

Groton Daily Independent

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"Though no one can go back and make a brand-new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand-new ending."

CARL BARD

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

Groton Community Calendar

Tuesday, Jan. 3

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

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

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

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

Emmanuel: Executive Committee Meeting, 7 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 4

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

School Breakfast: Eggs and breakfast potatoes.

School Lunch: Cheese nachos.

Chamber Board Meeting, noon, at City Hall

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

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

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

Thursday, Jan. 5

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

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Chicken sandwich, fries.

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

Emmanuel: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

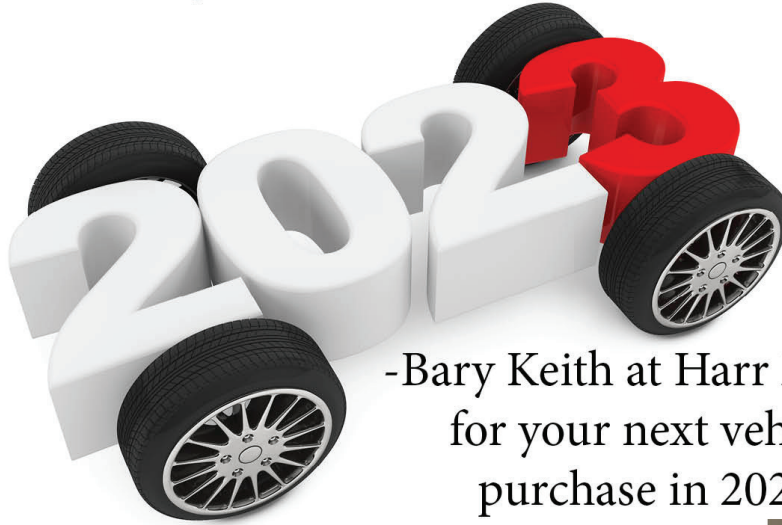
OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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

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Remember your Favorite Sales Person -



-Bary Keith at Harr Motors
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Bary Keith
Sales
(605) 216-6952



Happy **2023**
New Year



Harry Implement
"Family Owned & Operated Since 1935!"
(605) 395-6421 ~ Ferney

Let there
be peace
on Earth in
2023 and
may peace
be with you
and your
family
throughout
the year!



GDILIVE.COM



Basketball Double Header
Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023, starts at 4 p.m.
Warner at Groton Area



Junior Varsity Games
Sponsored by Gordon and Dorene Nelson

followed by Varsity Games
Sponsored by
Bary Keith at Harr Motors
Bierman Farm Service
Blocker Construction
Dacotah Bank
Groton Chamber of Commerce
Groton Ford
John Sieh Agency
Locke Electric
Spanier Harvesting & Trucking
Bahr Spray Foam
Thunder Seed with John Wheeting

**Shane Clark will be doing the play-by-play calling
of the girls games today!**

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New year memories

It was nice to ease into the new year with an exquisitely-seasoned five-course meal at Bernbaum's in Fargo. If you've never eaten there, I highly recommend it, and although it wasn't on Saturday night's menu, you definitely should order the matzo ball soup when you're there for lunch.

I always appreciate having the holidays off because for years I was a radio "air personality" which meant that I worked most holidays—certainly every New Year's Eve—spinning records for dances. Disco was big back then.

Every New Year's Eve, my buddy Bob and I found ourselves scraping frost from the inside of the windshield of a rattling white Chevy van that leaked frigid air through the floorboards.

Frostbite wasn't our only concern. The equipment was stored in the van when not in use so we were always in danger of electrocution as the frost melted off the amps when we fired them up.

After the dance, while all the party attendees were snoring away peacefully in bed, we'd be busting drifts at 2 a.m. while listening to Larry King on the radio.

There wasn't much glory in it, but I've worked tougher jobs. Alcohol was usually at the root of our problems, especially on New Year's Eve, when some raw-boned young farmer with a snoot-full would provoke Bob. Bob had anger issues. Which meant I had anger issues.

"Play something good," Jethro would say. Oh, that narrows it down.

Why were they always built like pro wrestlers, and why did Bob, who weighed in soggy at 150 pounds, have no fear of these maniacs? They were serial killers, every one of them.

Initially, Bob would politely ask what specific "good" song The Incredible Hulk wanted to hear, but, of course, they'd never be able to come up with a title, so the conversation would deteriorate, and eventually Bob would suggest that they perform an impossible anatomical gymnastic feat. This happened in Columbia, SD, one night back when Reagan was president and Donna Summer was big.

I pulled my partner aside. "Uh, Bob. You know who's going to have to fight this guy, right?" Make no mistake, I would have been pummeled. I just would have lasted longer.

After years of such adventures, I was thrilled to have New Year's off when I was working radio in Juneau. I'd planned a nice meal at a swank restaurant with my girlfriend. A couple days before the New Year, however, the receptionist patched a call into studio. It was someone from the Filipino Hall. It turned out their band had canceled. Probably eaten by bears. After all, it was Alaska. Weird stuff happened.

Once, I was flown to a remote rowdy logging community by float plane for a school prom. The next morning, when I walked a long hall toward the restaurant, I came upon a nearly-naked, inebriated lumberjack sprawled out on the carpet. By nearly-naked, I mean he was wearing one floppy wool sock.

It traumatized me.

"Where's my room?" he asked me. For the record, I didn't know, but dude, if you're locked out of your room and all you've got is one sock, your ankle probably isn't the best place for it.

Anyway, I expressed my sincere condolences about the bear massacre but very firmly told the caller I was unavailable for New Year's Eve. He cajoled. I held firm.

"Okay, for the sake of argument, if you were available, what would you charge?"

I resolved to end the conversation then and there. "\$1,000 for two hours." Even though things were more expensive in Alaska, that was outrageous in the mid-Eighties. It's probably still outrageous.

"Okay," he said without missing a beat.

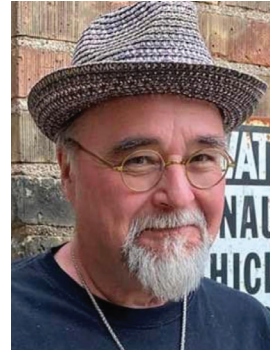
"Excuse me? What?! There's no way I'm worth that kind of money. I'm horrible! Besides, that's entrapment!"

They were lovely people. Obviously ruthless, but nice as could be, and when the two hours expired, they passed the hat, gave me another \$500 to keep going.

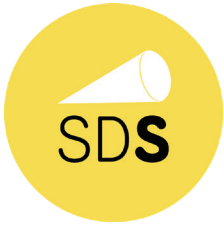
Several times a year thereafter, they'd call, and I grew quite fond of them. It wasn't about the money. They were always genuinely happy to see me—and it's kind of nice to feel wanted, isn't it?

Plus, they never once told me to play "something good."

Happy New Year, friends. Keep your room key in your sock.



That's Life
by Tony Bender



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

Don't let party loyalty trump voting for competent candidates

Dana Hess

JANUARY 2, 2023 6:30 AM

There will be some new faces in Pierre this month as legislative and executive oaths are administered. One face, however, will be familiar. Marty Jackley will return to serve as attorney general.

Jackley's previous time in the office was highlighted by competence and integrity, two qualities missing during the tenure of his successor, Jason Ravensborg. Even without the benefit of 20-20 hindsight, voters in this state must wonder what in the world they were thinking, electing a man to the top law enforcement office in the state who had little to no prosecutorial experience.

The only thing Ravensborg had in his favor was his status as a Republican. He handily defeated the Democrat running against him, even though Randy Seiler had a wealth of experience as a federal prosecutor.

Ravnsborg ended his tenure in the attorney general's office as the first statewide elected official ever impeached and removed from office. Prosecutors at the impeachment proceedings went to some lengths to question Ravensborg's integrity and honesty. Even their most offhand examples show that this was a man who should never have been put in a position of responsibility, no matter what his political party affiliation.

Prosecutors maintained that after the accident that killed Joseph Boever of Highmore, Ravensborg lied to law enforcement about the accident and improperly used the resources of his office to impede the investigation.

They built their case by questioning Ravensborg's integrity with small examples. Ravensborg was noted for speeding even before the Highmore accident. To highlight his tendency to misuse his office, they showed body camera footage from officers who had stopped Ravensborg for speeding. In each case, he established early on, "I'm the attorney general." At one stop, as Ravensborg was heading to National Guard training, he switched it up saying, "I'm the commanding officer."

Prosecutors questioned Ravensborg's honesty with an example from the night of the accident. As Ravensborg got ready to leave a political event in Redfield and head back to Pierre, he had two phones: his personal phone and a government phone for conducting state business. Prior to starting his trip home, Ravensborg took his personal phone and set the On My Way app. This is an app that provides prizes and points to drivers who don't use their phones while driving.

Ravnsborg set the On My Way app on his personal phone and then proceeded to give his government phone a workout. While he was driving to Pierre he had a conversation with his father. When that call ended, the attorney general scrolled through news headlines and checked his email. All the while, he was racking up prizes with the On My Way app for not using a phone while driving.

People who voted for Ravensborg, and there were about 179,000 of them, might ask how they were supposed to know they were getting a small-time scammer when they voted him in as attorney general. There's probably no way to know that, but they could look at the credentials of the other candidates at the GOP nominating convention and ask how a lawyer with little to no prosecutorial experience was nominated to run for attorney general instead of either of two other candidates who had experience as state's attorneys. Maybe On My Way wasn't the only one getting scammed.

The way to elect the best people is to loosen up a little on party loyalty in favor of experience. It's likely South Dakotans will be faced with another less than qualified elected official in the years to come in the person of new Secretary of State Monae Johnson.

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Johnson unseated incumbent Secretary of State Steve Barnett at the Republican convention by using election denier buzz words like "election integrity" and "voter fraud." To those who pay attention to elections in South Dakota, it seems like the state has plenty of the former and little to none of the latter, but that doesn't matter to Johnson and it didn't matter to 61% of the voters at the GOP convention who kicked Barnett to the curb.

Johnson, who campaigned on bringing more transparency to the Secretary of State's office, roundly refused to say whether she believes that Joe Biden beat Donald Trump in 2020. Now South Dakotans find themselves in the position of having an election denier running the office that oversees elections. That's like having a member of the Flat Earth Society run your globe company.

When Barnett cut out for the private sector, Johnson was sworn in early as secretary of state. Her short time in office has been notable for the veteran staff members she's let go for no good reason.

Recent history shows that we may be putting too much faith in political parties to field serious candidates for office. It's up to voters to look at the qualifications of candidates and, sometimes, put aside their party loyalties in favor of electing the most qualified people. If we had done that, perhaps the state could have avoided the dumpster fire that resulted from Ravensborg's tenure as attorney general and maybe we wouldn't be catching the first whiffs of the smoldering mess that Johnson is making in the Secretary of State's Office.

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



Junior Varsity Sponsors
Any one interested in
sponsoring any of these games
on GDILIVE.COM?

Girls C game and JV game with
Clark on Thursday

Boys JV game with Clark on
Friday at Clark

Boys and Girls JV games
Saturday with SF Lutheran

\$25 per game

Text Paul at 605-397-7460

As another winter storm strains the electric grid, it's time to fix transmission, experts say

BY: ROBERT ZULLO - JANUARY 1, 2023 6:30 AM

The deadly winter storm, christened Elliott by the Weather Channel, that tore through much of the United States over the Christmas weekend placed a huge strain on the American electric grid, pushing it past the breaking point in some places.

Frigid temperatures, in some places setting records, drove a surge in electric demand while also causing big problems for gas, coal and other power plants that took electric generation offline just when it was needed most. That forced some southeastern utilities to cut power to thousands of people on a rotating basis, and led grid operators to urge customers to conserve power.

"Supply and demand for electricity have to exactly balance in real time," said Michael Goggin, a longtime electric industry analyst and vice president at Grid Strategies, a consulting firm focused on clean energy integration. "If not, in a matter of seconds the grid can collapse."

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation announced Wednesday that they will open a joint investigation into the power system's performance.

"There will be multiple lessons learned from last week's polar vortex that will inform future winter preparations," said Jim Robb, president and CEO of NERC, the nonprofit regulator that sets and enforces reliability standards for the bulk power system in the U.S.

"This storm underscores the increasing frequency of significant extreme weather events (the fifth major winter event in the last 11 years) and underscores the need for the electric sector to change its planning scenarios and preparations for extreme events."

But for some experts, a major lesson from the storm is already plain, and it's the same as learned in past severe winter weather: The U.S. grid needs to be better connected to enable power to be moved easily to where it's needed in moments of crisis.

"Although this was a massive event that ultimately affected huge parts of the country, there were geographic elements to it," said Ari Peskoe, director of the Electricity Law Initiative at Harvard Law School. "The attention belongs on the transmission system."

The storm

John Moore, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, said the storm was unusual in several aspects, including the rapid drop in temperatures triggered by a blast of arctic air pushing down from Canada far into the American South, the rapid strengthening called "bombogenesis," and the heft of the pressure behind the system, which he said set a record in Edmonton, Canada.

"It's a very broad system and it's a lot of impacts associated with it. ... The cold air with this one was a little bit stronger than we usually see this time of year," Moore said, noting that the storm caused temperatures to drop 37 degrees in one hour at Denver International Airport, for example, and set temperature records in Wyoming and Montana, according to preliminary data.

As it moved east, it caused a deadly blizzard in the Buffalo area that claimed at least 40 lives and wreaked havoc on the electric grid.

"There were likely other records set across the South and East Coast," Moore said.

Outages

Though hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses were left without power because of normal storm calamities such as downed power lines, many other customers in the Carolinas and the Tennessee Valley Authority service territory, which includes most of Tennessee and parts of Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Virginia and North Carolina, saw outages because of the strain struggling power plants and surging demand placed on the grid.

"What we saw was concerning," said Goggin, who was monitoring data from many of the major regional transmission organizations hit by the storm. "You saw very high unplanned or forced outages of power plants of many types but primarily fossil." The extreme cold shut down many natural gas production wells,

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he said, which limited pipeline supplies that feed power plants.

"We've seen a number of events like this where the extreme cold disrupts the gas system which then cascades to the power system," he said.

TVA

On Dec. 23, with demand climbing past 33,000 megawatts (its normal December demand is around 24,000) the TVA for the first time in its 90-year history instituted load shedding — temporary, controlled outages — and urged customers to conserve electricity. The service interruptions ended on Dec. 24, with the TVA saying it had supplied more power over the previous 24 hours than ever before to meet an all-time peak winter demand. POWER magazine also quoted a TVA spokesperson saying that a "limited number" of power plants in TVA's territory "did not operate as expected during this event resulting in a loss of generation."

"We at TVA take full responsibility for the impact we had on our customers," the authority said in a Dec. 28 statement. "We are conducting a thorough review of what occurred and why. We are committed to sharing these lessons learned and — more importantly — the corrective actions we take in the weeks ahead to ensure we are prepared to manage significant events in the future."

In an email to States Newsroom Thursday, a TVA spokesperson could not say how many customers were affected nor provide any information on why power plants weren't able to perform, citing the ongoing review. In the Memphis area, where Memphis Light, Gas and Water is the TVA's largest customer, more than 30,000 customers were affected, WMC-TV, a local station, reported. The Chattanooga Free Press reported on Christmas Eve that the TVA had lost about 6,000 megawatts of generation the day before at coal and gas plants.

"Until the review is completed over the next few weeks, any discussion on individual plants would be inappropriate because it would just be speculation on our part," TVA spokesman Scott Fiedler told States Newsroom. "As the wholesale power provider, we instruct our 153 local power companies to reduce load. They implement the process to limit the impact to their customers. We expect customers were affected by 15-30 minutes in a rolling fashion as LPCs implemented curtailments."

Duke Energy

Duke Energy, one of the nation's largest utility companies, was forced to cut power to about 500,000 of its customers in North Carolina and South Carolina on Dec. 24, with the last of them having power restored by about 6 p.m., spokesman Jeff Brooks said.

"The combination of temperatures that were lower than forecast, customer usage that was higher than projected, some reduction in generating capacity on our system and limited options for additional capacity from outside of our service area due to extreme cold weather that impacted the eastern half of the United States created conditions that resulted in the need to conduct temporary outages," Brooks said.

"We made this difficult decision to protect the electric grid and reliability on our system, and to avoid a potential longer or broader outage to customers."

Another Duke Energy spokesman told States Newsroom in November, in response to a report by NERC that its service territory might be vulnerable to electric outages in the event of extreme winter weather, that the company was "ready to meet the energy needs of our customers every day, regardless of weather."

Brooks said the company is still examining generation performance during the storm and assembling information for regulators and couldn't provide more details on what type of power plants failed to perform.

Duke Energy officials are scheduled to brief the N.C. Utilities Commission staff on the outages on Tuesday.

"It was a combination of generation on our system that was either reduced or unavailable that evening, coupled with the inability to import additional electricity from out of state (which is something we can typically do to add to our native generation) that resulted in the need to initiate temporary outages," Brooks said, noting that solar wasn't a factor because it was dark when the outages were initiated. As of 2021, wind, solar and hydroelectric power made up just 7% of Duke's company-owned output.

"We did believe that we had adequate generation going into Friday evening to meet the forecasted de-

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mand for electricity," Brooks said. "That demand ultimately came in higher than we forecast."

PJM

Faced with plunging temperatures, surging power demand and some power plants struggling to perform, PJM, the nation's largest grid operator, issued a call for customers to conserve energy a day before Christmas Eve. The call came as a surprise for electric industry experts.

In a winter reliability assessment, NERC said that PJM — which coordinates the movement of electricity for 65 million people in all or parts of Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia — "expects no resource problems over the entire 2022-23 winter peak season because installed capacity is almost three times the reserve requirement."

But a big portion of that excess electric generation capacity was struggling to produce power, said Michael Bryson, PJM's senior vice president of system operations.

"We saw pretty significant generation outage data coming in, failing to start or tripping offline, far exceeding our ability to keep up," Bryson said. In its request to the Department of Energy for a temporary waiver of environmental rules for generation units, PJM said its peak load, or electric demand, exceeded 135,000 megawatts on Dec. 23 while about 45,000 megawatts of generation were out or underperforming. (PJM lists about 185,000 megawatts of total generation capacity)

Bryson said in an interview that the performance problems affected coal, gas and nuclear plants. Wind, which makes up the majority of renewable energy in PJM's generation mix (though it is dwarfed by coal, gas and nuclear) performed well during the storm, Bryson said. He had not had the chance to review how solar energy fared during the event.

"We'll be working through those issues unit by unit over the next week," he said, adding that power plants that failed to meet their performance criteria risk financial penalties.

In addition to participating in the NERC-FERC inquiry, "we're going to kick off a pretty comprehensive lessons-learned session ourselves," Bryson said, including examining the organization's own extreme cold electric load forecasting. He said PJM's forecast was low by about 7 to 10% on Dec. 23.

Creating a grid 'bigger than the weather'

Peskoe, the director of the electricity law initiative at Harvard, and Goggin, the energy consulting firm executive, both said too often in the aftermath of major storms that stress the power grid, one form of generation or another comes under fire.

"Extreme weather like this does affect all generation sources," Goggin said, though he said it appeared that renewables, which don't need coal piles that can freeze or pipelines that can be curtailed by cold, largely fared well during the storm.

But the real task for the people in charge of the nation's electric grid, is to grow a transmission system that's "bigger than the weather," as Goggin put it.

