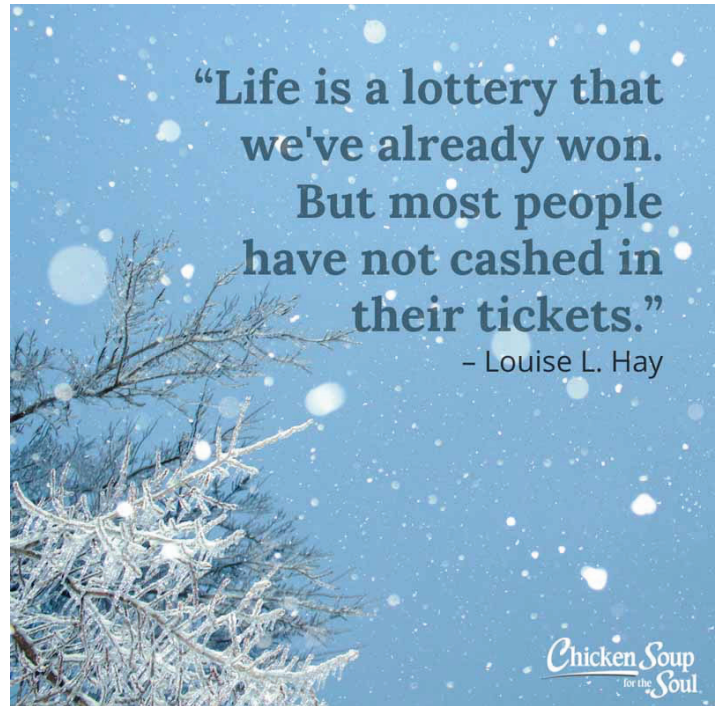


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Groton Community Calendar

Friday, Jan. 6

- Senior Menu: Ham and bean soup, egg salad sandwich, fresh fruit, cookie.
- School Breakfast: Biscuits and jelly.
- School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.
- Boys Basketball at Clark: C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and then varsity.
- Middle School Wrestling at Milbank, 5 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 7

- Wrestling at Garretson Invitational, 8 a.m.
- Basketball hosts Sioux Falls Lutheran, Boys JV at 1 p.m., Girls JV at 2 p.m., Boys Varsity to follow. No Varsity girls game.
- Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 8

- Open Gym: Grades JK-8; 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., Grades 6-12; 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- Emmanuel Lutheran Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.
- United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.
- Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m.
- Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

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

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

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Installation
Service & Repair
Underground & Aerial Work

2023

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Locke
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Office: 397-2440
9 N. 3rd St., Groton

Wanna get away?



2023



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make memories for 2023!
Happy New Year!**

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Boys Basketball
Friday, Jan. 6, 2023
Clark/Willow Lake at Clark



Livestreaming
C game at 5 p.m.
Sponsored by Grandpa Anonymous

Junior Varsity Game to follow
Sponsored by Groton Chiropractic Clinic

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

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

Jones among Aberdeen Public Schools Foundation Golden Apple Recipients

The Aberdeen Public Schools Foundation announced the seventh annual Golden Apple Awards, recognizing individuals that are dedicated, inspiring, and making a difference in the Aberdeen School District. This year's honorees are Kim Aman, Jeremy Schutter and Mendy Jones. Each received \$500 and an engraved golden apple.



Mindy Jones

Being understanding, respectful, professional, supportive, and committed are all terms that come to mind when one thinks about excellence in the field of education. These are a few of the terms used to describe Mendy Jones, Special Education Coordinator.

Jones began her career by working in several school settings for at-risk students. While handling the extreme behavioral and academic challenges that come with teaching in that setting, she also worked to obtain her Master's Degree. While working in this setting, she built lifelong friendships with the employees but more importantly with the clients that she worked with. One client had so much respect and trust in Jones that, at a young age, asked her to be his payee. She agreed and assisted this student with managing his finances but what is more admirable is that she continues to do this today, over 20 years later.

When transitioning to the public schools, her caring, supportive, and enthusiastic demeanor was evident in Jones's daily interactions with her students. She was a huge advocate for her students and went above and beyond in helping them be academically and behaviorally successful. Her ability to connect with them along with her high classroom expectations created a welcoming environment where students felt safe in expressing their

thoughts, ideas, opinions, and feelings. Jones was a strong voice for her students who lacked the skills to speak up and advocate for themselves. Her collaboration with parents, teachers, and administrators always put the student needs first.

Regardless of her extremely busy schedule, Jones will make time to assist staff whenever needed. She played an essential role in developing the Basic Classes at Central High School as she saw a need for more classes that would specifically fit the academic needs of students which improved the graduation rate of students with special needs. When we started seeing a need for more behavioral support for students, Jones proposed making a room where the students could go and process through their behavior instead of going straight to the office. The processing room has been very successful in lowering office referrals and suspensions. In an effort to assist families with making connections with adult service agencies, Jones started an adult service provider night at the high school. This allowed parents to meet many of the adult service providers and find out more about them all in one night.

Jones's giving nature doesn't end in the workplace. She has bought homecoming t-shirts, graduation tassels, paid for students to get into games or activities so they can have the same high school experiences as their peers. She has visited students in jail and written students in prison so they know they have someone in their corner and encouraging them to make good choices. She has gone to homes after hours to complete testing, get permission slips signed, and taken students shopping to get necessities such as coats. Jones serves on the Mayor's Advisory Committee that assists with the acceptance and integration of people with disabilities in our community. She also serves on the SAT, SNT, and the RDA committees throughout the school district and was a CPI staff trainer for many years.

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Kim Aman

Kim Aman, Simmons Elementary School Principal, always puts students first. She addresses all students by name, and learns the names of new students within their first week of school. She has implemented many positive behavior plans, including growth mindset and restorative behavior practices. While encouraging staff members to focus on the social-emotional wellness of students, she provides calming chairs, fidgets, and countless strategies to help with self-regulation.

Not only is Aman creating a constructive environment for students, she promotes a caring atmosphere for staff members. She is always supportive, and will drop whatever she is doing to help out. Building relationships is important to Aman, so she uses icebreakers and group games whenever possible. Teachers can always find little treats in mailboxes for birthdays, holidays, and even just because. Sometimes, she will even surprise staff members with a snack from her "Woot Woot" cart.

Aman is an active member in our community, works closely with the school's PTA, and makes connections with local businesses. You may have seen her serving meals at the monthly Table of Plenty feast, or collaborating with the Salvation Army to serve lunch to families over the summer. Aman has also partnered with Northern State University, teaching education courses regarding best practices and pedagogy. She has presented at several teacher and administrative workshops throughout the state, sharing her expertise in the areas of writing, school climate, and early childhood.

Aman has made a difference in the lives of countless students, as well as staff members who work with her. Her positive, outgoing personality shines every day, and she always takes on new challenges with a smile on her face. Her passion for learning is evident by her many degrees and accolades. Aman deserves the Golden Apple award for being an outstanding role model for her students, staff, and fellow colleagues.



Jeremy Schutter

Jeremy Schutter, Central High School Band Instructor, goes above and beyond what is expected in his responsibilities by creating strong personal connections with each of his students. He does this by getting to know about students' lives outside of the classroom; other activities, interests, and family life are all topics of conversation that can be heard between this teacher and students on a regular basis. Another way Schutter exceeds the expectations of his responsibilities is by making his classes exciting to be in. He includes challenging materials in order to push students to higher levels, which keeps class from becoming boring because there are always more ways to improve.

Schutter's impact can be found outside of the classroom because many of the lessons he teaches are essential lessons for life in the real world. One of the main lessons he teaches is punctuality. The phrase, "To be early is to be on time, to be on time is to be late, and to be late is not to be," is commonly said countless times throughout the school year. Other important life lessons he teaches in his classroom are a strong work-ethic and self-improvement. Schutter encourages every individual to focus on becoming one percent better every day, and also teaches the group to buy into what the group is working on. This means that everyone needs to truly give it their all for the

work to be effective and successful.

Outside of his professional responsibilities, Schutter is a member of the Aberdeen Municipal Band, plays in the Northern State University concert band, and participates in the pit orchestra for many ACT musi-

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cal. As a member of Zion Lutheran Church, he sings in the choir and plays trombone for Special Music during church services. Beside his musical involvement in the community, he volunteers by serving as a Confirmation member for young church members, packing lunches for the Salvation Army Feed the Kids program, and helping with Table of Plenty, which serves community members free meals.

Overall, Schutter has inspired students to continue in the fields of music and education by creating an atmosphere that rewards students for being the best possible versions of themselves. By building strong connections with students, creating an exciting atmosphere in his classroom, teaching life lessons, and volunteering beyond music, Schutter has gone above and beyond in his efforts to make a positive impact on education and the community.

The Golden Apple awards are a special project of the Aberdeen Public Schools Foundation. Visit www.AberdeenPublicSchoolsFoundation.org for more information. The Aberdeen Public Schools foundation promotes excellence in education by forging a partnership among the schools, community, and alumni.

Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #10 Results

Team Standings: Chipmunks – 8, Jackelopes – 8, Foxes – 6, Coyotes – 5, Shihtzus – 5, Cheetahs – 4

Men's High Games: Brad Waage – 221, Mike Siegler – 201, Ron Belden – 191

Women's High Games: Vicki Walter – 183, Lori Giedt – 173, Alexa Schuring – 168

Men's High Series: Brad Waage – 550, Mike Siegler – 536, TJ Sperry – 505

Women's High Series: Vicki Walter – 454, Alexa Schuring – 445, Sam Bahr – 428

Fun Game: Most Spares – Cheetahs with 47!

Lady Tigers have clean sweep over Clark/Willow Lake

Groton Area came from behind to edge past Clark/Willow Lake in girls basketball action played Thursday in Groton, 30-27.

The Tigers jumped out to a 9-0 lead, and then went on a big drought as the Cyclones scored 12 points in the second quarter and the Tigers were scoreless as Clark/Willow Lake took a 12-9 lead at half time. Clark/Willow Lake had a seven point lead in the third quarter, 22-15, and led at the break, 22-18.

The Tigers tied the game with 1:56 left in the game at 26 and took the lead with less than a minute to go with a Jerica Locke to Aspen Johnson feed under the basket and Johnson made the shot to give Groton a 28-27 lead. Gracie Traphagen made two free throws with seven seconds left for the 30-27 win. A last second three-point shot at the buzzer failed to go in.

Sydney Leicht led the Tigers with 13 points, three rebounds and made three three-pointers. Gracie Traphagen had seven points, 14 rebounds, one assist, one steal and two blocks and one three-pointer. Jaedyn Penning had four points, three rebounds, one assist and one steal. Aspen Johnson had two points and two rebounds. Brooke Gengerke had two points, four rebounds, one assist and two steals. Kennedy Hansen had two points, one rebound and three assists. Jerica Locke had four rebounds and three assists. Faith Traphagen had one rebound.

Groton Area made eight of 24 two-pointers for 33 percent, four of 23 three-pointers for 17 percent, two of two free throws, had 32 rebounds, 18 turnovers, nine assists, four steals, 11 fouls and two blocked shots.

They Vig led the Cyclones with eight points followed by Musonda Kabwe with seven, Alicia Vig had five, Haylee Tormanen three, and Kayla Jordan and Shay Michalski each had two points. Clark/Willow Lake made 10 of 39 field goals for 26 percent, made four of seven free throws, had 11 team fouls and 11 turnovers.

The Cyclones made eight points off of Groton Area's turnovers while the Tigers made two points off of Clark/Willow Lake's turnovers.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, 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 Wheeling. Shane Clark provided the play-by-play commentary.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 39-26. Laila Roberts led the Tigers with 12 points followed by Jaedyn Penning with 11, Faith Traphagen had five, Kennedy Hansen and Rylee Dunker each had four and Elizabeth Fliehs had three points. Brynn Roehrich and Sami Brenden led the Cyclones with eight points apiece. Mr. Anonymous sponsored the broadcast on GDILIVE.COM.

The C team jumped out to a 10-0 first quarter lead en route to a 28-11 win. Rylee Dunker and Taryn Traphagen each had six points, McKenna Tietz had five, Brooklyn Hansen and Talli Wright each had four points, Laila Roberts had two and Kella Tracy made a free throw. Hayden Broke made six points for the Cyclones. Weber Landscaping sponsored the broadcast on GDILIVE.COM.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Woman pleads guilty to another crime 11 days after sentence reduction by Noem

BY: SETH TUPPER - JANUARY 5, 2023 5:34 PM

A woman released from prison less than two weeks ago by Gov. Kristi Noem has pleaded guilty to another criminal charge that was pending while the woman was in prison.

Danielle Blakney, 30, of Spearfish, pleaded guilty Wednesday in Lawrence County court to one count of simple assault.

As part of a plea agreement, the prosecutor dropped another count of simple assault and a charge of intentional damage to property. A judge sentenced Blakney to 30 days in jail but suspended all of that time on several conditions, including that Blakney remain law-abiding for 360 days.

Blakney was one of seven people who received a reduced prison sentence — known as a “commutation” — from Gov. Noem on Christmas Eve. Noem reduced the seven prisoners’ sentences to supervised parole for the remainder of their terms.

“These seven individuals have each earned a second chance,” Noem said in a news release at the time. “Each of these individuals has demonstrated a low risk of recidivism.”

Blakney’s path to prison, a commutation from the governor, and back to a Lawrence County courtroom started with a lengthy criminal history culminating in a 2021 arrest.

In August of that year, a law enforcement officer pulled Blakney over for expired license plate tags and found marijuana, methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia in her vehicle. Blakney faced charges including possession of a controlled drug or substance and driving under the influence. Court documents in the case said she already had multiple felony convictions on her record.

While Blakney was on supervised release awaiting the outcome of that case, court documents say she was at a home in Spearfish in July 2022 when she allegedly knocked over a TV tray, pushed a woman to the floor, and smashed the windshield of a man’s car. That incident resulted in the assault and property-damage charges.

Blakney pleaded guilty to the drug and DUI charges in September 2022 and was sentenced to eight years in prison, with four suspended on the condition that she pay several hundred dollars in costs associated with the case.

The judge wrote in the sentencing order that Blakney “is not a candidate for probation and needs a structured environment to continue her necessary sobriety.” The judge noted her long criminal history, use of a variety of drugs and previous probation violations.

Blakney had served about three months of that multi-year prison term when Noem commuted the sentence on Christmas Eve and ordered Blakney’s release on parole.

The assault and property damage charges remained pending while Blakney was in prison, which led to her court appearance this week. Attorneys on both sides of this week’s court appearance did not immediately return phone messages from South Dakota Searchlight.

Gov. Noem has not publicly revealed the process she used to consider the seven Christmas Eve commutations, or how the seven people who benefitted from the commutations came to Noem’s attention from a state prison population of more than 3,000 people. Noem’s spokesman, Ian Fury, has not responded to phone messages or emails from South Dakota Searchlight seeking an interview or answers to questions, other than to acknowledge a Searchlight document request.

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At least one of the seven people had been denied a commutation recommendation by the state Board of Pardons and Paroles. South Dakota Searchlight could find no record of the other six cases being considered by the board. The state constitution allows Noem to bypass the board, but she issued an executive order in 2019 requiring that commutation applications go to the board for its consideration and recommendation.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Farmers brace for rising interest rates after years of steady lows

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 5, 2023 5:23 PM

Rising interest rates have farmers and lenders putting extra thought toward operational costs.

Taylor Sumption is a crop farmer just north of Aberdeen. He said the higher interest rates will make his annual loans cost more for things like putting his crops in the ground.

"For example, looking at putting in a corn crop, just the increase in interest is \$25 to \$30 per acre of added cost," Sumption said. "Then on top of that, we've had at least a 25% increase in equipment costs, maintenance, fuel, those things. So we're looking at pushing \$100 an acre of added cost."

Farming is a loan-reliant industry. Multiyear loans are often needed for purchases like land and equipment. And many farmers take out annual loans to cover expenses like fertilizer, feed and seed. Farmers need those annual loans because they make much of their money in the fall when they harvest and sell crops.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis' quarterly survey of agricultural credit conditions shows interest rates for operational loans jumped almost two percentage points from the first to the third quarter of 2022. And those rates have continued to climb.

The Wall Street Journal Prime, an average of the ten biggest banks' interest rates for their most credit-worthy customers, moved up to 7.5% on Dec. 15.

The last time the rate was that high was in 2007. The rate was about four percentage points lower the previous year, and the Federal Reserve expects interest rates to continue climbing.

Ag interest rates had been relatively steady, according to regional credit policy officer with First National Bank of Omaha, Kevin Moe.

"We just haven't seen that variable move up in such a dramatic fashion in a long time," Moe said.

And while the industry has navigated higher interest rates, Taylor Sumption said planting a crop is already more expensive today due to inflated fuel, fertilizer, seed and machinery prices.

"People my dad's age experienced 20% interest," Sumption said. "That would be absolutely crippling if we ever saw that now, but at the same time, the cost of putting in an acre of corn today is probably five or six times, if not more, in total cost."

That means interest rates don't have to rise much for farmers to feel a big difference, according to South Dakota State University crop business specialist and farmer Jack Davis.

"Rates could be four percent higher this year," Davis said. "So if we talk \$1 million in a line of credit that we use, that's another \$40,000 increase over the prior year, just from interest rates, not counting inflation. It's a huge factor."

Farm and ranch production expenditures for the Plains Region were already up 16 percent from 2020 to 2021.

Yet, a 2022 Minneapolis Fed survey found cash filling South Dakota farmers' pockets due to high crop prices. The survey also found land values soaring as more and more investors see land as a safe investment during uncertain economic times. Demand for loans decreased, according to lenders, with 45% reporting lower loan demand relative to 2021. However, 27% noted increased loan demand.

First National Bank's Kevin Moe said keeping the value of the farm's assets (like land) ahead of its short-term debts (like annual input loans) and maintaining good cash flow are what make for a robust farming operation.

However, Taylor Sumption said that while high land values are good collateral for loans, the higher taxes that have to be paid are another annual business expense.

"I don't care what land's worth," Sumption said. "I only care what it cost me because I'm never selling it."

Moe said U.S. agriculture has learned a lot from past turmoil and is more capable of navigating economic hardships today, because of stricter lending practices, better insurance and subsidies, and global communications that allow the industry to better anticipate market swings.

"While not immune, we have very sophisticated business people in this industry," Moe said. "Risk management tools are something today's producers are well aware of and using."

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Biden administration to rapidly expel more migrants at the border, add legal pathways

BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND ARIANA FIGUEROA - JANUARY 5, 2023 5:51 PM

WASHINGTON – President Joe Biden on Thursday announced dual immigration strategies that would increase expulsions of migrants who attempt to cross the Southern border, while also expanding opportunities for migrants from several countries to legally enter the United States.

But the sweeping new immigration plan brought condemnation from advocates who said he should not broaden the controversial Trump-era Title 42 policy, now under review at the U.S. Supreme Court, to expel any migrants.

Biden is also planning to make his first visit to the U.S.- Mexico border on Sunday, in El Paso, Texas, where he will get an overview of border enforcement operations and meet with local officials and community leaders.

Speaking at the White House Thursday with Vice President Kamala Harris at his side, Biden framed the moves as a balancing act to make the U.S. an asylum for migrants in need while also operating in a rational and "orderly process."

In an attempt to limit migration at the border, the Biden approach will allow up to 30,000 migrants each month from Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua who have U.S.-based financial sponsors and have passed a background check to enter the country legally. They would be allowed to work temporarily for two years.

However, those migrants who do not follow those procedures and try to cross the border without authorization will be immediately expelled to Mexico.

The administration will use both the Title 42 policy, enacted as an emergency health policy at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, and a more general expedited removal process that allows the U.S. to deport a migrant without a court hearing if the individual does not seek asylum or cannot prove a legitimate fear of persecution.

Title 42 allows officials to expel any non-citizen during a health crisis such as the coronavirus pandemic. Biden has said he opposes it, but the U.S. Supreme Court late last year blocked an administration effort to undo it. The court will hear another case affecting the policy's future in February.

If Title 42 cannot be used, the administration will rely on other immigration authorities, Biden and the Department of Homeland Security said Thursday.

Modeled after earlier program

The move to expand immigration is modeled after a parole program that had previously only applied to Venezuelan and Ukrainian nationals.

In October, the Biden administration made an agreement with Mexico to allow up to 24,000 qualifying Venezuelans who have preexisting U.S. ties for financial sponsorship to travel by air to a port of entry, while also having Mexico agree to take back any Venezuelans who came over to the U.S. without authorization.

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Biden said Thursday that migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela, account for most of the people traveling into Mexico to come to the U.S. because they are fleeing violence, economic crisis and political instability.

Biden said the move to expand immigration was consistent with a U.S. tradition of accepting immigrants seeking a better life. His own Irish ancestors took advantage of that tradition, he said.

"Can't blame them for wanting to do it," Biden said. "They flee oppression to the freest nation in the world. They chase their own American dream."

"I think it is a human right if your family's being persecuted," Biden said of migration to the United States. "The other side of this is there's also the people in this country have basic rights that are here. Basic, fundamental rights to assure that people who are coming have been checked out, they're not criminals."

'Deeply disappointed'

Biden said he disapproves of Title 42, instituted by his predecessor, Donald Trump, as a way to speed up expulsions during the pandemic, but would continue to use it.

However, immigration groups criticized the plan because migrants seeking to enter the country without first applying for the expanded parole program would be turned away.

"We are deeply disappointed at Biden's shameful expansion of Trump's Title 42 policy, which further cements his predecessor's anti-immigrant legacy," Layla Razavi, the interim executive director of the advocacy group Freedom for Immigrants, said in a statement.

"The Biden administration should be working to restore and strengthen our asylum system, not eroding what has been a vital lifeline for so many in our communities."

Other critics said the prohibition on arrivals at the U.S.-Mexico border also amounted to an illegal transit ban.

"Their decision to create an unlawful transit ban erases the words and values etched in the Statute of Liberty," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, said.

"This use of the parole authority is merely an attempt to replace our asylum laws, and thousands of asylum seekers waiting to present their cases will be hurt as a result."

Need for larger reform

Biden said the administration's policy changes were insufficient to address immigration, which he said should be addressed more broadly by Congress, which has done little in recent years to change immigration policy amid deep partisan disagreements.

The system doesn't have enough immigration personnel, including judges, to process legal immigration claims, he said. Congress rejected his request for an additional \$3.5 billion to fund such positions, he said.

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, an Illinois Democrat who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, said in a Thursday statement that he "strongly supports" the Biden policy changes and blamed congressional Republicans for blocking comprehensive updates.

"Congressional Republicans who have repeatedly obstructed bipartisan immigration reform leave President Biden with no choice but to use the authorities he has under current law to establish a more orderly process at our southern border," he said.

"We have seen over the past decade that new border enforcement cannot be effective unless migrants are also given meaningful legal pathways to come to the United States."

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

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

D.C. nears Jan. 6 anniversary with warnings about extremism, awards for courage

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JANUARY 5, 2023 5:46 PM

WASHINGTON – On the eve of the second anniversary of the U.S. Capitol insurrection, congressional Democrats and dozens of veterans on Thursday in a press conference called on incoming House Republican leaders to condemn political violence and hold their members who supported the attack accountable for their actions.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden is scheduled on Friday to host a ceremony where he will speak about the Jan. 6 attack, and award medals to a dozen people who “demonstrated courage and selflessness during a moment of peril for our nation,” according to a White House official.

They will include:

Election workers Shaye Moss and Ruby Freeman of Fulton County, Georgia, who were targeted by Trump administration officials and falsely accused of voter fraud.

Rusty Bowers, the former speaker of the Arizona House who resisted pressures to overturn 2020 election results.

Jocelyn Benson, the Michigan secretary of state who faced armed protesters outside her home when she resisted pressure over election results.

Al Schmidt, a former GOP commissioner in Philadelphia and member of the Philadelphia County Board of Elections who during the 2020 election faced threats for defending the integrity of the election.

At the veterans’ press event near the Capitol Reflecting Pool, House members Jason Crow of Colorado, Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania and Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey talked about how their values to uphold democracy started with their military service when they took an oath to protect the Constitution.

They voiced their concerns about how many veterans were part of the Jan. 6 mob.

“When you raise your right hand, and you take that oath to give everything to your country, that is a lifetime commitment,” Crow said. “A lifetime commitment and uniform, but continuing to fight for and preserve our democracy, and never has that been more important than the era that we live in right now.”

Extremism worries

House Democrats have held hearings and issued reports that have shown the growing worries about extremism among veterans and have recommended the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs protect veterans from those groups. Separately, an analysis by NPR found that 1 in 5 of the defendants charged for their involvement in the riot were veterans.

“While the individuals who descended upon and disrespected these storied halls represent a very small fringe faction of the population, it is no secret that they were inspired by some of the most senior officials in our government who failed to accept the results of the 2020 election,” said Houlahan.

She, Crow and Sherrill were in the House chamber during the insurrection, when hundreds of pro-Trump supporters stormed the Capitol in an attempt to prevent members of Congress from certifying the results of the 2020 presidential election.

President Donald Trump was impeached for a second time for his role in the insurrection, and a special committee investigating the attack unanimously voted to refer him and others to the Justice Department for potential criminal charges, including inciting or aiding an insurrection.

The special House panel investigating Jan. 6 found that Trump was directly involved in efforts to pressure state officials in Georgia, Arizona and elsewhere to overturn the 2020 election results in their states.

White House awards

This will be the first time Biden will give out the Presidential Citizens Medal, which is awarded to individuals who have done an extraordinary act of service for the United States or fellow Americans.

Among the recipients will be Eugene Goodman, the U.S. Capitol Police officer who is credited with diverting rioters from the Senate floor, allowing senators and staff to evacuate.

The president will also posthumously award a medal to the late Brian Sicknick, a Capitol Police officer

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who was injured while responding to the Jan. 6 attack and later died.

Michael Fanone, a Metropolitan Police Department Officer who responded to the Jan. 6 attack and was injured, will also receive a medal. Fanone later resigned, and has continued to put pressure on congressional Republicans to acknowledge their role in spreading the false narrative that the 2020 presidential election was stolen.

He most recently sent a letter signed by more than 1,000 veterans to top Republican leaders on Wednesday, calling on them to denounce political violence and the Jan. 6 attack.

Fanone, who was at the press event, said he wants MAGA Republicans to know "that myself and thousands, tens of thousands of veterans and members of the law enforcement community are paying very close attention to the things that they've said."

He singled out Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Kevin McCarthy of California, who is struggling to garner enough votes to secure the position of speaker of the House.

"This type of chaos will happen every single day in the House as some of the most extreme politicians our country has ever seen hold our democracy hostage," Fanone said about the speaker race that has continued for three days.

Without a speaker, no members of Congress can be sworn in and the chamber cannot conduct government business such as committee meetings or constituent services.

The veterans' press conference was hosted by Courage for America, an initiative organized by progressives to speak out against extremism and counter the GOP House, and Common Defense, a grassroots organization that works to promote progressive ideas in the veteran community.

A 'new sense of hope'

Sherrill, who served in the Navy for nine years, said she remembers being crouched in the House gallery, a cell phone in one hand, calling her loved ones, and a gas mask in the other.

"I had this great sense of sorrow that it had come to this," she said about veterans who attacked the Capitol. "The other side of my brain had really a sense of rage. How dare they?"

"And yet as I sit here today ... I think about how far we've come with the January 6 hearings," she said, adding that many people who ran as election deniers lost their campaigns.

