle and Ethan Chapin — were found on Nov. 13, several hours after investigators believe they died.

The arrest in the disturbing case brought a sense of relief to the small northern Idaho college town after weeks passed with little information released by police. But it has also raised questions about whether the suspect knew the victims, what he has been doing in the weeks since the killings and how authorities tracked him down in Pennsylvania.

Many of those details will be released after Kohberger makes his first appearance in an Idaho courtroom, Dahlinger said. State law prohibits police from releasing most investigation records while the investigation is underway, and investigators kept many details about the investigation secret to avoid damaging the case, he said.

"I just really hope that everybody out there can understand the 'why' behind us holding a lot of information close to our vest," Dahlinger said. "This is the positive outcome that we were searching for the entire time."

Kohberger's attorney, chief public defender Jason LaBar, said Kohberger is eager to be exonerated and plans to tell a judge in Monroe County, Pennsylvania on Tuesday that he will waive his extradition hearing so he can be quickly brought to Idaho.

LaBar also cautioned people against passing judgment on the case until a fair trial is held. The case has generated massive amounts of speculation on social media, with would-be sleuths suggesting possible motives and frequently trying to pin the blame for the deaths on various friends and acquaintances of the victims.

"Mr. Kohberger has been accused of very serious crimes, but the American justice system cloaks him in a veil of innocence," LaBar wrote in a prepared statement. "He should be presumed innocent until proven otherwise — not tried in the court of public opinion."

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Police are now trying to understand "every aspect" of Kohberger, Dahlinger said. When the arrest was announced, investigators asked that anyone that knows Kohberger call a tip line to share information.

The response was immediate.

"We got 400 phone calls within the first hour after the press conference, which is great," Dahlinger said. "We're trying to build this picture now of him: Who he is, his history, how we got to this event, why this event occurred."

Neighbors of the Kohberger family in Chestnuthill Township, Pennsylvania told The (Scranton) Times-Tribune on Friday they were shocked to see law enforcement vehicles outside the home.

Eileen Cesaretti, who lives across the street, said she loves Kohberger's parents and is fond of their son, who she said helped her and her husband around their house when he was home from school.

"I don't think he's capable of doing something like this. I pray to God he's innocent," Cesaretti said.

Nephi Duff lives next door to Bryan Kohberger at a Washington State University apartment complex for graduate students and families. He told Spokane, Washington-based television station KREM2 that recent crimes like the slayings in Moscow have left him feeling unsafe.

"I don't recall ever seeing him around," Duff said of Kohberger. "I thought I was moving to a safe, small community, but that hasn't been the case recently. I just think if these things are happening right under my nose, how do I protect (my family)?"

BK Norton, a student in the WSU Criminal Justice and Criminology Department, said Friday that they didn't know Kohberger well, but didn't like him.

"We interacted in class, but personally I was not a fan of Bryan because of comments he had made about LGBTQ+ individuals," they said in an email to The Associated Press. "He was a little off, but I always thought it was because he was awkward and wanted to fit in."

Federal and state investigators are now combing through Kohberger's background, financial records and electronic communications as they work to identify a motive and build the case, a law enforcement official who could not publicly discuss details of the ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. The investigators are also interviewing people who knew Kohberger, including those at WSU, the official said.

Kohberger is being held without bond in Pennsylvania and will be held without bond in Idaho once he is returned, Thompson, the Latah County prosecutor, said. The affidavit for four charges of first-degree murder in Idaho will remain sealed until he is returned, Thompson said. He is also charged with felony burglary in Idaho. An extradition hearing is scheduled for Tuesday.

The students — Kaylee Goncalves, 21, of Rathdrum, Idaho; Madison Mogen, 21, of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Xana Kernodle, 20, of Post Falls, Idaho; and Ethan Chapin, 20, of Conway, Washington — were members of the university's Greek system and close friends. Mogen, Goncalves and Kernodle lived in the three-story rental home with two other roommates. Kernodle and Chapin were dating and he was visiting the house that night.

Autopsies showed all four were likely asleep when they were attacked. Some had defensive wounds and each was stabbed multiple times. There was no sign of sexual assault, police said.

Ben Roberts, a graduate student in the criminology and criminal justice department at WSU, described Kohberger as confident and outgoing, but said it seemed like "he was always looking for a way to fit in."

"I had honestly just pegged him as being super awkward," Roberts said.

Roberts started the program in August — along with Kohberger, he said — and had several courses with him. He described Kohberger as wanting to appear academic.

"One thing he would always do, almost without fail, was find the most complicated way to explain something," he said.

The arrest marked a bittersweet moment for law enforcement officers, Dahlinger said.

"We're very excited by the fact that we were able to locate Mr. Kohberger and bring him into custody, but we all still feel the sadness and the sorry," he said. "We feel horrible for the families and the loss of their loved ones."



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## New York OKs human composting law; 6th state in US to do so

By MAYSOON KHAN Associated Press/Report for America

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Howard Fischer, a 63-year old investor living north of New York City, has a wish for when he dies. He wants his remains to be placed in a vessel, broken down by tiny microbes and composted into rich, fertile soil.

Maybe his composted remains could be planted outside the family home in Vermont, or maybe they could be returned to the earth elsewhere. "Whatever my family chooses to do with the compost after it's done is up to them," Fischer said.

"I am committed to having my body composted and my family knows that," he added. "But I would love for it to happen in New York where I live rather than shipping myself across the country."

Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul signed legislation on Saturday to legalize natural organic reduction, popularly known as human composting, making New York the sixth state in the nation to allow that method of burial.

Washington state became the first state to legalize human composting in 2019, followed by Colorado and Oregon in 2021, and Vermont and California in 2022.

For Fischer, this alternative, green method of burial aligns with his philosophical view on life: to live in an environmentally conscious way.

The process goes like this: the body of the deceased is placed into a reusable vessel along with plant material such as wood chips, alfalfa and straw. The organic mix creates the perfect habitat for naturally occurring microbes to do their work, quickly and efficiently breaking down the body in about a month's time.

The end result is a heaping cubic yard of nutrient-dense soil amendment, the equivalent of about 36 bags of soil, that can be used to plant trees or enrich conservation land, forests, or gardens.

For urban areas such as New York City where land is limited, it can be seen as a pretty attractive burial alternative.

Michelle Menter, manager at Greensprings Natural Cemetery Preserve, a cemetery in central New York, said the facility would "strongly consider" the alternative method.

"It definitely is more in line with what we do," she added.

The 130-acre (52-hectare) nature preserve cemetery, nestled between protected forest land, offers natural, green burials which is when a body can be placed in a biodegradable container and into a gravesite so that it can decompose fully.

"Every single thing we can do to turn people away from concrete liners and fancy caskets and embalming, we ought to do and be supportive of," she said.

But not all are onboard with the idea.

The New York State Catholic Conference, a group that represents bishops in the state, has long opposed the bill, calling the burial method "inappropriate."

"A process that is perfectly appropriate for returning vegetable trimmings to the earth is not necessarily appropriate for human bodies," Dennis Poust, executive director of the organization, said in a statement.

"Human bodies are not household waste, and we do not believe that the process meets the standard of reverent treatment of our earthly remains," he said.

Katrina Spade, the founder of Recompose, a full-service green funeral home in Seattle that offers human composting, said it offers an alternative for people wanting to align the disposition of their remains with how they lived their lives.

She said "it feels like a movement" among the environmentally aware.

"Cremation uses fossil fuels and burial uses a lot of land and has a carbon footprint," said Spade. "For a lot of folks being turned into soil that can be turned to grow into a garden or tree is pretty impactful."

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## Mega Millions jackpot climbs to \$785M after no big winner

The first Mega Millions drawing of the new year will be a big one after no one won an estimated \$685 million jackpot.

No ticket purchased for the lottery matched all six numbers drawn Friday night, Mega Millions said in a statement early Saturday. The top prize increased to \$785 million ahead of the next drawing Tuesday night.

The numbers selected Friday were: 1, 3, 6, 44, 51 and gold Mega Ball 7.