"When you do that, it allows you to bring in power from areas that are less affected," he said. "Having a large grid that allows you to move power around as events like this unfold provides a lot of value."

Goggin said he monitored data from the regional transmission organizations affected by the storm, including the Southwest Power Pool and MISO (Midcontinent Independent System Operator), neither of which had to resort to rolling outages, and noticed that wind electric prices in those markets plunged to very low or even negative levels. That means there wasn't enough transmission capacity to get the large amount of electricity the turbines were producing to where it was needed.

"That power would have been extremely valuable in locations farther east but it couldn't get out of the wind-producing areas," he said.

Simon Mahan, executive director of the Southern Renewable Energy Association, a trade group for large renewable energy and energy storage companies, said the storm showed how critical interconnection between regions is for reliability and that other parts of the southern electric grid are vulnerable to severe winter weather like the catastrophic grid collapse Texas saw in 2021.

"Being connected with our neighbors is exceptionally important," he said. "If we weren't connected with

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MISO and PJM, things would have been a disaster. ... Winter Storm Elliott is kind of that storm that showed that the rest of the Southeast is vulnerable like Texas was.”

Mahan noted that the storm raised transparency issues as well, with real-time data on generation and load coming in from areas controlled by regional transmission organizations like PJM and MISO but not so much from areas controlled by the TVA or monopoly utilities like those owned by Duke in the Carolinas and Southern Company in Alabama and Georgia.

“It’s very easy to see where there are problems. But in the Southeast, because there’s so little transparency, it’s hard to see,” he said.

The storm came as FERC is weighing a major proposed rule on streamlining regional electric transmission planning and cost allocation as well as taking into account broader benefits. And it comes less than a month after a FERC-led meeting on potentially requiring a minimum amount of interregional electric transfer capability — electricity that can be moved between regional transmission systems — for public utility transmission providers. Supporters described it as an “insurance policy” in the event of grid crises like extreme weather.

“One thing that I hope is explored as people try to dissect what happened is what would the value have been of interregional transfer capability during this event,” Peskoe said.

FERC Commissioner Willie Phillips at the meeting said better transfer capability can improve reliability and resilience, lower costs for customers by allowing them to access cheaper electricity and accommodate more renewable power.

“Given the likelihood of future extreme weather events and related generation shortfalls, many stakeholders have been asking us to do something,” Phillips said. “Both Winter Storm Uri and the 2014 polar vortex, these events have shown that greater interregional transfer capability has a significant reliability benefit.”

Not everyone was a fan of the idea though. Tricia Pridemore, chair of the Georgia Public Service Commission, which regulates utilities, said states like Georgia that are not part of regional transmission organizations, don’t need a new transfer requirement, citing the state’s utility planning process and cooperation with other southeastern utilities.

“Our bottom-up approach maintains reliability and does not put upward pressure on rates by constructing unnecessary or duplicative transmission assets,” she said. “Georgia is better for maintaining a safe, reliable affordable system all while not being told to do so from a top-down governance structure.”

According to the federal Energy Information Administration, Georgia is one of the more expensive states in the South in terms of average residential retail electric price and Pridemore’s commission just approved a big rate hike for the state’s dominant utility, Georgia Power.

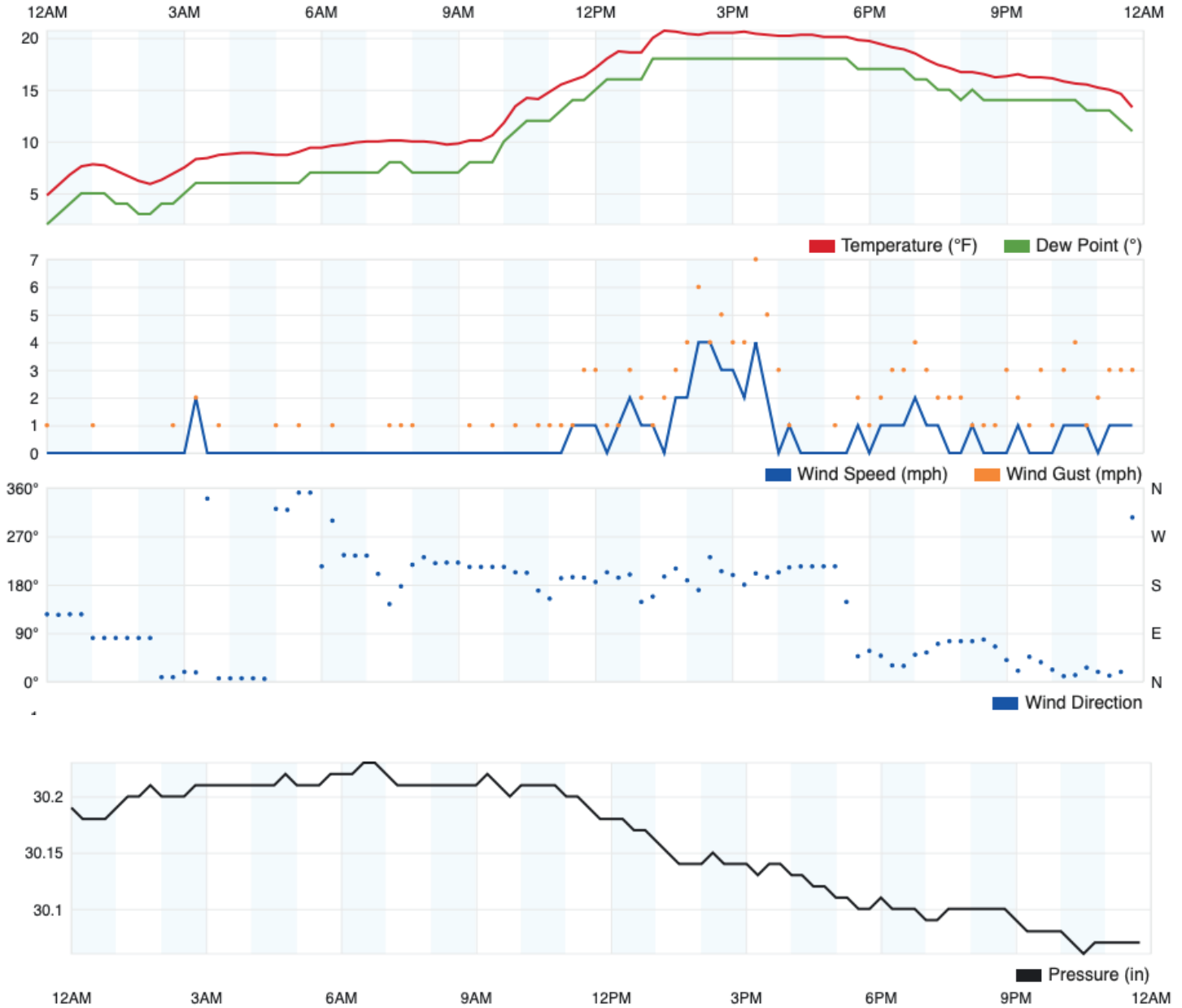
“The reality is during the storm and this past week after the storm, Southern Company and Georgia have really relied on imports from MISO and a significant amount of power from Canada that has been brought into MISO,” Mahan said. “It’s pretty incredible how Canada is helping keep the power on in places like Atlanta.”

Robert Zullo is a national energy reporter based in southern Illinois focusing on renewable power and the electric grid. Robert joined States Newsroom in 2018 as the founding editor of the Virginia Mercury. Before that, he spent 13 years as a reporter and editor at newspapers in Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Louisiana. He has a bachelor’s degree from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. He grew up in Miami, Fla., and central New Jersey.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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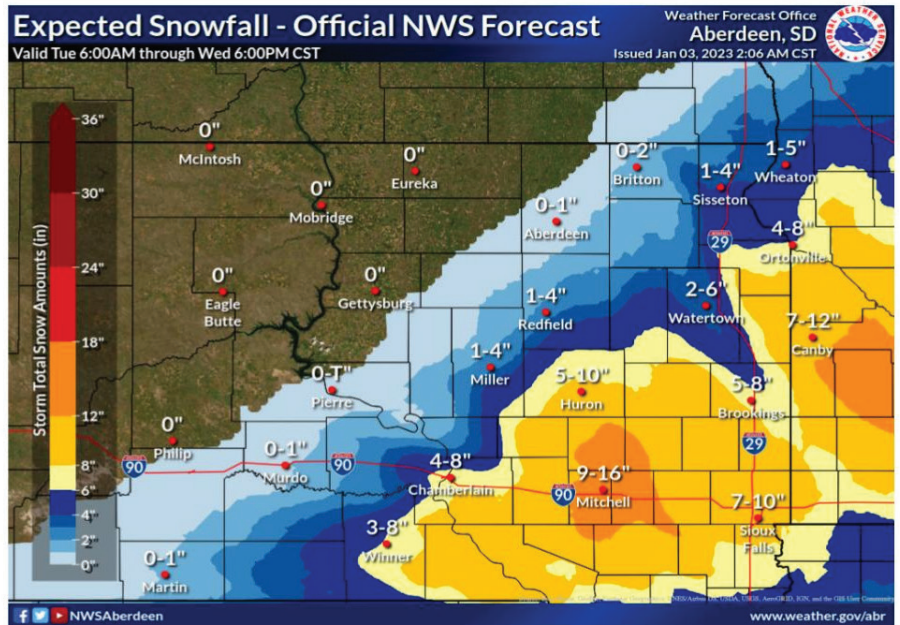
Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
 40%	 30%	 30%				
Chance Snow and Patchy Fog	Chance Snow	Chance Snow	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 19 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 19 °F	Low: 3 °F	High: 21 °F	Low: -1 °F	High: 13 °F



Expected Additional Snowfall

January 3, 2023
3:18 AM

- Moderate to heavy snow generally south and east of a line from Wheaton to Chamberlain today.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The core of heaviest snow has shifted slightly. Look for heaviest snow in the Sisseton hills region and western Minnesota. These snowfall amounts will make for difficult travel in these areas later today into Wednesday.

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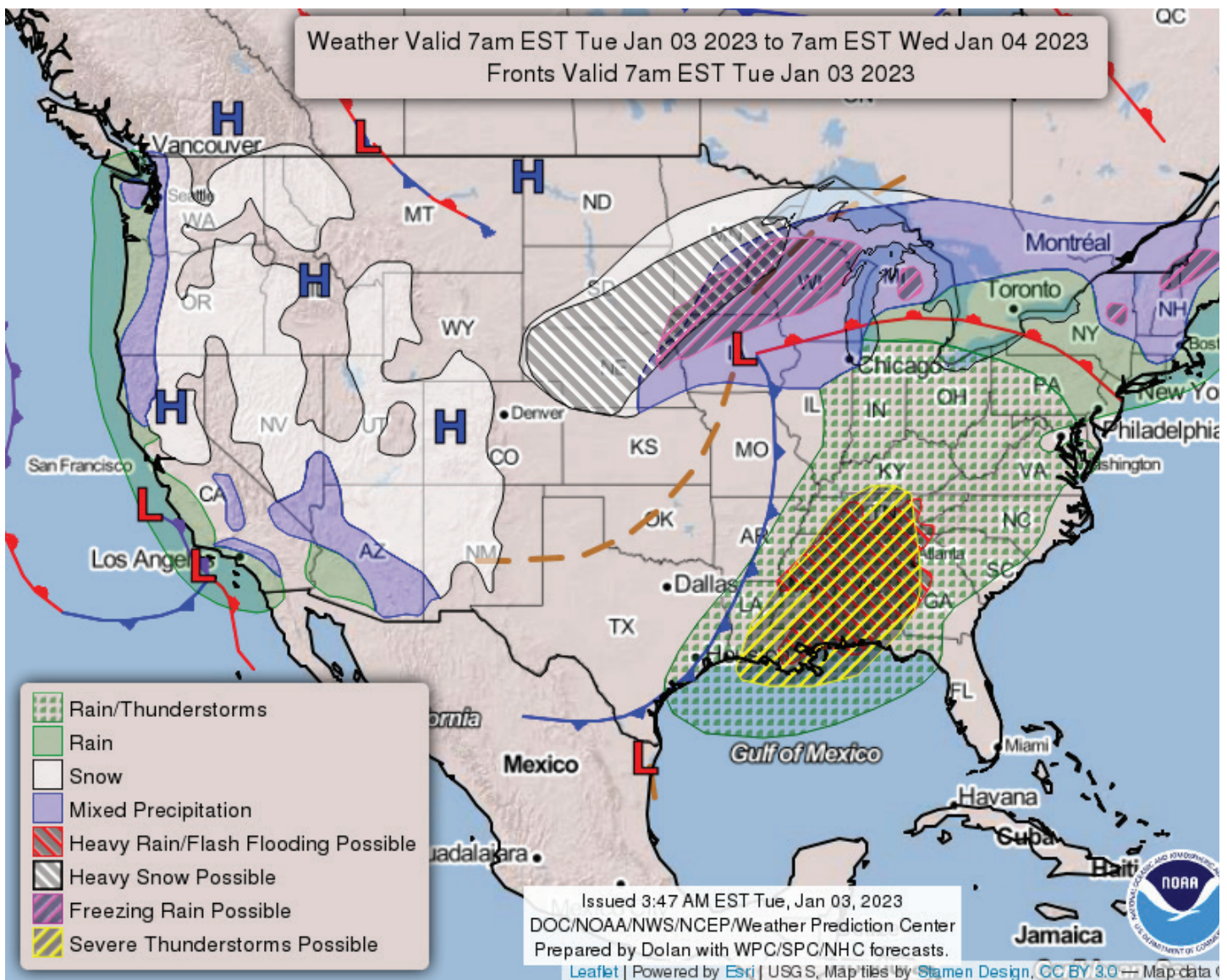
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 21 °F at 1:33 PM
Low Temp: 5 °F at 12:00 AM
Wind: 8 mph at 3:33 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 52 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 51 in 1962
Record Low: -34 in 1912
Average High: 24°F
Average Low: 3°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.06
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.06
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:03:20 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10:22 AM



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Today in Weather History

January 3, 1997: A powerful area of low pressure and deep Arctic high pressure brought almost all winter elements to central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota from the afternoon of the 3rd to the morning of the 5th. The storm began with widespread freezing rain, mainly over northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, where significant accumulations of ice occurred on roads, trees, and power lines. Late in the evening of the 3rd, the freezing rain changed to sleet and then snow, with substantial snowfall accumulations of 6 to as much as 27 inches by late on the 4th. As the Arctic high pressure pushed in through the morning and afternoon of the 4th, northwest winds increased to 25 to 45 mph gusting to 55 mph, creating widespread blizzard conditions, drifts up to 20 feet, and wind chills from 40 to 70 below. The massive accumulation of ice and snow across parts of central and mainly across northeast South Dakota resulted in the roof collapse of over 150 rural buildings. The roofs collapsed onto farm machinery and livestock with a lot of the machinery damaged and a lot of animals injured or killed. The collapse of so many buildings from snow and ice was believed to be the first in this area. On most other buildings, the snow had to be shoveled or blown off. One man was killed in west-central Minnesota as he was trying to shovel snow off the roof of a building. One roof collapse near Lake Poinsett, seven west of Estelline, killed four horses, damaged a boat, and flattened a car. The significant snow drifts buried a few homes during the storm. Many power outages also occurred across parts of central and northeast South Dakota as power lines and poles were downed from the heavy ice accumulation. Some people were without power for several days in the extreme cold conditions. The cities of Miranda, Rockham, Zell, Garden City, Bryant, Vienna, Glenham, Hazel, and other cities were without power for many hours. Some of the communities were out of power for up to 2 days.

In Aberdeen, heavy snow blocking a furnace exhaust vent sent three family members to the hospital for carbon monoxide poisoning. Also, in Aberdeen, the snowmobile club, the drift busters, were called upon for the first time in several years to deliver medicine, take patients to the hospital, and carry essential workers to work and home. Emergencies were challenging to respond to, making many hours to short distances. Throughout central and northeast South Dakota, many businesses and grocery stores were closed. Interstates 29 and 90 were both closed for a few days, along with most state highways. The rest of the roads were either blocked by huge drifts or had one-lane traffic. Snowplows were called off the streets until conditions improved, and when they did start to clear the roads, they worked 12 to 18 hour days. Many vehicles went into the ditch, with mainly minor injuries. Some people had to be rescued. Travelers and truckers were stranded for several days until the roads opened. When Interstate-29 re-opened, there was a logjam of vehicles for 3 miles. One Watertown policeman said he has never seen an impasse as bad as this in 28 years. Area airports were closed, or flights were canceled or delayed. The mail was delayed for several days, most activities were canceled or postponed, and many schools closed on the 6th. The heavy snowfall from this storm brought the widespread snowpack up to 2 to 5 feet. For the winter season so far, the area had record snowfall and recorded cold. Some of the snowfall amounts include 6 inches at McLaughlin, 8 inches 22 SSW Keldron and 4 NW Onida, 9 inches at Pollock, Timber Lake, Highmore, Mobridge, and Kennebec, 10 inches at Castlewood, Clear Lake, Miller, Fort Thompson, and Clark. Snowfall amounts of 1 to over 2 feet include 12 inches at Eureka, and Redfield, 13 inches at Selby and Aberdeen, 14 inches at Pierre and Roscoe, 15 inches at Ortonville MN, 16 inches at Mellette and Browns Valley, MN 18 inches at Faulkton and 1 ENE Stephan, 20 inches at Webster, 22 inches at Britton, 24 inches at Sisseton, 26 inches 10 NW Britton, and 27 inches at Wheaton.

1824: The oldest known weather information in Oklahoma begins on this today at Fort Gibson in 1824. Now known as Muskogee County.

1883: A remarkably brilliant meteor display occurred on the night of January 3rd. The phenomenon was observed at stations in Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. This meteor was described as having resembled a large, bright ball of fire.

1949: During the late afternoon hours, an estimated F4 tornado destroyed Warren, Arkansas. The tornado killed 55 people and injured more than 250 others. The destruction of the Bradley mill displaced 1,000 employees.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WATCH WHERE YOU WALK!

Years ago, while marching with my high school band, I was more into my music than I was into following my director. We were to march to the goal line on the football field, make a right turn, and then exit the field. One hundred and eleven musicians followed the directions perfectly. One tuba player kept marching into the end zone, alone, embarrassed, and lost. I was that tuba player.

Everyone needs the Director to be their guide and guard. If we choose otherwise we will end up in an "end zone" - alone, embarrassed, and eternally lost. The alternative?

"A person's steps are ordered by the Lord. How then can anyone understand their own way?" asks Solomon. Perhaps he was going through a difficult period in his life and he recalled a bit of advice from his father, King David: "The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in Him," wrote his Dad. He may have been facing a decision about his future and was struggling to know which path God would have him take. It may have been a family problem or issues with his staff. Wherever he was in his walk with God, he realized the importance of seeking His wisdom.

God has a plan for each of us, and He wants us to follow Him and fulfill that plan. However, He also has given us the freedom to make the ultimate decision: Will we seek His guidance and His will, or choose to go our own way? And, if we seek it, will we know it when we see it?

Again, we turn to the heart of Proverbs: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." When we, in humility, bow before Him in complete surrender, seek His will in prayer and study His Word, and ask for the counsel of fellow believers, we can be assured that He will bring His light to our path and protect our every step. Then, we will "know it when we see it!"

Knock, seek, listen, wait, watch, talk with others, and be faithful to Him. He will appear!