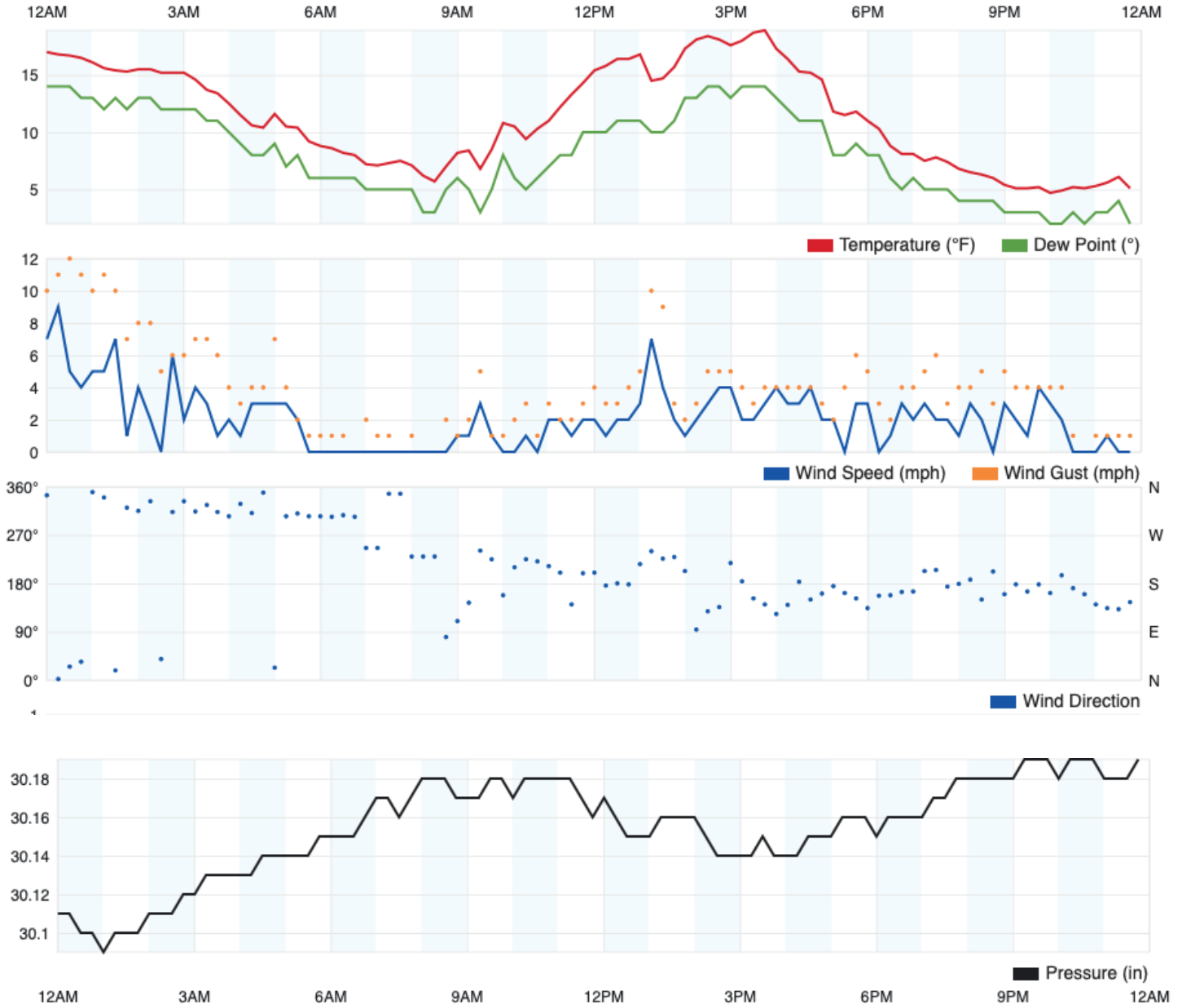
"I feel a new sense of hope," Sherrill said. "Our democracy is stronger and more resilient than ever, and so it's with almost a sense of joy, that I start this new term in Congress, because I know the American people have our back."

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

Groton Daily Independent

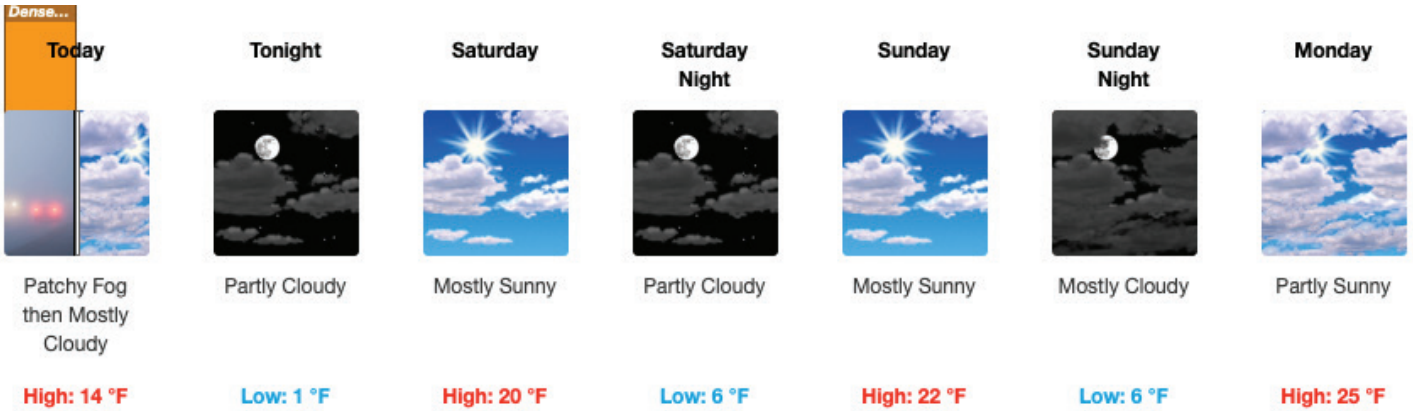
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Fog & Low Clouds Today

January 6, 2023
2:59 AM



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/abr

	TODAY			SATURDAY			SUNDAY		
Aberdeen	15°	2°	22°	6°	24°	7°			
Watertown	17°	2°	18°	6°	24°	10°			
Britton	13°	1°	17°	8°	23°	8°			
Milbank	15°	3°	18°	6°	26°	11°			
Redfield	13°	3°	18°	6°	22°	6°			
Pierre	21°	8°	28°	11°	32°	14°			
Eagle Butte	18°	7°	24°	12°	30°	16°			
Kennebec	19°	4°	24°	8°	30°	12°			
Gettysburg	17°	3°	22°	8°	27°	10°			
Sisseton	15°	4°	23°	10°	27°	14°			
Mobridge	17°	3°	25°	8°	29°	9°			
Wheaton	12°	1°	16°	6°	23°	7°			

Fri 6AM Fri 12PM Fri 6PM Sat 12AM Sat 6AM Sat 12PM Sat 6PM Sun 12AM Sun 6AM Sun 12PM Sun 6PM Mon 12AM Mon 6AM
 Last updated: 01/06/23 at 02:10 AM CST Temperature (Fahrenheit)



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

While some areas will remain clear today, areas of fog as well as low clouds will continue expand across the forecast area this morning and persist through much of the day.

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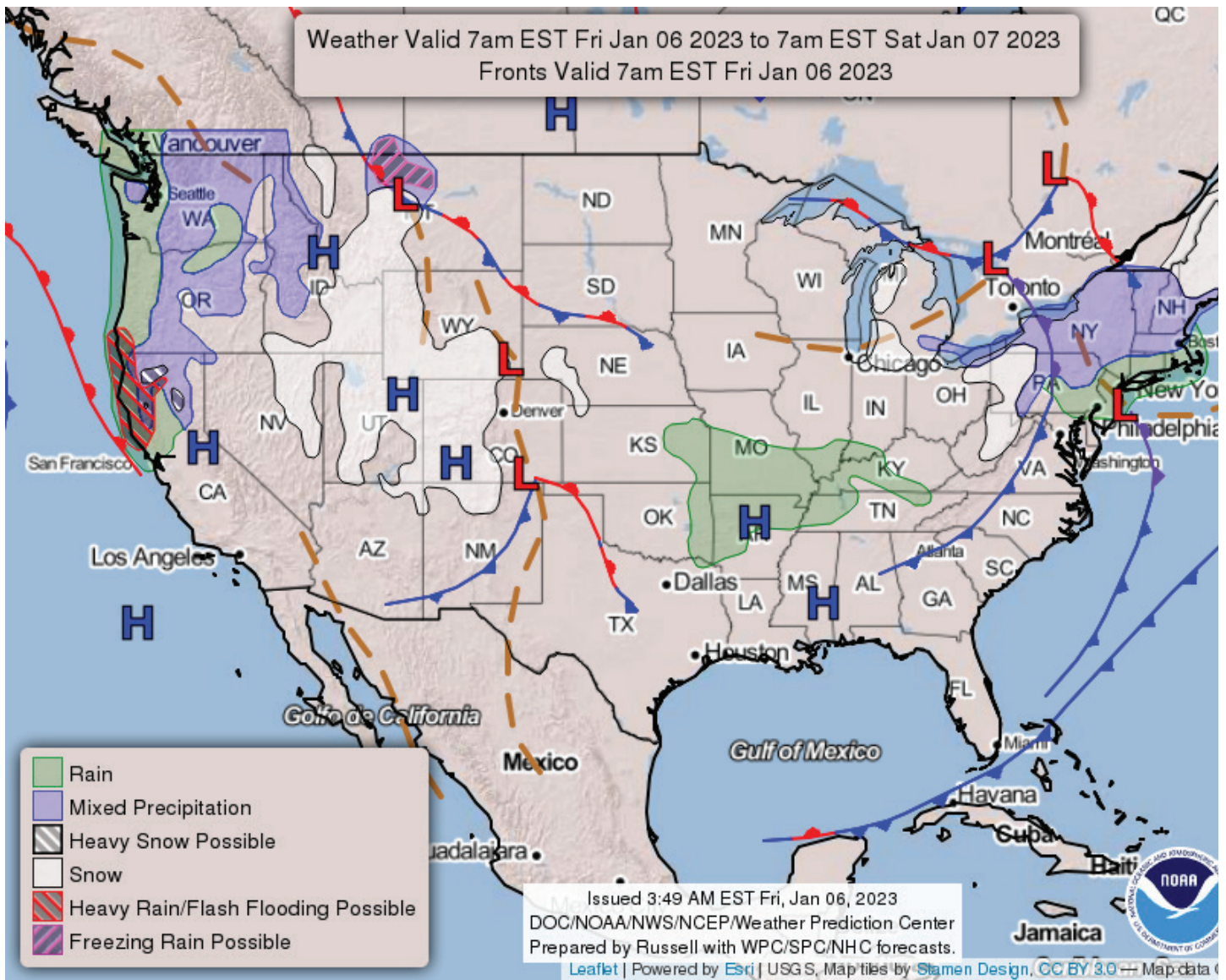
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 19 °F at 3:39 PM
Low Temp: 5 °F at 9:58 PM
Wind: 13 mph at 12:03 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 56 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 49 in 2012
Record Low: -30 in 1909
Average High: 24°F
Average Low: 3°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.13
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.13
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:06:24 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:09:52 AM



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Today in Weather History

January 6, 1962: Snow, high winds, sub-zero temperatures, and near blizzard conditions caused hazardous driving conditions across the area from the 6th into the 9th. Snowfall of generally 2 to 6 inches with winds of 30 to 40 mph caused widespread low visibilities along with drifts up to 4 foot high across central and northeast South Dakota.

January 6, 2010: A strong Alberta Clipper system tracked southeast through the northern plains on Tuesday night, January 5th through Thursday, January 7th. Sufficient Pacific moisture interacted with bitter cold Arctic air surging south from Canada, resulting in widespread snowfall over northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts ranged from 6 to 11 inches. The snow began across northeastern South Dakota in the late evening of the 5th into the early morning hours of the 6th. Many schools closed on the 6th and the 7th. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches in Andover and Doland; 7 inches in Britton, Sisseton, and near Milbank; 8 inches in Aberdeen, Bryant, and near Summit; 9 inches at Wilmot and Castlewood; 10 inches in Clear Lake and 11 inches at Watertown. [Click HERE](#) for more information.

January 6, 2014: The coldest air in recent history moved into the region during the early morning hours of the 5th and continued into the afternoon hours of the 6th. The combination of sub-zero temperatures with north winds produced dangerously cold wind chills from 40 below to around 55 degrees below zero. Winds gusted to over 40 mph at times. Several area activities were canceled, as well as many schools on Monday the 6th. Some of the coldest wind chills include; 56 below in Summit; 55 below near Hillhead; 54 below in Brandt and Webster; 53 below in Clear Lake; 52 below in Herreid; 51 below in Leola; 50 below in Watertown, Sisseton, Bowdle, and McIntosh.

1886: The "Great Blizzard of 1886" struck the Midwest with high winds, subzero temperatures, and heavy snowfall. These conditions caused as many as 100 deaths, and 80% of the cattle in Kansas perished.

1996: A severe nor'easter paralyzed the East Coast from January 6 to the 8. In Washington D.C., this storm is also known as the "Great Furlough Storm" because it occurred during the 1996 federal government shutdown. Snowfall amounts from this event include 47 inches in Big Meadows, Virginia; 30.7" in Philadelphia; 27.8" in Newark; 24.6" at the Dulles International Airport; 24.2" in Trenton; 24" in Providence; 22.5" in Baltimore; 18.2" in Boston; 17.1" in D.C.; and 9.6" in Pittsburgh.

1880 - Seattle, WA, was in the midst of their worst snowstorm of record. Hundreds of barns were destroyed, and transportation was brought to a standstill, as the storm left the city buried under four feet of snow. (David Ludlum)

1884 - The temperature dipped to one degree below zero at Atlanta, GA. It marked the final day of a severe arctic outbreak in the South and Midwest. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm moving across the western U.S. spread heavy snow into the Central Rockies. Casper WY received 14 inches of snow in 24 hours, a January record for that location. Big Piney WY reported 17 inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - It was a bad day for chickens. Heavy snow in Arkansas, with totals ranging up to 16 inches at Heber Springs, claimed the lives of 3.5 million chickens, and snow and ice up to three inches thick claimed the lives of another 1.75 million chickens in north central Texas. Up to 18 inches of snow blanketed Oklahoma, with Oklahoma City reporting a record 12 inches of snow in 24 hours. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A "bonafide blizzard" ripped through south central and southeastern Idaho. Strong winds, gusting to 60 mph at the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, whipped the snow into drifts five feet high, and produced wind chill readings as cold as 35 degrees below zero. The blizzard prompted an Idaho Falls air controller to remark that "the snow is blowing so hard you can't see the fog".(National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Rain and gale force winds prevailed along the Northern Pacific Coast. Winds at Astoria OR gusted to 65 mph. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed over Florida. Five cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Miami with a reading of 86 degrees. The hot spot in the nation was West Palm Beach with a high of 87 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

GIVING OR DOING: WHICH MATTERS MOST

Many guide their lives by "The Golden Rule" - "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you." They do what they do, not from the goodness of their hearts, but what they want or expect from others in return for doing something. It is the old adage: "If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." Their lives become a trading post.

Others give what they give because their goal is to obligate or control people. They cannot give without grumbling. After "presenting" an object, large or small, they wait and watch to see if they will receive something appropriate in return for their "goodness." If nothing comes, gifts stop.

Some give for recognition. They want to be praised in public places for their contributions or rewarded for being kind or being seen as a generous person. Many give because they expect to be recognized and blest by God for their gifts, trying to obligate Him for what He already owns.

Giving and doing are both good. But is there something more? "To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifices." This proverb makes a profound statement: We can make any number of sacrifices for many different reasons, but if we do not give because we love God, live righteously, and treat others with justice, dignity and respect, it seems as though giving and doing is less than acceptable in God's sight.

We must never forget that sacrifice is at the heart of the gospel: God sent His only begotten Son to die for us. But our giving, even sacrificially, must be done for the right reasons. We must realize that "being" is what God wants from us - beginning with "being" born again, followed by "being" righteous and just, and then followed by "being" generous for the right reasons.

Giving reflects gratitude. And if we are grateful for our salvation, we will give generously - but for the right reasons.

Prayer: May we understand, Lord, that our giving reflects our love for You. First our heads, then our hearts, and then giving "things" with our hands! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifices. Proverbs 21:3



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:
01.03.23

25 29 33 41 44 18

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$940,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 45 Mins 24
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.04.23

2 12 30 37 46 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$33,970,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 45
DRAW: Mins 24 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.05.23

7 15 23 32 40 2

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 15 Mins 24
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.04.23

5 18 26 27 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 45
DRAW: Mins 24 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.04.23

22 25 32 41 46 23

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 44
DRAW: Mins 24 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.04.23

12 32 56 67 68 26

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$325,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 44
DRAW: Mins 24 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Arlington 77, DeSmet 65

Bison 61, Takini 25

Brandon Valley 55, Watertown 33

Colman-Egan 40, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 32

Crow Creek 44, Chamberlain 42

Dell Rapids 49, Canton 40

Dell Rapids St. Mary 45, Estelline/Hendricks 32

Deubrook 49, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 44

Deuel 55, Webster 35

Edgemont 47, Crawford, Neb. 19

Florence/Henry 76, Wilmot 23

Groton Area 32, Clark/Willow Lake 29

Hamlin 52, Tiospa Zina Tribal 19

Harding County 63, McIntosh 12

Herreid/Selby Area 40, Faulkton 34

Hot Springs 44, Bennett County 26

Howard 62, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 49

Huron 60, Brookings 38

Kadoka Area 41, White River 36

Lead-Deadwood 50, Oelrichs 25

Lemmon 51, Heart River, N.D. 36

Miller 45, Mobridge-Pollock 41

Northwestern 60, Hitchcock-Tulare 22

Oakes, N.D. 52, Aberdeen Christian 20

Pierre 59, Sioux Falls Lincoln 41

Red Cloud 92, St. Francis Indian 31

Redfield 58, Britton-Hecla 40

Sisseton 57, Castlewood 40

Spearfish 48, Hill City 25

St. Thomas More 61, Sturgis Brown 35

Vermillion 47, Ponca, Neb. 36

Warner 63, Ipswich 30

Wessington Springs 52, Sunshine Bible Academy 10

Winner 45, Todd County 35

Wolsey-Wessington 56, James Valley Christian 43

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=

Lennox vs. Rock Valley, Iowa, ccd.

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli 62, Leola/Frederick 51

Bison 75, Takini 30

Castlewood 61, Sisseton 29

Colman-Egan 70, Arlington 44

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Crawford, Neb. 58, Edgemont 37
Dakota Valley 60, LeMars, Iowa 55
Dell Rapids 67, Canton 36
Dell Rapids St. Mary 65, Estelline/Hendricks 45
Deuel 79, Webster 50
Faith 72, Timber Lake 46
Hamlin 58, Tiospa Zina Tribal 41
Harding County 75, McIntosh 35
Highmore-Harrold 66, Sully Buttes 52
Hot Springs 71, Bennett County 19
Howard 41, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 39
Huron 61, Brookings 57
Ipswich 59, Warner 48
Lead-Deadwood 75, Oelrichs 29
Lemmon 50, Heart River, N.D. 32
McLaughlin 59, Stanley County 41
Miller 64, Mobridge-Pollock 45
Philip 52, Jones County 36
Redfield 49, Britton-Hecla 26
Sioux Falls Lincoln 72, Pierre 62
Spearfish 63, Hill City 60
St. Thomas More 56, Douglas 42
Sundance, Wyo. 55, Newell 29
Waubay/Summit 72, Langford 39
Wessington Springs 83, Sunshine Bible Academy 30
White River 88, Kadoka Area 53
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Lennox vs. Rock Valley, Iowa, ccd.

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

Bruns scores 15, South Dakota downs North Dakota 62-60

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — Paul Bruns scored 15 points to help South Dakota defeat North Dakota 62-60 on Thursday night.

Bruns added nine rebounds for the Coyotes (8-8). Kruz Perrott-Hunt scored 15 points, shooting 5 for 14 (1 for 4 from 3-point range) and 4 of 4 from the free throw line. Tasos Kamateros recorded 12 points and shot 5 for 14, including 2 for 5 from beyond the arc.

The Fightin' Hawks (6-10) were led by Treysen Eaglestaff, who posted 18 points and two steals. B.J. Omot added 15 points for North Dakota. In addition, Jalun Trent finished with 10 points.

Morgan scores 24, North Dakota State tops South Dakota State

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Andrew Morgan had 24 points and North Dakota State beat South Dakota State 65-59 on Thursday night.

Morgan also contributed 13 rebounds for the Bison (5-11). Grant Nelson scored 17 points while going 7 of 16 from the floor, including 1 for 6 from distance, and 2 for 4 from the line, and added eight rebounds. Boden Skunberg recorded 10 points and shot 5 of 9 from the field.

Zeke Mayo led the Jackrabbits (7-9) in scoring, finishing with 13 points, seven assists and two steals. Matt Dentlinger added 12 points and six rebounds for South Dakota State. Matthew Mors also put up 10 points.

Abortion rights bill fast-tracked in Minnesota to become law

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A bill to strengthen abortion rights in Minnesota is on the fast track to becoming law as it passed its first test Thursday.

A House health panel approved the legislation, which codifies protections into state statutes, 11-8 on just the third day of the 2023 session and sent it to its next committee stop on an expedited path to a House floor vote. Backers hope to put the bill on Democratic Gov. Tim Walz's desk for his signature by the end of the month.

As lawmakers across the country reconvene, they're getting their first chances to take up key abortion proposals in the six months since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade — and left the question of whether abortion is legal to the states to determine. Nationwide, scores of bills are in the pipeline that would either expand or restrict access.

On Tuesday, the Food and Drug Administration finalized a rule change that broadens availability of abortion pills at pharmacies, but legal experts foresee years of court battles over access to the pills as abortion-rights proponents bring test cases to challenge state restrictions.

Democrats in Minnesota and across the country ran on strong platforms of strengthening abortion rights in the wake of the Dobbs decision. They credit the backlash for their takeover of the Minnesota Senate, which gave the party full control of the Legislature for the first time in eight years and what their leaders say is the body's first ever majority that supports abortion rights.

Under a 1995 state Supreme Court decision, abortion rights are already protected in Minnesota. A district judge last summer declared that several restrictions that were enacted since that ruling violated the state constitution — including a waiting period and a parental notification requirement.

Now abortion rights supporters want to codify those protections into Minnesota statutes to ensure that future courts can't roll them back. In both the House and Senate, Democratic leaders on Wednesday assigned the bill a symbolically important first number to the legislation in the session. The bill would establish that "every individual has a fundamental right to make autonomous decisions about the individual's own reproductive health" including abortion and contraception.

"What happened to Roe could happen in Minnesota, too," warned Democratic Rep. Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn, of Eden Prairie, the bill's lead author.

But opponents argued that the bill would preclude any restrictions, including on abortions later in pregnancy up to the point of birth, or any role for parents of minors seeking abortions.

"My Democrat colleagues want to advance the most extreme position on abortion that they can possibly advance," said Rep. Anne Neu Brindley, of North Branch. "It is abhorrent."

Abortion is currently considered illegal at all stages of pregnancy, with various exceptions, in 13 states, including neighboring Wisconsin and South Dakota. Bans in several states, including neighboring North Dakota, remain on hold for the moment pending court challenges.

Minnesota abortion clinics have reported a surge in patients coming from other states as far away as Texas since last summer.

For some of the Republican-led states that have already implemented strict abortion bans, the focus will now be on discouraging residents crossing state borders to secure the procedure. A measure in Texas, for example, would take incentives away from businesses that help employees obtain abortions. For other red states, like Tennessee, GOP leaders are under pressure to clarify abortion bans that don't include exemptions for rape, incest or if the life of the woman is at risk.

Meanwhile, there are pushes to amend state constitutions — including South Carolina, South Dakota and Texas — to enshrine the right to abortion, though such efforts usually require voter approval.

Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman, of Brooklyn Park, said Wednesday that she'd like to see such a constitutional amendment on her state's 2024 ballot, too, but those discussions are still underway and none have been introduced yet this session.

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AG creates council to advise on missing indigenous people

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Attorney General Mark Vargo has created a council to advise him on missing and murdered indigenous people.

The Rapid City Journal reported Wednesday that a disproportionate percentage of missing people in South Dakota are indigenous. They make up only 9% of the state's population but 60% of people listed on the state's missing person's clearinghouse.

The council consists of advocates, prosecutors and law enforcement representatives for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, tribal and state agencies as well as state lawmakers.

The council will advise the attorney general's office on what protocols to create for the state's new Missing and Murdered Indigenous People office. The office currently employs one person, coordinator Allison Morrisette, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. She started in the position at the end of November and is based in Rapid City.

The council is scheduled to meet for the first time on Feb. 14. On June 30, they'll deliver a list of goals and objectives for the MMIP coordinator and then meet at least annually after that to receive a report from the coordinator, according to a press release.

Most council members' names haven't been released. Vargo spokesman Stewart Huntington said Vargo wants to give the council time to reach a consensus on goals before announcing the full membership.

2 years after Jan. 6, speaker scrap paralyzes Congress again

By ZEKE MILLER, MARY CLARE JALONICK and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Such are the fractures in the country, between the political parties and inside the Republican Party itself, that one time-honored specialty of Washington — memorializing and coming together over national trauma — isn't what it used to be.

Friday's moment of silence at the Capitol to contemplate the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on it was expected to draw mostly Democrats.

At the White House, few Republicans were expected for a ceremony at which President Joe Biden will award Presidential Citizens Medals to a dozen state and local officials, election workers and police officers for their "exemplary deeds of service for their country or their fellow citizens" in upholding the results of the 2020 election and fighting back the Capitol mob.

It's all a far cry from Sept. 11, 2001, when lawmakers who had frantically evacuated the Capitol during the terrorist attack gathered there later in the day in a moment of silence and broke out in "God Bless America," Republicans and Democrats shoulder to shoulder.

"They stood shaken and tearful on the steps of the Capitol, their love of nation and all that it symbolizes plain for the world to see," an Australian newspaper reported in a passage reflected now in the House's official history.

Today, the world sees a different picture, one of turmoil in American democracy coming from within the institution that insurrectionists overran two years ago.

The nation's legislative branch is again paralyzed — not by violence this time but by a tortuous struggle among Republicans over who should lead them, and the House itself, as speaker.

To be sure, a resolution to the immediate crisis may be near as the GOP leadership continues negotiations to appease its hard-right flank, but questions loom about the chamber's ability to manage even the most essential legislation, such as funding the government and meeting the nation's debt obligations.

Biden, in his afternoon remarks, will tell stories of heroism, whether in the face of a violent Capitol mob or a vehement horde of Donald Trump-inspired agitators who threatened election workers or otherwise sought to overturn the results. He will appeal for unity.

But the Democratic president can't ignore the warning signs that it could happen again.

In the midterms, candidates who denied the outcome of 2020's free and fair election were defeated for many pivotal statewide positions overseeing elections in battleground states, as were a number of election deniers seeking seats in Congress.

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Yet many of the lawmakers who brought baseless claims of election fraud or excused the violence on Jan. 6 continue to serve and are newly empowered.

Trump's 2024 candidacy has been slow off the starting blocks, but his war chest is full and some would-be rivals for the Republican presidential nomination have channeled his false claims about the 2020 race.

As well, several lawmakers who echoed his lies about a stolen election at the time are central in the effort to derail Rep. Kevin McCarthy's ascension to speaker — unswayed by Trump's appeals from afar to support him and end the fight.

The protracted struggle leaves the House leaderless, unable to pass bills and powerless to do much more than hold vote after vote for speaker until a majority is reached. Everything from national security briefings to helping their constituents navigate the federal bureaucracy are on pause because the members-elect can't yet take their oath of office.

Some Democrats see a throughline from Jan. 6.

The chaos of the speaker's election "is about destruction of an institution in a different way," said Democratic Rep. Pramila Jayapal of Washington, one of the lawmakers who fled the rioters two years ago.

Then, the insurrectionists trapped some lawmakers in the House chamber but never breached it. They held up national business for hours that day.

Now some are feeling trapped in the same chamber by the repeated, fruitless votes for speaker — 11 votes so far — and House business is held up for this week and counting.

"The stream of continuity here is extremism, elements of Trumpism, norms don't matter," says Democratic Rep. Mike Quigley of Illinois. "It's not about governing, it's about pontificating and advocating an extremist point of view."