The jackpot has grown so large thanks to long odds of one in 302.6 million that have resulted in 22 straight drawings without a big winner.

The estimated \$785 million prize is for a winner who chooses to be paid through an annuity, with annual checks over 29 years. Nearly all winners opt for cash, which for the next drawing would be an estimated \$395 million.

The jackpot is the largest since a \$2.04 billion Powerball prize was won Nov. 8 in California. A winner hasn't been announced for that record-setting payout.

"On only three previous occasions has the Mega Millions jackpot gone beyond \$700 million, and all three times those rolls continued on past \$1 billion," Mega Millions said.

Mega Millions is played in 45 states as well as Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

## Benedict XVI, reluctant pope who chose to retire, dies at 95

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — He was the reluctant pope, a shy bookworm who preferred solitary walks in the Alps and Mozart piano concertos to the public glare and majesty of Vatican pageantry. When Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI and was thrust into the footsteps of his beloved and charismatic predecessor, he said he felt a guillotine had come down on him.

So it should have come as little surprise that with a few words uttered in Latin on a Vatican holiday in 2013, Benedict ended it all, announcing that he would become the first pope in 600 years to resign.

His dramatic exit paved the way for Pope Francis' election and created the unprecedented arrangement of two popes, living side-by-side in the Vatican gardens. And it likely won't be a one-off, given that Francis has said Benedict "opened the door" for other popes to follow suit.

Francis praised Benedict in comments on Saturday during a New Year's Eve service held at St. Peter's Basilica.

"Only God knows the value and the strength of his intercession, of his sacrifices offered for the good of the Church," Francis said.

The Vatican announced that Benedict died Saturday at his home in the Vatican at age 95. Francis himself will celebrate Benedict's funeral Mass on Thursday, to which only Italy and Germany were asked to send official delegations, closing out an unprecedented chapter in the history of the papacy with a reigning pope eulogizing a retired one.

The intellectual German theologian, whose mission was to reawaken Christianity in a secularized and indifferent Europe, was forced to shoulder the brunt of the sex abuse scandal that festered unattended under St. John Paul II. Then, as he planned to make a quiet exit from the papacy, another scandal erupted when his own butler stole his personal papers and gave them to a journalist — leading to revelations that laid bare the need for a reformer pope to clean up the Vatican's act.

In between crises, Benedict pursued his single-minded vision to rekindle faith in a world that he frequently lamented seemed to think it could do without God.

"In vast areas of the world today, there is a strange forgetfulness of God," he told 1 million young people gathered on a vast field for his first foreign trip as pope, World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany, in 2005. "It seems as if everything would be just the same even without Him."

He echoed that theme in his final will released by the Vatican on Saturday night, urging the faithful especially in his homeland to "stand firm in the faith!" Two pages in length and dated 2006, the will also touched on a theme dear to his heart of the beneficial dialogue between faith and reason.

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With some decisive, often controversial moves, he tried to remind Europe of its Christian heritage. And he set the Catholic Church on a conservative, tradition-minded path that often alienated progressives. He relaxed restrictions on celebrating the old Latin Mass and launched a crackdown on American nuns, insisting that the church stay true to its doctrine and traditions in the face of a changing world.

It was a path that in many ways was reversed by his successor, Francis, whose mercy-over-morals priorities alienated the traditionalists who had been so indulged by Benedict.

Those conservatives spent much of Francis' reform-minded papacy — and Benedict's waning years in retirement — nostalgic for the good old days of the German pope, when doctrine and law seemed paramount and the church's moral teachings clear. They were never more outraged than when Francis reversed Benedict's edict to allow greater celebration of the old Latin Mass.

Benedict's style couldn't have been more different from that of John Paul or Francis. No globe-trotting media darling or populist, Benedict was a teacher and theologian to the core: quiet and pensive with a fierce mind. He spoke in paragraphs, not soundbites. He had a weakness for orange Fanta, cats as well as his beloved library; when he was elected pope, he had his entire study moved — as is — from his apartment just outside the Vatican walls into the Apostolic Palace. The books followed him to his retirement home.

"In them are all my advisers," he said in the 2010 book-length interview, "Light of the World." "I know every nook and cranny, and everything has its history."

Like his predecessor, Benedict made reaching out to Jews a hallmark of his papacy. His first official act as pope was a letter to Rome's Jewish community and he became the second pope in history, after John Paul, to enter a synagogue.

In his 2011 book, "Jesus of Nazareth," Benedict made a sweeping exoneration of the Jewish people for the death of Christ, explaining biblically and theologically why there was no basis in Scripture for the argument that the Jewish people as a whole were responsible for Jesus' death.

"It's very clear Benedict is a true friend of the Jewish people," said Rabbi David Rosen, who heads the interreligious relations office for the American Jewish Committee, at the time of Benedict's retirement.

Yet Benedict also offended some Jews who were incensed at his constant defense of and promotion toward sainthood of Pope Pius XII, the World War II-era pope accused by some of having failed to sufficiently denounce the Holocaust. And they harshly criticized Benedict when he removed the excommunication of a traditionalist British bishop who had denied the Holocaust.

Benedict's relations with the Muslim world were also a mixed bag. He riled Muslims with a speech in September 2006 — five years after the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States — in which he quoted a Byzantine emperor who characterized some of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as "evil and inhuman," particularly his command to spread the faith "by the sword."

A subsequent comment after the massacre of Christians in Egypt led the Al Azhar center in Cairo, the seat of Sunni Muslim learning, to suspend ties with the Vatican that were only restored under Pope Francis.

The Vatican under Benedict suffered notorious PR gaffes, and sometimes Benedict himself was to blame. He enraged the United Nations and several European governments in 2009 when, en route to Africa, he told reporters that the AIDS problem couldn't be resolved by distributing condoms.

"On the contrary, it increases the problem," Benedict said. A year later, he issued a revision saying that if a male prostitute were to use a condom to avoid passing HIV to his partner, he might be taking a first step toward a more responsible sexuality.

As soon as he was elected, Benedict moved decisively on a few select fronts: He made clear early on that he wanted to re-establish diplomatic relations with China that were severed in 1951. He wrote a landmark letter to the 12 million Chinese faithful in 2007, urging them to unite under Rome's wing. That letter helped pave the way for Francis to seal a controversial deal with Beijing over bishop appointments in 2018.

Within his first year, Benedict also signed off on a long-awaited document barring most gay men from the priesthood in a move that riled many progressives in the American church. But in a document welcomed by liberal Catholics, he also essentially abolished "limbo," saying there was hope that babies who died without being baptized would go to heaven.

And in one of his most popular acts at the time, he beatified his predecessor in record time, drawing

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1.5 million people to Rome in 2011 to witness John Paul move a step closer to sainthood. Francis finished the job in 2014 when he canonized John Paul along with St. John XXIII. Benedict attended the ceremony, creating a never-before-seen moment of two living popes honoring two dead ones.

But Benedict's legacy was irreversibly colored by the global eruption in 2010 of the sex abuse scandal, even though as a cardinal he had been responsible for turning the Vatican around on the issue.

At the time, it was the greatest crisis in the Catholic Church in decades, though its re-eruption in 2018 seemed to have eclipsed even that, given Francis' own failures and missteps.

Over the course of just a few months in 2010, thousands of people in Europe, Australia, South America and beyond came forward with reports of priests who raped and molested them as children, and bishops who covered up the crimes.

Documents revealed that the Vatican knew very well of the problem yet turned a blind eye for decades, at times rebuffing bishops who tried to do the right thing.

Benedict had firsthand knowledge of the scope of the problem, since his old office — the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which he had headed since 1982 — was responsible for dealing with abuse cases.

In fact, it was the then-Cardinal Ratzinger who took the revolutionary decision in 2001 to assume responsibility for processing those cases after he realized bishops around the world weren't punishing abusers but were just moving them from parish to parish where they could rape again.

And from 2004 to 2014, the Vatican defrocked 848 priests and sanctioned another 2,572 to lesser penalties, a get-tough approach to remove predators outright that went unmatched by Francis.