Prayer: How foolish we are, Lord, when we do not wait for and trust You. You have our best interests at heart. May we wait patiently as we seek Your guidance. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: A person's steps are ordered by the Lord. How then can anyone understand their own way? Proverbs 20:24



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: 15 Hrs 58 Mins 19 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.02.23

10 12 13 27 50 7

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$33,680,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 58 Mins 18 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.02.23

4 12 15 25 44 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 28 Mins 18 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.31.22

3 13 19 22 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 58 Mins 18 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.02.23

11 12 15 33 39 24

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 57 Mins 18 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.02.23

7 9 12 31 62 22

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$291,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 57 Mins 18 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Northwestern 51, Waverly-South Shore 13

St. Thomas More 51, Belle Fourche 37

Sully Buttes 45, Lyman 34

Vermillion 62, Tea Area 34

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Lyman 56, Sully Buttes 47

Northwestern 68, Waverly-South Shore 35

Tea Area 54, Vermillion 22

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

Beijing threatens response to 'unacceptable' virus measures

BEIJING (AP) — The Chinese government blasted COVID-19 testing requirements imposed on passengers from China and threatened countermeasures against countries involved, which include the U.S. and several European nations.

"We believe that the entry restrictions adopted by some countries targeting China lack scientific basis, and some excessive practices are even more unacceptable," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing Tuesday.

"We are firmly opposed to attempts to manipulate the COVID measures for political purposes and will take countermeasures based on the principle of reciprocity," she said.

The comments were China's sharpest to date on the issue. Australia and Canada this week joined a growing list of countries requiring travelers from China to take a COVID-19 test prior to boarding their flight, as China battles a nationwide outbreak of the coronavirus after abruptly easing restrictions that were in place for much of the pandemic.

Other countries including the U.S., U.K., India, Japan and several European nations have announced tougher COVID-19 measures on travelers from China amid concerns over a lack of data on infections in China and fears of the possibility that new variants may emerge.

French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne defended the tests. Starting Wednesday, anyone flying from China to France will have to present a negative virus test taken within the previous 48 hours and be subject to random testing on arrival.

"We are in our role, my government is in its role, protecting the French," Borne said Tuesday on France-Info radio.

Some Canadian experts have questioned the effectiveness of the testing. Kerry Bowman, assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Temerty Faculty of Medicine, said that people can test positive long after entering the country.

The requirement is "not based on science at this point," he said after Canada announced measures last weekend.

China, which for most of the pandemic adopted a "zero-COVID" strategy that imposed harsh restrictions aimed at stamping out the virus, abruptly eased those measures in December.

Chinese authorities previously said that from Jan. 8, overseas travelers would no longer need to quarantine upon arriving in China, paving the way for Chinese residents to travel.

Benedict's admirers keep streaming to Vatican to honor him

By GIADA ZAMPANO and FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — For a second day, lines of people wanting to honor Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's service to the Catholic church snaked around St. Peter's Square on Tuesday to view the late retired pontiff's body.

Benedict died on Saturday at age 95, 10 years after retiring from the papacy — the first to do so in 600 years — and after increasingly frail health. His body lies in state in St. Peter's Basilica, where thousands of faithful and curious came for the viewing.

On Monday, the first day the general public could view the body, around 65,000 people paid their respects — about double what Italian security had predicted. A third day of viewing is set for Wednesday.

On Thursday, Pope Francis will lead the funeral Mass at St. Peter's Square for his predecessor, whose retirement lasted two years longer than his papacy, which began in 2005.

Along with the rank-and-file faithful or the simply curious also came some notable figures from politics and Catholic hierarchy

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was among those coming to the basilica viewing Tuesday morning. Like Benedict did, Orbán has crusaded for a revival of what conservatives in Europe view as Europe's Christian roots.

The basilica's doors opened before dawn on Tuesday. Among those paying respects was 6-year-old Miriam Groppelli, who is an altar server in her parish in Milan.

She and her father, Giuseppe Groppelli, 40, traveled by train in the early hours to offer their homage, along with the child's grandparents and older brother and sisters.

"I told her his story and she was really excited to come to Rome to say goodbye," the father said. "Benedict has been very important for the Church, his speeches were so clear and beautiful, he leaves a great legacy of knowledge."

Groppelli offered his take on the unusual, nearly-decade-long arrangement that saw Benedict's retirement in the Vatican City monastery where he died on Saturday, and Francis, who was elected in 2013 by fellow cardinals to succeed him.

"I believe there's no real war or competition within the church and between popes. The church lives and grows every day, also thanks to their words," he said.

Benedict, who as German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had served for decades at the Vatican as the church's guardian of doctrinal orthodoxy, was known for his theological knowledge as well as for eloquent speeches, which — unlike like many of his predecessors — would write himself.

Francis will eulogize his predecessor at the funeral, which the Vatican has said would be marked by the simplicity that Benedict requested.

Since Benedict was no longer head of Vatican City State, in contrast to protocols for funerals of popes who died when they were reigning, only two countries — Italy and his native Germany — will send official delegations, according to the Vatican.

Instead, politicians and royalty, especially of predominantly Catholic countries, will attend in a private role.

With no need to elect a new pontiff following this former pope's death, cardinals who attend the funeral won't have to stay on in Rome to vote in a secret conclave to pick the next man who will help shape the Church's direction.

Still, with cardinals from around the world flocking to Rome to mourn the former pope, Francis would have ample opportunity to confer with these "princes of the Church," who — besides electing future pontiffs — serve as privileged advisers to reigning popes.

The last decade saw an uneasy kind of equilibrium over the presence in the Vatican of a retired pope and a reigning pope.

Now, Francis governs the church without that presence, which loomed over his papacy despite Benedict's last years lived out mainly with prayer and meditation.

On Tuesday, two powerful U.S. churchmen, Cardinals Timothy Dolan of New York and Sean Patrick O'Malley of Boston, attended Mass in the basilica being celebrated at an altar just behind the central view-

ing area for Benedict's body.

Francis has largely conducted business as usual since his predecessor passed away.

On Tuesday, he meet with the cardinal who heads the Italian bishops conference, bid farewell to South Korea's ambassador to the Holy See in a courtesy visit, greeted a delegation of an organization promoting brotherhood and appointed new papal envoys to Uruguay and to United Arab Emirates.

Francis' schedule also conferred with the basilica's archpriest, who on Monday, after Benedict's body was transferred in a pre-dawn procession from the monastery to the basilica, sprinkled holy water and incense by the bier.

Transgender Missouri inmate scheduled to be executed Tuesday

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Nearly 1,600 death row inmates have been put to death in the U.S. since 1977, but an execution scheduled for Tuesday in Missouri would be the first of an openly transgender woman.

Amber McLaughlin, 49, is set to die for stalking a former girlfriend and stabbing her to death nearly 20 years ago. With no legal appeals planned, McLaughlin's fate rests with Republican Gov. Mike Parson, who is weighing a clemency request.

A database for the anti-execution Death Penalty Information Center shows 1,558 people have been executed since the death penalty was reinstated in the mid-1970s. All but 17 of them were men, and the center said there are no known previous cases in which an openly transgender inmate was executed.

A clemency petition cited McLaughlin's traumatic childhood and mental health issues, which the jury never heard at her trial. A foster parent rubbed feces in her face when she was a toddler and her adoptive father used a stun gun on her, according to the petition, which also cited severe depression resulting in multiple suicide attempts, both as a child and as an adult.

The petition also included reports citing a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, a condition causing anguish and other symptoms as a result of a disparity between a person's gender identity and their assigned sex at birth. But McLaughlin's sexual identity is "not the main focus" of the clemency request, said her attorney, Larry Komp.

In 2003, long before transitioning, McLaughlin was in a relationship with Beverly Guenther. After they stopped dating, McLaughlin would appear at the suburban St. Louis office where Guenther worked, sometimes hiding inside the building, according to court records. Guenther obtained a restraining order and police officers occasionally escorted her to her car after work.

Guenther's neighbors called police on the night of Nov. 20, 2003, when she failed to return home. Officers went to the office building, where they found a broken knife handle near her car and a trail of blood. A day later, McLaughlin led police to a location near the Mississippi River in St. Louis where the body had been dumped.

McLaughlin was convicted of first-degree murder in 2006. A judge sentenced McLaughlin to death after a jury deadlocked on the sentence. Komp said Missouri and Indiana are the only states that allow a judge, rather than a jury, to sentence someone to death.

A court in 2016 ordered a new sentencing hearing, but a federal appeals court panel reinstated the death penalty in 2021.

McLaughlin began transitioning about three years ago, recalled Jessica Hicklin. Hicklin, 43, sued the Missouri Department of Corrections, challenging a policy that prohibited hormone therapy for inmates who weren't receiving it before being incarcerated. She won the lawsuit in 2018 and became a mentor to other transgender inmates, including McLaughlin.

Hicklin, who spent 26 years in prison for a drug-related killing before being released a year ago, described McLaughlin as a painfully shy person who came out of her shell after deciding to transition.

"She always had a smile and a dad joke," Hicklin said. "If you ever talked to her, it was always with the dad jokes."

The Bureau of Justice Statistics has estimated there are 3,200 transgender inmates in the nation's pris-

ons and jails.

Perhaps the best-known case of a transgender prisoner seeking hormone therapy was that of Chelsea Manning, the former Army intelligence analyst who served seven years in federal prison for leaking government documents to Wikileaks until President Barack Obama commuted the sentence in 2017. The Army agreed to pay for hormone treatments for Manning in 2015.

McLaughlin has not had hormone treatments, Komp said.

The U.S. Department of Justice wrote in a 2015 court filing that state prison officials must treat an inmate's gender identity condition just as they would treat other medical or mental health conditions, regardless of when the diagnosis occurred.

The only woman ever executed in Missouri was Bonnie B. Heady, who was put to death on Dec. 18, 1953, for kidnapping and killing a 6-year-old boy. Heady was executed in the gas chamber alongside the other kidnapper and killer, Carl Austin Hall.

Nationally, 18 people were executed in 2022, including two in Missouri. Kevin Johnson was put to death in November for the ambush killing of a Kirkwood, Missouri, police officer. Carman Deck was executed in May for killing James and Zelma Long during a robbery at their home in De Soto, Missouri.

Another Missouri inmate, Leonard Taylor, is scheduled to die Feb. 7. He was convicted of killing his girlfriend and her three young children.

Suspect in Idaho slayings not expected to fight extradition

STROUDSBURG, Pa. (AP) — A man facing first-degree murder charges in the slayings of four University of Idaho students last fall is not expected to fight extradition at a hearing Tuesday in Pennsylvania, where he was captured at his parents home.

Bryan Kohberger, a 28-year-old doctoral student and teaching assistant in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Washington State University, was taken into custody early Friday by state police in eastern Pennsylvania, authorities said.

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

LaBar said his client should be presumed innocent and "not tried in the court of public opinion."

Capt. Anthony Dahlinger, of the Moscow Police Department in Idaho, told The Associated Press on Saturday that authorities believe Kohberger was responsible for all four murders.

"We believe we've got our man," he said, adding that investigators obtained samples of Kohberger's DNA directly from him after he was arrested.

Kohberger's relatives in Pennsylvania have expressed sympathy for the families of the victims but vowed to support him and promote "his presumption of innocence."

His parents, Michael and Maryann, and his two older sisters, Amanda and Melissa, said in a statement released Sunday by his attorney that they "care deeply for the four families who have lost their precious children. There are no words that can adequately express the sadness we feel, and we pray each day for them."

The family said that relatives will continue to let the legal process unfold, and that "as a family we will love and support our son and brother." They say they have fully cooperated with law enforcement to try to "seek the truth and promote his presumption of innocence rather than judge unknown facts and make erroneous assumptions."

Latah County prosecutors in Idaho have said they believe Kohberger broke into the students' home near the university campus intending to commit murder. Their bodies were found Nov. 13, several hours after investigators believe they died.

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 had been visiting the house that night.

Latah County prosecutors have said the affidavit for four charges of first-degree murder will remain sealed until he is returned. He is also charged with felony burglary.

Investigators have asked for information about Kohberger from anyone who knows him, and Dahlinger said investigators got 400 calls to a tip line within the first hour of that request. He said they were "trying to build this picture now of him: Who he is, his history, how we got to this event, why this event occurred."

Israeli ultranationalist minister visits Jerusalem holy site

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — An ultranationalist Israeli Cabinet minister visited Tuesday a flashpoint Jerusalem holy site for the first time since taking office in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new far-right government last week. The visit is seen by Palestinians as a provocation.

Earlier in the day, Palestinian officials said a 15-year-old boy was killed by Israeli army fire near the occupied West Bank city of Bethlehem. The Israeli military said its forces had shot a person involved in violent confrontations with soldiers.

In Jerusalem, Itamar Ben-Gvir entered the site known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary flanked by a large contingent of police officers. The act drew condemnation from Israel's Arab neighbors, Egypt and Jordan, and a rebuke from the U.S. ambassador.

Ben-Gvir has long called for greater Jewish access to the holy site, which is viewed by Palestinians as provocative and as a potential precursor to Israel taking complete control over the compound. Most rabbis forbid Jews from praying on the site, but there has been a growing movement in recent years of Jews who support worship there.

The site has been the scene of frequent clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli security forces, most recently in April last year.

The U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem said that Ambassador Thomas Nides "has been very clear in conversations with the Israeli government on the issue of preserving the status quo in Jerusalem's holy sites. Actions that prevent that are unacceptable."

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which acts as custodian of the contested shrine, condemned Ben-Gvir's visit "in the strongest terms." Egypt warned against "negative repercussions of such measures on security and stability in the occupied territories and the region, and on the future of the peace process."

Ben-Gvir's stated intention of visiting the site earlier this week drew threats from the Islamic militant group Hamas.

Ben-Gvir wrote on Twitter after his visit that the site "is open to all and if Hamas thinks that if it threatens me it will deter me, they should understand that times have changed."

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said that Ben-Gvir entering the site on Tuesday was "a continuation of the Zionist's occupation aggression on our sacred places and war on our Arab identity."

"Our Palestinian people will continue defending their holy places and Al-Aqsa mosque," he said.

Ofir Gendelman, who has long served as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Arabic-language spokesman, released a video showing that the "situation is completely calm" at the holy site following Ben-Gvir's departure.

The hilltop shrine is the third-holiest site in Islam and an emotional symbol for the Palestinians. It sits on a sprawling esplanade that also is the holiest site for Jews, who call it to the Temple Mount because it was the location of two Jewish temples in antiquity.

Israel captured the historic Old City of Jerusalem, with its holy sites to three monotheistic faiths, along with the rest of east Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek those territories for a future independent state, with east Jerusalem as capital. Israel annexed east Jerusalem in a move unrecognized by most of the international community and considers the city its undivided, eternal capital.

The competing claims to the site lie at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and have sparked nu-

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merous rounds of violence in the past.

Ben-Gvir is head of the ultranationalist religious Jewish Power faction and has a history of inflammatory remarks and actions against Palestinians.

A day earlier, opposition leader Yair Lapid, who until last week was Israel's prime minister, spoke out against Ben-Gvir's intended visit, saying it would "lead to violence that will endanger human lives and cost human lives."

His visit came following months of mounting tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. On Monday, the Israeli rights group B'Tselem said 2022 was the deadliest year for Palestinians since 2004, a period of intense violence that came during a Palestinian uprising. It said nearly 150 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

The Israeli military has been conducting near-daily raids into Palestinian cities and towns since a spate of Palestinian attacks against Israelis killed 19 last spring. A fresh wave of attacks killed at least another nine Israelis in the fall.

In Tuesday's shooting incident, the Palestinian Health Ministry said Adam Ayyad, 15, died of a bullet wound to the chest. The Israeli military said Border Police officers came under attack in the Dheisha refugee camp next to Bethlehem. It said troops shot at people throwing firebombs and confirmed that a person was shot.

The Israeli army says most of the Palestinians killed have been militants. But stone-throwing youths protesting the incursions and others not involved in confrontations have also been killed.

New Congress to convene, but will McCarthy be House speaker?

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The new Congress opens with House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy grasping for his political survival, with the potential to become the first nominee for speaker in 100 years to fail to win initial support from his own colleagues in a high-stakes vote for the gavel.

Lawmakers convene Tuesday to a new era of divided government as Democrats relinquish control of the House after midterm election losses. While the Senate remains in Democratic hands, barely, House Republicans are eager to confront President Joe Biden's agenda after two years of a Democratic Party monopoly on power in Washington.

But first, House Republicans must elect a speaker.

McCarthy is in line to replace Speaker Nancy Pelosi, but he heads into the vote with no guarantee of success. The California Republican faces entrenched detractors within his own ranks. Despite attempts to cajole, harangue and win them over — even with an endorsement from former President Donald Trump — McCarthy has fallen short.

The noontime showdown could very well devolve into a prolonged House floor fight, a spectacle that divides the Republican Party, weakens its leadership and consumes the first days of the new Congress.

"This is a lot more important than about one person," said Doug Heye, a former Republican leadership senior aide. "It's about whether Republicans will be able to govern."

House Republicans will huddle behind closed doors early in the morning, ahead of the floor action, as newly elected lawmakers arrive for what's traditionally a celebratory day. Families in tow, the members of the new Congress prepare to be sworn into the House and Senate for the start of the two-year legislative session.

A new generation of Trump-aligned Republicans are leading the opposition to McCarthy, inspired by the former president's Make America Great Again slogan. They don't think McCarthy is conservative enough or tough enough to battle Democrats. It's reminiscent of the last time Republicans took back the House majority, after the 2010 midterms, when the tea-party class ushered in a new era of hardball politics, eventually sending Speaker John Boehner to an early retirement.

Typically it takes a majority of the House's 435 members, 218 votes, to become the speaker. With just a slim 222-seat majority, McCarthy can afford only a handful of detractors. A speaker can win with fewer

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than 218 votes, as Pelosi and Boehner did, if some lawmakers are absent or simply vote present.

But McCarthy has failed to win over a core — and potentially growing — group of right-flank Republicans led by the conservative Freedom Caucus, despite weeks of closed-door meetings and promised changes to the House rules. Nearly a dozen Republicans have publicly raised concerns about McCarthy.

“Kevin McCarthy doesn’t have to 218 votes to be speaker,” Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., the chairman of the Freedom Caucus and a leader in Trump’s efforts to challenge the 2020 election, said in an interview with The Associated Press. “Unless something dramatically changes, that’s where we’re going to be.”

Late Monday evening, McCarthy met with Perry in the speaker’s office at the Capitol, a Republican aide confirmed on condition of anonymity to discuss the private session.

Yet the prospect of holdouts causing havoc on Day One has launched a counter-offensive from Republicans who are frustrated that the detractors threaten the workings of the new Congress.

A sizable but less vocal group of McCarthy supporters started its own campaign, “Only Kevin,” as a way to shut down the opposition and pledge their support only to him.

A viable challenger to McCarthy had yet to emerge. Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., a former leader of the Freedom Caucus, was running against McCarthy as a conservative option, but was not expected to pull a majority. McCarthy defeated him in the November nominating contest, 188-31.

The second-ranking House Republican, Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, would be an obvious next choice, a conservative widely liked by his colleagues and seen by some as a hero after surviving a brutal mass shooting during a congressional baseball game practice in 2017.

Once rivals, McCarthy and Scalise have become a team. Scalise’s office rejected as “false” a suggestion Monday by another Republican that Scalise was making calls about the speaker’s race.

McCarthy vowed to fight to the finish, going multiple rounds of painstaking floor votes -- a sight unseen in Congress since the disputed speaker’s race of 1923.