Democratic Rep. Annie Kuster of New Hampshire said, "It is a very small minority who want to throw this institution into chaos."

After the unsatisfying midterm election for Trump allies, the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack wrapped up its work with a recommendation to the Justice Department to prosecute the former president. A special counsel and ultimately Attorney General Merrick Garland will now decide whether to indict him.

While the congressional investigations have ended, the criminal cases are still very much continuing, both for the 950 arrested and charged in the violent attack and for Trump and his associates who remain under investigation. The second seditious conspiracy trial begins this week, for members of the far-right Proud Boys.

In a measured but significant step, Congress in December amended the Electoral Count Act to limit the role of the vice president in counting electoral votes, to make it harder for individual lawmakers to mount objections to properly certified election results and to eliminate "fake electors" like those deployed by Trump allies in a bid to overturn his defeat to Biden.

After all that, Biden, who made it a tentpole of his agenda to prove to the world that democracies can deliver for their citizens, had dared hope that this was "the first time we're really getting through the whole issue relating to Jan. 6. Things are settling out."

But then came the fight for speaker, rare in the annals of Congress.

"And now, for the first time in 100 years, we can't move?" Biden said earlier this week. "It's not a good look. It's not a good thing."

"Look," he went on, "how do you think it looks to the rest of the world?"

Will Rogers' durable joke — "I am not a member of any organized political party. I am a Democrat" — now looks dated and out of place. Democrats voted unanimously for their new House leader, Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, in a seamless transition from Nancy Pelosi.

Two years after Jan. 6 and Trump's subsequent departure, Republicans, the party for which standing in line the longest usually meant victory, are now the party of factions and disorder.

Europe's inflation slows again but cost of living still high

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Europe ended a bad year for inflation with some relief as price gains eased again. While the cost of living is still painfully high, the slowdown is a sign that the worst might be over for weary consumers.

The consumer price index for the 19 countries that used the euro currency rose 9.2% in December from a year earlier, the slowest pace since August, the European Union statistics agency Eurostat said Friday. Croatia joined the eurozone on Jan. 1.

It was the second straight decline in inflation since June 2021. In November, the rate dipped to 10.1% after peaking at a record 10.6% in the previous month.

Households and businesses across Europe have been plagued by surging energy costs since Russia launched its war in Ukraine in February, which played havoc with oil and natural gas markets and have been the main driver of inflation.

The latest numbers indicate that the energy crisis may be easing for now. Energy price rises slowed to 25.7%, down from 34.9% in November and 41.5% in October.

Natural gas prices have slipped from all-time highs this summer as Europe has largely filled its storage for winter with supplies from other countries while warmer-than-usual weather has reduced fears of a shortage during the heating season.

Food price gains, the other big factor that's been driving up European inflation, held fairly steady. Prices for food, alcohol and tobacco rose at a 13.8% annual pace in December, a smidgen higher than the month before.

Inflation also has been worsened by bottlenecks in supplies of raw materials and parts amid rebounding global consumer demand after COVID-19 pandemic restrictions ended.

"It is likely that the peak in inflation is behind us now, but far more relevant for the economy and policymakers is whether inflation will structurally trend back to 2% from here on," said Bert Colijn, senior eurozone economist at ING Bank.

So-called core inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy costs, climbed to 5.2% last month from November's 5%, as prices rose for both services and goods such as clothing, appliances, cars and computers. Colijn and other economists said that means European Central Bank officials will likely roll out more interest rate hikes to get inflation back to their 2% target.

Soaring costs for energy and food have threatened a recession and fed labor unrest as wages fail to keep pace with the price rises. Across Europe, subway staff, hospital workers, train drivers, postal workers and air traffic controllers have gone on strike, threatening political turmoil.

In a sign that energy costs remain a worry for political leaders, French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday urged energy suppliers to renegotiate what he called "abusive contracts" with small businesses to ensure "reasonable" price hikes.

Macron spoke to bakers gathered at the presidential palace for a traditional Epiphany kings cake ceremony, underscoring how energy and food prices are intertwined.

"Like you, I've had enough of people making excessive profits on the crisis," he said.

The French government has capped natural gas and electricity price hikes to 15% this year for consumers and some very small companies that don't use much energy. But more energy-intensive businesses, like bakeries, aren't covered, leaving some of them facing closure because they can't pay their bills.

While governments have offered relief on high energy bills, central banks are battling inflation by hiking interest rates.

Last month, the European Central Bank raised its benchmark rate by half a point, slowing its record pace of interest rate increases slightly but promising that more hikes are on the way. It matched actions taken by counterparts in the U.S., United Kingdom and elsewhere.

"The eurozone economy is at best stagnating, and persistently strong core inflation means the ECB will feel duty bound to press on with its tightening cycle for a while yet," said Andrew Kenningham, chief

Europe economist for Capital Economics.

Kremlin-ordered truce is uncertain amid suspicion of motives

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The impact of Russian President Vladimir Putin's order for his forces in Ukraine to observe a unilateral, 36-hour cease-fire was in doubt Friday after Kyiv officials dismissed the move as a ploy but didn't clarify whether Ukrainian troops would follow suit.

Moscow also didn't say whether it would hit back if Ukraine kept fighting.

The Russian-declared truce in the nearly 11-month war began at noon Friday and was to continue through midnight Saturday Moscow time (0900 GMT Friday to 2100 GMT Saturday; 4 a.m. EST Friday to 4 p.m. EST Saturday). There were no immediate reports of it being broken.

Air raid sirens sounded in Kyiv about 40 minutes after the Russian cease-fire was to come into effect, but no explosions were heard. A widely-used Alerts in Ukraine app, which includes information from emergency services, showed sirens blaring all across the country.

Putin's announcement Thursday that the Kremlin's troops would stop fighting along the 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) front line or elsewhere was unexpected. It came after the Russian Orthodox Church head, Patriarch Kirill, proposed a cease-fire for this weekend's Orthodox Christmas holiday. The Orthodox Church, which uses the Julian calendar, celebrates Christmas on Jan. 7.

But Ukrainian and Western officials suspected an ulterior motive in Putin's apparent goodwill gesture.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy questioned the Kremlin's intentions, accusing the Kremlin of planning the fighting pause "to continue the war with renewed vigor."

"Now they want to use Christmas as a cover to stop the advance of our guys in the (eastern) Donbas (region) for a while and bring equipment, ammunition and mobilized people closer to our positions," Zelenskyy said late Thursday.

He didn't, however, state outright that Kyiv would ignore Putin's request.

U.S. President Joe Biden echoed Zelenskyy's wariness, saying it was "interesting" that Putin was ready to bomb hospitals, nurseries and churches on Christmas and New Year's.

"I think (Putin) is trying to find some oxygen," Biden said, without elaborating.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said Washington had "little faith in the intentions behind this announcement," adding that Kremlin officials "have given us no reason to take anything that they offer at face value."

The truce order seems to be a ploy "to rest, refit, regroup, and ultimately reattack," he said.

The Institute for the Study of War agreed that the truce could be a ruse allowing Russia to regroup.

"Such a pause would disproportionately benefit Russian troops and begin to deprive Ukraine of the initiative," the think tank said late Thursday. "Putin cannot reasonably expect Ukraine to meet the terms of this suddenly declared cease-fire, and may have called for the cease-fire to frame Ukraine as unaccommodating and unwilling to take the necessary steps toward negotiations."

Washington says it's prepared to keep backing Ukraine's war effort. On Friday, the U.S. was due to announce nearly \$3 billion in military aid for Ukraine — a major new package that was expected for the first time to include several dozen Bradley fighting vehicles.

The ill-feeling between the warring sides showed no signs of abating, despite the backdrop of Christmas.

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said those who rejected Putin's proposal for a Christmas truce were "clowns" and "pigs."

"The hand of Christian mercy was extended to the Ukrainians," he said in a Telegram post. "But pigs have no faith and no innate sense of gratitude."

Some civilians on the streets of Kyiv said they spoke from bitter experience in doubting Russia's motives.

"Everybody is preparing (for an attack), because everybody remembers what happened on the new year when there were around 40 Shahed (Iranian drones)," local resident Vasyl Kuzmenko said. "But everything is possible."

The white sedan: How police found suspect in Idaho slayings

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

The white sedan cruised past the gray, three-story rental home on a dead-end street in Moscow, Idaho. Then again. And again.

It was unusual behavior in the residential, hillside neighborhood in the quiet hours before dawn. And according to a police affidavit released Thursday, surveillance videos showing the vehicle that November night were key to unraveling the gruesome mystery of who killed four University of Idaho students inside the house.

With little else to go on as a panicked community demanded answers, investigators canvassed security footage from the neighborhood — including one recording of the car speeding away after the slayings — to get a sense of the killer's possible movements, the affidavit said.

Eventually, the document said, police were able to narrow down what was at first known only vaguely as a white sedan to a 2015 Hyundai Elantra registered to Bryan Kohberger, a 28-year-old doctoral student in criminology at Washington State University, just across the border in Pullman, Washington. Further investigation matched Kohberger to DNA at the crime scene, it said.

Kohberger made an initial appearance in an Idaho courtroom on Thursday following his extradition from Pennsylvania, where he was arrested last week. His attorney didn't immediately respond to a request for comment, though a public defender who represented him in Pennsylvania, Jason LaBar, has said he is eager to be exonerated and should not be tried "in the court of public opinion."

"Tracking movements in public is an important technique when you haven't identified any suspects," said Mary D. Fan, a criminal law professor at the University of Washington. "You can see movements in public even if you don't have probable cause to get a warrant. We live in a time of ubiquitous cameras. This is a remarkable account of what piecing together that audiovisual data can do."

The car's first pass by the home was recorded at 3:29 a.m. on Nov. 13 — less than an hour before Kaylee Goncalves, Madison Mogen, Xana Kernodle and Ethan Chapin were stabbed to death in their rooms, Moscow Police Cpl. Brett Payne wrote in the affidavit.

The vehicle drove by twice more and was recorded a fourth time at 4:04 a.m., Payne wrote. It wasn't seen on the footage again until it sped away 16 minutes later.

"This is a residential neighborhood with a very limited number of vehicles that travel in the area during the early morning hours," Payne wrote. "Upon review of the video there are only a few cars that enter and exit this area during this time frame."

A forensic examiner with the FBI determined the car to likely be a 2011-13 Hyundai Elantra, though subsequently said it could be a model as late as 2016, according to the affidavit.

Surveillance footage from the Washington State University campus offered further tantalizing information: A similar vehicle headed out of town just before 3 a.m. on the day of the killings and reappeared on cameras in Pullman just before 5:30 a.m., the affidavit said.

On Nov. 25, the Moscow Police Department asked regional law enforcement to look for a white Elantra. Three nights later, a WSU police officer ran a query for any white Elantras on campus.

One came back as having a Pennsylvania license plate and being registered to Kohberger. Within half an hour, another campus officer located the vehicle parked at Kohberger's apartment complex. It came back as having Washington state tags. Five days after the killings, Kohberger had switched the registration from Pennsylvania, his home state, to Washington, the affidavit said.

Investigators now had a name to go on, and further investigation yielded more clues. Kohberger's driver's license described him as 6 feet tall and 185 pounds, and his license photo showed him to have bushy eyebrows — all details consistent with a description of the attacker given by a surviving roommate, the affidavit said.

More research revealed that Kohberger had been pulled over by a Latah County, Idaho, sheriff's deputy in August while driving the Elantra. He gave the deputy a cellphone number.

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Armed with that number, Payne obtained search warrants for the phone's historical data. The location data showed the phone was near his home in Pullman until about 2:42 a.m. on the morning of the killings. Five minutes later, the phone started using cellular resources located southeast of the home — consistent with Kohberger traveling south, the affidavit said.

There was no other location data available from the phone until 4:48 a.m., suggesting Kohberger may have turned it off during the attack in an effort to avoid detection, the affidavit said. At that point, the phone began taking a roundabout route back to Pullman, traveling south to Genesee, Idaho, then west to Uniontown, Washington, and north to Pullman just before 5:30 a.m. — around the same time the white sedan showed back up on surveillance cameras in town.

It remains unclear why the victims were targeted.

Kohberger opened the account for the phone on June 23, the affidavit said, and location data showed that he had traveled to the neighborhood where the victims were killed at least a dozen times before the attacks. Those visits all came late in the evening or early in the morning, the affidavit said, and it was on one of those trips that he was pulled over by the sheriff's deputy on Aug. 21.

The cellphone data also included another chilling detail, the affidavit said: The phone returned to the victims' neighborhood hours after the attack, around 9 a.m. But even though one of the surviving housemates had seen a strange man inside and heard crying after 4 a.m., the killings were not reported to police until later that day, and there was no police response at the scene by 9.

Though police had realized Kohberger, with his 2015 Elantra, was a person of interest by Nov. 29, they issued a news release on Dec. 7 asking for the public's help in finding a white 2011-13 Elantra. They suggested such a vehicle had been near the home early on Nov. 13 and that any occupants "may have critical information to share regarding this case."

It wasn't clear why police issued that request, but law enforcement agencies sometimes use such public statements to throw off suspects and keep them from learning they're under suspicion. Tips poured in and investigators soon announced they were sifting through a pool of around 20,000 potential vehicles.

Kohberger apparently remained at WSU until mid-December, when he drove to his parents' house in Pennsylvania, accompanied by his father, in the Elantra. While driving through Indiana, Kohberger was pulled over twice on the same day for tailgating.

On Dec. 27, police in Pennsylvania recovered trash from the Kohberger family home and sent DNA evidence to Idaho, the affidavit said. The evidence matched the DNA found on the button snap of a knife sheath recovered at the crime scene, it said.

Kohberger is charged with four counts of first-degree murder and felony burglary. A status hearing in the case is set for Jan. 12.

McCarthy foes relish the fight: 'A really beautiful thing'

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rest easy, America ... we got this. What others see as dysfunction and chaos, many of Rep. Kevin McCarthy's opponents see as democracy at work.

Some of the roughly 20 Republicans declining to vote for McCarthy as the next House speaker are reveling in the moment, depicting their intransigence as a historic chance to correct the balance of power in Washington and give rank-and-file members more say in shaping legislation.

And while most House members are frustrated with the repeating ballots for speaker, fearing what it may portend for the next two years of Republican control, the lawmakers opposing McCarthy show no signs of giving up. In fact, they appear to be enjoying themselves.

"This is actually, a really beautiful thing," said Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., one of those opposing McCarthy, as the House prepared Thursday to take its ninth vote on who should be the chamber's next speaker.

Boebert said the action on the House floor was the most debate she's seen in her two years in Congress, "and I love it."

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Moments earlier, Rep. Matt Rosendale, R-Mont., shared her enthusiasm.

"We have had more discussion and debate over the last three days than I have participated in on this floor for the past two years," Rosendale said. "And it's healthy. It absolutely promotes the collegiality that everyone is striving to obtain."

But the vast majority of members-elect — they still can't take the oath of office — are ready to move on. For them, this week's logjam in the House is preventing the chamber from focusing on the kind of kitchen table issues that voters sent them to Washington to solve. Many fear it could be the start of a new normal filled with gridlock and failure to get bills passed.

Republicans who served in the military gathered Wednesday to voice their frustrations. Rep. Dan Crenshaw, R-Texas, said there are a variety of missions some of the veterans serving in Congress want to accomplish, from cutting the flow of fentanyl to cutting spending.

"I don't think that the American people care about any of the so-called missions happening this week — rules changes, who gets more power, who serves on what committee. I can't think of one American who gives a damn about any of that," Crenshaw said.

Republicans expected to lead House committees focused on defense and homeland security issued a joint statement saying the impasse was harming national security.

"The Biden administration is going unchecked and there is no oversight of the White House, State Department, Department of Defense, or the intelligence community. We cannot let personal politics place the safety and security of the United States at risk," said the statement from Republican Reps. Michael McCaul of Texas, Mike Rogers of Alabama and Mike Turner of Ohio.

And that was just from the Republican side. Democratic lawmakers were just as unsparing.

"First time in 100 years that there is no Congress because of ambition, or power grabs, or dysfunction," said Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, who will be the chamber's top-ranking Democrat. "This is not a partisan criticism. Understand this. It's embarrassing. It's dysfunction. It's dangerous. It's stupid. Those are words that Republican have used to describe what's going on in the House Republican conference right now."

McCarthy's opponents are taking the criticism in stride. They keep finding different people to float for speaker as they enthusiastically force one vote after another.

Rep. Dan Bishop, R-N.C., said his message to constituents is this: "If you think the challenges to America are maybe even existential, are really bad, this is exactly what you should want to see happen."

The House will be back at it Friday, with Republicans trying to elect their new speaker.

McCarthy's struggle marks the first time in 100 years that no nominee for House speaker could win the gavel on the first vote. Back in 1923, members of the Republican Party's progressive wing agreed to vote for Rep. Frederick Gillett of Massachusetts on the 9th ballot only after GOP leaders agreed to accept various procedural reforms those members favored.

Few seem to have enjoyed this week's battles over legislative process more than Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas. He said the House is working just as it should, pointing to the success that some Republicans had a century ago in generating rule changes through fights over the speakership.

"The idea that we're having multiple rounds of votes on the speaker, it was commonplace in the 19th century," Roy said.

Roy has long complained that lawmakers don't have the chance to amend bills on the House floor, which often leaves them with the choice of voting yes or no on a product put together by a select few legislative leaders. He said changes being sought by the McCarthy holdouts are "all about tools of empowerment" for the rank-and-file in Congress.

"I am open to whatever will give me the power to defend my constituents against this God-forsaken city," Roy said.

The House Freedom Caucus, which generally is made up of the GOP's most conservative members, has proposed that all legislation on the floor be open to amendment votes. That would dramatically slow the legislative process, possibly requiring the House to spend days or weeks focused on a bill.

The group has demanded that, if amendments are limited to some degree, that any Republican amend-

ment supported by at least 10% of the Republican conference be allowed to be debated and voted upon.

McCarthy opponents also want to restore a House rule that would allow any member to offer a "motion to vacate the chair," a procedure that forces a vote on whether to remove the speaker. They say it promotes accountability. McCarthy, seeking support from some conservatives, countered with a proposal that would allow such a vote with the support of five members.

The low threshold is troubling for some. Giving one lawmaker the power to force a vote on removing the speaker could become a common occurrence, predicted Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb.

"How would you like to do this every week?" Bacon said, referring to the voting drama on the House floor. "I think that's the future with a few of these individuals."

McCarthy offers deal to end standoff in House speaker fight

By LISA MASCARO and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The contours of a deal that could make Republican leader Kevin McCarthy the House speaker have begun to emerge after three grueling days and 11 failed votes in a political spectacle unseen in a century. It has left Republicans in disarray and exposed anew the fragility of American democracy.

The House will be back at it Friday, with Republicans trying to elect their new House speaker — this time, against the backdrop of the second anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. The deadly attack was an unimaginable scene of chaos that shook the country when a mob of then-President Donald Trump's supporters tried to stop Congress from certifying the Republican's 2020 election defeat.

McCarthy made no promises of a final vote that would secure him the speaker's gavel, but glimmers of a deal with at least some of the far-right holdouts who have denied him support were emerging.

"We've got some progress going on," McCarthy said late Thursday, brushing back questions about the lengthy, messy process. "It's not how you start, it's how you finish."

The agreement McCarthy presented to the holdouts from the conservative Freedom Caucus and others center around rules changes they have been seeking for months. Those changes would shrink the power of the speaker's office and give rank-and-file lawmakers more influence in drafting and passing legislation.

Even if McCarthy is able to secure the votes he needs, he will emerge as a weakened speaker, having given away some powers and leaving him constantly under threat of being voted out by his detractors. But he would also be potentially emboldened as a survivor of one of the more brutal fights for the gavel in U.S. history.

At the core of the emerging deal is the reinstatement of a House rule that would allow a single lawmaker to make a motion to "vacate the chair," essentially calling a vote to oust the speaker. McCarthy had resisted allowing it, because it had been held over the head of past Republican Speaker John Boehner, chasing him to early retirement.

The chairman of the chamber's Freedom Caucus, Scott Perry of Pennsylvania, who had been a leader in Trump's efforts to challenge his presidential election loss to Democrat Joe Biden, appeared receptive to the proposed package, tweeting an adage from Ronald Reagan, "Trust but verify."

Other wins for the holdouts include provisions in the proposed deal to expand the number of seats available on the House Rules Committee, to mandate 72 hours for bills to be posted before votes and to promise to try for a constitutional amendment that would impose federal limits on the number of terms a person could serve in the House and Senate.

Lest hopes get ahead of reality, conservative holdout Ralph Norman of South Carolina said: "This is round one."

It could be the makings of a deal to end a standoff that has left the House unable to fully function. Members have not been sworn in and almost no other business can happen. A memo sent out by the House's chief administrative officer Thursday evening said that committees "shall only carry-out core Constitutional responsibilities." Payroll cannot be processed if the House isn't functioning by Jan. 13.

After a long week of failed votes, Thursday's tally was dismal: McCarthy lost seventh, eighth and then historic ninth, 10th and 11th rounds of voting, surpassing the number from 100 years ago in the last drawn-

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out fight to choose a speaker.

The California Republican exited the chamber and quipped about the moment: "Apparently, I like to make history."

Feelings of boredom, desperation and annoyance seemed increasingly evident.

One McCarthy critic, Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, cast votes for Trump — a symbolic but pointed sign of the broad divisions over the Republican Party's future. Then he went further, moving the day from protest toward the absurd in formally nominating the former president to be House speaker on the 11th ballot. Trump got one vote, from Gaetz, drawing laughter.

Democrats said it was time to get serious. "This sacred House of Representatives needs a leader," said Democrat Joe Neguse of Colorado, nominating his own party's leader, Hakeem Jeffries, as speaker.

What started as a political novelty, the first time since 1923 a nominee had not won the gavel on the first vote, has devolved into a bitter Republican Party feud and deepening potential crisis.

Democratic leader Jeffries of New York won the most votes on every ballot but also remained short of a majority. McCarthy ran second, gaining no ground.

Pressure has grown with each passing day for McCarthy to somehow find the votes he needs or step aside. The incoming Republican chairmen of the House's Foreign Affairs, Armed Services and Intelligence committees all said national security was at risk.

"The Biden administration is going unchecked and there is no oversight of the White House," Republicans Michael McCaul, Mike Rogers and Mike Turner wrote in a joint statement.

But McCarthy's right-flank detractors led by the Freedom Caucus and aligned with Trump, appeared emboldened — even though the former president publicly backed McCarthy.

Republican Party holdouts repeatedly put forward the name of Rep. Byron Donalds of Florida, ensuring continuation of the stalemate that increasingly carried undercurrents of race and politics. They also put forward Republican Kevin Hern of Oklahoma, splitting the protest vote.

Donalds, who is Black, is seen as an emerging party leader and a GOP counterpoint to the Democratic leader, Jeffries, who is the first Black leader of a major political party in the U.S. Congress and on track himself to become speaker some day.

Ballots kept producing almost the same outcome, 20 conservative holdouts still refusing to support McCarthy and leaving him far short of the 218 typically needed to win the gavel.

In fact, McCarthy saw his support slipping to 201, as one fellow Republican switched to vote simply "present," and later to 200. With just a 222-seat GOP majority, he could not spare votes.

The disorganized start to the new Congress pointed to difficulties ahead with Republicans now in control of the House, much the way that some past Republican speakers, including Boehner, had trouble leading a rebellious right flank. The result: government shutdowns, standoffs and Boehner's early retirement.

The longest fight for the gavel started in late 1855 and dragged on for two months, with 133 ballots, during debates over slavery in the run-up to the Civil War.

EXPLAINER: Is China sharing enough COVID-19 information?

By HUIZHONG WU and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — As COVID-19 rips through China, other countries and the World Health Organization are calling on its government to share more comprehensive data on the outbreak. Some even say many of the numbers it's reporting are meaningless.

Without basic data like the number of deaths, infections and severe cases, governments elsewhere have instituted virus testing requirements for travelers from China. Beijing has said the measures aren't science-based and threatened countermeasures.

Of greatest concern is whether new variants will emerge from the mass infection unfolding in China and spread to other countries. The delta and omicron variants developed in places that also had large outbreaks, which can be a breeding ground for new variants.

Here's a look at what's going on with China's COVID-19 data:

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WHAT IS CHINA SHARING AND NOT SHARING?

Chinese health authorities publish a daily count of new cases, severe cases and deaths, but those numbers include only officially confirmed cases and use a very narrow definition of COVID-related deaths.

China is most certainly doing their own sampling studies but just not sharing them, said Ray Yip, who founded the U.S. Centers for Disease Control office in China.

The nationwide tally for Thursday was 9,548 new cases and five deaths, but some local governments are releasing much higher estimates just for their jurisdictions. Zhejiang, a province on the east coast, said Tuesday it was seeing about 1 million new cases a day.

If a variant emerges in an outbreak, it's found through genetic sequencing of the virus.

Since the pandemic started, China has shared 4,144 sequences with GISAID, a global platform for coronavirus data. That's only 0.04% of its reported number of cases — a rate more than 100 times less than the United States and nearly four times less than neighboring Mongolia.

WHAT IS KNOWN AND WHAT CAN BE FIGURED OUT?

So far, no new variants have shown up in the sequences shared by China. The versions fueling infections in China "closely resemble" those that have been seen in other parts of the world since July, GISAID said. Dr. Gagandeep Kang, who studies viruses at the Christian Medical College of Vellore in India, agreed, saying there wasn't anything particularly worrisome in the data so far.

That hasn't stopped at least 10 countries — including the U.S., Canada, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, the U.K., France, Spain and Italy — from announcing virus testing requirements for passengers from China. The European Union strongly encouraged all its member states to do so this week.

Health officials have defended the testing as a surveillance measure that helps fill an information gap from China. This means countries can get a read on any changes in the virus through testing, even if they don't have complete data from China.

"We don't need China to study that, all we have to do is to test all the people coming out of China," said Yip, the former public health official.

Canada and Belgium said they will look for viral particles in wastewater on planes arriving from China.

"It is like an early warning system for authorities to anticipate whether there's a surge of infections coming in," said Dr. Khoo Yoong Khean, a scientific officer at the Duke-NUS Centre for Outbreak Preparedness in Singapore.

IS CHINA SHARING ENOUGH INFORMATION?

Chinese officials have repeatedly said they are sharing information, pointing to the sequences given to GISAID and meetings with the WHO.

But WHO officials have repeatedly asked for more — not just on genetic sequencing but also on hospitalizations, ICU admissions and deaths. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus expressed concern this week about the risk to life in China.

"Data remains essential for WHO to carry out regular, rapid and robust risk assessments of the global situation," the head of the U.N. health agency said.

The Chinese government often holds information from its own public, particularly anything that reflects negatively on the ruling Communist Party. State media have shied away from the dire reports of a spike in cremations and people racing from hospital to hospital to try to get treatment as the health system reaches capacity. Government officials have accused foreign media of hyping the situation.

Khoo, noting that South Africa's early warning about omicron led to bans on travelers from the country, said there is a need to foster an environment where countries can share data without fear of repercussions.

Violence hits Mexico cartel stronghold as 'Chapo' son nabbed

By MARK STEVENSON and MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

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MEXICO CITY (AP) — The sun wasn't yet up in Culiacan when David Téllez and his family began making their way to the city's airport for a return flight to Mexico City after their vacation. But not long after they set out they encountered the first crude roadblock, an abandoned vehicle obstructing their way.

Téllez turned to social media to find out what was going on and saw that Sinaloa's state capital, a stronghold of the cartel by the same name, was filled with roadblocks and gunfire.

It would be hours before Mexico's defense secretary would confirm that the military had captured Ovidio Guzmán, a son of the notorious former Sinaloa cartel boss Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, on Thursday in a pre-dawn operation north of the city.