Benedict met with victims across the globe, wept with them and prayed with them. Under his leadership, the Vatican updated its legal code to extend the statute of limitations for cases and told bishops' conferences around the world to come up with guidelines to prevent abuse.

And most significantly, Benedict reversed his beloved predecessor by taking action against the 20th century's most notorious pedophile priest, the Rev. Marcial Maciel. Benedict took over Maciel's Legionaries of Christ, a conservative religious order held up as a model of orthodoxy by John Paul, after it was revealed that Maciel sexually abused seminarians and fathered at least three children.

But Benedict never admitted to any Vatican failure on abuse, and much to the dismay of victims, he never took action against bishops who ignored or covered up the abuse of their priests and moved known pedophiles around to abuse again.

As soon as the abuse scandal calmed down for Benedict, another one erupted. In October 2012, Benedict's former butler, Paolo Gabriele, was convicted of aggravated theft after Vatican police found a huge stash of papal documents in his apartment.

Gabriele told Vatican investigators he gave the documents to Italian journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi, who went on to publish a blockbuster book, because he thought the pope wasn't being informed of the "evil and corruption" in the Vatican and that exposing it publicly would put the church back on the right track.

It was a painful and embarrassing chapter for the Vatican that exposed power struggles, intrigue and allegations of corruption and homosexual liaisons in the highest levels of the Catholic Church. It was also a personal betrayal for Benedict, although he eventually pardoned Gabriele.

Once the "Vatileaks" scandal was resolved, Benedict felt free to make the decision he had hinted at previously but that was extraordinary all the same: On Feb. 11, 2013, he announced that he would resign rather than die in office as all his predecessors had done for almost six centuries.

"After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths due to an advanced age are no longer suited" to the demands of being pope, he told cardinals.

As one of John Paul's close aides, he had watched from up close as the Polish pope suffered publicly with Parkinson's disease in the final years of his papacy. When he became pope, Benedict clearly wanted to avoid the same fate.

It later became clear that his retirement had been planned for months. Renovation on a four-story building on the northern edge of the Vatican gardens had begun the previous fall, but only a handful of people

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knew it would one day be Benedict's retirement home.

He made his last public appearances as pope in February 2013 and then, on the last day of the month, boarded a helicopter for the papal summer retreat at Castel Gandolfo, to sit out the conclave that elected Francis, in private. He only returned to the Vatican months later, after Francis was fully installed.

Benedict then largely kept to his word that he would live a life of prayer in retirement, emerging only occasionally from his converted monastery for special events and writing occasional book prefaces and messages.

Despite his very different style and priorities, Francis treated Benedict with the utmost respect and love: The Argentine Jesuit frequently said that having Benedict in the Vatican was like having a "wise grandfather" living at home.

The decision to leave may have been Benedict's personal choice, but it's likely to have a long-term impact on the papal job description going forward.

"For the century to come, I think that none of Benedict's successors will feel morally obliged to remain until their death," said Paris Cardinal Andre Vingt-Trois on the day the resignation was announced.

Benedict was often misunderstood. Nicknamed "God's Rottweiler" by the unsympathetic media, he was actually a sweet and fiercely smart academic who devoted his life to serving the church he loved.

"Thank you for having given us the luminous example of the simple and humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord," Benedict's longtime deputy, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, told him in one of his final public events as pope.

Ratzinger inherited the seemingly impossible task of following in the footsteps of John Paul when he was elected the 265th leader of the Church on April 19, 2005. He was the oldest pope elected in 275 years and the first German in nearly 1,000 years.

As John Paul's right-hand man, he had been a favorite going into the vote and was selected in the fastest conclave in a century: Just about 24 hours after the voting began, white smoke curled from the Sistine Chapel chimney at 5:50 p.m. to announce "Habemus Papam!"

Benedict wrote three encyclicals, "God is Love" in 2006, "Saved by Hope" in 2007 and "Charity in Truth" in 2009. The last was perhaps his best known as it called for a new world financial order guided by ethics that was published in the throes of the global financial meltdown.

He penned a fourth, "The Light of Faith," that was eventually published in July 2013 under a joint byline with his successor, Francis, who finished it off after Benedict retired.

Benedict's call for financial ethics was more than just an exhortation: He amended the Vatican city state's legal code to comply with international norms to fight money laundering and terror financing, putting the Vatican on the path to financial transparency in a bid to shed its image as a scandal-marred tax haven.

Born April 16, 1927, in Markt Am Inn, in Bavaria, Benedict wrote in his memoirs of being enlisted in the Nazi youth movement against his will in 1941, when he was 14 and membership was compulsory. He deserted the German army in April 1945, the waning days of the war.

Benedict was ordained, along with his brother, Georg, in 1951. After spending several years teaching theology in Germany, he was appointed bishop of Munich in 1977 and elevated to cardinal three months later by Pope Paul VI.

If there were any doubts about Benedict's priority to reinvigorate Christianity in Europe, his choice of a papal name was as good an indication as any.

Benedict told cardinals soon after he was elected that he hoped to be a pope of peace, like Pope Benedict XV, who reigned during World War I. But the first Benedict — St. Benedict of Norcia — was also an inspiration.

The 5th- and 6th-century monk is a patron saint of Europe and inspired the creation of the Benedictine order, the main guardian of learning and literature in Western Europe during the dark centuries that followed the fall of the Roman Empire.

Until his 2020 death, his brother Georg was a frequent visitor, even after Benedict retired. His sister died years earlier. His "papal family" consisted of Monsignor Georg Gaenswein, his longtime private secretary who was always by his side, another secretary and consecrated women who tended to the papal apartment.

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They were with him when he received the sacrament of the anointing of the sick on Wednesday, three days before he died.

## Russian strikes intensify as Ukrainians return for holiday

By RENATA BRITO and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Multiple blasts rocked Kyiv and other areas of Ukraine on Saturday, killing at least one person and wounding 14 others, in a sign that the pace of Russia attacks had picked up before New Year's.

Some Ukrainians defied the danger, however, to return to the country to reunite with families for the holidays.

Ukrainian officials claimed Russia was now deliberately targeting civilians, seeking to create a climate of fear to see out the year grimly and usher in a bloody 2023.

First lady Olena Zelenska expressed outrage that such massive missile attacks could come just before New Year's Eve celebrations.

"Ruining lives of others is a disgusting habit of our neighbors," she said.

The blasts also came at an unusually quickened rhythm, one that alarmed officials just 36 hours after Russia launched a barrage of missiles on Thursday to damage energy infrastructure facilities.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba highlighted the harsh civilian toll of this latest offensive — that "this time, Russia's mass missile attack is deliberately targeting residential areas, not even the energy infrastructure."

The deadly blast in the Ukrainian capital occurred among the multi-story residential buildings of the Solomianskyi district.

An AP photographer at the scene of the explosions saw the body of a dead woman as her husband and son stood nearby. Among the injured taken to hospital was an older woman. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said two schools were also damaged, including a kindergarten.

Various residential buildings and civilian infrastructure were damaged in Kyiv on Saturday afternoon as part of massive attacks spanning the country. A top official in the president's office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, published photos and video of a partially collapsed six-story hotel in Kyiv. Klitschko said a Japanese journalist was among those injured in the capital.

Russia launched 20 cruise missiles over Ukraine on Saturday afternoon, of which Ukrainian forces shot down 12, according to Ukrainian military chief Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy published a video address shortly after Russia launched the New Year's Eve cruise missiles over Ukraine saying that Russian President Vladimir Putin is "hiding behind the military, behind missiles, behind the walls of his residences and palaces." Addressing the Russians, he added that "no one in the world will forgive you for this. Ukraine will not forgive."

At least four civilians were wounded in the Khmelnytskyi province of western Ukraine, according to regional Gov. Serhii Hamalii. Six people were wounded in the southern region of Mykolaiv.

Mykolaiv Gov. Vitalii Kim said that the Russians were targeting civilians more directly than just by attacking infrastructure as in the past.