“It would be nice if we can be ready to go on Jan. 3,” said Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, who is set to become chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. “But you know, if it doesn’t happen on the first ballot, that’s when that just pushes things back.”

Without a speaker, the House cannot fully form — naming its committee chairmen, engaging in floor proceedings and launching the investigations of the Biden administration that are expected to be core to the Republicans’ agenda.

The upheaval in the House on the first day of the new session could be in stark contrast to the other side of the Capitol, where Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell will officially become the chamber’s longest-serving party leader in history.

Despite being in the minority in the Senate, where Democrats hold a slim 51-49 majority, McConnell could prove to be a viable partner as Biden seeks bipartisan victories in the new era of divided government. The two men were expected to appear together later in the week in the GOP leader’s home state of Kentucky to celebrate federal infrastructure investment in a vital bridge that connects Kentucky and Ohio.

McCarthy’s candidacy for speaker should have been an almost sure thing. Affable and approachable, he led his party into the majority, having raised millions of campaign dollars and traveled the country to recruit many of the newer lawmakers to run for office.

Yet McCarthy has been here before, abruptly dropping out of the speaker’s race in 2015 when it was clear he did not have support from conservatives to replace Boehner.

One core ask from the holdouts this time is that McCarthy reinstate a rule that allows any single lawmaker to make a “motion to vacate the chair” — in short, to call a vote to remove the speaker from office.

Pelosi eliminated the rule after conservatives used it to threaten Boehner’s ouster, but McCarthy agreed to add it back in — but at a higher threshold, requiring at least five lawmakers to sign on to the motion.

“I will work with everyone in our party to build conservative consensus,” McCarthy wrote in a weekend letter to colleagues.

As McCarthy convened a New Year’s Day conference call with Republican lawmakers to unveil the new House rules package, Perry dashed off a fresh letter of concerns signed by eight other Republicans that

the changes do not go far enough.

Russia, shaken by Ukrainian strike, said mulling more drones

By FELIPE DANA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia is preparing to step up its attacks on Ukraine using Iranian-made exploding drones, according to Ukraine's president, as Moscow looks for ways to keep up the pressure on Kyiv after at least 63 Russian soldiers were killed in an attack in the latest battlefield setback for the Kremlin's war strategy.

"We have information that Russia is planning a prolonged attack by Shaheds (exploding drones)," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address late Monday.

He said the goal is to break Ukraine's resistance by "exhausting our people, (our) air defense, our energy," more than 10 months after Russia invaded its neighbor.

Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to be exploring ways to regain momentum in his flawed war effort, which in recent months has been undermined by a Ukrainian counteroffensive backed by Western-supplied weapons. That has brought sharp rebukes in some Russian circles of the military's performance.

In the latest embarrassment for the Kremlin, Ukrainian forces fired rockets at a facility in the eastern Donetsk region where Russian soldiers were stationed, killing 63 of them, according to Russia's Defense Ministry. Other, unconfirmed reports put the death toll much higher.

It was one of the deadliest attacks on the Kremlin's forces since the war began more than 10 months ago.

In the attack, Ukrainian forces fired six rockets from a HIMARS launch system and two of them were shot down, a Russian Defense Ministry statement said.

However, the Strategic Communications Directorate of Ukraine's Armed Forces claimed Sunday that around 400 mobilized Russian soldiers were killed in a vocational school building in Makiivka and about 300 more were wounded. That claim couldn't be independently verified. The Russian statement said the strike occurred "in the area of Makiivka" and didn't mention the vocational school.

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press show the apparent aftermath of the strike. An image from Dec. 20 showed the building standing. An image from Jan. 2 showed the building reduced to rubble. Other days had intense cloud cover, making seeing the site by standard satellite imagery impossible.

For the Russian military, the Iranian-made exploding drones are a cheap weapon which also spreads fear among troops and civilians. The United States and its allies have sparred with Iran over Tehran's role in allegedly supplying Moscow with the drones.

The Institute for the Study of War said that Putin is looking to strengthen support for his strategy among key voices in Russia.

"Russia's air and missile campaign against Ukraine is likely not generating the Kremlin's desired information effects among Russia's nationalists," the think tank said late Monday.

"Such profound military failures will continue to complicate Putin's efforts to appease the Russian pro-war community and retain the dominant narrative in the domestic information space," it added.

Zelenskyy warned that in the coming weeks, "the nights may be quite restless."

He added that during the first two days of the new year, which were marked by relentless nighttime drone attacks on Ukrainian cities and energy infrastructure, the country's forces shot down more than 80 Iranian-made drones.

As well as hoping to wear down resistance to Russia's invasion, the long-range bombardments have targeted the power grid to leave civilians at the mercy of biting winter weather as power outages ripple across the country.

"Every downed drone, every downed missile, every day with electricity for our people and minimal shut-down schedules are exactly such victories," Zelenskyy said.

In the latest fighting, a Russian missile strike overnight on the city of Druzhkivka in the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region wounded two people, the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, reported Tuesday.

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Officials said the attack ruined an ice hockey arena described as the largest hockey and figure skating school in Ukraine.

Overnight Russian shelling was also reported in the northeastern Kharkiv region and the southeastern Dnipropetrovsk region.

In the recently retaken areas of the southern Kherson region, Russian shelling on Monday killed two people and wounded nine others, Kherson's Ukrainian governor, Yaroslav Yanushevich, said Tuesday. He said the Russian forces fired at the city of Kherson 32 times on Monday.

South Korea: Talks with US on management of nukes underway

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea confirmed Tuesday that Seoul and Washington are discussing its involvement in U.S. nuclear weapons management in the face of intensifying North Korean nuclear threats, after President Joe Biden denied that the allies were discussing joint nuclear exercises.

The purported difference came after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un entered the new year with a vow to mass-produce battlefield nuclear weapons targeting South Korea and introduce a more powerful intercontinental ballistic missile capable of striking the mainland U.S. Some experts say Kim would eventually aim to use his enlarged weapons arsenal to wrest outside concessions like sanctions relief.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said in a newspaper interview published Monday that the two countries were pushing for a joint planning and training involving U.S. nuclear assets and that the United States responded positively about the idea.

Asked by a reporter later at the White House about whether the two countries were discussing joint nuclear exercises, Biden replied, "No."

Yoon's top adviser for press affairs, Kim Eun-hye, issued a statement Tuesday saying that Seoul and Washington "are discussing an intel-sharing, a joint planning and subsequent joint execution plans over the management of U.S. nuclear assets in response to North Korea's nuclear (threats)."

Kim said Biden likely answered "no" because a reporter tersely asked him about nuclear exercises without providing any background information.

In the Chosun Ilbo interview, Yoon said that while the U.S. nuclear weapons belong to the U.S., planning, intel-sharing and exercises involving them must be jointly conducted with South Korea. He said he finds it difficult to assure his people of a security guarantee with the current levels of U.S. security commitment.

South Korea has no nuclear weapons and is under the protection of a U.S. "nuclear umbrella," which guarantees a devastating American response in the event of an attack on its ally. But some experts question the effectiveness of such a security commitment, saying the decision to use U.S. nuclear weapons lies with the U.S. president.

Yoon's office didn't provide many details about his government's discussion with the United States. Some observers say South Korea is seeking to obtain a greater role on U.S. decision-making process on the deployment of its nuclear assets in times of tensions with North Korea.

Kim Taewoo, a former head of Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification, said the reported South Korea-U.S. discussion likely "benchmarked a NATO-style nuclear-sharing arrangement" that allows NATO member states' warplanes to carry U.S. nuclear weapons. He said the discussion still appears to be falling short of the NATO arrangement because possible nuclear exercises between the two countries would likely be South Korean air force aircraft escorting U.S. aircraft simulating nuclear strikes during joint drills.

"North Korea would take this sensitively. (South Korea and the U.S.) are discussing this to get North Korea to take this sensitively ... because that can be a deterrence against North Korea," Kim Taewoo said.

He said South Korea and the United States are likely using unofficial channels to discuss the topic. That allows South Korea to claim it's discussing the issue with the U.S. at the same time it allows Washington to deny that, he said.

Last year, North Korea performed a record number of weapons tests by launching a variety of ballistic

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missiles capable of reaching the U.S. mainland and its allies South Korea and Japan. In September, North Korea also adopted a new law authorizing the preemptive use of its bombs in a broad range of cases, including non-war scenarios.

After their annual meeting in November, the defense chiefs of the United States and South Korea issued a joint statement reaffirming the U.S. commitment to providing extended deterrence to South Korea and deploying U.S. strategic assets in a timely and coordinated manner as necessary and identify new steps to reinforce deterrence against North Korean threats. The statement also carried their agreement to bolster the alliance's information-sharing, joint planning and execution.

During a recently ended ruling party meeting, Kim Jong Un ordered the "exponential" expansion of his country's nuclear arsenal and the mass-production of tactical nuclear weapons missioned with attacking South Korea, as well as the development of a new ICBM tasked with having a "quick nuclear counterstrike" capability — a weapon he needs to strike the mainland, North Korea's state media reported Sunday.

Bills' Hamlin in critical condition after collapse on field

By MITCH STACY AP Sports Writer

CINCINNATI (AP) — Buffalo defensive back Damar Hamlin was in critical condition early Tuesday after the Bills say he suffered a cardiac arrest on the field following a tackle hours earlier, leading to the indefinite postponement of Buffalo's pivotal Monday night showdown against the Cincinnati Bengals.

"Damar Hamlin suffered a cardiac arrest following a hit in our game versus the Bengals. His heartbeat was restored on the field and he was transferred to the UC Medical Center for further testing and treatment," the Bills said in a statement. "He is currently sedated and listed in critical condition."

In a chilling scene, Hamlin was administered CPR on the field, ESPN reported, while surrounded by teammates, some of them in tears, while they shielded him from public view. He was hurt while tackling Bengals receiver Tee Higgins on a seemingly routine play that didn't appear unusually violent.

The NFL announced Hamlin's condition shortly after he was taken to a hospital, but neither the league nor the hospital released any other details about the 24-year-old's medical condition. The team's statement was released before its flight arrived back in Buffalo early Tuesday. There was no immediate update about the future status of the game.

On the play the 6-foot, 200-pound Hamlin was injured, Higgins led with his right shoulder, which hit the defensive back in the chest. Hamlin then wrapped his arms around Higgins' shoulders and helmet to drag him down. Hamlin quickly got to his feet, appeared to adjust his face mask with his right hand, and then fell backward about three seconds later and lay motionless.

Hamlin was treated on the field by team and independent medical personnel and local paramedics, and he was taken by ambulance to University of Cincinnati Medical Center. Teammate Stefon Diggs later joined Hamlin at the hospital.

About 100 Bills fans and a few Bengals fans gathered on a corner one block from the emergency room entrance, some of them holding candles.

Jeff Miller, an NFL executive vice president, told reporters on a conference call early Tuesday that the league had made no plans at this time to play the game, adding that Hamlin's health was the main focus.

An ambulance was on the field four minutes after Hamlin collapsed while many players embraced, including quarterbacks Buffalo's Josh Allen and Cincinnati's Joe Burrow.

"Please pray for our brother," Allen tweeted.

Hamlin collapsed at 8:55 p.m., and when he was taken off the field about 19 minutes later in what seemed like an eternity, the Bills gathered in prayer. A few minutes after the ambulance left the field, the game was suspended, and players walked off the field slowly and into their locker rooms where they awaited word on Hamlin and the game.

"I've never seen anything like it since I was playing," NFL executive Troy Vincent, a six-time Pro Bowl cornerback during his career, said in the conference call early Tuesday morning. "Immediately, my player hat went on, like, how do you resume playing after seeing a traumatic event in front of you?"

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Hamlin's uniform was cut off as he was attended to by medical personnel. ESPN reported on its telecast that Hamlin was also given oxygen.

Vincent said the league took no steps toward restarting the game and did not ask players to begin a five-minute warmup period as ESPN's broadcasters had announced.

"It never crossed our mind to talk about warming up to resume play," Vincent said. "That's ridiculous. That's insensitive. That's not a place we should ever be in."

Vincent said the Bills were returning early Tuesday morning to the team facility in Orchard Park, New York, with the exception of a few players who stayed behind with Hamlin.

There was a heavy police presence at Buffalo Niagara International Airport when the team arrived at about 2:45 a.m. A small group of fans gathered across the street from the players' parking area near the airport. Police blocked off the road to allow the players to leave.

The Bengals led 7-3 in the first quarter of a game between teams vying for the top playoff seed in the AFC. Cincinnati entered at 11-4 and leading the AFC North by one game over Baltimore, while AFC East champion Buffalo was 12-3.

"The NFLPA and everyone in our community is praying for Damar Hamlin," the players' union said in a statement. "We have been in touch with Bills and Bengals players, and with the NFL. The only thing that matters at this moment is Damar's health and well being."

The unfinished game has major playoff implications as the NFL enters the final week of the regular season, with the wild-card playoff round scheduled to begin on Jan. 14.

The aftermath of the injury was reminiscent of when Bills tight end Kevin Everett lay motionless on the field after making a tackle on the second-half opening kickoff in Buffalo's 2007 season-opening game against the Denver Broncos.

Everett sustained a spinal cord injury that initially left him partially paralyzed.

Hamlin spent five years of college at Pittsburgh — his hometown — and appeared in 48 games for the Panthers over that span. He was a second-team All-ACC performer as a senior, was voted a team captain and was picked to play in the Senior Bowl.

He was drafted in the sixth round by the Bills in 2021, played in 14 games as a rookie and then became a starter this year once Micah Hyde was lost for the season to injury.

By late Monday night, a community toy drive organized by Hamlin had surged to more than \$1.2 million in donations. His stated goal was \$2,500.

Kathryn Bersani and her mother, Gayle, were among the Bills fans who traveled from Buffalo for the game and went to the hospital from the stadium.

"This is our family Christmas," Kathryn Bersani said. "We thought it would be a great game. Joe (Burrow) and Josh (Allen) are such great men. Sad, sad time. Such a shock. I just hope he can live a normal life. It stunned us."

Chuck and Janet Kohl went to the hospital after watching the game at home.

"This is much more important than football," Chuck Kohl said. "Had to come and pray for Mr. Hamlin."

Entering the game, Hamlin had 91 tackles, including 63 solo tackles, and 1 1/2 sacks.

A tweet from the Pitt football account was simple and clear: "Damar Hamlin is the best of us. We love you, 3," the tweet said, referring to Hamlin by his college jersey number. "Praying for you."

Recalling Benedict's grace but also the storms of his papacy

By VICTOR L. SIMPSON Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Flying back to Rome from Beirut in September 2012, I was escorted down the aisle to the first-class section of the papal plane and seated beside Pope Benedict XVI.

The pope, then 85, looked and sounded weary. He had just completed a delicate, two-day visit to Lebanon as civil war raged in neighboring Syria.

It was my 92nd such trip: The first was with Pope John Paul II, the master of papal globe-trotting, and then over the past eight years with Benedict.

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Because I was planning to retire, Benedict's trip to Beirut was to be my last, and Vatican officials thought I should share the moment with him.

What I didn't know at the time was that it was to be his last trip, too. In a few months, he would become the first pope to resign in 600 years.

On that flight, Benedict was clearly tired, but he remained as congenial as always.

"Congratulations on your retirement," he said in a soft voice, speaking in his German-accented Italian that often made Italians chuckle.

When I told him that I had covered the Vatican for more than 30 years, he looked surprised. He sounded wistful as he said my retirement "is much deserved."

I have always wondered whether our encounter led him to think about any plans of his own that he had not yet revealed to the world. The retirement date that he announced later was Feb. 28 — the exact date that I had chosen to retire.

On the plane, Benedict appeared pleased with our chat and seemed to be in no rush to end it — it was his aides who motioned to me that it was time to return to my seat.

"Gracious" is always a word I associate with Benedict, who was perpetually ready to shake hands and say something appropriate for the occasion.

In the Netflix drama "The Two Popes," Benedict, as played by Anthony Hopkins, is depicted as uncompromising in his belief that the survival of the Roman Catholic Church can only be ensured by a return to its core principles.

Yet in his own way, Benedict was a revolutionary.

He was one to stand his ground and not back down, whatever outside pressures he came under. But he also seemed almost oblivious to the storms he would create.

When the inevitable questions arose about his past in Nazi Germany, he could point out he had covered that territory in several interviews done years before becoming pope: his mandatory membership in the Hitler Youth as a teenager; being drafted into the military near the end of the war; his desertion and surrender to the Americans.

He thus avoided controversies faced by others who were less honest about their histories. That certainly smoothed the way for his papal visits to the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, to Israel and to synagogues in Rome and New York.

It was fascinating to hear him chat in German with Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the Vienna-born rabbi, during a stop at New York's Park East Synagogue. They sounded like two old friends.

In one of the major crises of his papacy, a speech aimed at promoting tolerance among religions ended up provoking anger — and even some violence — in the Islamic community.

In a 2006 speech at Regensburg University in Germany, where he once served as a professor of theology, Benedict quoted a 14th-century Byzantine emperor who called Islam "evil and inhumane, such as his (the Prophet Muhammad's) command to spread by the sword the faith he preached."

The remarks drew swift condemnation in the Muslim world, but Benedict appeared surprised that what he saw as a scholarly discourse could create such rancor.

He said he "deeply regretted" that some took offense, but that he needed to insist that religion can never be a motivation for violence.

Years later, his former spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, said Benedict knew exactly what he meant with his remark.

When Benedict made his first trip to Africa, a French reporter asked in a news conference aboard the flight to Cameroon in 2009 whether condoms could play a role in fighting HIV.

"On the contrary, it (condom use) increases the problem," he said.

Journalists and others on the plane were baffled by the response, which contradicted the views of health workers and many of his own priests battling the disease on the continent.

He backtracked a bit a year later, saying that condom use could be a first step toward a more moral behavior to prevent the spread of HIV.

It was the kind of clarification that was a sign of the lingering confusion and Vatican infighting that marked Benedict's papacy.

In the years after his resignation, Benedict turned increasingly fragile and remained out of public view in a monastery inside the walls of Vatican City. He mainly devoted himself to prayer.

But his contributions to the church, which included opening the way for Pope Francis, were not forgotten by his Argentine successor. In 2021, when Benedict was 94, Francis issued a public thank you to the German on the 70th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

"To you Benedict, dear father and brother, goes our affection, our gratitude and our closeness," Francis said.

Where are the Gulf Arab tourists? Israel's hopes fall short

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — When Israel struck an agreement with the United Arab Emirates to open diplomatic ties in 2020, it brought an electrifying sense of achievement to a country long ostracized in the Middle East.

Officials insisted that Israel's new ties with the UAE, and soon after with Bahrain, would go beyond governments and become society-wide pacts, stoking mass tourism and friendly exchanges between people long at odds.

But over two years since the breakthrough accords, the expected flood of Gulf Arab tourists to Israel has been little more than a trickle. Although more than half a million Israelis have flocked to oil-rich Abu Dhabi and skyscraper-studded Dubai, just 1,600 Emirati citizens have visited Israel since it lifted coronavirus travel restrictions last year, the Israeli Tourism Ministry told The Associated Press.

The ministry does not know how many Bahrainis have visited Israel because, it said, "the numbers are too small."

"It's still a very weird and sensitive situation," said Morsi Hija, head of the forum for Arabic-speaking tour guides in Israel. "The Emiratis feel like they've done something wrong in coming here."