Just like that, Culiacan was thrust into a day of terror unlike any its residents had experienced since October 2019 — the last time authorities tried to capture the young Guzmán.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has railed against his predecessors' aggressive efforts to capture drug lords, but his administration bagged the high-profile cartel figure just days before hosting U.S. President Joe Biden, and at least in the short term locals were paying the price.

Culiacan residents posted video on social media showing convoys of gunmen in pickup trucks and SUVs rolling down boulevards in the city. At least one convoy included a flatbed truck with a mounted gun in the back, the same kind of vehicle that caused chaos and mayhem in the 2019 unrest.

All entrances to the city were blocked and similar acts were playing out in other parts of Sinaloa.

Rev. Esteban Robles, spokesman for the Roman Catholic diocese in Culiacan, said that "there is an atmosphere of uncertainty, tension," and that those who could were staying inside their homes.

"A lot of the streets are still blocked by the cars that were burned," Robles said.

The Culiacan municipal government warned: "Don't leave home! The safety of Culiacan's citizens is the most important." Schools, local government and many private businesses closed.

Oscar Loza, a human rights activist in Culiacan, described the situation as tense, with some looting at stores. On the south side of the city, where Loza lives, people reported convoys of gunmen moving toward a military base, but Loza said streets around his house were eerily quiet. "You don't hear any traffic," he said.

Téllez pressed on trying to get his family back to Mexico City, circumventing several more abandoned vehicles blocking roads and eventually making it to the airport.

There the family hurriedly checked in for their flight before employees of an airport restaurant urged them to shelter in a bathroom. Gunmen were arriving at the airport to prevent authorities from flying Guzmán out.

Juan Carlos Ayala, a Culiacan resident and Sinaloa University professor who studies the sociology of drug trafficking, said Ovidio Guzmán was an obvious target at least since 2019.

"Ovidio's fate had been decided. Moreover, he was identified as the biggest trafficker of fentanyl and the most visible Chapos leader." Asked how locals were reacting to the arrest, Ayala said "People have differing views, but I think the majority are with them" — the Sinaloa cartel.

That may be because of the money the cartel brings to the region, but also because locals know that even after federal troops withdraw, the cartel will still be there. As bad as it is, the cartel has ensured relative stability, if not peace.

Guzmán was indicted by the United States on drug trafficking charges in 2018. According to both governments, he had assumed a growing role among his brothers in carrying on their father's business, along with long-time cartel boss Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Marcelo Ebrard confirmed that the government had received a request in 2019 from the United States for Guzmán's arrest for purposes of extradition. He said that request would have to be updated and processed, but he added that first an open case in Mexico awaits Guzmán.

Ismael Bojorquez, director of the local news outlet Riodoce, which specializes in coverage of the area's drug trafficking, said the violent reaction had to do with the president's less aggressive stance toward organized crime.

"They (cartels) have taken advantage of these four years to organize themselves, arm themselves, strengthen their structures, their finances," he said. "I believe there are more weapons than three years ago. All of organized crime's armies have strengthened, not just the Chapitos, and this is the price that

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society is paying for this strategy of the federal government.”

At Culiacán’s airport, a Mexican military flight was able to spirit Guzmán away to Mexico City. Téllez’s commercial flight waited for its chance to take off as two large military planes landed with troops as did three or four military helicopters, and marines and soldiers began deploying along the perimeter of the runway.

When the airline flight was finally preparing to accelerate, Téllez heard gunshots in the distance. Within 15 seconds the sound was suddenly more intense and much closer, and passengers threw themselves to the floor, he said.

He did not know the plane had been hit by gunfire until a flight attendant told them. No one was injured, but the plane hastily retreated to the terminal.

Samuel González, who founded Mexico’s special prosecutor’s office for organized crime in the 1990s, said Guzmán’s capture was a “gift” ahead of Biden’s visit. The Mexican government “is working to have a calm visit,” he said.

He called the shots that hit the commercial airliner “without a doubt an act of international terrorism” and suggested it could lead to very serious discussions between the two governments about the implications of these actions.

By evening, Téllez remained in the terminal. The government had shut down the airport, as well as airports in Los Mochis and Mazatlan for security reasons.

Asked if the attempt to capture Guzmán was worth another day of tension and uncertainty in Culiacán, Téllez said, “If they caught him, it was worth it.”

Hawaii’s Kilauea volcano erupts again, summit crater glows

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Hawaii’s Kilauea began erupting inside its summit crater Thursday, the U.S. Geological Survey said, less than one month after the volcano and its larger neighbor Mauna Loa stopped releasing lava.

The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory detected a glow in webcam images indicating Kilauea had begun erupting inside Halemaumau crater at the volcano’s summit caldera, the agency said.

Kilauea’s summit is inside Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and away from residential communities.

Earlier Thursday, the U.S. Geological Survey raised the alert level for Kilauea due to signs that magma was moving below the summit surface, an indication that the volcano might erupt.

Kilauea is one of the world’s most active volcanoes. It last erupted for 16 months starting in September 2021. For about two weeks starting Nov. 27, Hawaii had two volcanoes spewing lava side by side when Mauna Loa erupted for the first time in 38 years. Both volcanoes stopped erupting at about the same time.

During the twin eruption, visitors to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park were able to see lava from both eruptions at the same time.

“It was a beautiful eruption, and lots of people got to see it, and it didn’t take out any major infrastructure and most importantly, it didn’t affect anybody’s life,” said Ken Hon, the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory’s scientist in charge.

Mauna Loa lava didn’t pose a threat to any communities, but got within 1.7 miles (2.7 kilometers) of a major highway connecting the east and west sides of the island. A 2018 Kilauea eruption destroyed more than 700 residences.

The observatory planned to continue monitoring the volcanoes for signs of renewed activity. Hon previously said there is generally a three-month “cooling off” period before scientists consider an eruption to be complete.

It was unclear what connection there could be to the volcanoes stopping their eruptions around the same time. The volcanoes can be seen at the same time from multiple spots in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park near Kilauea’s caldera.

Scientists planned to look at data to study the relationship between the two volcanoes, Hon previously said.

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For Native Hawaiians, volcanic eruptions have deep cultural and spiritual significance. During Mauna Loa's eruption, many Hawaiians took part in cultural traditions, such as singing, chanting and dancing to honor Pele, the deity of volcanoes and fire, and leaving offerings known as "hookupu."

China seeks to minimize COVID-19 risk during travel rush

BEIJING (AP) — China is seeking to minimize the possibility of a major new COVID-19 outbreak during this month's Lunar New Year travel rush following the end of most pandemic containment measures.

The Transportation Ministry on Friday called on travelers to reduce trips and gatherings, particularly if they involve elderly people, pregnant women, small children and those with underlying conditions.

People using public transport are also urged to wear masks and pay special attention to their health and personal hygiene, Vice Minister Xu Chengguang told reporters at a briefing.

The call stopped short of asking citizens to stay home entirely, as the government had since the pandemic began, although some local governments have urged migrant workers not to return home.

Xu said authorities expect more than 2 billion trips to be made during the weeklong festival season, the most important time for visiting family and friends in the traditional Chinese calendar. That is nearly double the number of last year and 70.3% over the same period in 2019 before the pandemic hit, Xu said.

Demand for family visits and tourism has "accumulated over the past three years of the pandemic to be met all at once," Xu said.

"We encourage people to make travel plans based on the situation of themselves and their family members," he said.

China abruptly ended a strict regime of lockdowns, quarantines and mass testing in December amid growing concerns about the economic impact and rare public protests in a country that permits no open political dissent.

China on Sunday is also ending mandatory quarantines for people arriving from abroad.

The current outbreak appears to have spread the fastest in densely populated cities, putting a strain on the health care system. Authorities are now concerned about the possible spread to smaller towns and rural areas that lack resources such as ICU beds.

Overseas, a growing number of governments are requiring virus tests for travelers from China, saying they are needed because the Chinese government is not sharing enough information on the outbreak, particularly about the potential emergence of new variants.

The European Union on Wednesday "strongly encouraged" its member states to impose pre-departure COVID-19 testing, though not all have done so. The World Health Organization has also expressed concern about the lack of data from China, while the U.S. is requiring a negative test result for travelers from China within 48 hours of departure.

China has criticized the requirements and warned it could impose countermeasures against countries using them. Spokespeople have said the situation is under control, and reject accusations of a lack of preparation for reopening.

Despite concerns, Hong Kong announced it will reopen some of its border crossings with mainland China on Sunday and allow tens of thousands of people to cross every day without being quarantined.

The city's land and sea border checkpoints with the mainland have been largely closed for almost three years and the reopening is expected to provide a much-needed boost to Hong Kong's tourism and retail sectors.

China has also gradually opened up to visits by foreign officials, hosting Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. this week.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is tentatively due to make his first visit to Beijing in office this month or next, during which he will meet with newly appointed Foreign Minister Qin Gang, China's blunt-speaking former ambassador to Washington.

As young Gazans die at sea, anger rises over leaders' travel

By FARES AKRAM and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Khaled Shurrab had been waiting more than half his life to get out of Gaza.

The 27-year-old had never left the coastal enclave, which has been blockaded by Israel and Egypt since 2007. He couldn't find a job — the territory's youth unemployment rate is over 60%. Like a growing number of Gazans, he packed his life into a suitcase and eventually made it to Turkey, where he set out on a treacherous sea voyage to Greece last October. When his rickety boat went down, his body disappeared into the sea.

A rising number of Gazans, seeking better lives abroad, are drowning at sea. The devastating procession has prompted a rare outpouring of anger against the territory's militant Hamas rulers, a number of whom are making their own — very different — exodus.

In recent months, high-profile Hamas officials have quietly decamped to upscale hotels in Beirut, Doha and Istanbul, stirring resentment among residents who see them as leading luxurious lives abroad while the economy collapses at home and 2.3 million Gazans remain effectively trapped in the tiny, conflict-scarred territory. Four wars against Israel and dozens of smaller skirmishes over the years have taken their toll in casualties, damage and isolation.

Israel and Egypt say the tight movement restrictions are needed to keep Hamas from stockpiling more weapons. Critics say the blockade amounts to collective punishment, as residents grapple with daily blackouts and routine shortages of basic goods.

"I blame the rulers here, the government of Gaza," said Shurrab's mother, Um Mohammed, from her home in the southern town of Khan Younis. Her son's body was never recovered from the Aegean Sea. "They live in luxury while our children eat dirt, migrate and die abroad."

Hamas says the leaders who have left plan on returning. Yet the string of exits keeps growing.

Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh relocated to Qatar, an energy-rich Gulf state, with his wife and several children in 2019. Political leader Fathi Hamad moved to Istanbul a year ago and frequently flies to Beirut, Lebanon's capital, where media reports have shown him in meetings at a five-star hotel.

Deputy leader Khalil al-Hayya also relocated to Turkey last year, according to news reports, including Hamas outlets that highlighted some of his travels. Since then, he has paid only two short visits to Gaza.

Former government spokesman Taher Nounou and leader Ibrahim Salah moved to Doha, the Qatari capital. Senior member Salah al-Bardawil, spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri and dozens of aides also have resettled in Doha, Istanbul, or Beirut, according to Hamas media reports and official statements.

Turkey in particular has long been a favorite destination for Hamas leaders and supporters because of the country's lenient visa policies toward members of what the United States and Europe consider a terrorist organization.

Several children of Hamas leaders are running lucrative real estate businesses for their parents in Istanbul, according to a Palestinian businessman familiar with their enterprises. He spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

Azmi Keshawi, Gaza analyst at the International Crisis Group, said that the movement of officials abroad has in some cases helped the group coordinate its operations with key patrons outside the territory. But he said Hamas nonetheless has a growing image problem at home.

"Ordinary Palestinians see that Hamas has gone from this humble Palestinian leadership who lived and struggled among the people to living in these comfortable zones where they are no longer suffering and seem far from the Palestinian cause and issues," he said. "Definitely people talk about this and draw comparisons in anger."

Wary of public backlash, Hamas does not comment on reports about its leaders leaving Gaza. As social media fills with revelations, it casts leaders' stays abroad as temporary foreign tours aimed at drumming up support. Some of these tours last for years.

Public outrage erupted last month at a mass funeral for young Gazans who drowned en route to Europe. Distraught families blamed Hamas for contributing to the collapse and chaos of Gazan life and accused

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the Islamic militant group of nepotism and corruption.

Mourners shouted the names of leaders including Haniyeh and Yehiyeh Sinwar, Hamas' current leader in Gaza, and chanted, "People are the victims!"

Such defiance is rare as Hamas moves to quash nearly all hints of dissent — though it remains the most popular group in its Gaza stronghold.

A recent poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research found that 43% of residents of Gaza would support the group if parliamentary elections were held, compared to 30% for the rival Fatah movement. The figures were nearly identical to support levels three months earlier.

The poll, conducted in December, questioned a total of 1,200 people in both Gaza and the occupied West Bank on a range of issues, and had a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

Still, more Gazans appear to be risking everything to get out.

A report issued in November by the Council on International Relations-Palestine, a Hamas-affiliated think tank, said 60,000 young people have left Gaza in recent years.

It blamed Israel, saying "the policies of occupation and siege" have "turned the life of Gazans into unbearable hell." The report was the first semi-official data on emigration. It did not say how the data was compiled.

Some who leave seek job opportunities in wealthy Gulf Arab states. Many, like Shurrab, fly to Turkey and attempt the perilous sea voyage to Europe in hopes of getting asylum.

Two shipwrecks in October alone made 2022 the deadliest at sea for Gazan migrants in eight years, according to rights groups. Shurrab is among 360 Gazans who have drowned or disappeared at sea since 2014, according to the Geneva-based Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor.

Despite the risks, Khaled Moharreb is still contemplating the dangerous sea route. After earning a nursing diploma two years ago, the 22-year-old said he has been unable to find a job.

"I want to travel and build my life," he said. "Anything outside is better than this place where you can not do anything and where the government is indifferent."

Without directly mentioning Hamas, he said he blames "those who control and run the country" for the lack of job opportunities.

Hamas has offered no apologies. Atef Adwan, a Hamas lawmaker, recently denounced those who attempt to flee to Europe as making a perverse pilgrimage to a land of "deterioration and regression."

Migration has long carried stigma among Palestinians, who have fought for decades to stay on their land. Haniyeh's roots in a crowded Gaza City refugee camp are a core part of his political identity.

Amid growing scrutiny, Hamas issued an unusual statement last year announcing the return of three top officials — al-Hayyah, al-Zahar and Salah — to Gaza, reassuring the public that they "did not flee."

Yet just two months later, news trickled out in Hamas media that al-Hayyah and Salah were on new "foreign tours" in Qatar and Iran.

Louisiana teens' deaths put spotlight on police chases

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — It was a tragically high price to pay for catching a suspected car thief: two innocent teenagers dead and a police officer jailed, facing serious charges for a car crash that resulted from the pursuit.

Maggie Dunn, 17, and Caroline Gill, 16, who were cheerleaders for their high school in the southern Louisiana town of Brusly, died in the collision Saturday. They're the latest fatalities among hundreds every year attributed to accidents involving police pursuits.

Many police departments have tightened their policies on such pursuits in recent years. However, National Highway Transportation Safety data show that 455 deaths were tied to police pursuits in 2020.

The Louisiana case is unusual in that the local prosecutor says the officer, 42-year-old David Cauthron, acted so recklessly that he should face charges and is preparing to ask a grand jury to consider bringing them.

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Authorities say Cauthron, an officer in the town of Addis, joined a chase in rural West Baton Rouge Parish that started when police in Baton Rouge pursued a man suspected of stealing his father's car.

Cauthron, authorities said, drove his police car through an intersection in Brusly, which is next to Addis, ignoring a red light and colliding with a car that held the two girls and Dunn's 20-year-old brother, Liam, who was critically injured.

"In my experience, I have not seen a police officer charged criminally in a police pursuit case," said Chicago civil rights attorney Andrew Stroth, who has handled numerous lawsuits in such cases but has no ties to the Louisiana collision.

Cauthron remained jailed Thursday, according to online records. Neither the jail nor the parish court clerk's office listed an attorney for him.

Parish District Attorney Tony Clayton said in a news release this week that he intends to ask the grand jury to consider charging Cauthron. Possible charges include negligent homicide and negligent injury. Clayton stressed that the investigation will be thorough, but he made clear that he believes the hot pursuit of suspect Tyquel Zanders, 24, was a deadly mistake.

"Sirens and police vehicles do not give an officer the authority to cut through a red light," Clayton wrote, adding that evidence so far indicates Cauthron was "grossly negligent."

Clayton didn't limit his criticism to Cauthron. He previously publicly questioned whether police in Baton Rouge should have pursued Sanders, who was arrested, uninjured, following a chase that involved multiple law enforcement agencies on both sides of the Mississippi River.

Baton Rouge news outlets, citing arrest records, say Zanders is accused of entering a relative's home on Saturday and making off with his father's car before leading police on a chase across the river and into Brusly, where the crash occurred. Authorities say Zanders drove back across the river and was arrested in Baton Rouge, where he is charged with car theft, home invasion and aggravated flight.

The Baton Rouge Police Department has a pursuit policy that is posted on the city's website and lays out when officers can and can't give chase. A department spokesman, Sgt. L'Jean McKneely, said the pursuit that led to the two teens' deaths is under review.

Addis police officials did not respond to a request for information about the policy.

Police pursuit deaths often get less attention than controversies over the police use of force, but criminal justice reformers are very aware of them. Policies governing pursuits in New Orleans were adopted after the city agreed to myriad reforms under a 2012 court settlement that followed numerous high-profile incidents involving deadly force.

Michael Downing, a former deputy police chief in Los Angeles, said his department adopted stronger restrictions on pursuits because of deaths, injuries and lawsuits. Strong policies are needed to temper a police officer's natural urge to pursue a criminal suspect, he said.

With no policy, Downing said, "their instincts are going to be engage, engage, engage."

Policies differ from department to department, and the issues at play are complex, including whether a suspect poses an immediate threat, he said.

Despite the policies adopted across the country, pursuit-related deaths remain a problem, said Stroth.

"Officers driving willfully, wantonly at high rates of speed in densely populated communities where there's no real threat," Stroth said. "And the results have been tragic."

As speaker bid falters, mixed views of McCarthy in hometown

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (AP) — House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy's political troubles don't stop at the Washington Beltway.

In his conservative, Central California hometown of Bakersfield — where oil derricks blanket hillsides and country music fans flock to Buck Owens' Crystal Palace hall — some voters are asking if what has become an embarrassing bid to succeed Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi came at the expense of the twin engines of the local economy — oil production and agriculture.

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McCarthy hails from a conservative, inland region of California far from the liberal strongholds of San Francisco and Los Angeles that doesn't figure in the California Dream myth of fast fame and easy living. Farming and oil pumping shape the economy — on a recent rainy morning in Bakersfield, fields of oil tanks, warehouses and the leaping flames from a refinery's gas flare stood out against a coal-colored sky.

Outside Ethel's Old Corral café in the city's Oildale neighborhood, oil field worker Zane Denio said he wasn't following McCarthy's day-to-day travails on Capitol Hill as he attempts to take Pelosi's gavel. For a third consecutive day Thursday, McCarthy failed to win enough Republican votes to claim the job, leaving his future prospects uncertain.

The registered Republican has voted for McCarthy in the past, but next time? That "depends on who is running against him," Denio said. "I think he's just another politician. That's the bottom line."

Denio said he cares about the oil industry and its good-paying jobs, but he sees them under constant attack from Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom and the Democratic-dominated Legislature pushing the state toward a green energy future.

Wearing a broad-brimmed cowboy hat, boots and sunglasses as the sun broke through a stormy sky, Denio questioned why McCarthy hasn't been more outspoken in defense of the industry. The availability of water in a drought-parched state also remains a constant challenge for agriculture, another foundation block in the regional economy.

"He could do more for the folks living in Kern County," east of Los Angeles where Bakersfield is the county seat. McCarthy's "salary comes from these fields," Denio said, waving his hand toward nearby hillsides covered with oil rigs.

McCarthy's sporadic appearances in the district also are a concern for Andrew Willingham, a manager at the bustling Pyrenees Café in downtown Bakersfield, which is popular with oil field workers and dependent on their patronage.

McCarthy "definitely spends a lot more time in Washington than he does here," said Willingham, a registered independent who calls McCarthy "a good person" who has left generous tips at the café.

But he worries the state is losing oil jobs to Oklahoma and Texas and wants McCarthy to be more vocal in support of those jobs. While he would like to see McCarthy preside over the House, "he might be able to focus more energy on Kern County if he wasn't speaker," Willingham said.

McCarthy has said the U.S. should boost domestic production to help keep pump prices in check.

While the region retains a Republican tilt — McCarthy easily won reelection last year — it has been changing like much of California, gradually becoming more diverse and Democratic. Former President Donald Trump carried Kern County by double digits in the 2020 presidential election.

To Mark Martinez, the political science department chair at California State University, Bakersfield, the turbulent congressional sessions leaving the House without a speaker expose weaknesses in McCarthy's leadership that will be difficult to erase.

Republicans took the House in November under McCarthy's leadership, but only by a fragile margin after a predicted "red wave" failed to materialize. McCarthy appeared to misread support among GOP House members, leaving him thus far unable to assemble enough votes to gain the speaker's post.

McCarthy's trustworthiness has been questioned by colleagues, while public support from Trump has proven unable to move votes in his favor. Meanwhile, Denio and other constituents in his district don't see him delivering for the region.

With Bakersfield in a rare, national spotlight, "this is really embarrassing," Martinez said. Whether McCarthy gains the speaker's seat or not, "Kevin is going to come out of this looking very, very weak."

That could embolden challengers eager to take his seat. "It's a bat to the head for Kevin," Martinez said.

Still, local supporters hope McCarthy endures and mounts a comeback; he's known for surprising his doubters.

Christy Ferguson, who owns Zingo's Café and an adjacent cocktail bar in Bakersfield, recalled McCarthy's assistance helping her gain \$25,000 in pandemic financial aid that she invested in her businesses.

Ferguson, a Republican, puzzled over McCarthy's political struggles in Washington. "I think he should

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be speaker," she said, predicting even greater future success.

"He'll be our next president," she said.

Best of CES 2023: Canine communication and a calming pillow

By ADRIANA MORGA, JAMES BROOKS and CARA RUBINSKY Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Tech companies are showing off their latest products this week at CES, formerly known as the Consumer Electronics show.

The show officially opened Thursday, with crowds of investors, media and tech workers streaming into cavernous Las Vegas venues to see the latest tech from big companies and startups alike.

Here are some highlights:

'TALKING' PETS

Have you ever wondered what your dog would say if it could speak to you?

FluentPet promises the next best thing — buttons the company says you can train your pet to push if it's hungry, needs to go outside or wants to play.

The buttons come in a hexagon-shaped plastic mat called a hextile. Hextiles can be connected to each other to form a bigger collection of buttons.

"We find that actually when dogs kind of know that they're being understood because they have the precision and specificity of the buttons, then they complain less because they're no longer wondering whether they actually communicated what they wanted to," said Leo Trottier, FluentPet CEO.

At CES, the company announced FluentPet Connect, a new app that notifies owners when their dog presses a button and collects data on how the buttons are used.

Fluent Pet's starter kit comes with hextiles, a speaker and six buttons for \$159.95. The app does not require a subscription.

A HIGH-TECH STROLLER

Canadian startup Gluxkind's smart stroller is designed to make life easier for parents on the go.

The AI-powered stroller has a sensor that can tell when you've picked up a fussy baby, at which point it will roll in front of you while you walk without you having to touch it.

When the baby is in the stroller, you need to keep your hands on it, but the battery will help propel it, making it easier to push uphill. It stops automatically if it gets too far away from whoever is pushing it. It can also rock a baby back and forth.

The battery lasts for about eight hours and takes two to four hours to charge.

"I looked into the stroller market and were really surprised that we didn't find anything that has some kind of level of automation or motorization present," said Anne Hunger, who co-founded the company with husband Kevin Huang after their daughter was born in 2020.

The company is currently taking pre-orders for the stroller and hopes to deliver them beginning in July. Prices start at \$3,300.

A CALMING PILLOW

Need a break? Japan's Yukai Engineering says its robotic fufuly pillow can help users relax by mimicking the rhythm of breathing.

The soft, fluffy pillow gently expands and contracts, vibrating as you hold it against your stomach. The idea is that you'll breathe more slowly and deeply as your breath starts to synch with the movement of the pillow.

It was developed based on research done at the University of Tokyo.

Yukai CEO Shunsuke Aoki said the pillow can help remote workers who struggle to switch off from their jobs.

The version on display at CES is a prototype. The company is looking for partners and hopes to start producing it this year.

ROBOT DOG

Meet Dog-E, the excitable robodog.

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Unveiled by toy maker WowWee, Dog-E has more than a million possible combinations of lights, sounds and personality traits.

Dog-E begins as a blank canvas and develops its personality as you set it up.

The app-connected toy has audio sensors to hear sounds, touch sensors on its sides and body, and a tail that you can program to display lighted icons and messages when it wags.

Jessica Kalichman from WowWee says it's a good option for those who can't commit to owning a real pup, or perhaps for those with allergies.

"I do think for anyone that's either not ready to have a dog yet, this is a great test to take care of it, learn to feed it, nurture it, and really have that trial run for a family," she said.

WowWee expects to have Dog-E in stores in September. It will sell for \$79. The app to control the toy's movements does not require a subscription.

A FOLDABLE TREADMILL

If you want a treadmill but don't have much space, WalkingPad offers a solution — a lightweight treadmill that can be folded in two when not in use and stored against a wall or under a bed.

WalkingPad reaches speeds of 7.5 mph (12 kph). It also includes a detachable phone or tablet holder and tracks your exercises in a free app. Its creators envision it helping remote workers stay fit at home.

An early version of WalkingPad went viral on TikTok as influencers added it to videos about their daily work-at-home routines.

Walking Pad creator King Smith Fitness opened its first headquarters in Dallas in December.

Another strong month of hiring would put Fed in tough spot

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The jobs report the government will issue Friday is expected to show that December was another healthy month for hiring — a boon for those looking for work but a problem for the Federal Reserve if it persists.

Economists have forecast that employers added 200,000 jobs last month and that the unemployment rate remained at 3.7%, near a half-century low, according to the data provider FactSet.

Last month's job growth will cap a second strong year of hiring for the U.S. economy. Through November, employers had added 4.9 million jobs in 2022, after 6.7 million were gained in 2021. All that hiring was part of a powerful rebound from the pandemic recession of 2020, a year when 9.3 million jobs were lost.

Last August, roughly two years after the pandemic recession ended, the nation had regained all the jobs lost to COVID-19. By contrast, it took nearly six years to regain the jobs that were lost in the 2008-2009 recession. Most economists credit, in part, the huge federal aid packages, totaling \$5 trillion, that were pushed by Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden for the sharp rebound.

Yet that government spending and the subsequent job gains also contributed to a swift rise in year-over-year inflation, which reached 9.1%, the highest level in 40 years, in June. Inflation has been slowing since then and amounted to 7.1% in November. Last year, in an aggressive drive to reduce inflation back toward its 2% goal, the Fed raised its benchmark interest rate seven times.

A solid job gain for December would indicate that for now, the economy is mostly healthy and far from falling into a downturn, though many economists expect a recession in the second half of this year.

But another month of brisk hiring would also make the Fed's delicate task even harder. The central bank is trying to curb inflation by making borrowing and spending increasingly expensive for consumers and businesses without causing a recession in the process.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell has emphasized in recent remarks that consistently strong job growth, which can force employers to raise pay to find and keep workers, can perpetuate inflation: Companies often raise prices to pass on their higher labor costs to their customers. And higher pay typically fuels more consumer spending, which can keep inflation elevated.

For that reason, Powell and other Fed officials have signaled their belief that to get inflation under control, unemployment will have to rise from its current low level.

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"The more the goal of higher unemployment appears to be slipping away from the Fed, the more aggressive it needs to be," said Tim Duy, chief U.S. economist at SGH Macro Advisors.