"In many cities residential areas, hotels, just roads and garages are affected," he wrote on Telegram.

In Zaporizhzhia region, as a result of a missile attack, two houses were destroyed, and around eight damaged. Four people were also wounded, among them a pregnant woman and a 14-year-old girl, said regional Gov. Oleksandr Starukh.

Even though Russia's 10-month war rumbles on with no end in sight, for some families the new year is nevertheless a chance to reunite, however briefly, after months apart.

At Kyiv's central railway station on Saturday morning, Mykyta, still in his uniform, gripped a bouquet of pink roses tightly as he waited on platform 9 for his wife Valeriia to arrive from Poland. He hadn't seen her in six months.

"It actually was really tough, you know, to wait so long," he told The Associated Press after hugging and kissing Valeriia.

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Nearby, another soldier, Vasyl Khomko, 42, joyously met his daughter Yana and wife Galyna who have been living in Slovakia due to the war, but returned to Kyiv to spend New Year's Eve together.

Back in February, fathers, husbands and sons had to stay behind as their wives, mothers and daughters boarded trains with small children seeking safety outside the country. Scenes of tearful goodbyes seared television screens and front pages of newspaper across the world.

But on the last day of the year marked by the brutal war, many returned to the capital to spend New Year's Eve with their loved ones, despite the ongoing Russian attacks.

As Russian attacks continue to target power supplies leaving millions without electricity, no big celebrations are expected and a curfew will be in place as the clock rings in the new year. But for most Ukrainians being together with their families is a luxury.

Valeriia first sought refuge from the conflict in Spain but later moved to Poland. Asked what their New Year's Eve plans were, she answered simply: "Just to be together."

The couple declined not to share their family name for security reasons as Mykyta has been fighting on the front lines in both southern and eastern Ukraine.

On platform 8, another young couple reunited. University student Arseniia Kolomiets, 23, has been living in Italy. Despite longing to see her boyfriend Daniel Liashchenko in Kyiv, Kolomiets was scared of Russian missiles and drone attacks.

"He was like, 'Please come! Please come! Please come!'" she recalled. "I decided that (being) scared is one part, but being with beloved ones on the holidays is the most important part. So, I overcome my fear and here I am now."

Although they have no electricity at home, Liashchenko said they were looking forward to welcoming 2023 together with his family and their cat.

Natalya Kontonenko had traveled from Finland. It was the first time she had seen her brother Serhii Kontonenko since the full-scale invasion began on Feb. 24. Serhii and other relatives traveled from Mykolaiv to Kyiv to meet Natalya.

"We are not concerned about the electricity, because we are together and that I think is the most important," he said.

## **Afghan war orphan remains with Marine accused of abduction**

By MARTHA MENDOZA, CLAIRE GALOFARO and JULIET LINDERMAN undefined

The Afghan woman ran down the street towards her friend's apartment as soon as she heard the news: the White House had publicly weighed in on her family's case.

Surely her child, who she says was abducted by a U.S. Marine more than a year ago, would now be returned, she thought. She was so excited that it was only after she'd arrived that she realized she wasn't wearing any shoes.

"We thought within one week she'd be back to us," the woman told The Associated Press.

Yet two months after an AP report on the high-stakes legal fight over the child raised alarms at the highest levels of government, from the White House to the Taliban, the baby remains with U.S. Marine Corps Major Joshua Mast and his family. The Masts claim in court documents that they legally adopted the child and that the Afghan couple's accusations are "outrageous" and "unmerited."

"We are all concerned with the well being of this child who is at the heart of this matter," said White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre after the AP detailed the child's plight in October.

Last month, the U.S. Justice Department filed a motion to intervene in the legal wrangling over the fate of the child, arguing that Mast's adoption should never have been granted. The government has said Mast's attempts to take the child directly conflicted with a U.S. foreign policy decision to reunite the orphan with her Afghan family. They asked that the case be moved from a rural Virginia court to federal court, but were denied by Presiding Circuit Court Judge Richard E. Moore.

Additionally, federal authorities say multiple investigations are underway.

"We all just want resolution for this child, whatever it's going to be, so her childhood doesn't continue

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to be in limbo," said Samantha Freed, a court-appointed attorney assigned to look after the best interests of the child. "We need to get this right now. There are no do-overs."

The legal fight has taken more than a year, and Freed is worried it could take months — maybe even years — more. The child is now 3 ½ years old. The Afghan family spoke with the AP on condition of remaining anonymous out of fear for their safety and concerns for their relatives back in Afghanistan.

Mast became enchanted with the child while on temporary assignment in Afghanistan in late 2019. Just a few months old, the infant had survived a Special Operations raid that killed her parents and five siblings, according to court records.

As she recovered from injuries in a U.S. military hospital, the Afghan government and the International Committee of the Red Cross identified her relatives, and through meetings with the State Department, arranged for their reunification. The child's cousin and his wife — young newlyweds without children yet of their own — wept when they first saw her, they said: Taking her in and raising her was the greatest honor of their lives.

Nonetheless, Mast — in spite of orders from military officials to stop intervening — was determined to take her home to the United States. He used his status in the military, appealed to political connections in the Trump administration and convinced the small-town Virginia court to skip some of the usual safeguards that govern international adoptions.

Finally, when the U.S. military withdrew from Afghanistan last summer, he helped the family get to the United States. After they arrived, they say, he took their baby from them at the Fort Pickett Virginia Army National Guard base. They haven't seen her since and are suing to get her back.

The Afghan woman gave birth to a daughter just weeks after the girl they'd been raising was taken from them. Every time they buy an outfit or a present for their daughter, they buy a second matching one for the child they pray will come back to them soon.

The Masts did not respond to repeated requests for an interview. Stepping out from a recent hearing, Joshua Mast told AP they've been advised not to speak publicly.

In court filings, Mast says he acted "admirably" to bring the child to the United States and care for her with his wife. They say they've given her "a loving home" and have "done nothing but ensure she receives the medical care she requires, at great personal expense and sacrifice." Mast celebrated his adoption of the child, whose Afghan family is Muslim, as an act of Christian faith.

The toddler's future is now set to be decided in a sealed, secret court case in rural Virginia — in the same courthouse that granted Mast custody. The federal government has described that custody order as "unlawful," "improper" and "deeply flawed and incorrect" because it was based on a promise that Afghanistan would waive jurisdiction over the child, which never happened.

The day Mast and his wife Stephanie Mast were granted a final adoption, the child was 7,000 miles away with the Afghan couple who knew nothing about it.

In court, Mast, still an active duty Marine, cast doubt on whether the Afghan couple is related to her at all. They argue that the little girl is "an orphan of war and a victim of terrorism, rescued under tragic circumstances from the battlefield." They say she is a "stateless minor" because she was recovered from a compound Mast says was used by foreign fighters not from Afghanistan.

The case has been consumed by a procedural question: Does the Afghan family — who raised the child for a year and a half — have a right under Virginia law to even challenge the adoption?

Judge Moore ruled in November that the Afghan family does have legal standing; the Masts' appeal is under review.

The child's Afghan relatives, currently in Texas, believe the U.S. government should be doing more to help them, because numerous federal agencies were involved in the ordeal.

"The government is not doing their job as they should," said the Afghan woman. "And in this process, we are suffering."

A State Department official said one of the agency's own social workers stood with Mast when he took the baby at Fort Pickett, but "had no awareness of the U.S. Embassy's previous involvement in reuniting



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the child with her next of kin in Afghanistan." The official described how the U.S. had worked hard in Afghanistan to unite the child with her relatives.

"We recognize the human dimension of this situation," said the official.

The Department of Defense said in a statement that the decision to reunite the child with her family was in keeping with the U.S. government's foreign obligations, as well as international law principles that mandate family reunification of children displaced in war. The Defense Department said it is aware that Mast "took custody" of the child but declined to comment further.

The Afghan couple pleaded for help from the tangle of agencies at Fort Pickett: the military, the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the police. Some didn't believe them, some said there was nothing they could do, some tried to intervene to no avail.