The lack of Emirati and Bahraini tourists reflects Israel's long-standing image problem in the Arab world and reveals the limits of the Abraham Accords, experts say.

Even as bilateral trade between Israel and the UAE has exploded from \$11.2 million in 2019 to \$1.2 billion last year, the popularity of the agreements in the UAE and Bahrain has plummeted since the deals were signed, according to a survey by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, an American think tank.

In the UAE, support fell to 25% from 47% in the last two years. In Bahrain, just 20% of the population supports the deal, down from 45% in 2020. In that time, Israel and Gaza militants fought a devastating war and violence in the occupied West Bank surged to its highest levels in years.

Israeli officials say Gulf Arab tourism to Israel is a missing piece that would move the agreements beyond security and diplomatic ties. Tourist visits from Egypt and Jordan, the first two countries to reach peace with Israel, also are virtually nonexistent.

"We need to encourage (Emiratis) to come for the first time. It's an important mission," Amir Hayek, Israeli ambassador to the UAE, told the AP. "We need to promote tourism so people will know each other and understand each other."

Israeli tourism officials flew to the UAE last month in a marketing push to spread the word that Israel is a safe and attractive destination. The ministry said it's now pitching Tel Aviv — Israel's commercial and entertainment hub — as a big draw for Emiratis.

Tour agents say that so far, betting on Jerusalem has backfired. The turmoil of the contested city has turned off Emiratis and Bahrainis, some of whom have faced backlash from Palestinians who see normalization as a betrayal of their cause. The Palestinian struggle for independence from Israel enjoys broad support across the Arab world.

"There's still a lot of hesitation coming from the Arab world," said Dan Feferman, director of Sharaka, a group that promotes people-to-people exchanges between Israel and the Arab world. "They expect (Israel) to be a conflict zone, they expect to be discriminated against." After leading two trips of Bahrainis

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and Emiratis to Israel, Sharaka struggled to find more Gulf Arab citizens interested in visiting, he said.

When a group of Emirati and Bahraini social media influencers in 2020 visited the Al Aqsa Mosque compound, the third-holiest site in Islam, they were spat on and pelted with shoes in Jerusalem's Old City, said Hija, their tour guide.

When another group of Emirati officials visited the flashpoint site accompanied by Israeli police, they drew the ire of the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, who issued a religious edict against Emiratis visiting the mosque under Israeli supervision.

Most Emiratis and Bahrainis who have visited Israel say they forgo their national dress and headscarves in order not to attract attention.

The Islamic Waqf, which administers the mosque, declined to answer questions about the number of Emirati and Bahraini visitors and their treatment at the compound.

Palestinian rage against Emiratis is not confined to the sacred esplanade. Emirati citizens visiting and studying in Israel say they face frequent death threats and online attacks.

"Not everyone can handle the pressure," said Sumaiyah Almehiri, a 31-year-old Emirati from Dubai studying to be a nurse at the University of Haifa. "I didn't give into the threats, but fear is preventing a lot of Emiratis from going."

The fear of anti-Arab racism in Israel can also drive Gulf Arabs away. Israeli police mistakenly arrested two Emirati tourists in Tel Aviv last summer while hunting for a criminal who carried out a drive-by shooting. Some Emiratis have complained on social media about drawing unwanted scrutiny from security officials at Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport.

"If you bring them here and don't treat them in a sensitive way, they'll never come back and tell all their friends to stay away," Hija said.

Benjamin Netanyahu, who returned for a sixth term as prime minister last week, has pledged to strengthen agreements with Bahrain, Morocco, the UAE and Sudan. Formal ties with Sudan remain elusive in the wake of a military coup and in the absence of a parliament to ratify its U.S.-brokered normalization deal with Israel.

As a chief architect of the accords, Netanyahu also hopes to expand the circle of countries and reach a similar deal with Saudi Arabia.

Yet experts fear his new government — the most ultranationalist and religiously conservative in Israel's history — could further deter Gulf Arab tourists and even jeopardize the agreements. His government has vowed to expand West Bank settlements and pledged to annex the entire territory, a step that was put on hold as a condition of the initial agreement with the UAE.

"We have a reason to be worried about any deterioration in relations," said Moran Zaga, an expert in Gulf Arab states at the University of Haifa in Israel.

So far, Gulf Arab governments have offered no reason for concern.

The Emirati ambassador was photographed warmly embracing Itamar Ben-Gvir, one of the coalition's most radical members, at a national day celebration last month. And over the weekend, the UAE's leader, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, called Netanyahu to congratulate him and invite him to visit.

It's a different story among those who are not in the officialdom.

"I hope that Netanyahu and those with him will not set foot on the land of the Emirates," Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, a prominent Emirati political scientist, wrote on Twitter. "I think it is appropriate to freeze the Abraham Accords temporarily."

Brazil prepares to bury Pelé in city he made soccer mecca

MAURICIO SAVARESE AP Sports Writer

SANTOS, Brazil (AP) — Forty-five years after Pelé played his last game, it's hard to imagine modern soccer, or Brazil, without him.

Geovana Sarmento, 17, waited in the three-hour line to view his body as it lay in repose at the stadium where he played for most his career. She came with her father, who was wearing a Brazil shirt with Pelé's

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name.

"I am not a Santos fan, neither is my father. But this guy invented Brazil's national team. He made Santos stronger, he made it big, how could you not respect him? He is one of the greatest people ever, we needed to honor him," she said.

Pelé will be buried Tuesday in the city where he grew up, became famous, and helped make into a global capital of soccer. A Catholic Mass will be celebrated at the Vila Belmiro stadium before his casket is ushered through the streets of Santos to a nearby cemetery.

Brazil's newly inaugurated President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who was sworn in for a third term Sunday after a comeback victory, is expected to come to Vila Belmiro shortly before the coffin is removed from the stadium.

The soccer great died Thursday at age 82 after a battle with cancer. He was the only player ever to win three World Cups.

Thousands of mourners, including high school students and supreme court justices, filed Monday past the body of Pelé on the century-old field where he made his hometown team one of Brazil's best. Pelé's coffin, draped in the flags of Brazil and the Santos FC football club, was placed on the midfield area of Vila Belmiro.

The storied 16,000-seat stadium was surrounded by mourning fans, and covered with Pelé-themed decorations inside. Fans coming out of the stadium said they'd waited three hours in line, standing under a blazing sun.

Caio Zalke, 35, an engineer, wore a Brazil shirt as he waited in line. "Pelé is the most important Brazilian of all time. He made soccer important for Brazil and he made Brazil important for the world," he said.

In the 1960s and 70s, Pelé was perhaps the world's most famous athlete. He met presidents and queens, and in Nigeria a civil war was put on hold to watch him play. Many Brazilians credit him with putting the country on the world stage for the first time.

Rows of shirts with Pelé's number 10 were placed behind one of the goals, waving in the city's summer winds. A section of the stands was filling up with bouquets of flowers placed by mourners and sent by clubs and star players — Neymar and Ronaldo among them — from around the world as loudspeakers played a song named "Eu sou Pelé" ("I am Pelé") that was recorded by the Brazilian himself.

The crowd was mostly local, although some came from far away. Many mourners were too young ever to have seen Pelé play. The mood was light, as people filtered out of the stadium to local bars, wearing Santos FC and Brazil shirts.

Claudio Carrançá, 32, a salesman, said: "I never saw him play, but loving Pelé is a tradition that goes from father to son in Santos. I learned his history, saw his goals, and I see how Santos FC is important because he is important. I know some Santos fans have children supporting other teams. But that's just because they never saw Pelé in action. If they had, they would feel this gratitude I feel now."

Among those at the stadium was Pelé's best friend Manoel Maria, also a former Santos player.

"If I had all the wealth in the world I would never be able to repay what this man did for me and my family," Maria said. "He was as great a man as he was as a player; the best of all time. His legacy will outlive us all. And that can be seen in this long line with people of all ages here."

FIFA President Gianni Infantino told journalists that every country should name a stadium after Pelé.

"I am here with a lot of emotion, sadness, but also with a smile because he gave us so many smiles," Infantino said. "As FIFA, we will pay a tribute to the 'King' and we ask the whole world to observe a minute of silence."

Another fan and friend in line was Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Gilmar Mendes.

"It is a very sad moment, but we are now seeing the real meaning of this legendary player to our country," Mendes told journalists. "My office has shirts signed by Pelé, a picture of him as a goalkeeper, also signed by him. DVDs, photos, a big collection of him."

Pelé had undergone treatment for colon cancer since 2021. The medical center where he had been hospitalized said he died of multiple organ failure as a result of the cancer.

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Pelé led Brazil to World Cup titles in 1958, 1962 and 1970 and remains one of the team's all-time leading scorers with 77 goals. Neymar tied Pelé's record during this year's World Cup in Qatar.

As legal pot grows, more kids sickened by edibles at home

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

The number of young kids, especially toddlers, who accidentally ate marijuana-laced treats rose sharply over five years as pot became legal in more places in the U.S., according to a study published Tuesday.

More than 7,000 confirmed cases of kids younger than 6 eating marijuana edibles were reported to the nation's poison control centers between 2017 and 2021, climbing from about 200 to more than 3,000 per year.

Nearly a quarter of the children wound up hospitalized, some seriously ill, according to a new analysis in the journal *Pediatrics*.

And those are just the reported cases, said Dr. Marit Tweet, a medical toxicologist with the Southern Illinois School of Medicine, who led the study.

Cases of kids eating pot products such as candies, chocolate and cookies have coincided with more states allowing medical and recreational cannabis use. Currently, 37 U.S. states permit use of marijuana for medical purposes and 21 states regulate adult recreational use.

Tweet called for greater vigilance by parents and for more laws like those adopted by several states to make pot products — often packaged to look like kids' candies and snacks — less appealing and accessible to children.

"When it's in a candy form or cookies, people don't think of it in the same way as household chemicals or other things a child could get into," she said. "But people should really be thinking of it as a medication."

Tweet and her colleagues analyzed reports to the National Poison Data System, which includes the nation's 55 regional poison control centers. More than half of the children were toddlers, ages 2 and 3, the study showed. More than 90% got the edibles at home.

"They're the ones starting to explore and to get up and move around," she said.

Of more than 7,000 reports, researchers were able to track the outcomes of nearly 5,000 cases. They found that nearly 600 kids, or about 8%, were admitted to critical care units, most often with depressed breathing or even coma. Nearly 15% were admitted to non-critical care units and more than a third were seen in emergency rooms. Drowsiness, breathing problems, fast heart rate and vomiting were the most common symptoms.

The results are not surprising, said Dr. Brian Schultz, a pediatric emergency physician at Johns Hopkins Medicine in Baltimore. He previously worked at Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C., where he and his colleagues treated kids who had eaten pot edibles "almost on a daily basis," he said.

Reports and hospitalizations rose during the last two years of the study, during the COVID-19 pandemic. More children were at home, with more opportunities to find pot treats, Tweet said. With marijuana more widely legal, parents may have felt less stigma seeking help from poison centers and health care providers, she added.

Brazilians mourn Pelé at the stadium where he got his start

By MAURICIO SAVARESE AP Sports Writer

SANTOS, Brazil (AP) — Thousands of mourners, including high school students and supreme court justices, began filing past the body of Pelé on Monday on the century-old field where he made his hometown team one of Brazil's best.

The soccer great died on Thursday after a battle with cancer. He was the only player ever to win three World Cups, and he was 82.

Pelé's coffin, draped in the flags of Brazil and the Santos FC football club, was placed on the midfield area of Vila Belmiro, the stadium outside Sao Paulo that was his home for most of his career. A Catholic

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Mass will be celebrated there Tuesday morning before his burial at a nearby cemetery. Brazil's newly inaugurated President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will come to Vila Belmiro shortly before Pelé's coffin is removed from the stadium.

The storied 16,000-seat stadium was surrounded by mourners, and covered with Pelé-themed decorations. Fans coming out of the stadium said they'd waited three hours in line, standing under a blazing sun.

Forty-five years after Pelé played his last game, he's still a central part of Brazil's national story.

Geovana Sarmiento, 17, came with her father, who was wearing a Brazil shirt with Pelé's name.

"I am not a Santos fan, neither is my father. But this guy invented Brazil's national team. He made Santos stronger, he made it big, how could you not respect him? He is one of the greatest people ever, we needed to honor him," she said.

In the 1960s and 70s, Pelé was perhaps the world's most famous athlete. He met presidents and queens, and in Nigeria a civil war was put on hold to watch him play. Many Brazilians credit him with putting the country on the world stage.

Caio Zalke, 35, an engineer, also wore a Brazil shirt as he waited in line. "Pelé is the most important Brazilian of all time. He made soccer important for Brazil and he made Brazil important for the world," he said.

Rows of shirts with Pelé's number 10 were placed behind one of the goals, waving in the city's summer winds. A section of the stands was filling up with bouquets of flowers placed by mourners and sent by clubs and star players — Neymar and Ronaldo among them — from around the world as loudspeakers played a song named "Eu sou Pelé" ("I am Pelé") that was recorded by the Brazilian himself.

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Santos FC said that more than 1,100 journalists from 23 countries were at the funeral. Dignitaries and friends of Pelé in attendance spoke at the funeral.

Among them was Pelé's best friend Manoel Maria, who is also a former Santos player. "If I had all the wealth in the world I would never be able to repay what this man did for me and my family. He was as great a man as he was as a player; the best of all time. His legacy will outlive us all. And that can be seen in this long line with people of all ages here."

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Another fan and friend in line was Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Gilmar Mendes.

"It is a very sad moment, but we are now seeing the real meaning of this legendary player to our country," Mendes told journalists. "My office has shirts signed by Pelé, a picture of him as a goalkeeper, also signed by him. DVDs, photos, a big collection of him."

Mendes also said Pelé was a humble man despite his global fame, and that he deserves every tribute.

The casket will be ushered through the streets of Santos before his burial Tuesday.

Pelé had undergone treatment for colon cancer since 2021. The medical center where he had been hospitalized said he died of multiple organ failure as a result of the cancer.

The soccer star led Brazil to World Cup titles in 1958, 1962 and 1970, and remains one of the team's all-time leading scorers with 77 goals. Neymar tied Pelé's record during this year's World Cup in Qatar.

65,000 view Benedict XVI's body lying in state at Vatican

By GIADA ZAMPANO and FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's body, his head resting on a pair of crimson pillows, lay in state in St. Peter's Basilica on Monday as tens of thousands queued to pay tribute to the pontiff who shocked the world by retiring a decade ago.

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On the eve of the first of three days of viewing, Italian security officials had said at least 25,000-30,000 people would come on Monday. But by the end of the first day's viewing, some 65,000 persons had passed by the bier, the Vatican said.

As daylight broke, 10 white-gloved Papal Gentlemen — lay assistants to pontiffs and papal households — carried the body on a cloth-covered wooden stretcher after its arrival at the basilica to its resting place in front of the main altar under Bernini's towering bronze canopy.

A Swiss Guard saluted as Benedict's body was brought in through a side door after it was transferred in a van from the chapel of the monastery grounds where the increasingly frail, 95-year-old former pontiff died on Saturday morning.

His longtime secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, and a handful of consecrated laywomen who served in Benedict's household, followed the van by foot for a few hundred yards in a silent procession toward the basilica. Some of the women stretched out a hand to touch the body with respect.

Before the rank-and-file faithful were allowed into the basilica, prayers were recited and the basilica's archpriest, Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, sprinkled holy water over the body, and a small cloud of incense was released near the bier. Benedict's hands were clasped, a rosary around his fingers.

Just after 9 a.m. (0800 GMT), the doors of the basilica were swung open so the public, some of whom had waited for hours in the pre-dawn damp, could pay their respects to the late pontiff, who retired from the papacy in 2013 — the first pope to do so in 600 years.

Faithful and curious, the public strode briskly up the center aisle to pass by the bier with its cloth draping after waiting in a line that by midmorning snaked around St. Peter's Square.

Benedict's body was dressed with a miter, the peaked headgear of a bishop, and a red cloak.

Filippo Tuccio, 35, said he came from Venice on an overnight train to view Benedict's body.

"I wanted to pay homage to Benedict because he had a key role in my life and my education," Tuccio said.

"When I was young I participated in World Youth Days," he said, referring to the jamborees of young faithful held periodically and attended by pontiffs. Tuccio added that he had studied theology, and "his pontificate accompanied me during my university years."

"He was very important for me: for what I am, my way of thinking, my values," Tuccio continued.

Among those coming to the basilica viewing was Cardinal Walter Kasper, like Benedict, a German theologian. Kasper served as head of the Vatican's Christian unity office during Benedict's papacy.

Benedict left an "important mark" on theology and spirituality, but also on the history of the papacy with his courage to step aside, Kasper told The Associated Press.

"This resignation wasn't a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength, a greatness because he saw that he was no longer up to the challenges of being pope," Kasper said.

Kasper, who was among the cardinals who elected Benedict to the papacy in 2005, added that the resignation gave "a more human vision to the papacy: that the pope is a man and is dependent on his physical and mental strengths."

Public viewing was set for 10 hours on Monday, and 12 hours each on Tuesday and Wednesday before Thursday morning's funeral, which will be led by Pope Francis, at St. Peter's Square.

As Benedict desired, the funeral will be marked by simplicity, the Vatican said when announcing the death on Saturday.

Workers on Monday were setting up an altar in the square for the funeral Mass. Also being arranged were rows of chairs for the faithful who want to attend the funeral. Authorities said they expected about 60,000 to come for the Mass.

On Monday, the Vatican confirmed widely reported burial plans. In keeping with his wishes, Benedict's tomb will be in the crypt of the grotto under the basilica that was last used by St. John Paul II, before the saint's body was moved upstairs into the main basilica ahead of his 2011 beatification, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said.

At two sides of the piazza's colonnade, viewers went through the usual security measures required for tourists entering the basilica — passing through metal detectors and screening bags through an X-ray machine.

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Marina Ferrante, 62, was among them.

"I think his main legacy was teaching us how to be free," she said. "He had a special intelligence in saying what was essential in his faith and that was contagious" for other faithful. "The thing I thought when he died was that I would like to be as free as he was."

While venturing that the shy, bookworm German churchman and theologian and the current Argentine-born pontiff had different temperaments, Ferrante said: "I believe there's a continuity between him and Pope Francis and whoever understands the real relationship between them and Christ can see that."

An American man who lives in Rome called the opportunity to view the body "an amazing experience." Mountain Butorac, 47, who is originally from Atlanta, said he arrived 90 minutes before dawn.

"I loved Benedict, I loved him as a cardinal (Joseph Ratzinger), when he was elected pope and also after he retired," Butorac said. "I think he was a sort of people's grandfather living in the Vatican."

With an organ and choir's soft rendition of "Kyrie Eleison" ("Lord, have mercy" in ancient Greek) in the background, ushers moved well-wishers along at a steady clip down the basilica's center aisle.. Someone left a red rose.

A few VIPs had a moment before the general public to pay their respects, including Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, the far-right leader who in the past has professed admiration for the conservative leanings of Benedict.

Italian President Sergio Mattarella also came to view the body. The Vatican has said only two nations' official delegations — from Italy and from Benedict's native Germany — were invited formally to the funeral, since the pope emeritus was no longer head of state.

Sister Regina Brand was among the mourners who came to the square before dawn.

"He's a German pope and I am from Germany," she said. "And I am here to express my gratitude and love, and I want to pray for him and to see him."