Fed officials have projected that they will raise their benchmark short-term rate to about 5.1% this year, the highest level in more than 15 years. If hiring and inflation remain strong, the Fed's rate might have to move even higher.

Technology companies have been laying off workers for months, with some, including Amazon, saying that they had hired too many people during the pandemic. Amazon has boosted its layoffs to 18,000 from an earlier announcement of 10,000. Cloud software provider Salesforce says it will cut 10% of its workers. And Facebook's parent company Meta says it will shed 11,000.

Smaller tech companies are also being hit. Stitch Fix, the fast fashion provider, said Thursday that it's cutting 20% of its salaried workers. DoorDash has said it will eliminate 1,250 jobs.

Yet outside of high tech, smaller companies, in particular, are still hiring. According to the payroll processor ADP, companies with more than 500 employees cut jobs in December, while businesses below that threshold added many more workers. And an analysis by investment bank Jefferies showed that small companies were posting a historically high proportion of job openings.

The Fed is concerned about the fast pace of wage growth, which it sees as a reason why inflation is likely to remain high. Average hourly pay is rising at about a 5% pace, one of its highest levels in decades.

Economists think growth likely amounted to a solid annual rate of roughly 2.5% in the final three months of last year. But there are signs it is slowing, and most analysts expect weaker growth in the current first quarter of 2023.

Consumers barely increased their spending in November, held down by modest holiday shopping. And manufacturing activity contracted in December for a second straight month, with new orders and production both shrinking.

And the housing market, an important economic bellwether, has taken a severe hit from the Fed's rate hikes, which have more than doubled mortgage rates in the past year. Home sales have plummeted for the past 10 months.

In memoir, Prince Harry says William attacked him during row

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry says his brother William physically attacked him during a ferocious argument — one of many startling allegations in a new memoir that includes revelations about the estranged royal's drug-taking, first sexual encounter and role in killing people during his military service in Afghanistan.

In the ghostwritten memoir, titled "Spare," Harry said that his brother Prince William lashed out during a furious argument over the siblings' deteriorating relationship. The Associated Press purchased a Spanish-language copy of the book ahead of its publication in 16 languages around the world on Tuesday.

Harry recounts a 2019 argument at his Kensington Palace home, in which he says William called Harry's wife, the former actor Meghan Markle, "difficult," "rude" and "abrasive." Harry said William grabbed his brother by the collar and ripped his necklace before knocking him down.

"I landed on the dog's bowl, which cracked under my back, the pieces cutting into me," Harry says in the passage, first reported by The Guardian.

Harry says he had scrapes and bruises as a result of the tussle, for which William later apologized.

The allegation is one of a slew in a book that exposes painful, intimate — and in some cases contested — details about the lives of Harry and other members of the royal family. The memoir is the latest in a string of public revelations and accusations by Harry and Meghan that have shaken Britain's royal family.

It includes Harry's assertion that he killed 25 people while serving as an Apache helicopter co-pilot and gunner in 2012 as part of Britain's military campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan. He said he felt neither pride nor shame about his actions, and in the heat of battle regarded enemy combatants as pieces being removed from a chessboard.

Harry spent a decade in the British Army — years he has described as his happiest because they allowed

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him a measure of normality — before taking up full-time royal duties in 2015.

The book recounts Harry's decades of disenchantment with his privileged, scrutinized and constrained royal life. In it he alludes to the book's title, recounting the alleged words of his father, then Prince Charles, to his mother, Princess Diana, on the day of his birth: "Wonderful! Now you've given me an heir and a spare — my work is done."

While William was destined from birth to be king, Harry, who is fifth in line to the throne behind his brother and William's three children, has often appeared to struggle with the more ambiguous role of "spare."

In the book Harry describes his rebellious teenage years. He recounts how he lost his virginity — to an older woman in a field behind a pub — and describes how he took cocaine when he was 17.

Neither Buckingham Palace, which represents King Charles III, nor William's Kensington Palace office has commented on the allegations.

Harry, 38, and the American actor married at Windsor Castle in May 2018. Less than two years later, the couple quit royal duties and moved to California, citing what they saw as the media's racist treatment of Meghan, who is biracial, and a lack of support from the palace.

Since then they have presented their side of the story in an interview with Oprah Winfrey and a six-part Netflix documentary released last month, which recounted the couple's bruising relationship with the U.K. media and estrangement from the royal family.

In the series, Harry said William screamed at him during a family meeting and accused palace officials of lying to protect his elder brother, who is now heir to the throne. Meghan, 41, talked about wanting to end her life as she struggled to cope with toxic press coverage.

Harry has recorded interviews with several broadcasters in Britain and the United States to promote the book.

In snippets released in advance, Harry told Britain's ITV that the royal household had cast him and Meghan as "villains" and "shown absolutely no willingness to reconcile." In an interview with CBS, he said the palace's refusal to defend him and Meghan from attacks was a "betrayal."

Palace officials have declined to comment on any of Meghan and Harry's allegations.

Since Harry and Meghan split from the royal family in 2020, the couple has launched a new life as U.S.-based charity campaigners and media personalities.

Harry has spoken about his desire for a reconciliation with his brother and father, who became King Charles III when Queen Elizabeth II died in September, aged 96. The book's scorching revelations are likely to make that more difficult.

Asked by ITV's Tom Bradby whether he will play a part in the British monarchy's future, Harry said: "I don't know."

Mexico nabs son of drug lord 'El Chapo' before Biden visit

By MARÍA VERZA and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN undefined

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexican security forces captured Ovidio Guzmán, an alleged drug trafficker wanted by the United States and one of the sons of former Sinaloa cartel boss Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, in a pre-dawn operation Thursday that set off gunfights and roadblocks across the western state's capital.

Defense Secretary Luis Cresencio Sandoval said Army and National Guard personnel had captured a son of "El Chapo." Sandoval identified him only as Ovidio, in keeping with government policy.

Ovidio Guzmán, nicknamed "the Mouse," had not been one of El Chapo's better-known sons until an aborted operation to capture him three years ago. That attempt similarly set off violence in Culiacan that ultimately led President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to order the military to let him go.

Thursday's high-profile capture comes just days before López Obrador will host U.S. President Joe Biden for bilateral talks followed by their North American Leaders' Summit with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Drug trafficking, along with immigration, is expected to be a top talking point.

"This is a significant blow to the Sinaloa cartel and major victory for the rule of law. It will not, however, impede the flow of drugs into the U.S. Hopefully, Mexico will extradite him to the U.S.," Mike Vigil, the DEA's former Chief of International Operations, said Thursday.

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Vigil said that Ovidio Guzmán was involved in all of the cartel's activities, especially the production of fentanyl. A 2018 federal indictment in Washington, D.C., accused the younger Guzmán of conspiring to distribute cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana in the United States.

The CDC said last July that more than 107,000 Americans had died from a drug overdose during the year ending January 2022, most of them involving opioids including illegally made fentanyl.

López Obrador's security approach reversed years of what came to be known as the kingpin strategy of taking down cartel leaders, which led to the fragmentation of large cartels and bloody battles for dominance. López Obrador put all his faith in the military, disbanding the corrupt Federal Police and creating the National Guard under military command.

The capture was the result of six months of reconnaissance and surveillance in the cartel's territory, and then quick action on Thursday, Sandoval said. National Guard troops spotted SUVs, some with homemade armor, and immediately coordinated with the army as they established a perimeter around the suspicious vehicles and forced the occupants out to be searched.

The security forces then came under fire, but were able to gain control of the situation and identify Guzmán among those present and in possession of firearms, Sandoval said.

Cartel members set up 19 roadblocks including at Culiacan's airport and outside the local army base, as well as all points of access to the city of Culiacan, Sandoval said, but the Air Force was able to fly Guzmán to Mexico City despite their efforts, and he was taken to offices of the Attorney General's organized crime special prosecutor.

Sandoval said Guzmán was a leader of a Sinaloa faction he called "los menores" or "the juniors," who are also known as "los Chapitos," for the sons of El Chapo.

Other "little Chapos" include two of his brothers — Iván Archivaldo Guzmán and Jesús Alfredo Guzmán — who are believed to have been running cartel operations together with Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada.

The Chapitos have been taking greater control in the cartel because Zambada was in poor health and isolated in the mountains, Vigil said. "The Chapitos know that if el Mayo dies, (the cartel) is going to break apart if they don't have control."

"It's going to be very important that the U.S. requests Ovidio's extradition quickly and that Mexico does it," Vigil said.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Marcelo Ebrard confirmed that Mexico received a request in 2019 from the United States for Guzmán's arrest for purposes of extradition. He said that request would have to be updated and processed, but he added that Guzmán must first face an open case in Mexico.

U.S. Homeland Security Investigations had posted a \$5 million reward for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of Guzmán early last year.

Alleged cartel members responded to Thursday's operation by carjacking Culiacan residents and setting vehicles ablaze in the cartel stronghold. Local and state authorities warned everyone to stay inside.

Intermittent gunfire continued into the afternoon Thursday in Culiacan as Mexican security forces continued to clash with cartel gunmen and few people ventured out.

Airline Aeromexico said in a statement that one of its jets was struck by a bullet Thursday morning as it prepared for takeoff. Passenger video posted online showed people cowering on the floor of the plane. The company said passengers and crew were safe.

Later, Mexico's Civil Aviation Agency said in a statement that an air force plane in Culiacan had also been hit with gunfire. In addition to the Culiacan airport, the agency said airports in Los Mochis and Mazatlan were also ordered closed and all flights cancelled for security reasons.

David Téllez was aboard that flight with his wife and children, preparing to return to Mexico City after visiting his in-laws.

Their plane had been waiting for its chance to take off as two large military planes carrying personnel landed as well as three or four military helicopters. Marines and soldiers deployed along the perimeter of the runway.

When the commercial flight was finally preparing to accelerate, Téllez heard gunshots in the distance. Within 15 seconds the sounds were suddenly more intense. "We heard gunshots and threw ourselves to

the floor," he said.

He did not know the plane had been hit until a flight attendant told them. The plane quickly returned to the terminal and they were hustled into a room. Late Thursday afternoon they were still in the airport, unsure of when they would be able to return to Mexico City.

Elsewhere in Culiacan, local reporter Marcos Vizcarra had sought shelter in a hotel after gunmen stole his car.

Then he explained via Twitter that armed men had entered the hotel where he had sought shelter "and are threatening guests to give them their car keys."

Later, Vizcarra reported that they had taken his phone, but he had made it home safely.

Such attempts to create chaos often come in response to arrests of important cartel figures in Mexico. One of the most notorious came when federal security forces cornered Ovidio Guzmán in October 2019, only to let him escape after gunmen shot up the city with high-powered weapons.

López Obrador said at the time he had made the decision to avoid the loss of life.

López Obrador entered office highly critical of the toll of his predecessors' drug war. He embraced the phrase "hugs, not bullets" to describe his approach to Mexico's chronic violence, which would focus on social programs aimed at weakening the draw of organized crime.

But four years into his six-year term, the death toll remains high.

In July, Mexico captured Rafael Caro Quintero, once one of the godfathers of drug trafficking and the man allegedly responsible for the murder of a DEA agent more than three decades ago, just days after López Obrador met with Biden at the White House.

At the time, the capture was seen as a signal that Mexico could be willing to go after high-profile cartel bosses again, something López Obrador had been loathe to do.

Police: Idaho slaying suspect's DNA found at crime scene

By REBECCA BOONE, MANUEL VALDES and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

MOSCOW, Idaho (AP) — Idaho police pieced together DNA evidence, cellphone data and surveillance video to charge a criminology graduate student with the November slaying of four University of Idaho undergraduates, according to an affidavit unsealed Thursday.

The affidavit says DNA matching that of 28-year-old Bryan Kohberger was found on a knife sheath recovered at the crime scene, just a short drive across the state border where he is a criminal justice doctoral student at Washington State University.

The affidavit also says that a cellphone belonging to Kohberger was near the victims' home on a dozen occasions prior to the killings, and that while it was apparently turned off around the time of the early-morning attack, cell tower data place his phone in that region of Idaho shortly afterward.

Kohberger made his first appearance Thursday in an Idaho court, where he faces four charges of first-degree murder. He did not enter a plea, and was ordered held without bail.

The affidavit details a chilling encounter between one of the victims' surviving roommates and a masked intruder the night of the stabbings in Moscow, Idaho. But many questions remain unanswered, including whether Kohberger and any of the victims knew each other, and why police weren't alerted until nearly eight hours after the killings likely occurred.

Traces of DNA from a lone male later determined to be Kohberger were found on the button of a leather knife sheath found in the rental home where the victims were killed, according to the affidavit written by Brett Payne, a police corporal in Moscow. Investigators later closely matched the DNA on the sheath to DNA found in trash taken from Kohberger's parents' home in Pennsylvania, where he was arrested last week.

The sheath had a U.S. Marine Corps insignia on it, though there's no record of Kohberger having served in the military.

The attack that occurred in the early morning hours of an off-campus home had spread fear throughout the university and surrounding area for weeks, as authorities seemed stumped by the brutal stabbings. Investigators made a breakthrough, however, after searching for a white sedan that was seen near the

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crime scene around the time of the killings.

Surveillance footage captured near the off-campus house showed that a white sedan — later identified as a Hyundai Elantra — drove by the home three times in the early morning hours of Nov. 13, returning a fourth time at about 4:04 a.m.

The car was next spotted on surveillance cameras leaving the victims home 16 minutes later “at a high rate of speed,” according to the affidavit. The same car was later spotted on a different camera headed toward Pullman, Washington, the town where Washington State University and Kohberger’s apartment are located.

The affidavit connects some of the dots between the surveillance footage and cellphone data. Kohberger’s phone pinged communications towers in the region at the same time and in the same areas that the white Elantra was seen driving in the hours after the killings, the affidavit says.

The cellphone data included another chilling detail, the affidavit said: It pinged a cell tower near the victims’ neighborhood hours after the attack, around 9 a.m.

Latah County prosecutors have said they believe Kohberger broke into the home with the intention of killing the victims: Kaylee Goncalves, 21; Madison Mogen, 21; Xana Kernodle, 20; and Ethan Chapin, 20. But investigators have made no public statements about a possible motive, or whether any weapons have been found.

Two other housemates were at home during the Nov. 13 killings, but were not physically harmed.

One of the uninjured housemates told investigators that she was awoken by noises at about 4 a.m., and thought she heard another housemate say something like, “there’s someone here.” She looked outside her bedroom and didn’t see anything. Later she thought she heard crying coming from Kernodle’s room and looked outside again. That’s when she said she heard a male voice say something to the effect of, “it’s OK, I’m going to help you,” according to the affidavit.

She later opened her door a third time and saw a masked man in black clothing whom she did not recognize walking toward her and stood in “frozen shock” as he walked past her toward a sliding glass door, the affidavit said. She went back in her room and locked the door.

Investigators believe the suspect then left the home. The document does not say what happened next at the home, or why police were not alerted for several more hours.

Mental health experts say common physiological responses to frightening or traumatic experiences include an urge to fight, an urge to flee, or an urge to freeze.

Location data from Kohberger’s cellphone showed he had traveled to the area of the victims’ residence at least a dozen times between late June and the night of the killings, authorities said.

Those apparent visits to the victims’ neighborhood all occurred late in the evening or in the early morning, the affidavit said. Investigators also obtained location data from the night of the killings, showing that Kohberger’s phone was near his home in Pullman until about 2:42 a.m.

Five minutes later, the phone started using cellular resources located southeast of the home -- consistent with Kohberger traveling south, the affidavit said. There was no other location data available from the phone until 4:48 a.m. — from a cellphone tower south of Moscow — suggesting Kohberger may have turned his phone off during the attack, the affidavit said.

At that point, the phone began taking a roundabout route back to Pullman, traveling south to Genesee, Idaho, then west to Uniontown, Washington, and north to Pullman just before 5:30 a.m. -- around the same time the white sedan showed up on surveillance cameras in town.

An FBI expert identified the vehicle as a 2011-2016 Hyundai Elantra; Kohberger was driving a 2015 white Elantra during traffic stops in August and in October, the affidavit said.

At the time, Kohberger’s vehicle had a Pennsylvania license plate and was registered in that state. That registration was set to expire on Nov. 30, however. On Nov. 18 — five days after the killings — Kohberger registered the car in the state of Washington, getting a new license plate.

Kohberger had applied to become an intern with the Pullman Police Department sometime in the fall of 2022, writing in his application essay that he wanted to help rural law enforcement agencies collect and

analyze technical data in public safety operations, according to the affidavit. The document does not say if Kohberger was granted the internship.

The Pullman Police Department did not immediately respond to a message from The Associated Press asking if Kohberger ever became an intern with the department.

During Thursday's court hearing, Kohberger appeared with his attorney in an orange jumpsuit and remained silent while the magistrate ordered him not to have contact with the victims' families. His next hearing was set for Jan. 12.

Some of Goncalves' family members attended the hearing.

"It's obviously an emotional time for the family, seeing the defendant for the first time," the Goncalves' family attorney, Shanon Gray, said outside the courthouse. "This is the beginning of the criminal justice system and the family will be here for the long haul."

Kohberger's defense attorney, Anne Taylor, did not respond to a request for comment on Thursday. A magistrate judge has placed the attorneys and others involved in the case under a sweeping gag order barring them from talking publicly about the case.

McCarthy fails for 3rd day in bitter GOP House speaker fight

By LISA MASCARO and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For a long and frustrating third day, divided Republicans kept the speaker's chair of the U.S. House empty Thursday, as party leader Kevin McCarthy failed again and again in an excruciating string of ballots to win enough GOP votes to seize the chamber's gavel.

Long after darkness, glimmers of a deal with far-right holdouts were emerging. But the day's tally was dismal: McCarthy lost seventh, eighth and then historic ninth, 10th and 11th rounds of voting, surpassing the number of 100 years ago in the last drawn-out fight to choose a speaker. By nightfall, despite raucous protests from Democrats, Republicans voted to adjourn and return Friday to try again.

The California Republican soaked up the moment without visible concern: "Apparently, I like to make history."

The contours of an agreement with holdouts from the conservative Freedom Caucus began to take shape, including several of the key rules changes they have been seeking for months. Those changes would shrink the power of the speaker's office and give rank-and-file lawmakers more influence in drafting legislation.

At the core is the reinstatement of a House rule that would allow a single lawmaker to make a motion to "vacate the chair," essentially calling a vote to oust the speaker — a move McCarthy had resisted because it had been held over the head of past Republican Speaker John Boehner, chasing him to early retirement.

Even if McCarthy is able to secure the votes he needs, he will emerge as a weakened speaker, having given away some powers and constantly under a threat of being voted out by his detractors. But he would also be potentially emboldened as a survivor of one of the more brutal fights for the gavel in U.S. history.

Other wins for the holdouts include provisions in the proposed deal to expand the number of seats available on the House Rules Committee, to mandate 72 hours for bills to be posted before votes and to promise to try for a constitutional amendment that would impose federal limits on the number of terms a person could serve in the House and Senate.

The chairman of the chamber's Freedom Caucus, Scott Perry of Pennsylvania, appeared receptive, tweeting the adage from Ronald Reagan, "Trust but verify."

Lest hopes get ahead of reality, conservative holdout Ralph Norman of South Carolina said, "This is round one."

"We've got some progress going on," McCarthy said, brushing back questions about the lengthy, messy process. "It's not how you start, it's how you finish."

With McCarthy's supporters and foes locked in stalemate, the House cannot fully open for the new session, essentially at a standstill, unable to swear in elected members and conduct official business. And feelings of boredom, desperation and annoyance seemed increasingly evident on Thursday.

One McCarthy critic, Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, cast votes for Donald Trump — a symbolic but pointed

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sign of the broad divisions over the Republican Party's future. Then he went further, moving the day from protest toward the absurd in formally nominating the former president to be House speaker on the 11th ballot. Trump got one vote, from Gaetz, drawing laughter.

As night fell before the second anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol by Trump supporters trying to overturn Joe Biden's election, Democrats said it was time to get serious. The divisive speaker's fight only underscored the fragility of American democracy exposed by that assault.

"This sacred House of Representatives needs a leader," said Democrat Joe Neguse of Colorado, nominating his own party's leader, Hakeem Jeffries, as speaker.

McCarthy could be seen talking, one on one, in whispered and animated conversations in the House chamber. His emissaries sidled up to holdouts, and grueling negotiations proceeded in the GOP whip's office down the hall. Through defeat after defeat, McCarthy remained determined to persuade Republicans to end the paralyzing debate that has blighted his new GOP majority.

What started as a political novelty, the first time since 1923 a nominee had not won the gavel on the first vote, has devolved into a bitter Republican Party feud and deepening potential crisis.

Democrat Jeffries of New York won the most votes on every ballot but also remained short of a majority. McCarthy ran second, gaining no ground.

Pressure has grown with each passing day for McCarthy to somehow find the votes he needs or step aside. The incoming Republican chairmen of the House's Foreign Affairs, Armed Services and Intelligence committees all said national security was at risk.

"The Biden administration is going unchecked and there is no oversight of the White House," Republicans Michael McCaul, Mike Rogers and Mike Turner wrote in a joint statement. "We cannot let personal politics place the safety and security of the United States at risk."

But McCarthy's right-flank detractors, led by the Freedom Caucus and aligned with Trump, appeared emboldened — even though the former president publicly backed McCarthy.

Republican Party holdouts repeatedly put forward the name of Rep. Byron Donalds of Florida, ensuring continuation of the stalemate that increasingly carried undercurrents of race and politics. They also put forward Republican Kevin Hern of Oklahoma, splitting the protest vote.

Donalds, who is Black, is seen as an emerging party leader and a GOP counterpoint to the Democratic leader, Jeffries, who is the first Black leader of a major political party in the U.S. Congress and is on track himself to become speaker some day.

Another Black Republican, newly elected John James, nominated McCarthy on the seventh ballot as nominators became a roll call of the GOP's rising stars. For the 10th it was newly elected Juan Ciscomani of Arizona, an immigrant from Mexico whose speech drew chants of "USA! USA!"

A new generation of conservative Republicans, many aligned with Trump's Make America Great Again agenda, want to upend business as usual in Washington and are committed to stopping McCarthy's rise without concessions to their priorities.

But those opposing McCarthy do not all have the same complaints, and he may never be able to win over some of them.

The disorganized start to the new Congress pointed to difficulties ahead with Republicans now in control of the House, much the way that some past Republican speakers, including Boehner, had trouble leading a rebellious right flank. The result: government shutdowns, standoffs and Boehner's early retirement.

The longest fight for the gavel started in late 1855 and dragged on for two months, with 133 ballots, during debates over slavery in the run-up to the Civil War.

'Bomb cyclone' brings damaging winds, drenches California

By MARTHA MENDOZA and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

CAPITOLA, Calif. (AP) — Hurricane-force winds, surging surf and heavy rains from a powerful "atmospheric river" pounded California on Thursday, knocking out power to tens of thousands, causing flooding, and contributing to the deaths of at least two people, including a toddler whose home was crushed by a

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falling tree.

Raging seas damaged two historic piers, rock and mudslides closed down highways, and deep snow piled up at ski resorts in the latest in a series of atmospheric rivers — long plumes of moisture stretching far over the Pacific — to reach the drought-stricken state. The “Pineapple Express” storm originated near Hawaii and was pulled toward the West Coast by a rotating area of rapidly falling air pressure known as a “bomb cyclone.”

Even as rains were expected to let up and some evacuation orders lifted Thursday, crews were assessing damage, trying to restore power and beginning the cleanup while bracing for more wet and wild weather this weekend that could be particularly troublesome for communities along swollen rivers.

The blustery tempest that came ashore Wednesday knocked out power to more than 180,000 homes and businesses, according to poweroutage.us.

In Sonoma County, Aeon Tocchini, a 2-year-old boy, was killed when a redwood tree crumpled a section of his family’s mobile home where he had been sitting on a sofa, authorities said. His father and neighbors freed the boy — nicknamed “Goldie” because of his light hair and sunny personality — but he couldn’t be revived.

“He was the happiest child, always smiling and encouraging people,” his teary-eyed grandmother Aileen Tocchini said outside the damaged Occidental home where a red tricycle and yellow dump truck were buried under broken branches. “He was a love, an angel.”

In Fairfield, a 19-year-old woman died after her vehicle hydroplaned on a flooded road and hit a utility pole, police said on Facebook.

The seaside village of Capitola in Santa Cruz County about 60 miles (100 kilometers) south of San Francisco suffered possibly the worst damage as waves that were forecast to top 25 feet (7.6 meters) crashed into homes and restaurants at the mouth of Soquel Creek and knocked out a section of its historic wooden pier.

Surf shattered the windows at Zelda’s on the Beach, tossing furniture around inside the eatery. The Wharf House restaurant, at the end of the Capitola Wharf, was cut off from the mainland after a midspan of the wooden structure collapsed.

Wharf House owner Willie Case said he had a “great degree of sadness” as he looked at the damage from a cliff above the village and lamented this his employees would be out of work until the pier is repaired. He noted that in 1982, the former restaurant at that site fell into the sea. He anticipates more damage as new storms roll in.

“I don’t think the party’s over yet,” he said.

Hurricane-strength gusts as high as 101 mph (162 kph) toppled trees onto buildings and roads, knocked out power lines and blew down the roof on a gas station in South San Francisco.

National Weather Service meteorologist Warren Blier said the wind speed recorded on a Marin County hilltop was among the highest he could recall in a 25-year career.

A large eucalyptus tree in Oakland crashed through the roof of Victoria James’ apartment as she was preparing for dinner Wednesday. She and her children ran into the hallway, initially thinking it was an earthquake, and braced for an aftershock.

As water began pouring into their home, the family fled with only clothes on their backs — some of the children without shoes.

“There’s big holes in the ceiling. In my bedroom, the living room and the kitchen for sure,” she said from her car. “Everything’s damaged.”

A California Highway Patrol officer responding to a crash in San Jose was struck and injured by a tree on Highway 17, Officer Ross Lee said. The officer was expected to survive.

In Southern California, a helicopter crew plucked a man clinging to bamboo branches from an island in the Ventura River, Ventura County Fire Department spokesperson Andy VanSciver said.

The blustery winds and incessant rain were especially taxing for the homeless population in California, where 100,000 people live on the streets.

Glenn Scott, 59, who has arthritis in both knees and feet and needs a cane to walk, sought refuge on a

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bench outside the main San Francisco public library with a small group of other homeless people.

"I just have to do whatever I've gotta do and go wherever I can to get peace of mind," Scott said.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency to allow for a quick response and to aid in cleanup from another powerful storm that hit just days earlier.

In the coastal community of Aptos, about dozen people were stuck at their homes because flooding, downed trees and debris blocked the road out, said Paul Karz, an employee at Seacliff State Beach. Violent waters had tossed picnic tables against a cliff, wiped out much of the beach boardwalk, damaged its wooden wharf and left only a "skeleton" of its sea wall.

Sonoma County authorities issued an evacuation warning for a string of towns along the Russian River, where greater flooding was expected by Sunday.

Sections of Highway 101 in Northern California were closed due to downed trees, while rockfall had shuttered several sections of the coastal Highway 1, including in the scenic Big Sur area.

As much as 2 feet (61 centimeters) of snow fell on Mammoth Mountain over 24 hours and more was expected, delivering another bonus to Sierra Nevada ski areas.

The storm came days after a New Year's Eve downpour led to evacuations in Northern California, where at least four people died in flooding.

Atmospheric rivers, named by researchers in the 1990s, occur globally but are especially significant on the U.S. West Coast, where they create 30% to 50% of annual precipitation, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The storms won't be enough to officially end the state's ongoing drought, now entering its fourth year, but they have helped. Not including the latest deluge, recent storms moved parts of the state out of the "exceptional drought" category in the U.S. Drought Monitor. Most of the state, though, remains in the extreme or severe drought categories.

NFL: Bills-Bengals won't resume; playoff scenarios revealed

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

The NFL said Thursday it will not resume the Bills-Bengals game that was suspended Monday night after Buffalo safety Damar Hamlin collapsed and went into cardiac arrest on the field.