The couple eventually reached Martha Jenkins, an attorney volunteering at the base.

"When I first heard their story, I thought there must be something lost in translation — how could this be true?" said Jenkins. She contacted authorities.

Almost two months after they lost the child, Virginia State Police dispatch records obtained by the AP show "an advocate" called to report what had happened.

"The family is on Fort Pickett, they are requesting an investigation to the validity of the adoption and if it was done under false pretenses," wrote the dispatcher. The record notes that the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI were involved.

Jenkins, who was in Virginia temporarily, called every Virginia adoption attorney she could find until she reached Elizabeth Vaughan.

"It was very surprising to me that no one helped them," said Vaughan, who offered to represent the Afghan couple for free. "I don't think they had a lot of the paperwork Americans like to see when someone's proving that they have custody. But there are laws about people, trusted adults, who arrive with a child. So much more investigating should have been done."

A Marine Corps spokesperson wrote in a statement that they are fully cooperating with federal law enforcement investigations, including at least one focused on the alleged unauthorized removal and retention of classified documents or material. In emails Mast sent asking for help bringing the child from Afghanistan, now submitted as exhibitions in court, he referenced reading classified documents about the raid that killed the girl's family.

Investigators and prosecutors declined to comment, citing the ongoing inquiries.

On the other side of the globe, the Taliban issued a statement saying it "will seriously pursue this issue with American authorities so that the said child is returned to her relatives."

Now every night before bed, the Afghan couple scroll through an album of 117 photos of the year and half they spent raising her — a sassy child with big bright eyes, who loved to dress up in shiny colors and gold bangle bracelets. There's a photo of the child wearing a black and green tunic and tiny gold sandals, nestled on the young Afghan man's lap, smiling mischievously at the camera. In one video, she runs alongside the man, bouncing down the sidewalk to keep up with his stride.

They'll soon be moving to a new two-bedroom apartment. There, they say, the little girl's room will be ready for her, whenever she comes home.

## Taxes fall, wages rise and jaywalking OK'd by new state laws

By DAVID A. LIEB and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Taxes will fall and minimum wages rise for residents in numerous states as a variety of new laws take effect Sunday that could impact people's finances and, in some cases, their personal liberties.

Some new laws could affect access to abortion. Others will ease restrictions on marijuana and concealed guns, or eliminate the need to pay to get out of jail.

Jaywalkers will get a reprieve in California, thanks to a new law prohibiting police from stopping pedestrians for traffic violations unless they are in immediate danger of being hit by a vehicle.

Here's a look at some of the laws taking effect in the new year.

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## ABORTION

After the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling in June, abortion access became a state issue. Laws in place in 13 states, most of them controlled by Republicans, ban abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with varying exceptions. Meanwhile, more liberal states have been extending abortion protections.

Laws taking effect in January are not wholesale policy changes but are intended to make abortion more accessible in California and New York. Abortion already is legal in those states through viability, which is about 24 weeks gestational age.

California will allow trained nurse practitioners, midwives and physician assistants to provide abortions without supervision from a physician. In New York, a law dealing with multiple facets of health care requires private insurers that cover births to also cover abortion services, without requiring co-payments or co-insurance.

A new Tennessee law, adopted in May, will bar dispensing abortion pills by mail or at pharmacies, instead requiring them to be given with a physician present. But advocates on both sides of the issue believe the effect will be minimal because a ban on abortions throughout pregnancy went into effect after the Supreme Court's ruling.

## TAXES

Thanks to large budget surpluses, about two-thirds of the states approved permanent tax cuts or one-time rebates last year. Several of those will take effect in January.

Income tax cuts mean less money will be withheld from workers' paychecks in Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina and South Carolina. An Arizona income tax rate reduction to a flat 2.5% also will take effect in January, a year before originally scheduled because of strong state revenues.

Iowa will revamp its income tax brackets as a first step toward an eventual flat tax, and it will stop taxing retirement income.

Kansas will reduce its sales tax on groceries. Virginia will lower the tax on groceries and personal hygiene products. Colorado also will remove taxes from hygiene products, but will impose a 10-cent fee on plastic bags as a precursor to their elimination in 2024.

Other states are providing tax incentives for law-and-order professions. Rhode Island will exempt military pensions from tax. Georgia will offer a tax credit for donations to local law enforcement foundations.

But not all taxes will be going down. A voter-approved "millionaire tax" will take effect in Massachusetts, imposing a 4% surcharge on income of more than \$1 million.

Wyoming is taking steps to collect taxes more quickly. Producers of coal, oil, gas and uranium will have to pay taxes monthly, instead of up to 18 months after extraction. The change comes after some counties had difficulty collecting millions of dollars owed by coal companies that went bankrupt.

## WAGES

Minimum wage workers will get a pay raise in 23 states as a result of laws passed in previous years, some of which provide annual inflationary adjustments. The increases range from an extra 23 cents in Michigan to an additional \$1.50 in Nebraska, where a ballot measure approved in November will raise the minimum wage from \$8 to \$9.50 an hour.

The gap continues to grow between the 20 states following the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour and the 30 others requiring more. The highest state minimum wage now will be \$15.74 an hour in Washington — more than double the federal rate.

Another law taking effect with the new year will require employers in Washington to include salary and benefits information in job postings, rather than waiting until a job offer to reveal such information. Similar salary transparency laws are in place in half a dozen other states.

Workers in Colorado and Oregon will start seeing paycheck deductions in January to fund new paid family leave programs. But Oregon residents will have to wait until September and Colorado residents until 2024 before they can claim paid time off following a serious illness in their family, the arrival of new

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children or recovery from sexual assault, domestic violence, harassment or stalking.

Ohio will offer a new way for people to spend their paychecks. Sports betting will become legal, joining more than 30 states that have adopted similar laws since a 2018 U.S. Supreme Court ruling said it was OK.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

A new law in Illinois is supposed to eliminate cash bail for people accused of crimes, but a judge put that on hold in late December after 64 counties challenged it as unconstitutional. Requiring bonds to be posted has long been a way to ensure people who are arrested show up for their trials, but critics say the system penalizes the poor. Eliminating cash bail would put Illinois in a group of states including California, Indiana, New Jersey, Nebraska and New York that have prohibited or restricted the practice.

Another area where social justice meets criminal justice is relaxing marijuana laws.

In November, voters made Maryland the 21st state to legalize recreational use by adults. That begins on July 1, 2023. As an interim step at the start of the year, possession by adults of up to 1.5 ounces of cannabis will become a civil offense punishable with a maximum fine of \$100.

In Connecticut, some provisions of a 2021 law that legalized recreational marijuana also kick in, including automatic expungement of convictions for possession of less than 4 ounces of marijuana that were imposed from 2000 through September 2015. According to the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, 21 other states have expungement laws.

Alabama will become the 25th state where it will be legal to carry a concealed handgun without a permit.

A new Missouri law will prohibit homeless people from sleeping on state land without permission. Violators could face up to 15 days in jail and a \$500 fine after an initial warning. The law also prohibits state funding from being used for permanent housing for homeless people, instead directing it toward temporary shelters and assistance with substance use and mental health treatment.

## Ukraine conflict casts shadow on Russia as it enters 2023

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin's New Year's address to the nation usually is rather anodyne and backed with a soothing view of a snowy Kremlin. This year, with soldiers in the background, he lashed out at the West and Ukraine.

The conflict in Ukraine cast a long shadow as Russia entered 2023. Cities curtailed festivities and fireworks. Moscow announced special performances for soldiers' children featuring the Russian equivalent of Santa Claus. An exiled Russian news outlet unearthed a video of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, now the Ukrainian president despised by the Kremlin, telling jokes on a Russian state television station's New Year's show just a decade ago.

Putin, in a nine-minute video shown on TV as each Russian time zone region counted down the final minutes of 2022 on Saturday, denounced the West for aggression and accused the countries of trying to use the conflict in Ukraine to undermine Russia.