Rose Parade avoids California rain as it welcomes New Year

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — Flower-covered floats, marching bands and equestrian units celebrated the New Year on a chilly but dry Monday as the 134th Rose Parade slipped through a gap in California's siege of drenching storms.

Pasadena's annual floral spectacle offered the optimistic theme of "Turning the Corner" for 2023, and former U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords of Arizona, who survived a 2011 shooting, served as grand marshal.

"The New Year is a time for renewal, an opportunity for a fresh start," Tournament of Roses President Amy Wainscott told the television audience.

The parade, which by tradition is held on Jan. 2 when New Year's Day falls on a Sunday, kicked off with the Los Angeles band Fitz and the Tantrums! performing "Let Yourself Free" and a crowd-pleasing flyby of two U.S. Air Force B-1B jets.

Rain has rarely fallen on the parade, but this year it came close. Downpours pounded Southern California over the weekend — and rain returned Monday evening during the Rose Bowl college football game between Utah and Penn State.

But earlier in the day, parade participants and thousands of spectators avoided a soaking.

Giffords rolled down the 5.5-mile (8.8-mile) route in a flower-decked antique convertible, accompanied by her husband, Democratic U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona.

Marching bands came from across the U.S. and around the world.

The Riverside County, California, sheriff's mounted unit was led by a riderless horse in honor of Deputy Isaiah Cordero, 32, who was slain during a traffic stop on Dec. 29.

The floats offered simple beauty — birds, bees, bears, bugs and giraffes covered in flowers or other natural materials — as well as messages such as a Cal Poly universities' entry called the "Road to Reclamation" depicting animated snails and mushrooms living on a fallen tree branch.

The Louisiana Office of Tourism's "Feed Your Soul" float depicting a paddlewheel riverboat was the stage for mid-parade performance by Lainey Wilson.

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Donate Life's bright orange and red Chinese street dragon blowing smoke out its nostrils was awarded the sweepstakes trophy for most beautiful entry by the Tournament of Roses judges.

"American Idol" finalist Grace Kinstler performed aboard a float promoting tourism to her home state of Illinois, and country music star Tanya Tucker sang her current single, "Ready as I'll Never Be," in the parade's finale.

EU to try again for coordination on China COVID-19 policies

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union nations will try again on Wednesday to mold a coordinated approach on if and how authorities should check incoming airline passengers from China for any new COVID-19 variants after several member nations announced individual efforts over the past week.

Belgium said late Monday it would be checking wastewater from planes coming in from China to see if it yields new clues about any potentially dangerous variants. It said that it would urge visitors from China who do not feel well to take a COVID-19 test.

More should be done, but only in a coordinated approach among the 27 member states, said Belgian Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke. "It would be a good signal toward China if all EU nations would say together: 'If you come to Europe you have to be tested first,'" he told VRT network.

Sweden, which holds the rotating EU presidency, said officials from the member states will hold an Integrated Political Crisis Response meeting on Wednesday to see if entry requirements throughout the bloc are necessary.

"It is important that we get the necessary measures in place quickly," said Swedish Health Minister Jakob Forssmed.

EU nations France, Spain and Italy have already announced independent measures to implement tougher COVID-19 measures for passengers arriving from China.

France's government is requiring negative tests, and is urging French citizens to avoid nonessential travel to China. France is also reintroducing mask requirements on flights from China to France.

Spain's government said it would require all air passengers coming from China to have negative tests or proof of vaccination. Italy was the first EU member in requiring coronavirus tests for airline passengers coming from China, but several others have said such measures might not be the best option to protect local populations since new variants now coming from China have already been around in Europe, often for many months.

The United States announced new COVID-19 testing requirements Wednesday for all travelers from China, joining some Asian nations that had imposed restrictions because of a surge of infections.

Jan. 6 panel shutting down after referring Trump for crimes

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Jan. 6 committee is shutting down, having completed a whirlwind 18-month investigation of the 2021 Capitol insurrection and having sent its work to the Justice Department along with a recommendation for prosecuting former President Donald Trump.

The committee's time officially ends Tuesday when the new Republican-led House is sworn in. With many of the committee's staff already departed, remaining aides have spent the last two weeks releasing many of the panel's materials, including its 814-page final report, about 200 transcripts of witness interviews, and documents used to support its conclusions.

Lawmakers said they wanted to make their work public to underscore the seriousness of the attack and Trump's multi-pronged effort to try to overturn the election.

"Accountability is now critical to thwart any other future scheme to overturn an election," Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., and Vice Chairwoman Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., wrote in a departing message on Monday. "We have made a series of criminal referrals, and our system of Justice is responsible for what

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comes next.”

Some of the committee’s work — such as videotape of hundreds of witness interviews — will not be made public immediately. The committee is sending those videos and some other committee records to the National Archives, which by law would make them available in 50 years. Members of the committee said they didn’t release that videotape now because it would have been too difficult to edit it and redact sensitive information.

Incoming Republican leaders may try to get those materials much sooner, though. A provision in a package of proposed House rules released Sunday calls for the National Archives to transfer “any records related to the committee” back to the House no later than Jan. 17.

It is unclear whether the GOP-led House could enforce the provision and what they would do with the materials.

The committee’s conclusion comes after one of the most aggressive and wide-ranging congressional investigations in recent memory. The panel formally or informally interviewed more than 1,000 witnesses, collected more than 1 million documents and held 10 well-watched hearings. The two Republicans and seven Democrats on the panel were able to conduct the investigation with little interference after House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy declined to appoint minority members, angry that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had rejected two of his suggested appointments.

In the end, the panel came to a unanimous conclusion that Trump coordinated a “conspiracy” on multiple levels, pressuring states, federal officials and lawmakers to try to overturn his defeat, and inspired a violent mob of supporters to attack the Capitol and interrupt the certification of President Joe Biden’s win. The panel recommended that the Justice Department prosecute Trump on four crimes, including aiding an insurrection.

While a so-called criminal referral has no real legal standing, it is a forceful statement by the committee and adds to political pressure already on Attorney General Merrick Garland and special counsel Jack Smith, who is conducting an investigation into Jan. 6 and Trump’s actions.

“This is the most intense investigation I’ve been involved in,” said California Rep. Zoe Lofgren, who has been in the House for almost three decades and served as an aide to a member on the House Judiciary Committee in the 1970s when Congress was preparing to impeach then-President Richard Nixon. Lofgren was also in the House for former President Bill Clinton’s impeachment and served as an impeachment manager during Trump’s first impeachment three years ago.

“I have never been involved in anything as wide ranging and intense,” Lofgren said.

She said that at the beginning of the probe, she felt it would be a success if there was a renewed enthusiasm for protecting democracy. In the November midterm elections, 44% of voters said the future of democracy was their primary consideration at the polls, according to AP VoteCast, a national survey of the electorate.

Lofgren said she believes the committee made clear that Trump was responsible for the insurrection and “it was not done at the last minute.”

“I think we proved that and we sent it all to the Department of Justice,” Lofgren said. “We’ll see what they do.”

Gov. Walz pledges to bolster education as he begins 2nd term

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

Democratic Gov. Tim Walz pledged Monday to make the largest investments in public education in Minnesota history as he took the oath of office for his second term.

Minnesota has a “historic opportunity” with its \$17.6 billion projected budget surplus to become the best state in the country for children and families, the former teacher said during inauguration ceremonies at the Fitzgerald Theater in St. Paul. He’ll unveil his two-year budget plan in three weeks but is expected to roll out some major proposals sooner.

“Now is the time to be bold,” Walz said. “To build that bright future for Minnesotans. And now is the

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time to deliver. We can lead the nation in ending child poverty, making sure that every child receives that world-class education. And in doing so, we'll continue to make sure that Minnesota is the best place to raise a family."

Walz said his administration made "historic strides" in its first four years despite the global COVID-19 pandemic, the nationwide and international racial reckoning that followed the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in 2020, and an era of deep political divisions. But he said much more work lies ahead.

The governor said his agenda for the 2023 Legislature, which will convene Tuesday, will include free school lunches, more funding for special education and mental health, incentives for increasing teacher diversity, a ban on so-called conversion therapy for LGBTQ kids, and paid family and medical leave for their parents. Walz said the Democratic takeover of the Legislature after eight years of divided government makes him optimistic about succeeding.

"The era of gridlock in St. Paul is over," Walz proclaimed.

Also sworn in Tuesday were Democratic Secretary of State Steve Simon for a third term, and Lt. Gov Peggy Flanagan, Attorney General Keith Ellison and State Auditor Julie Blaha for their second terms.

Ellison took his oath from new U.S. District Judge Jerry Blackwell, who was a star of the prosecution team that the attorney general assembled to convict former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin of Floyd's murder.

"In prosecuting the people who killed George Floyd, we showed that no one is above the law, and no one is beneath the law," said Ellison, the state's first Black attorney general. "We believe in equal justice before the law."

Diversity, inclusion and racial justice were major themes of the festivities, which featured Ojibwe, Dakota and African American speakers, singers and honor guards, and prayers from Muslim, Jewish and Christian faith leaders.

Flanagan, a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, took her oath from Judge Sarah Wheelock, the first Native American on the Minnesota Court of Appeals.

The lieutenant governor celebrated "a government that looks more and more like the people of Minnesota with each passing election." She also highlighted the administration's efforts to build lasting partnerships with Minnesota's 11 sovereign tribal nations.

Despite all the divisions of the last four years, Walz said he believes in his 2018 campaign theme of "One Minnesota" more than ever.

"I hope Minnesotans and all of you that are here and are listening saw yourself reflected on the people of this stage," the governor said. "The sense of who we are as a state. The sense that you belong here. When you hear inclusion ... it's being embodied right in front of you today."

Transgender woman's scheduled execution would be US first

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Unless Missouri Gov. Mike Parson grants clemency, Amber McLaughlin, 49, will become the first transgender woman executed in the U.S. She is scheduled to die by injection Tuesday for killing a former girlfriend in 2003.

McLaughlin's attorney, Larry Komp, said there are no court appeals pending.

The clemency request focuses on several issues, including McLaughlin's traumatic childhood and mental health issues, which the jury never heard in her trial. A foster parent rubbed feces in her face when she was a toddler and her adoptive father used a stun gun on her, according to the clemency petition. It says she suffers from depression and attempted suicide multiple times.

The petition also includes reports citing a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, a condition that causes anguish and other symptoms as a result of a disparity between a person's gender identity and their assigned sex at birth.

"We think Amber has demonstrated incredible courage because I can tell you there's a lot of hate when

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it comes to that issue," her attorney, Larry Komp, said Monday. But, he said, McLaughlin's sexual identity is "not the main focus" of the clemency request.

Parson's spokesperson, Kelli Jones, said the review process for the clemency request is still underway.

There is no known case of a transgender inmate being executed in the U.S. before, according to the anti-execution Death Penalty Information Center. A friend in prison says she saw McLaughlin's personality blossom during her gender transition.

Before transitioning, McLaughlin was in a relationship with girlfriend Beverly Guenther. McLaughlin would show up at the suburban St. Louis office where the 45-year-old Guenther worked, sometimes hiding inside the building, according to court records. Guenther obtained a restraining order, and police officers occasionally escorted her to her car after work.

Guenther's neighbors called police the night of Nov. 20, 2003, when she failed to return home. Officers went to the office building, where they found a broken knife handle near her car and a trail of blood. A day later, McLaughlin led police to a location near the Mississippi River in St. Louis, where the body had been dumped.

McLaughlin was convicted of first-degree murder in 2006. A judge sentenced McLaughlin to death after a jury deadlocked on the sentence. A court in 2016 ordered a new sentencing hearing, but a federal appeals court panel reinstated the death penalty in 2021.

One person who knew Amber before she transitioned is Jessica Hicklin, 43, who spent 26 years in prison for a drug-related killing in western Missouri in 1995. She was 16. Because of her age when the crime occurred, she was granted release in January 2022.

Hicklin, 43, began transitioning while in prison and in 2016 sued the Missouri Department of Corrections, challenging a policy that prohibited hormone therapy for inmates who weren't receiving it before being incarcerated. She won the lawsuit in 2018 and became a mentor to other transgender inmates, including McLaughlin.

Though imprisoned together for around a decade, Hicklin said McLaughlin was so shy they rarely interacted. But as McLaughlin began transitioning about three years ago, she turned to Hicklin for guidance on issues such as mental health counseling and getting help to ensure her safety inside a male-dominated maximum-security prison.

"There's always paperwork and bureaucracy, so I spent time helping her learn to file the right things and talk to the right people," Hicklin said.

In the process, a friendship developed.

"We would sit down once a week and have what I referred to as girl talk," Hicklin said. "She always had a smile and a dad joke. If you ever talked to her, it was always with the dad jokes."

They also discussed the challenges a transgender inmate faces in a male prison — things like how to obtain feminine items, dealing with rude comments, and staying safe.

McLaughlin still had insecurities, especially about her well-being, Hicklin said.

"Definitely a vulnerable person," Hicklin said. "Definitely afraid of being assaulted or victimized, which is more common for trans folks in Department of Corrections."

The only woman ever executed in Missouri was Bonnie B. Heady, put to death on Dec. 18, 1953, for kidnapping and killing a 6-year-old boy. Heady was executed in the gas chamber, side by side with the other kidnapper and killer, Carl Austin Hall.

Nationally, 18 people were executed in 2022, including two in Missouri. Kevin Johnson, 37, was put to death Nov. 29 for the ambush killing of a Kirkwood, Missouri, police officer. Carman Deck was executed in May for killing James and Zelma Long during a robbery at their home in De Soto, Missouri.

Another Missouri inmate, Leonard Taylor, is scheduled to die Feb. 7 for killing his girlfriend and her three young children.

Alpine slopes face snow shortage in unseasonably warm winter

By JAMEY KEATEN and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Much of the Alps just don't look right for this time of year. Sparse snowfall and unseasonably warm winter weather in Europe's central mountains are allowing grass to blanket hillsides across the region, causing headaches for ski slope operators and aficionados of Alpine white.

Patches of grass, rock and dirt were visible Monday in some of Europe's skiing meccas — like Innsbruck in Austria, Villars-sur-Ollon and Crans-Montana in Switzerland, and Germany's Lenggries and far beyond. The dearth of snow has revived concerns about temperature upheaval linked to climate change.

On a swath stretching from France to Poland, but with the Alps at the center, many parts of Europe were enjoying short-sleeve weather. A weather map showed Poland racking up daily highs in the double digits Celsius — or more than 50 Fahrenheit — in recent days.

It's a sharp contrast to the frigid weather and blizzards in parts of the United States late last year.

Swiss state forecaster MeteoSuisse pointed to some of the hottest temperatures ever this time of year. A weather station in Delemont, in the Jura range on the French border, already hit a record average daily temperature of 18.1 degrees Celsius (nearly 65 Fahrenheit) on the first day of the year, over 2-1/2 degrees Celsius higher than the previous record high for January. Other cities and towns followed suit with records.

MeteoSuisse quipped on its blog: "... this turn of the new year could almost make you forget that it's the height of winter."

Forecaster Anick Haldimann of MeteoSuisse said a persistent weather system that brought in warmer air from the west and southwest has lingered, locking in warmer temperatures expected to last through the week. While slopes above 2,000 meters (over 6,500 feet) have gotten snow, lower down, "the order of the day is patience" for skiing buffs, she said.

The shortage has been particularly burdensome around Switzerland's Adelboden, which is set to host World Cup skiing on Saturday, and generally draws 25,000 fans for a single day of racing. Resorts like these look for such races to offer up bucolic wintertime images to draw amateur skiers, but grassy, brown sides to the course can mar the landscape — and dampen the appeal.

Course director Toni Hadi acknowledged that the race will be run on 100% artificial snow this year.

"The climate is a bit changing but what should we do here? Shall we stop with life?" he said by phone, noting that other challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic and war show "life is not easy" these days.

"Everything is difficult -- not only to prepare a ski slope," Hadi said.

The start to 2023 picked up where many countries had already left off: Last year was the hottest on record in both Switzerland and France. More broadly, the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization says the past eight years are on track to be the eight warmest on record. Its final tally on global temperature figures for 2022 will be released in mid-January.

Next door in France, national weather agency Meteo France said 2022 ended with some of the warmest weather the country has ever experienced at this time of year -- capping an exceptionally warm year that saw temperature records broken and rampant forest fires and drought conditions.

Meteo France says the southern Alps and, in the northern Alps, slopes above 2,200 meters, have seen close to normal snowfalls. But snow is notably lacking at lower altitudes in the northern Alps and across the Pyrenees, it said.

To be sure, the Alps cover a lot of territory and not all of it is bereft of snow: Perhaps counterintuitively, some of the best snowfall has been reported in the Italian Dolomites, to the south of the Swiss Alps.

Early in the ski season, fortunes looked bright for snow lovers: In France, freezing weather into mid-December raised hopes that ski resorts in the Alps, the Pyrenees and elsewhere might see plenty of early snow and the lasting subzero temperatures needed to keep runs open.

But exceptionally warm weather followed, prompting some resorts at lower altitudes to close down as snow cover melted away.

"There was a good start to the season with a cold wave in mid-December which provided some white to pretty much everyone. Then, last week, there was quite a bit of rain and warm temperatures, so a certain number of runs had to close again," Laurent Reynaud of the Domaines Skiabiles de France industry group

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that represents French ski resorts, lift operators and others, said on C-News television.

Germany too has seen unusually springlike temperatures — as high as 16 degrees Celsius (61 Fahrenheit) in parts of the country on Monday. New Year's Eve is believed to have been the warmest since reliable records began. The German Weather Service reported readings of 20 Celsius (68 Fahrenheit) and just above at four weather stations in southern Germany, news agency dpa reported.

Wim Thiery, a professor of climate science at the University of Brussels, said the same jet stream that pulled down cold air from the Arctic into the U.S. has fanned warm air from subtropical zones into Europe. He warned that climate change hasn't finished its work — unless people cut use of fuels that trap heat in the atmosphere.

"By the end of the century (it's) just going to be over ... skiing in the Alps as we know it," he said, adding that lower-altitude mountain areas already feel the impact. "In the future, these problems will get worse, because the snow will continue to melt as long as the climate warms."

Brazil's Lula welcomed back by Latin American leaders

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Latin American leaders converged on Brazil to meet with President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on his first full day in office Monday, welcoming him back to power and hoping his country assumes a great role on the international stage.

Lula's predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, rarely traveled abroad or received visiting heads-of-state and found himself increasingly isolated.

But South American heads of state — some of them fellow leftists, though not all — clearly welcomed Lula's third term in office and want greater participation from the continent's largest economy.

"It was a very powerful symbol of desire in the region that leaders want Brazil to be back," according to Oliver Stuenkel, a professor of international relations at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university. "Latin American leaders want an active, engaged Brazil."

On Monday, Lula met with presidents Argentina's Alberto Fernández, Bolivia's Luis Arce of Bolivia, Ecuador's Guillermo Lasso, Chile's Gabriel Boric and Colombia's Gustavo Petro. Other leaders also traveled to the capital, Brasilia, on Sunday and congratulated Lula on his inauguration, including Uruguay's President Luis Alberto Lacalle Po.

On Monday afternoon Lula also met with Wang Qishan, the vice president of China, by far Brazil's biggest export destination. Although Bolsonaro toned down his attacks on China in the latter half of his administration, it is important for China to dialogue with Lula's administration and ensure Latin America's biggest nation remains a true partner, Stuenkel said.