The league said some of the factors in coming to its decision included that "not playing the Buffalo-Cincinnati game to its conclusion will have no effect on which clubs qualify for the postseason. No club would qualify for the postseason and no club will be eliminated based on the outcome of this game."

Also, the NFL said playing the game between the Bills and Bengals would have required postponing the start of the playoffs by a week, and affecting all 14 teams that qualified for the postseason.

The NFL said its decision creates "potential competitive inequities in certain playoff scenarios." The league said clubs on Friday, in a special league meeting, would consider a resolution recommended by the commissioner and approved today by the competition committee.

Hamlin has shown what physicians treating him are calling "remarkable improvement over the past 24 hours," the team announced Thursday, three days after the 24-year-old player had to be resuscitated on the field.

The Bills-Bengals game had major playoff implications for the AFC. Buffalo (12-3) entered Monday night needing a win to maintain the AFC's No. 1 seed. The Kansas City Chiefs (13-3) now hold that spot. The Bengals (11-4) had a chance to earn that top seed with two more wins and a loss by the Chiefs.

The scenarios approved by the competition committee include a potential neutral site for the AFC championship game. The league is considering several sites, including indoor and outdoor stadiums.

The resolution being presented to clubs for a vote on Friday follows:

The AFC Championship Game will be played at a neutral site if the participating teams played an unequal number of games and both could have been the No. 1 seed and hosted the game had all AFC clubs played a full 17-game regular season.

Those circumstances involve Buffalo or Cincinnati qualifying for the game as a road team. If Buffalo and

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Kansas City both win or tie this weekend, a Bills-Chiefs AFC title game would be at a neutral site.

If Buffalo and Kansas City both lose and Baltimore wins or ties, a Bills-Chiefs AFC title game would be at a neutral site.

If Buffalo and Kansas City both lose and Cincinnati wins, Bills or Bengals against Kansas City in the AFC title game would be at a neutral site.

Also, if Baltimore defeats Cincinnati in Week 18, the Ravens would have two wins over the Bengals, a divisional opponent, but will not be able to host a playoff game because Cincinnati will have a higher winning percentage for a 16-game schedule than Baltimore will for a 17-game schedule.

Therefore, if Baltimore defeats Cincinnati and if those two clubs are scheduled to play a wild-card game against each other, the site for that game would be determined by a coin toss.

However, if the Bengals win this weekend or if Baltimore and Cincinnati are not scheduled to play each other in the wild-card round, the game sites would be determined by the regular scheduling procedures.

"As we considered the football schedule, our principles have been to limit disruption across the league and minimize competitive inequities," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said. "I recognize that there is no perfect solution. The proposal we are asking the ownership to consider, however, addresses the most significant potential equitable issues created by the difficult, but necessary, decision not to play the game under these extraordinary circumstances."

Biden agenda, lithium mine, tribes, greens collide in Nevada

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — Opponents of the largest lithium mine planned in the U.S. urged a federal judge in Nevada on Thursday to vacate the U.S. government's approval of the project until it completes additional environmental reviews and complies with all state and federal laws.

U.S. District Judge Miranda Du said after a three-hour hearing in Reno that she hoped to make a decision "in the next couple months" on how to proceed in the nearly two-year-old legal battle over the Bureau of Land Management's approval of the mine. Lithium Nevada Corp. plans near the Nevada-Oregon line.

Lawyers for the company and the Bureau of Land Management insisted the project complies with U.S. laws and regulations. But they said that if Du determines it does not, she should stop short of vacating the agency's approval and allow initial work at the site to begin as further reviews are initiated.

Lawyers for a Nevada rancher, conservation groups and Native American tribes suing to block the mine said that should not occur because any environmental damage would be irreversible.

Dozens of tribe members and other protesters rallied outside the downtown courthouse during the hearing, beating drums and waving signs at passing motorists.

Du has refused twice over the past year to grant temporary injunctions sought by tribal leaders who say the mine site is on sacred land where their ancestors were massacred by the U.S. Cavalry in 1865.

Lithium Nevada and the Bureau of Land Management say the project atop an ancient volcano is critical to meeting the growing demand for lithium to make electric vehicle batteries — a key part of President Joe Biden's push to expedite a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy through a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

"It is the largest known lithium deposit of its kind," Laura Granier, a lawyer representing the company, told Du Thursday. "Our nation and the world will suffer if this project is delayed further."

Opponents say it will destroy dwindling habitat for sage grouse, Lahontan cutthroat trout, pronghorn antelope and golden eagles, pollute the air and create a plume of toxic water beneath the open-pit mine deeper than the length of a football field.

"We need a smart energy future that transitions our economy from fossil fuels to renewables without sacrificing rare species in the process," said Greta Anderson, deputy director of the Western Watersheds Project, which also petitioned in September for protection of a tiny nearby snail under the Endangered Species Act.

The Bureau of Land Management fast-tracked the project's approval during the final days of the Trump

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administration. The Biden administration continues to embrace it as part of the president's clean energy agenda.

Demand for lithium is expected to triple by 2030 from 2020. Lithium Nevada says its project is the only one on the drawing board that can help meet the demand.

Will Falk, a lawyer for the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, said that "in this rush for lithium in Nevada, the BLM went way too fast in permitting this mine."

Roger Flynn, a lawyer for the Western Mining Action Project representing several environmental groups, said the agency wants the project to move forward even though it botched the environmental reviews it was determined to complete before ex-President Donald Trump left office.

"Meanwhile, there will be this immediate, permanent massive environmental damage," Flynn said.

Thursday's hearing marked the first on the actual merits of the lawsuit filed in February 2021. It will set the legal landscape going forward after the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a ruling in Arizona that voided federal approval of a copper mine.

That potentially precedent-setting decision raises questions about the reach of the Mining Law of 1872 and could have a bearing on disposal of waste rock at the lithium mine in the high desert about 200 miles (321 kilometers) northeast of Reno.

In addition to the cultural and environmental concerns about the potential effects, the new 9th Circuit ruling halting the Arizona mine in July was a focus of Thursday's hearing. Du told lawyers on both sides she was interested in "the extent to which (that case) controls the outcome of this case."

The San Francisco-based appellate court upheld the Arizona ruling that the Forest Service lacked authority to approve Rosemont Copper's plans to dispose of waste rock on land adjacent to the mine it wanted to dig on a national forest southeast of Tucson.

The service and the Bureau of Land Management long have interpreted the Mining Law of 1872 to convey the same mineral rights to such lands.

The 9th Circuit agreed with U.S. Judge James Soto, who determined the Forest Service approved Rosemont's plans in 2019 without considering whether the company had any mining rights on the neighboring lands. He concluded the agency assumed under mining law that Rosemont had "valid mining claims on the 2,447 acres it proposed to occupy with its waste rock."

Leilani Doktor, a Justice Department lawyer for the Bureau of Land Management, said the Forest Service and the BLM are under "different regulatory schemes."

"Each step of the way, BLM followed its own regulations," she said.

8 dead in Utah murder-suicide after wife sought divorce

By SAM METZ Associated Press

ENOCH, Utah (AP) — A Utah man fatally shot his five children, his mother-in-law and his wife and then killed himself two weeks after the woman had filed for divorce, according to authorities and public records.

Police also revealed during a Thursday news conference that officers investigated the 42-year-old man and his family a "couple of years prior," suggesting possible earlier problems inside the household. Enoch Police Chief Jackson Ames did not elaborate.

Investigators were aware of the divorce petition but didn't know if it was the motivation behind the killings, Mayor Geoffrey Chesnut said.

The killings rocked the small town of Enoch in southern Utah about halfway between Salt Lake City and Las Vegas. It's in one of the fastest-growing areas of the country, and communities of new homes on big lots are made up primarily of large families that belong, like most in Utah, to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known widely as the Mormon church. Many residents work and do business in nearby Cedar City, a city of about 35,000 that serves as a commercial hub for Enoch, which doesn't have its own downtown.

The deceased were members of the faith and well known in town. Many residents served in church alongside members of the slain family or went to school with the children, city officials said.

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"This is a tremendous blow to many families who have spent many nights with these individuals who are now gone," Chesnut said.

City Manager Rob Dotson said people are "feeling loss, they're feeling pain and they have a lot of questions."

Community members gathered Thursday evening to mourn and sing hymns in a private vigil at a church up the street from the home where the victims were found the previous day.

Officials said they believe Michael Haight killed his wife, 40-year-old Tausha Haight; his mother-in-law; and the couple's five children. Each appeared to have gunshot wounds.

The three girls and two boys ranged in age from 4 to 17 and included 7-year-old twins, authorities said. Tausha Haight's mother, 78-year-old Gail Earl, was said to have been staying with the family to help during a difficult time.

Court records show that Tausha Haight filed for divorce Dec. 21. Her lawyer said Thursday that Haight had been served with the papers Dec. 27. The reasons for the divorce were unknown, in part because Utah law keeps details of divorce proceedings sealed from the public.

Tausha Haight and other members of the family were seen the night before the killings at a church group for young women, Chesnut said. Police were dispatched to the family's home Wednesday afternoon for a welfare check after someone reported that she had missed an appointment earlier in the week, city officials said.

Family mass killings have become a disturbingly common tragedy across the country. In 2022 there were 17 of them, according to a database compiled by USA Today, The Associated Press and Northeastern University. Ten were murder-suicides, and 14 were shootings. The database defines a mass killing as four or more people slain, not including the assailant.

James Park, who represented Tausha Haight in the divorce case, said she had not expressed any fear that her husband would physically hurt her. Park declined to elaborate, citing the investigation into the killings. He said he met with Tausha Haight only twice, mostly recently on Tuesday, and she "was an incredibly nice lady."

The White House said in a statement that President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden were mourning with the Enoch community. It called for further steps to reduce gun violence, now the leading cause of death for children in the U.S.

The home where the victims were found was decorated with Christmas lights and located in a neighborhood of newly built single-family houses on a ridge overlooking Enoch. It has a view of houses with snow-covered roofs and mountains in the distance. Half the surrounding block was cordoned off by police tape.

The Cedar City area, historically agricultural, is being transformed by new subdivisions. Cattle and sheep line the highway at the edge of town, along with signs that advertise "Custom New Homes" and recreation in southern Utah's famous national parks.

Sharon Huntsman of Cedar City came to the neighborhood with a bouquet of white flowers Thursday morning. She said the deaths had deeply rattled Iron County and cried as she propped up the bouquet in the snow at a makeshift memorial where neighbors left stuffed animals and flowers.

"It's just one big community," she said. "We all have one heavenly father."

Archives from a local newspaper capture moments in Michael Haight's life beginning with a picture of him laughing as a baby in an announcement marking his first birthday. He was in the Boy Scouts and went on a church mission in Brazil.

In 2003, Haight married Tausha Earl at a church temple. She was from Overton, Nevada, about two hours south of Cedar City, where he grew up. As an adult, Haight worked as an insurance agent.

Tausha Haight's Facebook page showed pictures of the family looking happy in picturesque settings of Utah, and in front of a large statue of Jesus.

Jennie Earl, who is Tausha's sister-in-law and a member of the Utah State Board of Education, posted a photo on Facebook of Tausha and her children and wrote about the "stiff competition" to be their favorite aunt.

"I pray that Christ's love will mend our broken hearts and fill us with forgiveness and peace," Earl wrote.

She declined to comment when reached by The Associated Press.

Community members who gathered at Enoch City Hall to listen to Thursday's news conference said it was wrenching to have to tell their own children that their peers may not be at school the next day.

"We told them last night," said city councilman Richard Jensen, a father of eight. "We gathered them around for a family prayer type of thing. We told them a family in town, everyone had been killed and when they show up to school tomorrow it's possible kids will be missing."

CES startups face cautious investors amid economic woes

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — More than a thousand startups are showcasing their products at the annual CES tech show in Las Vegas, hoping to create some buzz around their gadgets and capture the eyes of investors who can help their businesses grow.

But amid the slew of layoffs in the tech industry and an economic landscape battered with high inflation and interest rates, many may be met with cautious investors looking for products that can deliver quick returns instead of hype.

Analysts say the event this year has somewhat of a muted tone compared to prior shows, when many companies routinely unveiled pie-in-the-sky projects that never saw the light of day. Carolina Milanesi, president and principal analyst at the consumer tech research firm Creative Strategies, said this time around, many of the tech items displayed during the show's media preview days, which occurred Tuesday and Wednesday, have been less "flamboyant" compared to prior years, which showcased things like talking microwaves and smart jeans that vibrate to direct users.

"The economy — and I think the mood in general — is a little bit negative around tech," Milanesi said. "It's really getting companies to focus on real value for customers."

CES, the most influential tech gathering in the world, officially begins on Thursday to attendees in the industry. Roughly 3,000 companies have registered to attend the event, including big companies like Amazon that are laying off thousands of employees and axing unprofitable areas of their business amid uncertainty in the wider economy.

Simultaneously, many startups are attempting to find their wings at a time when consumers are tightening their belts and being more picky about how to spend their money. And experts note the somber economic climate can be particularly difficult for companies who make hardware products — they typically require robust investments to manufacture their gadgets and often encounter challenges with securing the money they need.

Marco Snickers, founder and CEO of OneThird, a startup that tests produce ripeness, said investors have been much more critical this year about which companies to fund. Securing investments for his own company took much longer than anticipated but luckily, he said, some existing investors stepped up to help and the company didn't run out of cash. They were able to secure more funding last month.

"We can hopefully survive 2023 with what we have today," Snickers said, adding the Netherlands-based company, which also has an app, hopes to expand their products to the U.S.

Another CES attendee, Mohamed Soliman, founder of the French electric skates startup AtmosGear, said investors have been more fearful about putting money into projects during the entire pandemic and are asking for a higher level of maturity from companies before they put some skin in the game.

"I think CES could be a 'do or die' time for many startups," said Wedbush analyst Dan Ives. "The clock struck midnight in terms of tech investors just giving away free money. There's a lot more competing for capital."

Saving money has now become a big priority for the tech industry, a shift from the past when more analysts and investors were more focused on how companies were growing. Ives said unlike products that received a lot of buzz during prior shows but didn't have a clear revenue path, like drones, investors are now looking to fund things that can be deployed, such as artificial intelligence, chip technology and electric vehicles.

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More transformational tech themes, such as broader use of virtual reality and immersive experiences in the metaverse, are also being showcased at the show. Though the metaverse has its skeptics, Ives said he believes all these technologies could lay the groundwork for what's likely to be a fourth industrial revolution.

But as of now, a recession is potentially on the doorstep, he said. "And I think that's the elephant in the room at this year's CES."

Event organizers for their part say excitement hasn't dampened. Brian Comiskey, the director of thematic programs at the Consumer Technology Association, the trade group putting together the show, said many startups are excited to be back at the event and mingle in person with investors after COVID kept many of them away for the past two shows.

The organization also has a program, called CTA Match, that pairs startups with investors who might be interested in their products, he said, adding many companies have showcased items that can be rolled out soon, or are innovations that could be deployed if they meet the right investors.

But even entrepreneurs that raise money are facing higher costs due to inflation. That, coupled with a more challenging investment scene could mean more companies won't be able to make it — or won't be able to make it with the cash they have on hand, a scenario that could lead to more mergers with big companies, said Peter Csathy, chairman of the media and tech advisory firm Creative Media.

Still, startups are trying to get the most out of the show and will attempt to create buzz around their products in an effort to grab some headlines and get free marketing, Csathy said.

"I don't think the pie-in-the-sky, ultra-cool, ultra-novel gadgets go away," he said. "They just may not be getting the emphasis that they otherwise would have had in a vibrant economic environment."

Southwest starts on reputation repair after cancellations

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — With its flights running on a roughly normal schedule, Southwest Airlines is now turning its attention to repairing its damaged reputation after it canceled 15,000 flights around Christmas and left holiday travelers stranded.

CEO Robert Jordan said Thursday that Southwest has processed about 75% of the refund requests it has received. The airline has also returned most lost bags to their owners, and hired an outside firm to sift through requests for reimbursement of things like hotels and meals that stranded passengers paid out of their own pockets, he said.

The massive disruptions began Dec. 22 with a winter storm, and snowballed when Southwest's ancient crew-scheduling technology was overwhelmed, leaving crews and planes out of position to operate flights. It took the airline eight days to recover.

Jordan said in a brief interview that Southwest is still studying what went wrong, and he doesn't want to make changes in technology until that review is done. He expressed optimism but offered few specifics about avoiding a repeat meltdown.

Southwest is giving 25,000 frequent-flyer points to customers whose flights were canceled or significantly delayed between Dec. 24 and Jan. 2, and seems to be making progress on refunds, but executives concede it will take many weeks to process the reimbursement requests.

Danielle Zanin is still waiting to hear whether Southwest will cover the \$1,995.36 that she spent during a four-day odyssey getting her family of four home to Illinois after their flight was canceled in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Even if she eventually gets the money, it may not be enough for her to try Southwest again.

"It would take a lot for the airline to prove to me that they can fix whatever technology they use to get flight crews and planes where they need to go. It's just not worth the hassle that I went through," Zanin said. She said she plans to go back to flying on American Airlines even if it costs more.

Southwest hopes that refunds, reimbursements and loyalty points will persuade people not to switch to other airlines, known in the industry as "booking away."

"Book-away typically has a short half-life, perhaps as little as a month, given it appears from many accounts that Southwest is being very generous reimbursing not only flight but other out-of-pocket costs"

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and is serious about fixing the technological shortcomings that made the crisis worse, said Robert Mann, an airline consultant in New York.

Retaining loyal customers is crucial if Southwest is to limit the financial damage of the meltdown. The company has yet to say how much money it lost because of the canceled flights — Jordan promised more information before Southwest reports quarterly results on Jan. 26.

Raymond James airline analyst Savanthi Syth estimated that the storm will cost Southwest about \$585 million in lost revenue, plus higher expenses. Mann figures it's between \$500 million and \$600 million in cash, vouchers and frequent-flyer points.

Airlines — including Southwest as recently as October 2021 — have recovered quickly from previous meltdowns, whether they were caused by bad weather, crew shortages, IT outages or other factors. Passenger numbers, if they declined at all, recovered quickly.

"The reputational damage is only as relevant as what consumers can do about it," said Michael Mazzeo, who teaches strategy at Northwestern University's business school and has examined airline competition. "In a lot of markets, there is little or no competition to Southwest. When there is no outlet for consumers, the damage is more limited."

Southwest, American, United and Delta control about 80% of the domestic air-travel market. Southwest — it started 50 years ago as a low-cost competitor to big airlines but has gradually become much more like them — has a particularly outsized presence in some big states including California, Arizona and Texas.

Southwest remained relatively quiet for several days even after it became clear that it was struggling while other airlines recovered from the winter storm — and after it came under repeated criticism from consumers, media reports and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.

As canceled flights piled up day after day, Southwest gave few updates and rejected requests for interviews with key executives. It posted a video apology by Jordan Dec. 27, followed a day later by a video with another executive. Company executives did not speak generally to the media until Dec. 29, when they announced that Southwest would resume normal operations the following day.

"The company was slow to come forward in terms of corporate PR communications until the government went after them, the (Transportation) secretary called the CEO directly and demanded they move fast to take care of those people," said Larry Yu, a George Washington University professor who studies crisis management in the tourism industry. "Short-term, it's big damage."

But Yu also noted that Southwest has decades of reputation for relatively low fares and good service to fall back on. He praised the airline for promising refunds, reimbursements and frequent-flyer points.

"They have to do something to win back those customers," Yu said. Now, he added, Southwest must make good on vows to improve its technology, "because you don't want to equate low-cost with low-tech."

Jordan said Southwest has good technology, but he said the airline will re-examine IT priorities once it better understands how the December failure unfolded.

The debacle has also focused attention on Southwest among lawmakers in Congress.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said Wednesday that he will re-introduce a "passenger bill of rights," which failed to become law in the last Congress.

"The Southwest debacle creates a moment when the forces in favor of this kind of consumer-protection measure could prevail," he said in an interview.

The Senate Commerce Committee said this week it will hold hearings on the Southwest meltdown. Blumenthal said witnesses should include executives from Southwest and other airlines.

"This problem (of flight disruptions) is hardly limited to Southwest, it's hardly the first meltdown in airline travel, and it's hardly unforeseeable," Blumenthal said. He said it was baffling why Southwest had not improved its crew-scheduling technology after it had failed during previous disruptions in the summer and fall of 2021.

Buttigieg has said repeatedly that his department is watching Southwest closely and will hold it accountable to treat customers fairly.

Consumer groups have given mixed grades to the Transportation Department's oversight of airlines. They viewed the Trump administration as a low point, with few enforcement actions taken against airlines even in the face of record consumer complaints. The Biden administration fined Frontier Airlines and

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several foreign carriers last year for not quickly paying refunds to travelers whose flights were canceled during the early months of the pandemic, but advocates were disappointed that none of the four largest U.S. airlines were fined.

The Transportation Department has the burden of enforcing consumer-protection laws aimed at protecting airline travelers. Several consumer groups are urging Congress to let state officials and private parties sue airlines to enforce those laws — an effort that has been unsuccessful so far.

"The airlines are going to lobby hard to have as little regulation as possible, but with each passing melt-down it becomes more apparent that real change is needed," said John Breyault, vice president of public policy at the National Consumers League.

Damar Hamlin asked who won Bills-Bengals when he woke up

By JOHN WAWROW and CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin has begun to communicate in writing with his family and others who have been at his bedside since he went into cardiac arrest three days ago — and his first question was, "Did we win?" his doctors said Thursday.

"The answer is yes, Damar, you won. You've won the game of life." Dr. Timothy Pritts told reporters in a conference call from the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, where Hamlin was rushed after collapsing and being resuscitated on the field during the Bills' game against the Bengals on Monday night.

Hamlin remains critically ill and in the hospital's intensive care unit, but he began to wake up Wednesday night, and it appears his neurological function is intact, meaning he can follow commands and move, Pritts said.

"He still has significant progress he needs to make, but this marks a really good turning point in his ongoing care," the doctor said.

"His first question that he wrote when he started to awaken was, 'Did we win?'" Pritts said. "So we know that it's not only that the lights are on. We know that he's home. And it appears that all the cylinders are firing within his brain, which is greatly gratifying for all of us."

Dr. William Knight IV said doctors had not yet determined the cause of Hamlin's cardiac arrest and that testing is ongoing.

It's also too early to say whether Hamlin could return to football after undergoing rehabilitation, Knight said.

The developments came as the Bills returned to practice on Thursday for the first time since Hamlin collapsed when his heart stopped after making a tackle during the game's first quarter.

The game was suspended and will not be resumed, two people familiar with the decision told The Associated Press. Both people spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the league is still figuring out how to determine playoff seedings and scheduling. The NFL Players Association must approve changes.

Hamlin, a second-year player from the Pittsburgh area, spent the past two days sedated and listed in critical condition.

Pritts said during the conference call that neurological signs of improvement began Wednesday night as Hamlin gradually woke up, with the rest of his body healing. Hamlin still cannot speak because of a breathing tube in his throat.

Knight credited the quick medical response with saving Hamlin's life.

He said a physician was by Hamlin's side within a minute of him collapsing and recognized that the defensive back did not have a pulse. Knight said Hamlin required CPR and resuscitation on the field.

"It's been a long and difficult road for the last three days ... he has made a pretty remarkable improvement," Knight said.

"Great news," President Joe Biden said in a tweet. "Damar, like I told your mom and dad yesterday, Jill and I — along with all of America — are praying for you and your family."

Along with being able to write, his doctors said Hamlin was able to hold the hands of family and members of the Bills' administrative and medical teams at his bedside.

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Although Hamlin is following commands, doctors have not yet fully assessed his speech and other functions, in part because he is under sedation to accommodate the breathing tube.

"When we talk about neurologically intact, it's a very gross term of big motor movements and following commands. When we talk about the finer things that make us human — cognition, emotion, speech, language, etc., we're looking forward to learning more about that," Knight said.

Over the past few days, players across the league — both former teammates and those who didn't know Hamlin until Monday — have rallied in support.

Colts safety Rodney Thomas made the two-hour drive from Indianapolis to Cincinnati on Tuesday just to be by the side of his former high school teammate.

"He's a fighter. I know he's a fighter and there's no other thought in my mind other than him walking out under his own power," Thomas said Wednesday.

Minnesota Vikings defensive tackle Harrison Phillips, who spent the previous four seasons playing for Buffalo, had dinner delivered to the hospital for Hamlin's family and medical staff.

Fans, team owners and players — including Tom Brady and Russell Wilson — have made donations to Hamlin's Chasing M's Foundation, which had raised more than \$7.5 million by Thursday evening.

CES 2023: Ram electric pickup joins crowded field next year

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — When a futuristic-looking electric Ram pickup truck goes on sale next year, it will hardly be the first in line.

By then, at least seven EV competitors are scheduled to be on sale, all of them vying for a share of the huge full-size truck market that now includes the three top-selling gasoline and diesel powered vehicles in the United States.

Four models — Ford's F-150 Lightning, Rivian's R1T, Lordstown Motors' Endurance and the GMC Hummer EV Pickup — already are on the road. And this year or next, three others — the Chevrolet Silverado EV, GMC Sierra EV and Tesla's Cybertruck — are scheduled to roll out.

Yet executives at Ram, which is Stellantis' truck and commercial vehicle brand, say it doesn't bother them to be following rather than leading their competitors.

"It's actually an advantage for us," Mike Koval Jr., CEO of the Ram brand, said in an interview. "Because we have full knowledge of what the other guys have announced."

On Thursday afternoon, company executives unveiled a concept version of the Ram 1500 Revolution battery-powered truck at the CES gadget show in Las Vegas. The production truck isn't likely to be as edgy as the one shown on stage, which looks like a halfway point between Tesla's angular Cybertruck and a conventional gas pickup. But the Ram EV, Koval said, will surpass competitors in the areas that customers value the most: payload, towing, range and technology.

GM has announced that the Silverado EV will be able to travel over 400 miles (640 kilometers) on a single charge. (Its rivals have ranges of between 230 to 400 miles, depending on battery size.) Koval insists that the production Ram "will push past everything that our competitors have announced."

By next year, he noted, more charging stations and other infrastructure will be in place, making the market for EVs more attractive.

Jessica Caldwell, executive director of insights for Edmunds.com, said the Ram won't be overly late to the market because the electric trucks on sale now can't fully satisfy the sustained growth in consumer demand.

GM says more than 170,000 people have put down \$100 refundable deposits on the Sierra. Last year, Ford sold over 15,000 Lightning trucks, even though the vehicles weren't available until May. The company closed reservations after receiving \$100 deposits from nearly 200,000 potential buyers.

Last year, Americans bought more than 2.1 million full-size pickups, most of which still run on gasoline. Big pickups accounted for more than 15% of all U.S. new vehicle sales, a huge and lucrative market. Electric vehicle sales are growing fast: Last year, 807,000 of them were sold in the United States — up

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65% from 2021.

The prices of the EV trucks, which are comparatively costly, will have to move closer to those of gasoline versions to pull buyers away, said Michelle Krebs, executive analyst for Cox Automotive.

Ford's electric pickup initially was to have a version starting around \$40,000. But the starting price now is just under \$56,000, driven up by demand and price increases for raw materials. That's far more than the base gasoline-powered F-150 which starts just below \$34,000.

"The problem with the pricing," Krebs said, "is the costs are rising to build EVs. Lithium and other (battery) mineral prices are high."

Automakers say that prices should decline as the companies spread costs across more vehicles and as breakthroughs in battery chemistry reduce the quantity or even eliminate minerals now needed to store energy.

Koval says he's well-aware that the electric Ram will have to appeal to customers who want base-model work versions as well as those who want higher-priced luxury and technology — even with "insane" costs of raw materials.

"We're going to try to have something for everybody," he said, "but with an eye on that critical price point."