"It was a year of difficult, necessary decisions, the most important steps toward gaining full sovereignty of Russia and powerful consolidation of our society," he said, echoing his repeated contention that Moscow had no choice but to send troops into Ukraine because it threatened Russia's security.

"The West lied about peace, but was preparing for aggression, and today it admits it openly, no longer embarrassed. And they cynically use Ukraine and its people to weaken and split Russia," Putin said. "We have never allowed anyone and will not allow anyone to do this."

The Kremlin has muzzled any criticism of its actions in Ukraine, shut independent media outlets and criminalized the spread of any information that differs from the official view — including diverging from calling the campaign a special military operation. But the government has faced increasingly vocal criticism from Russian hardliners, who have denounced the president as weak and indecisive and called for ramping up strikes on Ukraine.

Russia has justified the conflict by saying that Ukraine persecuted Russian speakers in the eastern Donbas region, which had been partly under the control of Russian-backed separatists since 2014. Ukraine

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and the West says these accusations are untrue.

"For years, the Western elites hypocritically assured all of us of their peaceful intentions, including the resolution of the most difficult conflict in the Donbas," Putin said.

Western countries have imposed wide sanctions against Russia, and many foreign companies pulled out of the country or froze operations after Moscow sent troops into Ukraine.

"This year, a real sanctions war was declared on us. Those who started it expected the complete destruction of our industry, finances, and transport. This did not happen, because together we created a reliable margin of safety," Putin said.

Despite such reassurances, New Year's celebrations this year were toned down, with the usual fireworks and concert on Red Square canceled.

Some of Moscow's elaborate holiday lighting displays made cryptic reference to the conflict. At the entrance to Gorky Park stand large lighted letters of V, Z and O – symbols that the Russian military have used from the first days of the military operation to identify themselves.

"Will it make me a patriot and go to the front against my Slavic brothers? No, it will not," park visitor Vladimir Ivaniy said.

Moscow also announced plans to hold special pageant performances for the children of soldiers serving in Ukraine.

The Russian news outlet Meduza, declared a foreign agent in Russia and which now operates from Latvia, on Saturday posted a video of Zelenskyy, who was a hugely popular comedian before becoming Ukraine's president in 2019, performing in a New Year's Day show on Russian state television in 2013.

Zelenskyy jokes that the inexpensive sparkling wine Sovietskoe Shampanskoye, a popular tippie on New Year's, is in the record books as a paradox because "the drink exists but the country doesn't."

Adding to the irony, the show's host was Maxim Galkin, a comedian who fled the country in 2022 after criticizing the military operation in Ukraine.

## Migrant shelters try to help traumatized assault survivors

GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico (AP) — Since he began volunteering two months ago for weekend shifts at a clinic in one of this border city's largest shelters, Dr. Brian Elmore has treated about 100 migrants for respiratory viruses and a handful of more serious emergencies.

But it's a problem he hasn't yet managed to address that worries him the most – the worsening trauma that so many migrants carry after long journeys north that often involve witnessing murders and suffering from kidnappings and sexual assault.

"Most of our patients have symptoms of PTSD — I want to initiate a screening for every patient," said Elmore, an emergency medicine doctor, at Clinica Hope. It was opened this fall by the Catholic nonprofit Hope Border Institute with help from Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, which borders Juarez.

Doctors, social workers, shelter directors, clergy and law enforcement say growing numbers of migrants suffer violence that amounts to torture and are arriving at the U.S.-Mexican border in desperate need of trauma-informed medical and mental health treatment.

But resources for this specialized care are so scarce, and the network of shelters so overwhelmed by new arrivals and migrants who've been stuck for months by U.S. asylum policies, that only the most severe cases can be handled.

"Like a pregnant 13-year-old who fled gang rapes, and so needs help with childcare and middle school," said Zury Reyes Borrero, a case manager in Arizona with the Center for Victims of Torture, who visited that girl when she gave birth. "We get people at their most vulnerable. Some don't even realize they're in the U.S."

In the past six months, Reyes Borrero and a colleague have helped about 100 migrants at Catholic Community Services' Casa Alitas, a shelter in Tucson, Arizona, that in December was receiving about 700 people daily released by U.S. authorities and coming from countries as distinct as Congo and Mexico.

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Each visit can take hours, as the case workers try to build a rapport with migrants, focusing on empowering them, Reyes Borrero said.

"This is not a community that we talk babbling brook with... They might not have any memory that's safe," said Sarah Howell, who runs a clinical practice and a nonprofit treating migrant survivors of torture in Houston.

When she visits patients in their new Texas communities, they routinely introduce relatives or neighbors who also need help with severe trauma but lack the stability and safety necessary for healing.

"The estimated level of need is at least five times higher than we support," said Leonce Byimana, director of U.S. clinical services for the Center for Victims of Torture, which operates clinics in Arizona, Georgia and Minnesota.

Most migrants are traumatized by what they left behind, as well as what they encountered en route, Byimana said. They need "first-aid mental health" as well as long-term care that's even harder to arrange once they disperse from border-area shelters to communities across the country, he added.

Left untreated, such trauma can escalate to where it necessitates psychiatric care instead of therapy and self-help, said Dylan Corbett, Hope Border Institute's executive director.

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, the U.S. branch of the global Catholic refugee agency, is planning to ramp up mental health resources in the coming weeks in El Paso, which has seen a surge in crossings, said its director, Joan Rosenhauer.

All along the border, the most staggering trend has been the increase in pregnant women and girls, some younger than 15, who are victims of assault and domestic violence.

Volunteers and advocates are encountering so many of these survivors that they had to focus scarce legal, medical and shelter resources on helping them, leaving hundreds of other victims of political violence and organized crime to fend for themselves.

Service providers and migrants say the most dangerous spot on journeys filled with peril at every step is "la selva" – the Darien Gap jungle separating Colombia from Panama, crossed by increasing numbers of Venezuelans, Cubans and Haitians who first moved to South America and are now seeking safer lives in the United States.

Natural perils like deadly snakes and rivers only add to the risks of an area rife with bandits preying on migrants. Loreta Salgado was months into her flight from Cuba when she crossed the Darien.

"We saw many dead, we saw people who were robbed, people who were raped. We saw that," she repeated, her voice cracking, in a migrant shelter in El Paso a few days before Christmas.

Asked about "la selva," some women just suck in their breath – and only later reveal having saved their daughters by speeding them along and getting raped themselves, or enduring strained relationships with their partners who were made to watch the assault, Howell said.

"I don't think it's the first rape that most women I've talked to have experienced. But it's the most violent and the most shameful, because it was in front of other people," Howell added.

In many cases, forensic evaluations at border clinics that document mental and physical abuse are also crucial to migrants' asylum cases, because often no other evidence is available for court proceedings, Byimana said. Asylum is granted to those who cannot return to their countries for fear of persecution on specific grounds, including sometimes very high, systemic levels of violence against women.

But it takes years for asylum cases to be decided in U.S. immigration court, with a current backlog of more than 1.5 million people, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse. And that's with pandemic-era restrictions still in place that allow authorities to turn away or expel most asylum-seekers.

A long wait for resolution, coming on top of a long journey across multiple countries, can intensify the trauma that migrants experience, advocates say.

"There's a different tension and fear in faces than I've seen before," said Howell, who's been researching trauma and forced migration for 15 years. "They don't know how to stop running."

## Ukraine's debts: US aims to get IMF to reexamine loan fees

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A provision in the recently signed defense spending bill mandates that the United States work to ease Ukraine's debt burden at the International Monetary Fund, which could create tensions at the world's lender-of-last-resort over one of its biggest borrowers.

The National Defense Authorization Act requires American representatives to each global development bank, including the IMF, where the U.S. is the largest stakeholder, to use "the voice, vote, and influence" of the U.S. in seeking to assemble a voting bloc of countries that would change each institution's debt service relief policy regarding Ukraine.

Among other things, the U.S. is tasked with forcing the IMF to reexamine and potentially end its surcharge policy on Ukrainian loans. Surcharges are added fees on loans imposed on countries that are heavily indebted to the IMF.