Lula is later scheduled to receive the president of Angola and representatives from Cuba, Venezuela and Peru.

NYC machete attack: Man arrested on attempted murder charges

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A man accused of attacking police with a machete near New York's Times Square on New Year's Eve was arrested on charges of attempting to murder police officers, authorities said Monday as they continued to investigate whether he was motivated by Islamic extremism.

Trevor Bickford, 19, also faces attempted assault charges from the attack that injured two officers at the edge of the high-security zone where throngs of new year's revelers were gathered, the New York Police Department said in a news release.

Bickford, who lives in Wells, Maine, remained hospitalized Monday with a gunshot wound to the shoulder from police fire during the confrontation. He was awaiting arraignment, and it wasn't immediately clear if he had a lawyer who could speak to the allegations. The Associated Press left messages for his relatives.

A law enforcement official familiar with the matter told the AP on Sunday that investigators believe Bickford traveled to New York City earlier in the week. They are examining whether he made the trip specifically

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to attack police at the Times Square festivities, the official said.

New York City police and federal officials are still trying to ascertain a motive, and investigators are reviewing Bickford's online postings, which included some mentions of Islamic extremist views, the official said. The official could not publicly discuss details about the ongoing investigation and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Michael Driscoll, the assistant director in charge of the FBI's New York field office, said Sunday that investigators believe the attacker acted alone.

FBI spokespeople in New York and Boston declined to discuss the ongoing inquiry Monday. Boston field office spokesperson Kristen Setera called it a "very active investigation."

FBI agents were seen Sunday night entering Bickford's family home in Wells, a popular beach destination close to the New Hampshire border. Bickford competed in sports in high school, was part of Maine's state champion wrestling team in 2020 and made the honor roll for his studies at least one year.

The principal at Wells High School declined to comment on Monday. Messages seeking comment were sent to the wrestling coach.

Bickford's father died unexpectedly in 2018, according to an online obituary.

The machete attack happened about two hours before midnight on Saturday, just outside the area where people are screened for weapons before gaining entry to one of the world's biggest and most famous New Year's celebrations.

Two of the officers were struck with the machete before an officer shot the suspect, authorities said. One officer suffered a fractured skull and the other has a bad cut. Both were expected to recover, as was the suspect.

The attack briefly sent some people running, but the festivities in Times Square continued.

Utah cracks women's AP top 10 for 1st time; Gamecocks No. 1

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

South Carolina finished 2022 how it started the year: No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25 women's basketball poll.

While the top-ranked Gamecocks cruised to a win in their lone game last week, then-No. 4 Indiana, No. 6 N.C. State and No. 7 Virginia Tech all lost as they scrambled to replace injured players.

There were 22 losses by teams in the AP top 10 this season before Jan. 1. That was tied for the most in the past 23 years before January, matching the 2014-15 season, according to ESPN. Seven of those losses came to unranked teams, tied with 1999-2000 and 2004-05 for the most ever.

The New Year didn't start off any better for top teams as then-No. 10 UCLA lost to Oregon State.

"The most challenging week putting together my poll in my 12 years as a voter," ESPN analyst Deb Antonelli said after all the ranked-team losses last week. "I'm looking at records, injuries, NET and my experienced eye as a basketball analyst, and it's difficult. We wanted parity and we got it! It's a great measurement of growth in game."

Stanford, Ohio State, Notre Dame and UConn round out the top five teams in the poll released Monday. With the Hoosiers' defeat, that left only five unbeaten teams, including the top-ranked Gamecocks, who were once again a unanimous choice at No. 1.

No. 3 Ohio State, No. 7 LSU, No. 8 Utah and 24th-ranked St. John's are the other undefeated teams heading into 2023. Utah is making its first appearance in the top 10.

Indiana dropped to sixth with Virginia Tech and North Carolina State finishing off the top 10.

Duke was one of the the teams to knock off a top-10 squad last week, beating the Wolfpack. The Blue Devils entered the poll at No. 19. They are off to a 13-1 start with the lone loss coming against UConn. Kara Lawson's team is 3-0 in conference play for the first time since 2013-14 and is off to its best in six years.

Arkansas fell out of the poll.

RISING UTES:

Utah extended its season-opening winning streak to 14 games, the second longest in school history and

only two victories short of the team that went 16-0 to begin the 1997-98 season.

FALLING TAR HEELS

North Carolina has lost three straight games and fallen to No. 22 in the poll after dropping contests to Florida State and Virginia Tech. The Tar Heels, who were sixth in the Top 25 two weeks ago, will try end the slide against Miami on Thursday.

Idaho slayings suspect's family voices sympathy for victims

STROUDSBURG, Pa. (AP) — Relatives of a man arrested in Pennsylvania in the slayings of four University of Idaho students expressed sympathy for the victims' families but also vowed to support him and promote "his presumption of innocence."

Bryan Kohberger, 28, is eager to be exonerated and plans to tell a judge Tuesday in Pennsylvania that he will not fight extradition to Idaho, said his public defender, Jason LaBar.

Moscow, Idaho, police Capt. Anthony Dahlinger said that would speed up the process of bringing Kohberger to Idaho to face charges, but that he wasn't sure yet when that might happen.

Kohberger, a doctoral student and teaching assistant in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Washington State University, was taken into custody early Friday by state police at his parents' home in Chestnuthill Township in eastern Pennsylvania, authorities said.

His parents, Michael and Maryann, and his two older sisters, Amanda and Melissa, said in a statement released Sunday by his attorney that they "care deeply for the four families who have lost their precious children. There are no words that can adequately express the sadness we feel, and we pray each day for them."

The family said that relatives will continue to let the legal process unfold, and that "as a family we will love and support our son and brother." They say they have fully cooperated with law enforcement to try to "seek the truth and promote his presumption of innocence rather than judge unknown facts and make erroneous assumptions."

LaBar, the public defender in Monroe County, Idaho, urged people not to pass judgment until a fair trial has been held.

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

Capt. Dahlinger told The Associated Press on Saturday that authorities believe Kohberger was responsible for all four murders. "We believe we've got our man," he said.

Bill Thompson, a prosecutor in Latah County, Idaho, said during a news 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 victims were found Nov. 13, several hours after investigators believe they died.

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.

Christina Teves, a spokesperson for the Chapin family, declined to comment Monday on the Kohberger family's statement. Shanon Gray, a lawyer for the Goncalves family, did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Latah County prosecutors have said the affidavit for four charges of first-degree murder in Idaho will remain sealed until he is returned. He is also charged with felony burglary in Idaho. Many details of the case are expected to be released after Kohberger's first appearance in an Idaho courtroom, Dahlinger said.

EU Parliament starts process to lift 2 lawmakers' immunity

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The president of the European Parliament has launched an urgent procedure to waive the immunity of two lawmakers following a request from Belgian judicial authorities investigating a major corruption scandal rocking EU politics.

The European Parliament said Monday that President Roberta Metsola asked all services and committees to give the procedure priority, with the goal to have it finished by Feb. 13.

"From the very first moment the European Parliament has done everything in its power to assist in investigations and we will continue to make sure that there will be no impunity," Metsola said. "Those responsible will find this Parliament on the side of the law. Corruption cannot pay and we will do everything to fight it."

The EU Parliament press service did not identify the two MEPs. According to two people familiar with the case who were not allowed to speak publicly because the investigation is ongoing, they are Italian Andrea Cozzolino and Belgian Marc Tarabella.

The two did not immediately respond to queries asking for comments.

Tarabella, whose home was raided last month, and Cozzolino have denied wrongdoing and self-suspended their membership of the Parliament's Socialists and Democrats group (S&D).

Cozzolino had previously said he was ready to abandon his parliamentary immunity so that he would be able to answer questions from authorities.

"When it comes to the request to lift their immunity the S&D group would follow, in the context of the European Parliament, the procedures foreseen in a responsible and constructive manner," the Socialists and Democrats said.

A third member of Parliament, Eva Kaili, has already been charged in relation with the scandal, which allegedly involves Qatari and Moroccan officials suspected of influencing economic and political decisions with gifts and money.

Prosecutors accuse Kaili of corruption, membership in a criminal organization and money laundering. A Greek socialist MEP, Kaili has been in custody since Dec. 9. Her partner, Francesco Giorgi, an adviser at the European Parliament, is jailed on the same charges.

Kaili was relieved of her duties of parliament Vice-President after being charged. She would have normally enjoyed immunity from prosecution but was brought before a judge after Belgian police launched raids on premises across Brussels last month and large sums of cash were reportedly found at her home.

Kaili and Giorgi are suspected of working with Giorgi's one-time boss, Pier Antonio Panzeri, a former EU lawmaker. According to arrest warrants, Panzeri "is suspected of intervening politically with members working at the European Parliament for the benefit of Qatar and Morocco, against payment."

The Parliament has halted work on files involving Qatar as it investigates what impact the cash-and-gifts-for-influence bribery scandal might have had. Qatar vehemently denies involvement and Morocco has yet to respond to allegations that its ambassador to Poland might have been involved.

Belgian prosecutors are also seeking the handover of Panzeri's wife and daughter from Italy, where they were put under house arrest on similar charges.

A fourth suspect in Belgium — Niccolo Figa-Talamanca, secretary-general of the non-governmental organization No Peace Without Justice — was also charged and jailed over the affair.

The scandal came to public attention after police launched more than 20 raids, mostly in Belgium but also in Italy. Hundreds of thousands of euros were found at a home and in a suitcase at a hotel in Brussels. Mobile phones and computer equipment and data were seized.

Moscow says Ukrainian rocket strike kills 63 Russian troops

By FELIPE DANA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian forces fired rockets at a facility in the eastern Donetsk region where Russian soldiers were stationed, killing 63 of them, Russia's defense ministry said Monday, in one of the deadliest attacks on the Kremlin's forces since the war began more than 10 months ago.

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Ukrainian forces fired six rockets from a HIMARS launch system and two of them were shot down, a defense ministry statement said. It did not say when the strike happened.

The strike, using a U.S.-supplied precision weapon that has proven critical in enabling Ukrainian forces to hit key targets, delivered a new setback for Russia which in recent months has reeled from a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

According to the governor of Russia's Samara region, Dmitry Azarov, an unspecified number of residents of the region were among those killed and wounded by the strike on the town of Makiivka.

Russian military bloggers, whose information has largely been reliable during the war, said ammunition stored close to the facility had exploded in the attack and contributed to the high number of casualties.

Expressing anger at the losses, Daniil Bezsonov, an official with the Russian-appointed administration in Russian-occupied Donetsk, called for the punishment of military officers who ordered a large number of troops to be stationed at the facility.

The Ukrainian military appeared to acknowledge the attack Monday, with the General Staff confirming that Makiivka was hit on Dec. 31, and saying 10 Russian military vehicles were destroyed or damaged. It added that Russian personnel losses were still being clarified.

In a claim that could not be independently verified, the Strategic Communications Directorate of Ukraine's Armed Forces had maintained Sunday that some 400 mobilized Russian soldiers were killed in a vocational school building in Makiivka and about 300 more were wounded. The Russian statement said the strike occurred "in the area of Makiivka" and didn't mention the vocational school.

Meanwhile, Russia deployed multiple exploding drones in another nighttime attack on Ukraine, officials said Monday, as the Kremlin signaled no letup in its strategy of using bombardments to target the country's energy infrastructure and wear down Ukrainian resistance to its invasion.

The barrage was the latest in a series of relentless year-end attacks, including one that killed three civilians on New Year's Eve.

On Monday, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said that 40 drones "headed for Kyiv" overnight. All of them were destroyed, according to air defense forces.

Klitschko said 22 drones were destroyed over Kyiv, three in the outlying Kyiv region and 15 over neighboring provinces.

Energy infrastructure facilities were damaged as the result of the attack and an explosion occurred in one city district, the mayor said. It wasn't immediately clear whether that was caused by drones or other munitions. A wounded 19-year-old man was hospitalized, Klitschko added, and emergency power outages were underway in the capital.

In the outlying Kyiv region a "critical infrastructure object" and residential buildings were hit, Gov. Oleksiy Kuleba said.

Russia has carried out airstrikes on Ukrainian power and water supplies almost weekly since October.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has accused Russia of "energy terrorism" as the aerial bombardments have left many people without heat amid freezing temperatures. Ukrainian officials say Moscow is "weaponizing winter" in its effort to demoralize the Ukrainian resistance.

Ukraine is using sophisticated Western-supplied weapons to help shoot down Russia's missiles and drones, as well as send artillery fire into Russian-held areas of the country.

Moscow's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24 has gone awry, putting pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin as his ground forces struggle to hold ground and advance. He said in his New Year's address to the nation that 2022 was "a year of difficult, necessary decisions."

Putin insists he had no choice but to send troops into Ukraine because it threatened Russia's security — an assertion condemned by the West, which says Moscow bears full responsibility for the war.

Russia is currently observing public holidays through Jan. 8.

Drones, missiles and artillery shells launched by Russian forces also struck areas across Ukraine.

Five people were wounded in the Monday morning shelling of a Ukraine-controlled area of the southern Kherson region, its Ukrainian Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevich said on Telegram.

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The Russian forces attacked the city of Beryslav, the official said, firing at a local market, likely from a tank. Three of the wounded are in serious condition and are being evacuated to Kherson, Yanushevich said.

Seven drones were shot down over the southern Mykolaiv region, according to Gov. Vitali Kim, and three more were shot down in the southeastern Dnipropetrovsk region, Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko said.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, a missile was also destroyed, according to Reznichenko. He said that energy infrastructure in the region was being targeted.

Ukraine's Air Force Command reported Monday that 39 Iranian-made exploding Shahed drones were shot down overnight, as well as two Russian-made Orlan drones and a X-59 missile.

"We are staying strong," the Ukrainian defense ministry tweeted.

A blistering New Year's Eve assault killed at least four civilians across the country, Ukrainian authorities reported, and wounded dozens. The fourth victim, a 46-year-old resident of Kyiv, died in a hospital on Monday morning, Klitschko said.

Multiple blasts rocked the capital and other areas of Ukraine on Saturday and through the night. The strikes came 36 hours after widespread missile attacks Russia launched Thursday to damage energy infrastructure facilities, and the unusually quick follow-up alarmed Ukrainian officials.

In Russia, a Ukrainian drone hit an energy facility in the Bryansk region that borders with Ukraine, Bryansk regional governor Alexander Bogomaz reported on Monday morning. A village was left without power as a result, he said.

Prince Harry says he wants his father and brother back

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry has said he wants to have his father and brother back and that he wants "a family, not an institution," during a TV interview ahead of the publication of his memoir.

The interview with Britain's ITV channel is due to be released this Sunday. In clips released Monday, Harry was shown saying that "they feel as though it is better to keep us somehow as the villains" and that "they have shown absolutely no willingness to reconcile" — though it was not clear who he was referring to.

Harry, also known as the Duke of Sussex, and his wife Meghan have aired their grievances against the British monarchy since the couple stepped down as senior royals in 2020 and moved to California, where they now live with their two young children.

Harry, 38, has previously spoken about his estrangement from his father, King Charles III, and elder brother Prince William since his departure from the U.K.

Last month Netflix released "Harry & Meghan," a six-part series that detailed the couple's experiences leading to their decision to make a new start in the U.S.

In that documentary, Harry was scathing about how the royal press team worked, and spoke about how his relationship with William and the rest of the royal household broke down. Meghan described wanting to end her life as she struggled to cope with toxic U.K. press coverage.

Harry's autobiography, titled "Spare" — recalling the saying "the heir and the spare" — is being released on Jan. 10.

Analysis: NFC is wide open heading into final weekend of NFL

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Tom Brady again was at his best when the Tampa Bay Buccaneers needed him most.

The 45-year-old, seven-time Super Bowl champion had one of the best statistical games of his 23-year career in a 30-24 victory over the Carolina Panthers on Sunday that clinched Tampa's second straight NFC South title.

Another old quarterback who also wears No. 12 is one way win away from joining Brady in the playoffs. Aaron Rodgers and Green Bay Packers routed Minnesota 41-17 for their fourth straight win. One more next week at home against Detroit secures a wild-card spot that seemed improbable when the Packers were 4-8.

On a day when the NFC's top teams struggled, the Buccaneers (8-8) and Packers (8-8) were victorious

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in must-win games and proved they can't be counted out despite mediocre records.

"Playoffs start a clean slate for everybody," Buccaneers coach Todd Bowles said. "You've got a three-game elimination tournament and it doesn't matter where you are."

Brady rekindled his connection to Mike Evans, hitting the four-time Pro Bowl receiver in stride three times for touchdown passes of 63, 57 and 30 yards. He finished 34 of 45 for 432 yards, tying the fifth-highest output in his career.

"Mike played awesome, like he always does," Brady said. "I love playing out there with him and he's an amazing player. I've missed him too many times this year, so it was nice to connect with him and hopefully we can keep that going. I think we will."

Brady became the first player in league history to complete at least 30 passes in five consecutive games and the first player with at least 30 completions in 10 games within a single season. His completion percentage of 75.6% was his highest in a game with at least 45 pass attempts in his career.

Evans had 10 catches for 207 yards to surpass 1,000 yards receiving for the ninth straight season, extending his own NFL record to begin a career.

"Tom was just dropping dimes," Evans said. "Those were some really, really good balls. One of the best games I've seen Tom play since he has been here. They were falling right in the breadbasket every time. He had an unbelievable game."

Brady has now led the Buccaneers to three comeback wins when trailing by double digits in the fourth quarter, including two in a row.

With Brady and Evans back in sync and Tampa's defense playing tough, the Buccaneers are a dangerous team in the playoffs.

Same for Rodgers and the Packers.

A ball-hawking defense helped Green Bay dismantle NFC North champion Minnesota. Two-time Pro Bowl cornerback Jaire Alexander and the secondary held star receiver Justin Jefferson to just one catch. Rodgers was efficient, Aaron Jones ran for 111 yards and the defense forced four turnovers, including a pick-6 by Darnell Savage.

Now, after several outcomes around the league went their way over the past few weeks, the Packers just have to beat the Lions (8-8) to get in.

"I know not many people in that locker room and definitely not many of you people believed we'd be sitting here at 8-8 with control of our own destiny going into Week 18," Rodgers said. "That's pretty special."

Suddenly, the NFC seems wide open after the Philadelphia Eagles (13-3) lost their second straight game without Jalen Hurts, the Vikings (12-4) were blown out and the San Francisco 49ers (12-4) needed overtime to beat Las Vegas after surrendering 500 yards to Jarrett Stidham and the Raiders' offense.

The Eagles would secure the No. 1 seed with a win over the playoff-bound New York Giants (9-6-1), who are locked into the sixth seed. The Dallas Cowboys (12-4) need a win over Washington and Philadelphia to lose to overtake the Eagles.

Anything is possible in the NFL this season.

NYC nurses, hospitals resume contract talks; some reach pact

NEW YORK (AP) — A possible strike by thousands of New York City nurses loomed Monday even as nurses at one hospital reached a tentative agreement hours before their contract was set to expire.

The pact affecting 4,000 nurses at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital awaits ratification.

Contract talks between nurses and seven other hospitals will resume this week to avert a strike by 12,000 other nurses as early as next Monday, Jan. 9. Their contracts expired Tuesday.

"Striking is always a last resort, but nurses say they are prepared to strike if hospital administration gives them no other option to protect their patients and their practice," the New York State Nurses Association said in a statement over the weekend.