The truck also will offer fast 350 kilowatt charging that can add up to 100 miles of range in about 10 minutes, a large interior accessed through "saloon style" doors with a interior with multiple configurations.

Getting people to give up their gas-powered trucks may take a while, Krebs acknowledges. In Midwestern states and Texas, where most pickups are sold, there aren't many EV charging stations that enable longer trips.

Electric trucks may also appeal to companies that buy fleets of work trucks and want to receive tax credits and avoid paying for gasoline.

Caldwell thinks the market for electric pickups will include buyers who use them for work and those who otherwise would buy an electric SUV for personal use.

Electric trucks, she said, "kind of give people who maybe were on the fence about (an EV) more reason to buy."

FTC proposes rule that would ban employee noncompete clauses

By ALEXANDRA OLSON and MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writers

The Federal Trade Commission proposed a rule Thursday that would ban U.S. employers from imposing noncompete clauses on workers, a sweeping measure that could make it easier for people to switch jobs and deepen competition for labor across a wide range of industries.

The proposed rule would prevent employers from imposing contract clauses that prohibit their employees from joining a competitor, typically for a period of time, after they leave the company.

Advocates of the new rule argue that noncompete agreements contribute to wage stagnation because one of the most effective ways to secure higher pay is switching companies. They argue that the clauses have become so commonplace that they have swept up even low-wage workers.

Opponents argue that by facilitating retention, noncompete clauses have encouraged companies to promote workers and invest in training, especially in a tight labor market. The public has 60 days to submit commentary on the rule before it takes effect.

During a Cabinet meeting, President Joe Biden called the FTC action "a huge step forward in banning non-compete agreements that are designed simply to lower people's wages."

"These agreements block millions of retail workers, construction workers and other working folks from taking better jobs and getting better pay and benefits in the same field," Biden said.

The FTC has moved aggressively to curb the power of major corporations under Chair Lina Khan, a legal scholar and Washington outsider whose appointment by Biden signaled a tough antitrust stance.

The agency estimates that the new rule could boost wages by nearly \$300 billion a year and expand career opportunities for about 30 million Americans.

"Noncompetes block workers from freely switching jobs, depriving them of higher wages and better

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working conditions, and depriving businesses of a talent pool that they need to build and expand," Khan said in a prepared statement.

The FTC's proposal comes amid an already competitive job market, particularly in industries that suffered mass layoffs during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic and have since struggled to recall their workers. Many workers remain on the sidelines, holding out for better pay, coping with lingering childcare or health issues, or opting for early retirement.

"There is a potential that it will contribute to the 'great resignation' that everyone is talking about to some degree, but employees are simply losing one of the tools in their toolbox and there are other ways to retain top talent," said Vanessa Matsis-McCready, associate general counsel and director of human resources for Engage PEO, which provides HR services for small- and medium-sized companies. "You will see a lot of business trying to retain top talent via raises or other fringe benefits."

Employers nationwide are still hiring and layoffs are historically low, despite high-profile job cut announcements from companies such as software provider Salesforce, Facebook's parent company Meta, and Amazon. The government is expected to announce Friday that employers added a solid 200,000 jobs last month, and that unemployment remained 3.7%, near a half-century low.

A 2019 analysis by the liberal Economic Policy Institute estimated that 36 million to 60 million workers could be subject to noncompete agreements, which the group said companies have increasingly adopted in recent years.

While such agreements are most common among higher-paid workers, the study found that a significant number of low-wage workers were subjected to them, including more than quarter of those making an average wage of less than \$13 an hour.

On Wednesday, for example, the FTC took action against three companies for unlawfully imposing non-compete clauses against workers, including low-wage security guards who were threatened with a \$100,000 fine if they violated the agreement.

The EPI study found that many companies still impose noncompete clauses in several states that already ban or restrict them, including in California, where the practice has been prohibited for a century.

The proposed FTC rule would require companies to scrap existing noncompete causes and actively inform workers that they are no longer in effect, as well as prohibiting the imposition of new ones.

The proposal is based on a preliminary finding that noncompete clauses quash competition in violation of Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act. It would not generally apply to other types of employment restrictions, like non-disclosure agreements.

But Emily Dickens, chief of staff and head of public affairs for the Society of Human Resources Management, said the proposed FTC rule is overly broad and could potentially harm businesses that depend on them to thrive. She cited very small, emerging industries where crucial know-how cannot be safeguarded through non-disclosure agreements alone.

Dickens said SHRM, a group of more than 300,000 human resources professionals and executives around the world, will encourage its members to present specific situations that could justify noncompete clauses during the FTC's commentary period.

Although "there are jobs where it makes no sense to have noncompete," Dickens said, "this kind of blanket ban is going to stifle innovation."

While defenders of non-compete clauses argue they help start-ups and small business retain talent, opponents say they hinder recruitment at those same entities.

The Economic Innovation Group, a Washington-based public policy research group, applauded the rule and called on Congress to pass proposed legislation that would impose a similar ban with more permanency.

"Restricting the use of non-compete agreements is fundamentally good policy that will boost wages, improve workforce mobility, and encourage entrepreneurship and innovation throughout the economy," said John Lettieri, EIG's president and CEO.

US to send Ukraine dozens of Bradleys in \$2.85B aid package

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. will send Ukraine nearly \$3 billion in military aid, in a massive new package that will for the first time include several dozen Bradley fighting vehicles, U.S. officials said Thursday, in the Biden administration's latest step to send increasingly lethal and powerful weapons to help Ukraine beat back Russian forces.

European allies also stepped up their weapons commitments. Germany announced it will provide armored personnel carriers and a Patriot missile battery to Ukraine, and France said it will soon hold talks to arrange for the delivery of armored combat vehicles.

All of the announcements, however, fall short of sending heavier battle tanks, which are more complex to use and have a longer-range gun. The Bradley, an armored carrier used to transport troops to combat, is not a tank but is known as a "tank-killer" because of the anti-tank missile it can fire.

The latest U.S. aid — totaling about \$2.85 billion and about 50 Bradleys — is the largest in a series of packages of military equipment that the Pentagon has pulled from its stockpiles to send to Ukraine. It is aimed at getting as much to the Ukrainian forces as possible during the winter months, before spring sets in and an expected increase in fighting begins.

An announcement is expected Friday, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because details of the package have not been publicly announced.

President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz confirmed in a joint statement Thursday that the U.S. would provide Bradleys to Ukraine while Germany would provide Marder armored personnel carriers. The statement did not give the number of vehicles or the total cost of the aid package.

"We've had to do everything we can to help the Ukrainians resist Russian aggression, and Russia is not attempting to slow up," Biden said during a meeting with his Cabinet at the White House on Thursday. "The actions they're taking are as barbaric as they were a year ago and they're not letting up at all, at all."

A short time later, in his nightly video address, Zelenskyy thanked the allies.

"Today I would like to personally thank President Biden and Chancellor Scholz for the decision to strengthen our defense, a very important decision," he said. "We will have another Patriot battery and powerful armored vehicles — this is really a great victory for our state."

The U.S. last month announced it will send Ukraine its first Patriot battery, the most advanced surface-to-air missile system the West has provided for the war effort.

The Bradley fighting vehicle is a medium-armored combat vehicle that can serve as a fortified troop carrier on the battlefield. It has tracks rather than wheels, but is lighter and more agile than a tank. It can carry a crew of three and an additional five or six troops, and is seen as a critical way to move forces safely into battle.

Speaking to reporters Thursday, Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, said the Bradley will provide "both an offensive and a defensive capability to Ukrainians to be able to change the equation on the battlefield."

He said Ukrainian troops will need training on the operation and maintenance of the vehicles. Ryder declined to provide details on the version of Bradley being sent or the timelines for delivery or training.

Also included in the aid package will be HUMVEES, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, or MRAPs, and a large amount of missiles and other ammunition, according to the U.S. officials.

The aid comes on the heels of Zelenskyy's dramatic visit to Washington last month, when he slipped secretly out of his war-torn nation for the first time to thank America and predict that 2023 would be a "turning point" in the conflict, now in its 11th month.

In urging more support for his country's war effort, he told Congress, "Your money is not charity," and instead is "an investment in the global security and democracy that we handle in the most responsible way."

Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials have pressed Western leaders to provide more advanced weapons, including armored vehicles and the Patriot missile batteries. A \$1.85 billion aid package last month, in addition to including a Patriot battery for the first time, provided an undisclosed number of Joint Direct

Attack Munitions kits, to modify massive bombs by adding tail fins and precision navigation systems so they can be guided to a target.

TIMELINE: DNA, video lead officials to Idaho suspect

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

Court documents unsealed Thursday after the suspect in the November fatal stabbings of four University of Idaho students made his first court appearance in Idaho reveal the timeline for how Bryan Kohberger went from being on law enforcement radar to becoming the man charged with four counts of first-degree murder and one count of burglary. Below is a timeline from the documents:

- Nov. 13, 2022: Ethan Chapin and Xana Kernodle returned to the King Road house, where Kernodle was living, at about 1:45 a.m. after visiting the Sigma Chi house on the University of Idaho campus. Kaylee Goncalves and Madison Mogen were at a local bar in Moscow, Idaho, between 10 p.m. on Nov. 12, 2022 until 1:30 a.m. on Nov. 13. They visited a food truck and then an unnamed person gave them a ride at about 1:56 a.m. to the King Road house, where they were living. Two unharmed roommates identified in the affidavit as D.M. and B.F. said everyone was home by 2 a.m. and in their rooms by 4 a.m.

- Nov. 13, 2022: The suspect's vehicle, a white sedan, was seen on Washington State University surveillance cameras traveling away from campus at about 2:53 a.m.

- Nov. 13, 2022.: Kernodle received a DoorDash order at about 4 a.m.

- Nov. 13, 2022: Unharmed roommate D.M. was awoken at about 4 a.m. to what sounded like Goncalves playing with her dog in a bedroom on the third floor. Soon after, D.M. said she heard what sounded like Goncalves say something like, "there's someone here." Cellphone records show that it might have been Kernodle who made the statement.

- Nov. 13, 2022: D.M. reported thinking she heard crying from Kernodle's room and heard a male voice saying something like, "it's ok, I'm going to help you."

- Nov. 13, 2022: At about 4:17 a.m., a security camera at a house northwest of the King Road residence picked up the sound of voices or a whimper followed by a loud thud.

- Nov. 13, 2022: D.M. opened her door a third time after she heard crying and saw a man with bushy eyebrows dressed in black with a mask over his nose and mouth walking toward her. She froze and the man walked to the sliding glass door and she locked herself in her room.

- Nov. 13, 2022: Investigators believe the four students were killed between 4 a.m. and 4:25 a.m. Police investigators arrived and located the bodies of the students, along with a tan leather knife sheath that carried the suspect's DNA and a shoe print outside the roommate's door.

- Nov. 13, 2022: Footage from security videos show the suspect's vehicle in the King Road neighborhood starting at 3:29 a.m. Police say it made three passes by the house and made a fourth pass at about 4:04 a.m. before leaving the area at a high rate of speed at about 4:20 a.m.

- Nov. 13, 2022: Surveillance video recorded the suspect vehicle in Pullman and the WSU campus around 5:25 a.m.

- Nov. 13, 2022: Investigators tracking Kohberger's phone said it left his residence at about 9 a.m. and traveled to Moscow. It pinged cellular services that would cover the King Road home between 9:12 a.m. and 9:21 a.m. It then traveled back to the Kohberger home at about 9:32 a.m.

- Nov. 13, 2022: There was no police response to the killings until later in the day.

- Nov. 18, 2022: Bryan Kohberger changed the registration of his white Elantra from Pennsylvania plates to Washington state license plates.

- Nov. 25, 2022: Law enforcement were on the lookout for a Hyundai Elantra.

- Nov. 29, 2022: A WSU police officer learned that a 2015 white Elantra with a Pennsylvania license plate was registered to Bryan Kohberger. The officer tracked down Kohberger's driver's license and noted that he was a white male, 6-feet tall and weighed about 185 pounds (83.91 kilograms). His photograph showed bushy eyebrows.

- Dec. 13, 2022: Kohberger's vehicle was seen in Loma, Colorado.

- Dec. 15, 2022: Kohberger, traveling to Pennsylvania with his father, was stopped by law enforcement in Hancock County, Indiana.
- Dec. 23, 2022: Officials obtained a warrant to search Kohberger's phone records. They show that the phone was in Pullman at 2:42 a.m. on Nov. 13, 2022 but then stops reporting to the network. It does not connect again until 4:48 a.m.
- Dec. 29, 2022: Based on the information gathered, law enforcement secured an arrest warrant for Bryan Kohberger. He was taken into custody early in the morning by the Pennsylvania State Police at a home in Chestnuthill Township.
- Jan. 3, 2023: Kohberger appeared at Pennsylvania's Monroe County Courthouse and agreed to waive extradition in order to be moved back to Idaho to face charges.
- Jan. 4, 2023: Kohberger arrived in Moscow on a small plane.
- Jan. 5, 2023: Kohberger made his first court appearance in Latah County and the court records in the case have been unsealed.

NHL evolves its plan, prep for terrifying cardiac events

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

The horror that swept across the NFL when Buffalo Bills defensive back Damar Hamlin collapsed and went into cardiac arrest during a game this week in Cincinnati was all too familiar to members of the hockey community.

Five players in the NHL over the past 25 years who collapsed during a game — terrifying scenes that stopped play while people scrambled to help — were diagnosed with a heart-related issue of some kind.

Big defenseman Chris Pronger went down after taking a puck to the chest. Jiri Fischer, Rich Peverley and Jay Bouwmeester all collapsed on the bench. Ondrej Pavelec went down on the ice.

All recovered — a couple of them went on to play for years — and the incidents prompted the NHL to adjust procedures to prepare for and handle cardiac events, rare as they may be.

"It allows you to make sure that your protocols are working," said Pronger, who suffered from the condition *commotio cordis* when he took a slap shot to the chest during a playoff game in Detroit in 1998. "You're able to kind of see where things went right, where things went wrong and you're able to really kind of dig in and enhance or say, 'No, this is exactly what we planned for, this is exactly what happened and this is how we're supposed to manage and take care of these situations.'"

Hockey has had enough of these situations to make doctors and trainers ready for handling the next one.

The NHL's emergency action plan requires at least three physicians, two ambulances and automated external defibrillators (AEDs) at all arenas, which now have removable benches to clear space for medical attention.

It's a plan that has evolved: electrocardiogram (EKG) tests first became mandatory for players in 1998, and in 2005 a doctor was simply required to be within 50 feet of the benches and AEDs to be in close proximity.

After Peverley collapsed during a game in Dallas in March 2014, the NHL required the doctor on hand to be an active, trained specialist in emergency management. In the years since, there have been enhancements in cardiac life-support capabilities and additional provisions for CPR and cardiopulmonary rehearsals involving paramedics and arena staff.

"The single most important thing is that everybody involved in either a practice or a competition is aware of an emergency action plan, and that includes an ability to recognize a cardiac arrest, to initiate CPR as quickly as possible and to get access to an AED as quickly as possible," said Dr. Ben Levine, a professor of internal medicine and cardiology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center who treated Peverley. "The quicker you can initiate that cascade of events, the more likely there is to be a successful outcome."

University of Alberta Dr. Terry DeFreitas said 2 minutes is the ideal response time to begin CPR and the use of an AED. She said she believes it helps medical personnel to know the arena and for ambulances

to be close to the ice.

"That doesn't give you a lot of time at all," DeFreitas said.

Quick work from trainers like the Blues' Ray Barile with Pronger and again with Bouwmeester in February 2020 and Detroit's Anthony Colucci with Fischer may have saved the players' lives. Now there's a blueprint for how to respond within seconds.

Retired defenseman Mathieu Schneider, who was next to Fischer when his teammate collapsed in 2005, said medical staffs deserve a lot of credit.

"I really think we're at a place, a point in time now, where we're prepared for almost anything that can happen within a game situation," said Schneider, who serves as special assistant to the NHLPA executive director.

The Russia-based Kontinental Hockey League in 2008 saw 19-year-old New York Rangers prospect Alexei Cherepanov die of heart failure during a game. At the time, there was no ambulance on site and no working defibrillator. Afterward, the league took steps to mandate not only those changes but require comprehensive physicals for players and more.

"The KHL certainly learned lessons there, especially if they were going to get players at that point in time to come over there," said John Davidson, who has spent nearly five decades in hockey and is now president of hockey operations for the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Davidson took plenty of pucks to the chest and neck as an NHL goaltender from 1973-82 and was a broadcaster at the game when Pronger was struck. Davidson has grown to appreciate the amount of work that goes into protecting players.

"It's a major part of what we do," Davidson said. "We don't just show up, drop the puck, play the game and go home. There's a lot of stuff that goes on behind the scenes, and I feel very comfortable with the standard of safety that we have with the NHL."

The NFL will now look at how Hamlin's cardiac arrest was handled, much like the NHL studied its cases to see what can improve.

"That's the key to doing anything well," Levine said. "See what happened in your event or another event, ask, 'What do we do, and can we do that better?'"

Putin orders weekend truce in Ukraine; Kyiv won't take part

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday ordered his armed forces to observe a unilateral 36-hour cease-fire in Ukraine this weekend for the Orthodox Christmas holiday, the first such sweeping truce move in the nearly 11-month-old war. Kyiv indicated it wouldn't follow suit.

Putin did not appear to condition his cease-fire order on Ukraine's acceptance, and it wasn't clear whether hostilities would actually pause on the 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) front line or elsewhere. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed the Russian move as playing for time to regroup its invasion forces and prepare additional attacks.

At various points during the war that began Feb. 24, Russian authorities have ordered limited, local truces to allow civilian evacuations or other humanitarian purposes. Thursday's order was the first time Putin has directed his troops to observe a cease-fire throughout Ukraine.

"Based on the fact that a large number of citizens professing Orthodoxy live in the combat areas, we call on the Ukrainian side to declare a cease-fire and give them the opportunity to attend services on Christmas Eve, as well as on the Day of the Nativity of Christ," Putin's order said.

The order didn't specify whether it would apply to both offensive and defensive operations. It wasn't clear, for example, whether Russia would strike back if Ukraine kept fighting.

Ukrainian officials from Zelenskyy on down dismissed Putin's moves.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy stopped short of stating his forces would reject Putin's request to suspend fighting, instead questioning the Russian leadership's motives.

"Now they want to use Christmas as a cover to stop the advance of our guys in the Donbas for a while and bring equipment, ammunition and mobilized people closer to our positions," Zelenskyy said. "What

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will it give? Just another increase in the count of losses.”

Zelenskyy claimed that since he unveiled a peace plan in November, almost 110,000 Russian soldiers have been killed, and he accused the Kremlin of planning the fighting pause “to continue the war with renewed vigor.”

The most comprehensive recent Western estimate of Russia’s military losses was from a senior U.S. military official, who said in November that about 100,000 Russian soldiers had been killed or wounded. Russian authorities haven’t provided any recent figure for their military casualties.

Zelenskyy adviser Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted that Russian forces “must leave the occupied territories — only then will it have a ‘temporary truce.’”

Ukraine’s National Security Council chief Oleksiy Danilov told Ukrainian TV: “We will not negotiate any truces with them.”

He also tweeted: “What does a bunch of little Kremlin devils have to do with the Christian holiday of Christmas? Who will believe an abomination that kills children, fires at maternity homes and tortures prisoners? A cease-fire? Lies and hypocrisy. We will bite you in the singing silence of the Ukrainian night.”

U.S. President Joe Biden said it was “interesting” that Putin was ready to bomb hospitals, nurseries and churches on Christmas and New Year’s. “I think he’s trying to find some oxygen,” he said, without elaborating.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said Washington had “little faith in the intentions behind this announcement,” adding that Kremlin officials “have given us no reason to take anything that they offer at face value.” He said the truce order seems to be a ploy “to rest, refit, regroup, and ultimately re-attack.”

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric welcomed the move but said it “will not replace a just peace in line with the U.N. Charter and International law.”

Putin acted after the Russian Orthodox Church head, Patriarch Kirill, proposed a truce from noon Friday through midnight Saturday Moscow time (0900 GMT Friday to 2100 GMT Saturday; 4 a.m. EST Friday to 3 p.m. EST Saturday). The Orthodox Church, which uses the Julian calendar, celebrates Christmas on Jan. 7.

Kirill has previously called the war part of Russia’s “metaphysical struggle” to prevent a Western liberal ideological encroachment.

Zelenskyy had proposed starting a path toward peace with a Russian troop withdrawal before Dec. 25, but Moscow rejected it.

Political analyst Tatyana Stanovaya said the cease-fire order “fits well into Putin’s logic, in which Russia is acting on the right side of history and fighting for justice.”

“In this war, Putin feels like a ‘good guy,’ doing good not only for himself and the ‘brotherly nations,’ but also for the world he’s freeing from the ‘hegemony’ of the United States,” Stanovaya, founder of the independent R.Politik think tank, wrote on Telegram.

She also linked Putin’s move to Ukrainian forces’ recent strike on Makiivka that killed at least 89 Russian servicemen. “He really doesn’t want to get something like that for Christmas,” she said.

Ukrainians reacted with suspicion.

“On the 8th of March (Women’s Day), (Ukraine’s) independence day, Christmas (Dec. 25) and the New Year, there were no cease-fires. Why should there be one now?” said Sophiia Romanovska, a 21-year-old student who fled Mariupol for Kyiv, peppering her comments with expletives.

Putin issued the truce order after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged him in a phone call to implement a “unilateral cease-fire,” according to the Turkish president’s office. The Kremlin said Putin “reaffirmed Russia’s openness to a serious dialogue” with Ukrainian authorities.

Erdogan told Zelenskyy later that Turkey was ready to mediate a “lasting peace.” Erdogan has made such offers frequently, helped broker a deal allowing Ukraine to export grain, and has facilitated prisoner swaps.

Russia’s professed readiness for peace talks came with the usual conditions: that “Kyiv authorities fulfill the well-known and repeatedly stated demands and recognize new territorial realities,” the Kremlin said, referring to Moscow’s insistence that Ukraine recognize Crimea and other illegally seized territory as part of Russia.

Previous attempts at peace talks have failed over Moscow’s territorial demands because Ukraine insists

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Russia withdraw from occupied areas.

Coupled with talk of diplomacy were new pledges Thursday of military support for Ukraine. Zelenskyy called the pledges "really a great victory for our state."

Germany said it would match a U.S. announcement last month to supply Ukraine with a Patriot missile battery, the most advanced surface-to-air missile system the West has provided to Kyiv.

Germany also said it would supply Marder armored personnel carriers, and France said it will discuss with Ukraine delivery of armored combat vehicles that can destroy tanks.

U.S. officials said they will send Ukraine nearly \$3 billion in military aid in a new package that will for the first time include several dozen Bradley fighting vehicles. The aim is to get as much aid to Ukrainian forces as possible before spring begins and fighting increases. An announcement was expected Friday, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the package's details had not been announced.

The Kremlin contends the West's supply of weapons to Ukraine is prolonging the conflict.

While more weapons arrive, the battlefield situation appears to have settled into a stalemate and war of attrition. As winter sets in, troop and equipment mobility is more limited.

In the latest fighting, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of the Ukrainian presidential office, said Thursday that Russian shelling killed at least five civilians and wounded eight in the previous 24 hours.

An intense battle has left 60% of the eastern city of Bakhmut in ruins, Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said. Ukrainian defenders appear to be holding the Russians back. Taking the city in the Donbas region, an expansive industrial area bordering Russia, would not only give Putin a major battlefield gain after months of setbacks but rupture Ukraine's supply lines and allow Moscow's forces to press toward key Ukrainian strongholds in Donetsk.

In what appeared to be a move to entice more men to join the fight, the first convicts recruited for battle by the Wagner Group, a Russian private military contractor, received a promised government pardon after serving six months on the front line. A video released by Russia's state RIA Novosti news agency showed Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Wagner Group's millionaire owner, shaking hands with about 20 pardoned men.

Study: Two-thirds of glaciers on track to disappear by 2100

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

The world's glaciers are shrinking and disappearing faster than scientists thought, with two-thirds of them projected to melt out of existence by the end of the century at current climate change trends, according to a new study.

But if the world can limit future warming to just a few more tenths of a degree and fulfill international goals — technically possible but unlikely according to many scientists — then slightly less than half the globe's glaciers will disappear, said the same study. Mostly small but well-known glaciers are marching to extinction, study authors said.

In an also unlikely worst-case scenario of several degrees of warming, 83% of the world's glaciers would likely disappear by the year 2100, study authors said.

The study in Thursday's journal *Science* examined all of the globe's 215,000 land-based glaciers -- not counting those on ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica -- in a more comprehensive way than past studies. Scientists then used computer simulations to calculate, using different levels of warming, how many glaciers would disappear, how many trillions of tons of ice would melt, and how much it would contribute to sea level rise.

The world is now on track for a 2.7-degree Celsius (4.9 degrees Fahrenheit) temperature rise since pre-industrial times, which by the year 2100 means losing 32% of the world's glacier mass, or 48.5 trillion metric tons of ice as well as 68% of the glaciers disappearing. That would increase sea level rise by 4.5 inches (115 millimeters) in addition to seas already getting larger from melting ice sheets and warmer water, said study lead author David Rounce.

"No matter what, we're going to lose a lot of the glaciers," Rounce, a glaciologist and engineering professor at Carnegie Mellon University, said. "But we have the ability to make a difference by limiting how many glaciers we lose."

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"For many small glaciers it is too late," said study co-author Regine Hock, a glaciologist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the University of Oslo in Norway. "However, globally our results clearly show that every degree of global temperature matters to keep as much ice as possible locked up in the glaciers."

Projected ice loss by 2100 ranges from 38.7 trillion metric tons to 64.4 trillion tons, depending on how much the globe warms and how much coal, oil and gas is burned, according to the study.

The study calculates that all that melting ice will add anywhere from 3.5 inches (90 millimeters) in the best case to 6.5 inches (166 millimeters) in the worst case to the world's sea level, 4% to 14% more than previous projections.

That 4.5 inches of sea level rise from glaciers would mean more than 10 million people around the world — and more than 100,000 people in the United States — would be living below the high tide line, who otherwise would be above it, said sea level rise researcher Ben Strauss, CEO of Climate Central. Twentieth-century sea level rise from climate change added about 4 inches to the surge from 2012 Superstorm Sandy costing about \$8 billion in damage just in itself, he said.

Scientists say future sea level rise will be driven more by melting ice sheets than glaciers.

But the loss of glaciers is about more than rising seas. It means shrinking water supplies for a big chunk of the world's population, more risk from flood events from melting glaciers and about losing historic ice-covered spots from Alaska to the Alps to even near Mount Everest's base camp, several scientists told The Associated Press.

"For places like the Alps or Iceland... glaciers are part of what makes these landscapes so special," said National Snow and Ice Data Center Director Mark Serreze, who wasn't part of the study but praised it. "As they lose their ice in a sense they also lose their soul."

Hock pointed to Vernagtferner glacier in the Austrian Alps, which is one of the best-studied glaciers in the world, but said "the glacier will be gone."

The Columbia Glacier in Alaska had 216 billion tons of ice in 2015, but with just a few more tenths of a degree of warming, Rounce calculated it will be half that size. If there's 4 degrees Celsius (7.2 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial times, an unlikely worst-case scenario, it will lose two-thirds of its mass, he said.

"It's definitely a hard one to look at and not drop your jaw at," Rounce said.

Glaciers are crucial to people's lives in much of the world, said National Snow and Ice Center Deputy Lead Scientist Twila Moon, who wasn't part of the study.

"Glaciers provide drinking water, agricultural water, hydropower, and other services that support billions (yes, billions!) of people," Moon said in an email.

Moon said the study "represents significant advances in projecting how the world's glaciers may change over the next 80 years due to human-created climate change."

That's because the study includes factors in glacier changes that previous studies didn't and is more detailed, said Ruth Mottram and Martin Stendel, climate scientists at the Danish Meteorological Institute who weren't part of the research.