The U.S. interest in changing the policy comes as it has distributed tens of billions for Ukrainian military and humanitarian aid since the Russian invasion began in February. Most recently, Ukraine will receive \$44.9 billion in aid from the U.S. as part of a \$1.7 trillion government-wide spending bill.

Inevitably, some U.S. grant money is spent servicing IMF loans.

"I can see why the Senate would want to relax the surcharge for Ukraine," Peter Garber, an economist who most recently worked at the global markets research division of Deutsche Bank, wrote in an email. "As the principal bankroller of economic aid for Ukraine, the US would not want to deliver funds only to have them go right to the coffers of the IMF."

Economists Joseph Stiglitz at Columbia University and Kevin P. Gallagher at Boston University wrote in February about surcharges, saying that "forcing excessive repayments lowers the productive potential of the borrowing country, but also harms creditors" and requires borrowers "to pay more at exactly the moment when they are most squeezed from market access in any other form."

Other economists say the fees provide an incentive for members with large outstanding balances to repay their loans promptly.

Even with the aid, the beleaguered Ukrainian economy is expected to shrink by 35 percent, according to the World Bank, and the country will owe roughly \$360 million in surcharge fees alone to the IMF by 2023.

The effort to wrangle the IMF's 24 directors, who are elected by member countries or by groups of countries, to end the surcharges may not be so easy.

Just before Christmas, the directors decided to maintain the surcharge policy. They said in a Dec. 20 statement that most directors "were open to exploring possible options for providing temporary surcharge relief," but others "noted that the average cost of borrowing from the Fund remains significantly below market rates."

Prominent economists studying the war's impacts pointed out in a December report — "Rebuilding Ukraine: Principles and Policies," by the Paris- and London-based Centre for Economic Policy Research — that "some significant voting members may have interests that are not aligned with having Ukraine succeed economically."

Securing consistent financing to Ukraine could become harder as the war rages on. There are growing fears of a global recession and concerns that European allies are struggling to deliver on their financing promises. In addition, the GOP is set this coming week to take control of the House, with the top Republican, Rep. Kevin McCarthy, saying his party will not write a "blank check" for Ukraine.

Mark Weisbrot, co-director of the liberal Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, said the surcharge issue affects not just Ukraine, but also other countries facing debt crises. Among them: Pakistan, hit by flooding and humanitarian crises, as well as Argentina, Ecuador, and Egypt, who together are on the hook for billions in surcharges.

"There is no logic to the IMF imposing surcharges on countries already in crisis," Weisbrot said, "which inevitably happens because the surcharges are structured to hit countries already facing financial problems."

He said the issue will become more urgent as Ukraine's debt grows and the war drags on.

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Jeffrey Sachs, an economist and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, said "these surcharges should certainly be eliminated," adding: "The IMF undercuts its core lender-of-last-resort role."

## Tradition of hiking in the new year reaches all 50 US states

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A simple plan to get more people enjoying the outdoors on New Year's Day has become a nationwide movement after a hike at a Massachusetts park more than three decades ago.

Just 380 people participated in the initial First Day Hike in 1992 at the nearly 7,000-acre (2,830-hectare) Blue Hills Reservation just south of Boston. On Sunday, tens of thousands of people are expected to take part in First Day Hikes at hundreds of parks in all 50 states.

A vigorous walk is a great way to start the new year on the right foot — literally — and get outdoors, enjoy nature, spend time with family and friends and maybe start working on that New Year's resolution to get in shape, park officials and participants said.

"It's all about mind, body and soul," said Rodney Franklin, director of parks for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The late Patrick Flynn, the former supervisor at Blue Hills, came up with the original plan.

"He wanted a way to bring people into the parks in the winter time because so many people think of parks as just a summertime place," said Priscilla Geigis, deputy commissioner for conservation and resource stewardship at the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Steve Olanoff, 77, took part in that inaugural event at Blue Hills back in 1992 and is now a volunteer who helps shepherd hikers along the park's trails each year.

"Back then, there was nothing to do on New Year's Day," he said. "Everyone just sat home and watched television. When I heard there was an opportunity to go for a hike I said, 'Well, I'll try that.' It's really amazing that so many people are doing this now."

Over the years, more Massachusetts state parks joined in. Then, parks in other states came on board. In 2012, First Day Hikes went nationwide when the National Association of State Park Directors endorsed the idea.

"It just goes to show that one person can have an idea that can spread like that," Geigis said.

Some states have added their own twists. At Ink Lake State Park in Burnet County, Texas, northwest of Austin, participants can go for a first day run, bike ride, or paddle in a canoe or kayak.

Snowshoes or cross country skis may be required at some Oregon locations, said Jason Resch, marketing manager for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Elijah Bristow State Park near Eugene is even offering a first day horseback ride.

"Just bring your own horse," Resch said.

Some hikes are guided by park rangers or volunteers who teach about the history, geography, flora and fauna of a particular park. That in turn promotes stewardship, and a commitment to protect parks and open spaces, Geigis said. Refreshments are offered at many sites.

And people of all ability levels are welcome.

"We want to appeal to as many people as possible," Franklin said. "So you'll have some of our hikes that take place on paved, flat surfaces that are not very long, but if you want a brisk, longer hike, you can do that."

Families with babies, seniors, and people with their dogs have participated in the First Day Hike at the Chester Blandford State Forest in Massachusetts, said Elizabeth Massa, president of the Western Mass Hilltown Hikers, who guides the 1.5-mile (2.4-kilometer) jaunt.

"If your New Year's resolution is the get more exercise, lose weight, get healthier, then this is your opportunity," she said.

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## Arizona governor's tenure defined by push right, Trump feud

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey beamed as an excavator's heavy claw smashed through the windows of an old state office building and began tearing off the façade.

In one of his last public appearances in mid-December, the outgoing Republican governor watched the physical manifestation of a project that has defined his eight-year tenure: tearing down state government.

Ducey also cut taxes, vastly expanded school choice, restricted abortion and built a makeshift wall on the U.S.-Mexico border in defiance of a Democratic president, checking just about every conservative box.

At a time when the conservative movement is almost singularly oriented around "owning the libs," Ducey spent his two terms outmaneuvering Democrats to advance Republican priorities, reshaping his state in a decisively conservative direction.

Yet he leaves office Monday with a limited national profile and the enmity of GOP foot soldiers less interested in the pile of things he accomplished than the one thing he would not do: overturn then-President Donald Trump's defeat in the state's 2020 election.

"Ducey really gave the road map of how to govern, how to stay relatively popular and get things done," said Mike Noble, a Phoenix-based pollster who used to work for Republicans and now focuses on non-partisan surveys.

Democrat Katie Hobbs is becoming governor, but a Republican-controlled Legislature will limit her ability to undo much of what Ducey enacted. Ducey's preferred successor, businesswoman Karrin Taylor Robson, lost the GOP primary to Trump-backed former television anchor Kari Lake, who rose to prominence on the right as a fierce proponent of Trump's election lies.

Ducey offered a tepid endorsement of the entire Republican slate but did not campaign with Lake, who lost narrowly to Hobbs and continues to claim the election was marred by intentional misconduct. She frequently attacked Ducey on her way to winning the GOP nomination.

The governor also feuded openly with Kelli Ward, the state GOP chair. But despite the dominance of Lake and Ward in the current state GOP, he plays down their significance.

"They are inconsequential and have zero power," Ducey told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday.

Ducey has said little about his plans after leaving the governor's office. He is sometimes mentioned as a top-ticket recruit for Arizona's 2024 Senate race or as a dark-horse candidate for president or vice president — if the GOP is interested in his brand of limited-government conservatism.

He rejected a recruitment effort by establishment Republicans to run against Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly, who was reelected in November. Ducey also has largely eschewed the social media taunts that helped Republicans such as Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis build a national profile.

Ducey offered his most candid assessment of the modern GOP in a September speech at the Ronald Reagan President Library and Museum. The governor warned that "a dangerous strain of big government activism has taken hold" within the party and he lamented that a segment of the conservative movement is driven by anger instead of substance.