The union issued a 10-day notice that it intends to strike if an agreement isn't reached. The advance notice is required by law to give hospitals to arrange for alternative staffing.

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The nurses have been calling for what they described as safe staffing levels, fair wages, no cuts to their health coverage, and health and safety protections in light of the “triple-demic” of COVID-19, RSV and flu.

They also want community benefits such as funding programs to recruit and train nurses from within the communities they serve.

The seven hospitals where the nurses could strike include Montefiore, Mount Sinai Hospital, Mount Sinai Morningside and West, Maimonides, BronxCare, Richmond University Medical Center, and Flushing Hospital Medical Center.

Representatives of several hospitals said Friday they remained hopeful contract agreements will be reached before a strike but said they are prepared to bring in outside workers as a precaution as they face high patient volume because of the triple health threats.

The union congratulated its members at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital on reaching a tentative agreement on what it called “a fair contract” hours before their contract expired.

The hospital said it was pleased to have reached a tentative agreement.

“With this agreement, which is still subject to ratification by the nurses, we are making a significant investment in our outstanding nursing team and ensuring that we can continue to deliver the highest level of care to our patients,” the hospital said in a statement.

At the Supreme Court, it’s taking longer to hear cases

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When lawyers argue before the Supreme Court, a small white light goes on to tell them when their time is almost expired and then a red light signals when they should stop. But arguments this term are extending well beyond the red light’s cue.

Arguments that usually lasted an hour in the morning have stretched well beyond two, and on many days it’s long past lunchtime before the court breaks.

The lengthy arguments have to do with a change the justices have made to their argument style, a switch tied to the coronavirus pandemic, leading to the justices asking more questions. Justices have said in the past that lawyers’ written briefs, not oral arguments, most influence their decisions, so it’s unclear if the extra time is really helping them decide cases. Whether that trend will continue is also an open question.

In December, an argument about whether a Colorado graphic artist can refuse to create wedding websites for same-sex couples lasted two hours and 25 minutes. And an important elections case that was scheduled for an hour and a half clocked in at two hours and 53 minutes. Already, a handful of arguments have been longer than any argument the high court heard in the term that ended in June — and that term included major cases on abortion and guns.

In the graphic artist case on Dec. 5, Justice Neil Gorsuch engaged in friendly banter with attorneys about the length of arguments.

“Good morning, Mr. Olson,” Gorsuch said around 11:30 a.m., after arguments had been going on for nearly an hour and a half.

“Is it still morning?” responded Colorado lawyer Eric R. Olson.

“Just barely,” Gorsuch replied to laughter from the audience. “It must not feel like it standing where you are.”

“I’m here all day, Justice Gorsuch,” Olson said.

The reason high court arguments are running longer goes back to a change the justices made in 2020. After the pandemic began, the justices decided to hold arguments by telephone and abandoned their typical free-for-all style of questioning. Instead, each justice got a few minutes to ask questions in order of seniority.

When the justices moved back to in-person arguments in their courtroom more than a year and a half later, they returned to the largely free-for-all questioning. Now, however, at the end of each lawyer’s time, the justices each get a chance to ask any remaining questions, again in seniority order. That switch led to an average of 18 extra minutes per case last term, said lawyer William Jay, who’s been tracking the

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extra time.

Jay said by email the longest argument so far this term was a case involving the adoption of Native American children, which ran three hours and 13 minutes. Jay said his sense is that the justices seem more comfortable with the format this term and that the questions are longer. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, who replaced retiring Justice Stephen Breyer, is also a "considerably more active questioner" than her predecessor, Jay said.

According to Adam Feldman, the creator of the Empirical SCOTUS blog, Jackson has spoken about 36,000 words this term while her most vocal colleague, Justice Elena Kagan, has spoken only about 24,000.

The justices' new format has tripped up some lawyers who are used to the old way of doing business and have moved to sit down when the red light on their podium went on.

"Don't go. Not so fast," Chief Justice John Roberts told one lawyer who tried to sit prematurely.

Longer arguments are, in fact, a return for the court. Early in the court's history, cases could take days to argue.

During the 1800s, when the justices heard arguments from noon to 4 p.m. without a lunch break, tables were set up behind the bench and the justices would leave one or two at a time to eat.

"The audience could not see them eating, but they could very distinctly hear the rattle of the knives and forks," court history expert Clare Cushman has written.

The length of arguments shrank over the years until in 1970, under Chief Justice Warren Burger, it became 30 minutes per side. The court's website claims that's still the case. "Typically, the Court holds two arguments each day beginning at 10:00 a.m., each lasting one hour," it says.

These days there's no leaving the bench to eat during arguments, though justices sometimes duck out to go to the bathroom. In October, when the court heard back-to-back arguments in two affirmative action cases, it took a brief break between cases. The court had scheduled two hours and 40 minutes of arguments in the two cases. They took nearly five hours.

That's compared with an hour and 27 minutes for *Bush v. Gore* in 2001. In 2012, arguments over President Barack Obama's health care law stretched for approximately six and a half hours over three days.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who was chief from 1986 to 2005, was known for cutting off lawyers and even fellow justices when the lawyer's red light went on.

Seth Waxman, a veteran of more than 80 Supreme Court arguments, once remarked that for Rehnquist: "The red light ended everything — absolutely everything."

Roberts, who became chief after Rehnquist's death, is less strict, but before the pandemic, arguments were still generally an hour.

In the graphic designer case, after the third and final lawyer stood up to argue, Gorsuch couldn't resist revisiting the argument's length.

"I think, at the end of two hours -- we are now in the afternoon, by the way," Gorsuch told Biden administration attorney Brian Fletcher.

"Good afternoon," Fletcher replied.

It was only the first of two cases scheduled for the day.

Israeli army kills 2 Palestinians in West Bank confrontation

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Israeli forces killed two Palestinians, including a man claimed by an armed group as a member, during a confrontation that erupted early Monday when troops entered a Palestinian village in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian health officials said.

The two men were killed in the village of Kafr Dan near the northern city of Jenin. The Israeli military said it entered Kafr Dan late Sunday to demolish the houses of two Palestinian gunmen who killed an Israeli soldier during a firefight in September. The military said troops came under heavy fire and fired back at the shooters.

It was the latest bloodshed in the region that has seen Israeli-Palestinian tensions surge for months. On Monday, the Israeli rights group B'Tselem said 2022 was the deadliest year for Palestinians since 2004, a

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period of intense violence that came during a Palestinian uprising.

The Palestinian Health Ministry identified those killed as Samer Houshiyeh, 21, and Fouad Abed, 25. Houshiyeh was shot several times in the chest, according to Samer Attiyeh, the director of the Ibn Sina Hospital in Jenin. Attiyeh initially said Abed was 17, but the ministry later gave his age as 25.

An armed group, the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, later claimed Houshiyeh as a member. The group, an offshoot of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party, published an older photo in which Houshiyeh had posed with rifles. Video on social media showed his body wrapped with the armed group's flag as his mother and other mourners bid farewell.

It was not immediately clear whether the second Palestinian killed was also affiliated with a militant group. Israel says it demolishes the homes of militants as a way to deter potential attackers. Critics say the tactic amounts to collective punishment.

The Israeli military has been conducting near-daily raids into Palestinian cities and towns since a spate of Palestinian attacks against Israelis killed 19 last spring.

Nearly 150 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank and east Jerusalem last year, according to B'Tselem's figures, making 2022 the deadliest since 2004, when 197 Palestinians were killed. A fresh wave of attacks killed at least another nine Israelis in the fall. The Israeli army says most of the Palestinians killed have been militants. But stone-throwing youths protesting the incursions and others not involved in confrontations have also been killed.

Hamoked, an Israeli rights group, said that Israel is holding 866 Palestinians in administrative detention, a form of imprisonment without trial. That figure is up from around 500 a year ago, the organization said, the highest since 2003, during the peak of the last Palestinian uprising. It said that a total of 4,658 Palestinians are imprisoned by Israel on security related charges.

Israel says the raids are meant to dismantle militant networks and thwart future attacks. The Palestinians see them as further entrenchment of Israel's 55-year, open-ended occupation of the West Bank.

Israel captured the West Bank, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, in the 1967 Mideast war and the Palestinians seek those territories for a future state.

New this week: 'The Pale Blue Eye,' Iggy Pop and 'The Menu'

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music platforms this week.

MOVIES

— Christian Bale reunites with filmmaker Scott Cooper, who directed him in "Hostiles" and "Out of the Furnace," for "The Pale Blue Eye," a murder mystery set in 1830 New York. This time Bale plays a detective investigating a series of killings alongside a young Edgar Allen Poe (played by "Harry Potter" and "The Queen's Gambit" alum Harry Melling). In his review for The Associated Press, Mark Kennedy wrote that "a very satisfying and unexpected ending" awaits those who can bear the movie's chill, which should be easier when it's available in your living room, on Netflix, on Thursday.

— If you haven't consumed enough rich food, or content about very rich people, over the holidays, HBO Max has a treat coming your way with "The Menu," streaming on Monday. Ralph Fiennes plays a celebrity chef at a very exclusive restaurant where things take a decidedly sinister turn for its various patrons including a foodie fanboy (Nicolas Hoult) and his skeptical date (Anya Taylor-Joy), a movie star (John Leguizamo) and a food critic (Janet McTeer). AP Film Writer Jake Coyle, in his review, wrote that the screenwriters "bake an amuse-bouche of commentaries on class and service industry dynamics into an increasingly unhinged, and bloody, romp."

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

MUSIC

— Get the year started right with a pop — from Iggy Pop. "Every Loser," his latest album, out Friday, includes the the savage "Frenzy" and the very catchy "Strung Out Johnny." Pop is joined on the album by

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members of Blink 182 (Travis Barker), Foo Fighters (Taylor Hawkins), Guns N' Roses (Duff McKagan), Jane's Addiction (Chris Chaney, Dave Navarro, Eric Avery), Pearl Jam (Josh Klinghoffer, Stone Gossard) and Red Hot Chili Peppers (Klinghoffer, Chad Smith). The result is 11 songs, his team says, "by a man who refused to go gently into that good night."

— Rising country singer-songwriter Brandon Ratcliff on Friday drops the album "Tale of Two Towns," with a really lovely and melancholy title track that explores the push-pull of staying or escaping home. "Are you more brave for leaving or sticking around?" he asks. More singles include "Drove Me Country," "Someone Who Believes In You" and "Always Moving On," revealing a hard-to-pin down and exciting artist. Ratcliff has toured with Kelsea Ballerini, Brett Young and Keith Urban, and in 2020 was named to Pandora's Ones to Watch list and topped Rolling Stone's all-genre Breakthrough Artists chart. He is the son of multi-Grammy Award winner Suzanne Cox.

— Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

TELEVISION

— It wasn't until the 2019 Lifetime docuseries, "Surviving R. Kelly," that criminal investigations into the disgraced singer were kicked into high-gear. Earlier this year, Kelly was sentenced to 30 years in prison where a jury in New York found him guilty of racketeering and sex trafficking. A second trial in Chicago ended on Sept. 14 with his conviction on charges of producing child pornography and enticing girls for sex. Lifetime will conclude its coverage on R. Kelly's victims with "Surviving R. Kelly: The Final Chapter," with a two-night special, premiering Monday and Tuesday.

— A new Netflix docuseries delves into the rise and fall of financier Bernie Madoff, who was behind the largest Ponzi scheme in history and died in prison in 2021. The series features clips of Madoff's court depositions and interviews with people including investigators, his former employees and victims. All four episodes of "Madoff: The Monster of Wall Street" drop Wednesday on the streamer.

— Sixty acts from past seasons of "America's Got Talent" and other "Got Talent" iterations across the globe will compete in "America's Got Talent: All-Stars." Simon Cowell, Howie Mandel and Heidi Klum return as judges with Terry Crews as host beginning Monday on NBC.

— Alicia Rancilio

Floods in Philippines leave 51 dead, over a dozen missing

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Thousands of people in the Philippines remained in emergency shelters in the wake of devastating Christmas flooding, as the death toll climbed to 51 with 19 missing, authorities said Monday.

Images showed residents in southern Misamis Occidental province sweeping away thick mud from the floors of their homes. In the seaside village of Cabol-anonan, coconut trees were uprooted and huts made of light material were nearly flattened.

The Northern Mindanao region bore the brunt of the disaster, reporting 25 deaths, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. Most of the deaths were from drowning and landslides, and among the missing were fishermen whose boats capsized.

Floods have subsided in most parts, but more than 8,600 people were still in shelters.

Over 4,500 houses were damaged by the floods, along with roads and bridges, and some areas still struggle with disrupted power and water supply, the disaster management agency said.

Ivy Amor Amparo, a hospital worker from Ginoog city in Misamis Oriental province, said that the seaside home of her parents and siblings was damaged by big waves and uprooted trees. Rescuers ferried the mother of two and her relatives in a truck to a nearby shelter, where they spent the Christmas weekend.

She said her father bought materials using the 5,000 pesos (\$90) cash aid from the local government to build a temporary shelter for the household, whose seven members are now miserably cramped in the small living room of the damaged house.

"Their things are still with the neighbor and some in our house," Amparo told The Associated Press in a phone interview. "When they need to take a bath at the community water pump, they have to get their

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clothes from the neighbor's house."

Officials said the government sent food and other essentials, deployed heavy equipment for clearing operations, and provided iron sheets and shelter repair kits. Teams from the capital Manila were sent to assist communities with limited clean water in setting up water filtration systems.

At least 22 cities and municipalities have declared a state of calamity. The move will allow the release of emergency funds and hasten rehabilitation efforts.

A shear line — the point where warm and cold air meet — triggered heavy rains in parts of the country last week, causing the floods, the state weather bureau said.

Looted ancient sarcophagus returned to Egypt from US

CAIRO (AP) — An ancient wooden sarcophagus that was featured at the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences was returned to Egypt after U.S. authorities determined it was looted years ago, Egyptian officials said Monday.

The repatriation is part of Egyptian government efforts to stop the trafficking of its stolen antiquities. In 2021, authorities in Cairo succeeded in getting 5,300 stolen artifacts returned to Egypt from across the world.

Mostafa Waziri, the top official at the Supreme Council of Antiquities, said the sarcophagus dates back to the Late Dynastic Period of ancient Egypt, an era that spanned the last of the Pharaonic rulers from 664 B.C. until Alexander the Great's campaign in 332 B.C.

The sarcophagus, almost 3 meters (9.5 feet) tall with a brightly painted top surface, may have belonged to an ancient priest named Ankhenmaat, though some of the inscription on it has been erased, Waziri said.

It was symbolically handed over at a ceremony Monday in Cairo by Daniel Rubinstein, the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Egypt.

The handover came more than three months after the Manhattan District Attorney's Office determined the sarcophagus was looted from Abu Sir Necropolis, north of Cairo. It was smuggled through Germany into the United States in 2008, according to Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg.

"This stunning coffin was trafficked by a well-organized network that has looted countless antiquities from the region," Bragg said at the time. "We are pleased that this object will be returned to Egypt, where it rightfully belongs."

Bragg said the same network had smuggled a gilded coffin out of Egypt that was featured at New York's Metropolitan Museum. Met bought the piece from a Paris art dealer in 2017 for about \$4 million. It was returned to Egypt in 2019.

Today in History TUE JAN 03

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 3, the third day of 2023. There are 362 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 3, 1990, ousted Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega surrendered to U.S. forces, 10 days after taking refuge in the Vatican's diplomatic mission.

On this date:

In 1777, Gen. George Washington's army routed the British in the Battle of Princeton, New Jersey.

In 1861, more than two weeks before Georgia seceded from the Union, the state militia seized Fort Pulaski at the order of Gov. Joseph E. Brown. The Delaware House and Senate voted to oppose secession from the Union.

In 1868, the Meiji Restoration re-established the authority of Japan's emperor and heralded the fall of the military rulers known as shoguns.

In 1959, Alaska became the 49th state as President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a proclamation.

In 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower announced the United States was formally terminating diplo-

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matic and consular relations with Cuba.

In 1967, Jack Ruby, the man who shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, died in a Dallas hospital.

In 1977, Apple Computer was incorporated in Cupertino, California, by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Mike Markkula (MAHR'-kuh-luh) Jr.

In 2002, a judge in Alabama ruled that former Ku Klux Klansman Bobby Frank Cherry was mentally competent to stand trial on murder charges in the 1963 Birmingham church bombing that killed four black girls. (Cherry was later convicted, and served a life sentence until his death in November 2004.)

In 2007, Gerald R. Ford was laid to rest on the grounds of his presidential museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan, during a ceremony watched by thousands of onlookers.

In 2008, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama won Democratic caucuses in Iowa, while Mike Huckabee won the Republican caucuses.

In 2013, students from Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, reconvened at a different building in the town of Monroe about three weeks after the massacre that had claimed the lives of 20 first-graders and six educators. The new 113th Congress opened for business, with House Speaker John Boehner (BAY'-nur) re-elected to his post despite a mini-revolt in Republican ranks.

In 2020, the United States killed Iran's top general in an airstrike at Baghdad's international airport; the Pentagon said Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds force, had been "actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members" in Iraq and elsewhere. Iran warned of retaliation.

Ten years ago: Students from Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, reconvened at a different building in the town of Monroe about three weeks after the massacre that had claimed the lives of 20 first-graders and six educators. The new 113th Congress opened for business, with House Speaker John Boehner re-elected to his post despite a mini-revolt in Republican ranks. No. 5 Oregon beat No. 7 Kansas State, 35-17, in the Fiesta Bowl.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump signed an executive order disbanding the controversial voter fraud commission he had set up to investigate the 2016 presidential election after alleging without evidence that voting fraud cost him the popular vote; the White House blamed the decision to end the panel on more than a dozen states that refused to cooperate. A brutal winter storm delivered a rare blast of snow and ice to the coastal Southeast, giving parts of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina their heaviest snowfall in nearly three decades.

One year ago: A jury in San Jose, California, convicted Elizabeth Holmes of duping investors into believing that her startup company Theranos had developed a revolutionary medical device that could detect diseases and conditions from a few drops of blood. The East Coast's main north-south highway, Interstate 95, became impassable in Virginia after a truck jackknifed, triggering a chain reaction as other vehicles lost control during a winter storm; hundreds of drivers were stuck in place in frigid temperatures, some for over 24 hours. Expanding COVID-19 boosters amid an omicron surge, the Food and Drug Administration allowed extra Pfizer shots for children as young as 12.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Dabney Coleman is 91. Journalist-author Betty Rollin is 87. Hockey Hall of Famer Bobby Hull is 84. Singer-songwriter-producer Van Dyke Parks is 80. Musician Stephen Stills is 78. Rock musician John Paul Jones (Led Zeppelin) is 77. Actor Victoria Principal is 73. Actor-director Mel Gibson is 67. Actor Shannon Sturges is 55. Actor John Ales is 54. Jazz musician James Carter is 54. Contemporary Christian singer Nichole Nordeman is 51. Musician Thomas Bangalter (Daft Punk) is 48. Actor Jason Marsden is 48. Actor Danica McKellar is 48. Actor Nicholas Gonzalez is 47. Singer Kimberley Locke (TV: "American Idol") is 45. Actor Kate Levering is 44. Former NFL quarterback Eli Manning is 42. Actor Nicole Beharie is 38. Pop musician Mark Pontius is 38. R&B singer Lloyd is 37. Pop-rock musician Nash Overstreet (Hot Chelle (shel) Rae) is 36. Actor Alex D. Linz is 34.