"I look at the party and worry that candidates are more defined by their attitudes than the policies they propose," Ducey said. "And yes, a good many small-government conservatives have morphed into bullies — people who are very comfortable using government power to tell companies and people how to live their lives."

Ducey walked a tightrope during Trump's presidency, initially forging a strong alliance with him and never issuing public criticism, even when his tweets or border policies threatened to be problematic for Arizona.

But their relationship crumbled live on television, when Ducey silenced a call from Trump — signified by a "Hail to the Chief" ring tone — as the governor signed the paperwork certifying Democrat Joe Biden's narrow presidential victory in Arizona. Trump more recently called Ducey "one of the worst governors in America."

Democrats, including state Sen. Martín Quezada, say Ducey could have done more to help prevent



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Trump's lies about the 2020 election from taking root in the state Republican Party.

Ducey avoided, for example, weighing in on an unprecedented partisan review of the 2020 election conducted by Trump supporters on behalf of Senate Republicans, an episode that became a widely mocked spectacle. He also raised millions of dollars for some of the most extreme voices in the Legislature to keep a GOP majority.

"He could have been a leader and stood on a platform and said, 'Our elections are safe, our elections are secure and people can trust our election system,'" Quezada said. "That's an opportunity he really missed."

Democrats also fault Ducey for being slow to restore money for schools as the state rebounded from the Great Recession. Meager funding and stagnant wages led to a teacher walkout in 2018, culminating in a 20% raise for teachers that was brokered by Ducey. He took heat from the left for rapidly lifting his COVID-19 restrictions, which was followed by an immediate surge of deaths in the summer of 2020.

Ducey said his approach to election denialism is to "address it with facts" and recognize that there are "very good people who have been misled."

"Sometimes you need a 'clean up on aisle nine' to focus the mind," he said. "And I do think the candidates that you saw focusing on the future, rather than looking in the rearview mirror and talking about the past, were the ones that had great success."

During his tenure, Ducey notched victories for just about every piece of the conservative coalition that defined the GOP before Trump's 2016 victory reshaped the party's tone and focus.

He signed a first-in-the-nation universal school voucher law, which lawmakers approved just two years after voters decisively rejected a less ambitious measure.

He backed new restrictions on abortion year after year, including a ban on terminating pregnancies after 15 weeks gestational age. A state appeals court ruled Friday the law takes precedence over a near total abortion ban that dates to the Civil War.

He expanded the state Supreme Court and packed it with conservatives, creating a legacy that will endure long after he leaves office and could further constrain Hobbs' ambitions. He rejects comparisons to a push by liberals to expand the U.S. Supreme Court because, he says, Arizona's high court was always expected to grow with the state.

He presided over a diversification of the state's economy, liberally offering tax breaks and a hands-off government to technology companies and manufacturers. He inherited a massive budget deficit in 2015 and leaves with a record surplus that allowed him to cut taxes.

A native of Toledo, Ohio, Ducey graduated from Arizona State University and went on to run Cold Stone Creamery, which he built from a neighborhood ice cream shop near his alma mater into a franchised national brand.

He sold the business and turned to politics, getting elected state treasurer in 2010 and governor four years later.

As head of the Republican Governors Association, Ducey built his profile among conservative donors and GOP political operatives, relationships that could be useful if he decides to run for another office.

Ducey said he's still considering his next move and did not rule out another run for elected office, adding, "I do think I've got another act or two in me."

"I've loved being part of the conservative cause, and I care about it greatly," Ducey said. "So I'm open-minded to what's next."

## Today in History SUN JAN 01

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, Jan. 1, the first day of 2023. There are 364 days left in the year.

On Jan. 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that slaves in rebel states shall be "forever free."

On this date:

In 1892, the Ellis Island Immigrant Station in New York formally opened.

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In 1942, the Rose Bowl was played in Durham, North Carolina, because of security concerns in the wake of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor; Oregon State defeated Duke, 20-16.

In 1953, country singer Hank Williams Sr., 29, was discovered dead in the back seat of his car during a stop in Oak Hill, West Virginia, while he was being driven to a concert date in Canton, Ohio.

In 1954, NBC broadcast the first coast-to-coast color TV program as it presented live coverage of the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California.

In 1959, Fidel Castro and his revolutionaries overthrew Cuban leader Fulgencio Batista, who fled to the Dominican Republic.

In 1975, a jury in Washington found Nixon administration officials John N. Mitchell, H.R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and Robert C. Mardian guilty of charges related to the Watergate cover-up (Mardian's conviction for conspiracy was later overturned on appeal).

In 1979, the United States and China held celebrations in Washington and Beijing to mark the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In 1984, the breakup of AT&T took place as the telecommunications giant was divested of its 22 Bell System companies under terms of an antitrust agreement.

In 1985, the music cable channel VH-1 made its debut with a video of Marvin Gaye performing "The Star-Spangled Banner."

In 1993, Czechoslovakia peacefully split into two new countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

In 2006, President George W. Bush strongly defended his domestic spying program, calling it legal as well as vital to thwarting terrorist attacks. The Medicare prescription drug plan went into effect.

In 2014, the nation's first legal recreational pot shops opened in Colorado at 8 a.m. Mountain time.

Ten years ago: The Senate approved a compromise in the small hours to avert the "fiscal cliff" and sent it to the House, which approved it in a late-night vote; President Barack Obama announced he would sign the measure. In Maryland, same-sex marriage became legal in the first state south of the Mason-Dixon Line. No. 8 Stanford held off Wisconsin 20-14 in the 99th Rose Bowl. Singer Patti Page, 85, died in Encinitas, California.

Five years ago: Former Fox News Channel anchor and 1989 Miss America Gretchen Carlson was named chairwoman of the Miss America Organization's board of directors, with three other past pageant winners joining her on the board. In the first Rose Bowl to go into overtime, Georgia advanced to college football's national championship game with a 54-48 win over Oklahoma. Alabama advanced by beating top-ranked Clemson, 24-6, in the Sugar Bowl. Peter Martins, the longtime leader of the New York City Ballet, announced his retirement in the midst of an investigation into accusations of sexual misconduct. California launched legal sales of recreational marijuana, with customers lining up early for ribbon cuttings and promotions.

One year ago: A Louisiana federal judge ruled that President Joe Biden could not require teachers in the Head Start early education program to be vaccinated against COVID-19. A year after New Year's Day passed without a Rose Parade due to the coronavirus pandemic, the floral spectacle marched on in Pasadena, California, despite a new surge of infections. Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu was remembered at a state funeral in South Africa for his Nobel Peace Prize-earning role in ending the country's apartheid regime and for championing the rights of LGBTQ people. Chicago police said 2021 had ended as one of the deadliest years on record in the city, with 797 homicides. Former Denver Broncos and Atlanta Falcons coach Dan Reeves died at his Atlanta home at the age of 77.

Today's Birthdays: Documentary maker Frederick Wiseman is 93. Actor Frank Langella is 85. Rock singer-musician Country Joe McDonald is 81. Writer-comedian Don Novello is 80. Actor Rick Hurst is 77. Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., is 69. The former head of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, is 67. Rapper Grandmaster Flash is 65. Actor Renn Woods is 65. Actor Dedee Pfeiffer is 59. Country singer Brian Flynn (Flynnville Train) is 57. Actor Morris Chestnut is 54. R&B singer Tank is 47. Model Elin Nordegren is 43. Actor Jonas Armstrong is 42. Actor Eden Riegel is 42. Olympic gold medal ice dancer Meryl Davis is 36. Rock musician Noah Sierota (Echosmith) is 27.

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Today's Highlight in History:

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Five years ago: The nation's first legal recreational pot shops opened in Colorado at 8 a.m. Mountain Standard Time. Actress Juanita Moore, 99, died in Los Angeles. No. 4 Michigan State romped to a 24-20 victory over No. 5 Stanford in the 100th Rose Bowl. No. 15 Central Florida pulled off one of the biggest upsets of the bowl season by outlasting No. 6 Baylor 52-42 in the Fiesta Bowl.

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