This new study better factors in how the glaciers' ice melts not just from warmer air, but water both below and at the edges of glaciers and how debris can slow melt, Stendel and Mottram said. Previous studies concentrated on large glaciers and made regional estimates instead of calculations for each individual glacier.

In most cases, the estimated loss figures Rounce's team came up with are slightly more dire than earlier estimates.

If the world can somehow limit warming to the global goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial times -- the world is already at 1.1 degrees (2 degrees Fahrenheit) -- Earth will likely lose 26% of total glacial mass by the end of the century, which is 38.7 trillion metric tons of ice melting. Previous best estimates had that level of warming melting translating to only 18% of total mass loss.

"I have worked on glaciers in the Alps and Norway which are really rapidly disappearing," Mottram said in an email. "It's kind of devastating to see."

Exiled Venezuela lawmakers chosen to lead anti-Maduro fight

By CAMILLE RODRIGUEZ MONTILLA and JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuela's opposition has selected an all-female team of mostly unknown exiled former lawmakers to replace the beleaguered Juan Guaidó as the face of its faltering efforts to remove socialist President Nicolas Maduro.

Last week, politicians who were elected to the National Assembly in 2015 voted to oust Guaidó from his role as "interim president," a title he claimed as head of what was widely considered the South American nation's last democratically elected institution.

On Thursday, those same former lawmakers chose Dinorah Figueroa as his replacement. She'll be joined by two other backbenchers — Marianela Fernández and Auristela Vásquez — in a triumvirate leadership of a legislature that operates as a symbolic shadow to Maduro's rubber-stamping National Assembly, which convened Thursday in its neoclassical chambers.

The women represent three different parties that had been pushing for Guaidó's removal as a way to reconnect with disillusioned voters ahead of next year's presidential elections. But it remains to see how, living outside Venezuela, they will manage to mobilize their compatriots to counter Maduro's increasingly firm grip on power.

Figueroa, a medical surgeon who has been living in Spain, appealed for unity in her first address to fellow Maduro opponents. She also promised to work to shield the OPEC nation's extensive oil assets abroad, which include Houston-based refinery Citgo, from seizure by a long list of creditors stiffed by Maduro's profligate spending over the years.

"I have the conviction that this parliament will raise the flag of faith, hope and justice," Figueroa said in the session, which was held virtually, in a Zoom meeting, because so many opposition politicians like her have fled Venezuela in recent years.

In January 2019, the National Assembly, then controlled by the opposition, voted to stop recognizing Maduro as president after several top opponents were barred from running against him. It then appointed Guaidó, who was one of the few leaders in his Popular Will party to avoid arrest or exile, to be the nation's "interim president," in accordance with the order of succession outlined in Venezuela's constitution.

Guaidó was quickly recognized as Venezuela's legitimate leader by the United States and dozens of governments in Europe and Latin America.

But his interim government was unable to win over the military, the traditional arbiter of political disputes in Venezuela, and the opposition-controlled National Assembly's five-year mandate officially ended at the close of 2020. With leftist leaders winning elections across Latin America in recent years, the U.S.-led international coalition to pressure Maduro has also frayed. Colombia, Brazil and Spain are among the countries that recently re-established diplomatic ties.

Guaidó, in Thursday's meeting, thanked his many supporters, both domestic and foreign, in what was something akin to a farewell address. Standing at a lectern emblazoned with the Venezuelan presidential seal, the 39-year-old said he would remain in Venezuela — despite calls for his arrest from among Maduro's more radical supporters — and urged his successors to rebuild the unity needed to unseat Maduro.

"We can't generate a power vacuum that only benefits the de-facto dictator," he said.

Guaidó's departure from the political scene may only be temporary however.

Although no longer the harbinger of hope he was when he rose from obscurity amid a wave of street protests to challenge Maduro's rule, he remains a popular figure in the otherwise rudderless opposition, admired for his bravery and commitment to the cause of Venezuela's democracy if not for always delivering results. He's expected to be among those who will compete in opposition primaries this year to see who runs against Maduro in 2024.

Meanwhile, Maduro's supporters seemed to be relishing the opposition's squabbles.

At Thursday's session inaugurating the legislative year, loyalist lawmakers re-elected Jorge Rodríguez to lead the National Assembly. Rodríguez, a close Maduro ally, accused the opposition of causing imposing

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undue "pain, suffering and aggression against the Venezuelan people" by supporting U.S. sanctions on the country.

Socialist party boss Diosdado Cabello also took a shot at the rival legislature, saying: "They love to live in a fantasy, they love to live dreaming."

The Biden administration has largely tried to avoid wading into the opposition's feuding while continuing to pressure Maduro to make meaningful concessions to the opposition in negotiations taking place in Mexico that would pave the way for free and fair elections.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said Tuesday that the U.S. stands ready to work with any individual, or collective body, chosen by the 2015 National Assembly to represent it.

"Our approach to Nicolás Maduro has not changed," Price said Tuesday. "He is illegitimate. We support the 2015 National Assembly as the only remaining vestige of democracy in Venezuela."

Biden toughens border, offers legal path for 30,000 a month

By COLLEEN LONG, ZEKE MILLER and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden said Thursday the U.S. would immediately begin turning away Cubans, Haitians and Nicaraguans who cross the border from Mexico illegally, his boldest move yet to confront the arrivals of migrants that have spiraled since he took office two years ago.

The new rules expand on an existing effort to stop Venezuelans attempting to enter the U.S., which began in October and led to a dramatic drop in Venezuelans coming to the southern border. Together, they represent a major change to immigration rules that will stand even if the Supreme Court ends a Trump-era public health law that allows U.S. authorities to turn away asylum-seekers.

"Do not, do not just show up at the border," Biden said as he announced the changes, even as he acknowledged the hardships that lead many families to make the dangerous journey north.

"Stay where you are and apply legally from there," he advised.

Biden made the announcement just days before a planned visit to El Paso, Texas, on Sunday for his first trip to the southern border as president. From there, he will travel on to Mexico City to meet with North American leaders on Monday and Tuesday.

Homeland Security officials said they would begin denying asylum to those who circumvent legal pathways and do not first ask for asylum in the country they traveled through en route to the U.S.

Instead, the U.S. will accept 30,000 people per month from the four nations for two years and offer the ability to work legally, as long as they come legally, have eligible sponsors and pass vetting and background checks. Border crossings by migrants from those four nations have risen most sharply, with no easy way to quickly return them to their home countries.

"This new process is orderly," Biden said. "It's safe and humane, and it works."

The move, while not unexpected, drew swift criticism from asylum and immigration advocates, who have had a rocky relationship with the president.

"President Biden correctly recognized today that seeking asylum is a legal right and spoke sympathetically about people fleeing persecution," said Jonathan Blazer, the American Civil Liberties Union's director of border strategies. "But the plan he announced further ties his administration to the poisonous anti-immigrant policies of the Trump era instead of restoring fair access to asylum protections."

Even with the health law restrictions in place, the president has seen the numbers of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border rise dramatically during his two years in office; there were more than 2.38 million stops during the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, the first time the number topped 2 million. The administration has struggled to clamp down on crossings, reluctant to take hard-line measures that would resemble those of the Trump administration.

That's resulted in relentless criticism from Republicans who say the Democratic president is ineffective on border security, and the newly minted Republican House majority has promised congressional investigations on the matter.

The new policy could result in 360,000 people from these four nations lawfully entering the U.S. in a

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year, a huge number. But far more people from those countries have been attempting to cross into the U.S. on foot, by boat or swimming; migrants from those four countries were stopped 82,286 times in November alone.

Enyer Valbuena, a Venezuelan who was living in Tijuana, Mexico, after crossing the border illegally, said Thursday's announcement came as no surprise but a blow nonetheless.

"This was coming. It's getting more difficult all the time," he said by text message.

Some Venezuelans waiting on Mexico's border with the U.S. have been talking among themselves if Canada is an option, Valbuena said. He had been waiting for the outcome of the pandemic-related asylum ban before trying to enter the U.S. again and is seeking asylum in Mexico, which offers a much better future than Venezuela.

"If it becomes more difficult (to reach the U.S.), the best path is to get papers in Mexico," said Valbuena, who currently works at a Tijuana factory.

Mexico has agreed to accept up to 30,000 migrants each month from the four countries who attempt to walk or swim across the U.S.-Mexico border and are turned back. Normally, these migrants would be returned to their country of origin, but the U.S. can not easily send back people from those four countries for a variety of reasons that include relations with the governments there.

Anyone coming to the U.S. is allowed to claim asylum, regardless of how they crossed the border, and migrants seeking a better life in the U.S. often pay smugglers the equivalent of thousands of dollars to deliver them across the dangerous Darien Gap.

But the requirements for granting asylum are narrow, and only about 30% of applications are granted. That has created a system in which migrants try to cross between ports of entry and are allowed into the U.S. to wait out their cases. But there is a 2 million-case immigration court backlog, so cases often are not heard for years.

The only lasting way to change the system is through Congress, but a bipartisan congressional effort on new immigration laws failed shortly before Republicans took the House majority.

"The actions we're announcing will make things better, but will not fix the border problem completely," Biden said, in pressing lawmakers to act.

Under then-President Donald Trump, the U.S. required asylum seekers to wait across the border in Mexico. But clogs in the immigration system created long delays, leading to fetid, dangerous camps over the border where migrants were forced to wait. That system was ended under Biden, and the migrants who are returned to Mexico under the new rules will not be eligible for asylum.

Biden will also triple the number of refugees accepted to the U.S. from the Western Hemisphere, to 20,000 from Latin America and Caribbean, over the next two years. Refugees and asylum-seekers have to meet the same criteria to be allowed into the country, but they arrive through different means.

Border officials are also creating an online appointment portal to help reduce wait times at U.S. ports of entry for those coming legally. It will allow people to set up an appointment to come and ask to be allowed into the country.

At the U.S.-Mexico border, migrants have been denied a chance to seek asylum 2.5 million times since March 2020 under the Title 42 restrictions, introduced as an emergency health measure by Trump to prevent the spread of COVID-19. But there always has been criticism that the restrictions were used as a pretext by the Republican to seal off the border.

Biden moved to end the Title 42 restrictions, and Republicans sued to keep them. The U.S. Supreme Court has kept the rules in place for now. White House officials say they still believe the restrictions should end, but they maintain they can continue to turn away migrants under immigration law.

The four nationalities that Biden addressed Thursday now make up the majority of those crossing the border illegally. Cubans, who are leaving the island nation in their largest numbers in six decades, were stopped 34,675 times at the U.S. border with Mexico in November, up 21% from October. Nicaraguans, a large reason why El Paso has become the busiest corridor for illegal crossings, were stopped 34,209 times in November, up 65% from October.

But Venezuelans were seen far less at the border after Mexico agreed on Oct. 12 to begin accepting those expelled from the United States. They were stopped 7,931 times, down 64% from October.

Venezuelans have said the changes have been difficult, particularly with finding a sponsor who has the financial resources to demonstrate the ability to support them. And even if they find a sponsor, sometimes they delay their arrival because they don't have the economic resources to pay for the flight to the U.S. For some, the Venezuelan passport that they need has expired, and they cannot afford to pay for the renewal.

Survey: 3.3 million US adults displaced by natural disasters

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

More than 1.3% of the adult population in the U.S. was displaced by natural disasters in the past year, with hurricanes responsible for more than half of the forced relocations, according to first-of-its-kind survey results from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The Household Pulse Survey results said that 3.3 million U.S. adults were displaced by either hurricanes, floods, fires, tornados or other disasters. The two-year-old online survey asked for the first time about displacement from natural disasters in results released Thursday.

Some states were impacted more than others. In Florida, nearly 1 million people, or about 1 in 17 adult residents, were displaced in a state that was ravaged by Hurricanes Ian and Nicole in the fall. More than 409,000 people — or almost 1 in 8 residents — were displaced in Louisiana, which had a comparatively calm hurricane season in 2022 even though residents still were dealing with the devastating impacts from Hurricane Ida the previous year.

Among the states with lowest rates of the adult population being displaced by disasters were Indiana, Maine, North Dakota, Ohio and Oklahoma.

Of the 3.3 million displaced adults, more than a third were out of their homes for less than a week. About 1 in 6 residents never returned to their homes, according to the survey.

The demographic makeup of the displaced didn't deviate much from the overall race and ethnic background of the U.S. population, but they tended to be poorer. About 22% of the displaced adults reported having a household income of less than \$25,000 a year, compared to 17.4% for the overall U.S. population.

The Census Bureau sent invitations to more than 1 million households to participate in the experimental survey and collected a total of 70,685 responses in mid-December.

As COVID surges in China, US begins testing more travelers

By LAURA UNGAR and SHELBY LUM Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Shubham Chandra knows how dangerous the coronavirus can be: He lost his dad during the pandemic. So when he cleared customs at Newark Liberty International Airport and saw people offering anonymous COVID-19 testing, he was happy to volunteer.

"It's a minimum amount of effort to help a lot of people," said the 27-year-old New York City man, who had just stepped off a plane from Cancun, Mexico.

The airport testing is part of the government's early warning system for detecting new variants, which began expanding recently in the wake of a COVID-19 surge in China.

With the addition of Los Angeles and Seattle, there are now seven airports where arriving passengers can volunteer for COVID-19 tests. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention program now covers about 500 flights from at least 30 countries, including more than half from China and surrounding areas.

As of Thursday, the CDC is also requiring travelers to the U.S. from China, Hong Kong and Macao to take a COVID-19 test no more than two days before travel and provide a negative result before boarding a flight.

And down the road, some scientists are calling for wider use of an additional strategy: screening wastewater from toilet tanks on arriving airplanes.

"Without surveillance, it's very hard to know what's going on," said Dr. Stuart Campbell Ray, an infectious disease expert at Johns Hopkins University. "Hopefully, with more sampling, we will get more information

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about what's circulating."

Some scientists are worried the COVID-19 surge in China could unleash a new coronavirus mutant on the world, since every infection is another chance for the virus to change. There's no sign of a new variant from China at this point. But one reason for new testing requirements, according to the CDC, is a lack of adequate and transparent information from China on viral strains infecting people there.

"We have very little control over what happens elsewhere," said epidemiologist Katelyn Jetelina, a consultant to the CDC. "What we can control is what's happening in the United States."

The airport program is based on an unfortunate reality: "Travelers ... go across the globe quickly and they can get and spread infectious diseases really fast," said Dr. Cindy Friedman, chief of CDC's travelers' health branch.

Friedman said the program is a partnership with two companies that take care of the testing and lab work — XpresCheck and Concentric by Ginkgo. A pilot program was expanded around the time the first omicron variant emerged in the U.S. more than a year ago. Besides Newark, Seattle and Los Angeles, the program includes New York's Kennedy, Washington's Dulles and airports in Atlanta and San Francisco.

The latest expansion of the traveler surveillance program aims to capture more flights from China. But on Wednesday in Newark, some of the targeted planes arrived from Mexico, France and Belgium. After clearing customs, travelers could stop at a table, swab their noses and fill out a form. Chandra said it took about a minute.

Like other travelers, he won't get the results. But he tests for COVID-19 when he flies to Ohio every other month to see his mom, he said, since "the last thing I want to do is bring (the virus) home to her."

About 10% of people on targeted flights volunteer. Their samples are pooled and PCR tested. Positive ones are genetically sequenced. Volunteers get free home COVID-19 tests.

Over time, Friedman expects the program to grow and potentially go global. It's already shown it can spot coronavirus variants early — detecting omicron variants BA.2 and BA.3 and reporting them to a global database weeks before others did.

But Jetelina said a surveillance program at seven airports is "just not that big" so trying to spot variants might be like "looking for a needle in the haystack."

To aid the search, experts suggest taking more samples from airplane bathrooms.

"It's a little gross when you start thinking about it," Jetelina said. "But these are really long flights and we would expect the majority of people would go to the bathroom."

The CDC, which monitors wastewater in municipal systems, ran a pilot program last summer testing airplane wastewater at Kennedy airport. Friedman said the agency is working to expand this type of surveillance.

Such testing has been used elsewhere. A study last year in the journal *Environment International* looked at wastewater testing from 37 flights chartered to bring Australians home earlier in the pandemic, concluding that the practice "can provide an additional and effective tool" for monitoring the virus coming into a country. Recently, Canada announced an expanded wastewater pilot program and Belgium said it would test wastewater from airplanes coming from China.

As surveillance continues, scientists believe that the omicron variant BF.7, which is extremely adept at evading immunity, is driving China's current surge. CDC data shows BF.7 is already in the U.S., and currently accounts for about 2% of COVID-19 cases. The most prevalent mutant in the U.S. is XBB.1.5, another variant responsible for 41% of U.S. cases. Ray said this one attaches more tightly than its competitors to a receptor that allows viruses to enter a cell.

Scientists said the virus will surely keep evolving — which is why they need to keep searching for new variants. The coronavirus is like a predator stalking humanity, Ray said, and "the predator adapts to the prey."

Amazon, Salesforce jettison jobs in latest tech worker purge

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE and MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writers

E-commerce giant Amazon and business software maker Salesforce are the latest U.S. technology companies to announce major job cuts as they prune payrolls that rapidly expanded during the pandemic lockdown.

Amazon said Wednesday that it will be cutting about 18,000 positions. It's the largest set of layoffs in the Seattle-based company's history, although just a fraction of its 1.5 million global workforce.

"Amazon has weathered uncertain and difficult economies in the past, and we will continue to do so," CEO Andy Jassy said in a note to employees that the company made public. "These changes will help us pursue our long-term opportunities with a stronger cost structure."

He said the layoffs will mostly impact the company's Amazon Stores division — which a spokesman said encompasses its e-commerce business as well as company's brick-and-mortar stores such as Amazon Fresh and Amazon Go — and its PXT organizations, which handle human resources and other functions.

In November, Jassy told staff that layoffs were coming due to the economic landscape and the company's rapid hiring in the last several years. Wednesday's announcement included earlier job cuts that had not been numbered. The company had also offered voluntary buyouts and has been cutting costs in other areas of its sprawling business.

Salesforce, meanwhile, said it is laying off about 8,000 employees, or 10% of its workforce.

The cuts announced Wednesday are by far the largest in the 23-year history of a San Francisco company founded by former Oracle executive Marc Benioff. Benioff pioneered the method of leasing software services to internet-connected devices — a concept now known as "cloud computing."

The layoffs are being made on the heels of a shake-up in Salesforce's top ranks. Benioff's hand-picked co-CEO Bret Taylor, who also was Twitter's chairman at the time of its tortuous \$44 billion sale to billionaire Elon Musk, left Salesforce. Then, Slack co-founder Stewart Butterfield left. Salesforce bought Slack two years ago for nearly \$28 billion.

Salesforce workers who lose their jobs will receive nearly five months of pay, health insurance, career resources, and other benefits, according to the company. Amazon said it is also offering a separation payment, transitional health insurance benefits, and job placement support.

Benioff, now the sole chief executive at Salesforce, told employees in a letter that he blamed himself for the layoffs after continuing to hire aggressively into the pandemic, with millions of Americans working from home and demand for the company's technology surging.

"As our revenue accelerated through the pandemic, we hired too many people leading into this economic downturn we're now facing, and I take responsibility for that," Benioff wrote.

Salesforce employed about 49,000 people in January 2020 just before the pandemic struck. Salesforce's workforce today is still 50% larger than it was before the pandemic.

Meta Platforms CEO Mark Zuckerberg also acknowledged he misread the revenue gains that the owner of Facebook and Instagram was reaping during the pandemic when he announced in November that his company would be laying off 11,000 employees, or 13% of its workforce.

Like other major tech companies, Salesforce's recent comedown from the heady days of the pandemic have taken a major toll on its stock. Before Wednesday's announcement, shares had plunged more 50% from their peak close to \$310 in November 2021. The shares gained nearly 4% Wednesday to close at \$139.59.

"This is a smart poker move by Benioff to preserve margins in an uncertain backdrop as the company clearly overbuilt out its organization over the past few years along with the rest of the tech sector with a slowdown now on the horizon," Wedbush analyst Dan Ives wrote.

Salesforce also said Wednesday that it will be closing some of its offices, but didn't include locations. The company's 61-story headquarters is a prominent feature of the San Francisco skyline and a symbol of tech's importance to the city since its completion in 2018.

Beds run out at Beijing hospital as COVID-19 spreads

By ANDY WONG and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Mostly older men and women wearing masks rested on cots in hallways, while others slept upright in crowded waiting rooms with numbered chairs. Many received fluids intravenously, while others were given oxygen. The sound of people coughing — and of new patients arriving on gurneys — was steady.

At the Chuiyangliu hospital in the east of Beijing on Thursday, signs of the COVID-19 outbreak stretching public health facilities in the world's most populous nation were on full display.

Beds ran out by midmorning at the packed hospital, even as ambulances brought more people in. Hard-pressed nurses and doctors rushed to take information and triage the most urgent cases.

The crush of people seeking hospital care follows China's abandonment of its most severe pandemic restrictions last month after nearly three years of lockdowns, travels bans and school closures that weighed heavily on the economy and prompted unusual street protests in a country that quashes political dissent.

The outbreak appears to have spread the fastest in densely populated cities first. Now, authorities are concerned as it reaches smaller towns and rural areas with weaker health care systems. Several local governments began asking people Thursday not to make the trip home for the upcoming Lunar New Year holiday, signaling lingering worry around opening up.

Overseas, a growing number of governments are requiring virus tests for travelers from China, saying they are needed because the Chinese government is not sharing enough information on the outbreak. The European Union on Wednesday "strongly encouraged" its member states to impose pre-departure COVID-19 testing, though not all have done so.

Italy — the first place in Europe where the pandemic exacted a heavy toll in early 2020 — became the first EU member to require tests for passengers from China last week, and France and Spain followed with their own measures. The U.S. is requiring a negative test result for travelers from China within 48 hours of departure.

China has criticized the requirements and warned of countermeasures against countries imposing them.

World Health Organization head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Wednesday he was concerned about the lack of outbreak data from the Chinese government.

At a daily briefing Thursday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Beijing has consistently "shared information and data with the international community in an open and transparent manner."

"At present, China's COVID-19 situation is under control," Mao said.

On Sunday, many remaining restrictions — some already not being enforced — will be lifted.

"We recommend that everyone not return to their hometowns unless necessary during the peak of the outbreak," the government of Shaoyang county in Hunan province in central China said in a notice dated Thursday. "Avoid visiting relatives and traveling between regions. Minimize travel."

Similar appeals were issued by Shouxian county in Anhui province southeast of Beijing and the cities of Qingyang in Gansu province in the northwest and Weifang in Shandong on the east coast.

The appeals, which harkened back to the last few years of strict pandemic restrictions, showed that some officials remain nervous about lifting them too quickly.

The Weifang government notice said residents should celebrate the holiday with video and phone gatherings.

"Avoid visiting relatives and friends to protect yourself and others," it said.

Despite such concerns, Hong Kong announced it will reopen some of its border crossings with mainland China on Sunday and allow tens of thousands of people to cross every day without being quarantined.

The city's land and sea border checkpoints with the mainland have been largely closed for almost three years and the reopening is expected to provide a much-needed boost to Hong Kong's tourism and retail sectors.

Faithful mourn Benedict XVI at funeral presided over by pope

By NICOLE WINFIELD, GIADA ZAMPANO and FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis joined tens of thousands of faithful in bidding farewell to Benedict XVI at a rare requiem Mass Thursday for a dead pope presided over by a living one, ending an unprecedented decade for the Catholic Church that was triggered by the German theologian's decision to retire.

Bells tolled and the crowd applauded as pallbearers emerged from a fog-shrouded St. Peter's Basilica and placed Benedict's simple cypress coffin before the altar in the square outside. Wearing the crimson vestments typical of papal funerals, Francis opened the service with a prayer and closed it by solemnly blessing the casket and bowing his head.

In between, Francis made only fleeting reference to Benedict in his homily, offering a meditation on Christ instead of a eulogy of his predecessor's legacy before the casket was sealed and entombed in the basilica grotto.

Heads of state and royalty, clergy from around the world and thousands of regular people flocked to the ceremony, despite Benedict's request for simplicity and official efforts to keep the first funeral for a pope emeritus in modern times low-key.

Many mourners hailed from Benedict's native Bavaria and donned traditional dress, including boiled wool coats to guard against the morning chill.

"We came to pay homage to Benedict and wanted to be here today to say goodbye," said Raymond Mainar, who traveled from a small village east of Munich for the funeral. "He was a very good pope."

Ignoring exhortations for decorum at the end, some in the crowd held banners or shouted "Santo Subito!" — "Sainthood Now!" — echoing the spontaneous chants that erupted during St. John Paul II's 2005 funeral.

The former Joseph Ratzinger, who died Dec. 31 at age 95, is considered one of the 20th century's greatest theologians and spent his lifetime upholding church doctrine. But he will go down in history for a singular, revolutionary act that changed the future of the papacy: He retired, the first pope in six centuries to do so.

Francis has praised Benedict's courage in stepping aside, saying it "opened the door" for other popes to do the same. But few, including Benedict himself, expected his 10-year retirement to last longer than his eight-year papacy, and the prolonged cohabitation of two popes in the Vatican Gardens sparked calls for protocols to guide future resignations.

Some 50,000 people attended Thursday's Mass, according to the Vatican, after around 200,000 paid their respects during three days of public viewing.

Only Italy and Germany were invited to send official delegations, but other leaders took the Vatican up on its offer and came in their "private capacity." They included several heads of state and government, delegations of royal representatives, a host of patriarchs and 125 cardinals.

Among those attending was Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen, who was given special court permission to attend the funeral. Zen was detained in May on suspicion of colluding with foreign forces under China's national security law after he fell afoul of authorities over his participation in a now-silenced democracy movement. His passport was revoked when he was detained.

Benedict's close confidants were also in attendance, most prominently the former pope's longtime secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein. He bent down and kissed a book of the Gospels that was left open on the coffin before the ceremony began.

After it ended, the coffin was brought to the basilica grotto, placed first into a zinc casket, sealed, then placed into an oak one.

A choir's hymn echoed in the crypt as the casket was lowered into the ground, featuring Benedict's papal coat of arms, a cross and a plaque noting in Latin that it contained his body: "Corpus Benedicti XVI PM," for "pontifex maximus" or "supreme pontiff."

Matteo Colonna, a 20-year-old seminarian from Teramo, Italy, said he came to Rome in part because of the historic nature of the funeral — but also because it had personal resonance for him.

"The first spark of my vocation started under the pontificate of Benedict, but then it became even stronger under Pope Francis," Colonna said, while sitting in prayer in St. Peter's Square at dawn. "I see a

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continuity between these two popes and the fact that today Francis is celebrating the funeral in Benedict's memory is an historical event."

But the service was also significant for what it lacked: the feeling of uncertainty that would normally accompany the passing of a pope before a new one is elected.

"Benedict has been the bridge between John Paul and Francis," said Alessandra Aprea, a 56-year-old from Meta di Sorrento near Naples. "We could not have Francis without him."

Early Thursday the Vatican released the official history of Benedict's life, a short document in Latin that was placed in a metal cylinder in his coffin before it was sealed, along with the coins and medallions minted during his papacy and his pallium stoles.

The document gave ample attention to Benedict's historic resignation and referred to him as "pope emeritus," citing verbatim the Latin words he uttered on Feb. 11, 2013, when he announced he would retire.

The document, known as a "rogito" or deed, also cited his theological and papal legacy, including his outreach to Anglicans and Jews and his efforts to combat clergy sexual abuse "continually calling the church to conversion, prayer, penance and purification."

Francis didn't mention Benedict's legacy in his homily and only uttered his name once, in the final line, delivering instead a meditation on Jesus' willingness to entrust himself to God's will.

"Holding fast to the Lord's last words and to the witness of his entire life, we too, as an ecclesial community, want to follow in his steps and to commend our brother into the hands of the Father," Francis said.

During St. John Paul II's quarter-century as pope, Ratzinger spearheaded a crackdown on dissent as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, taking action against the left-leaning liberation theology that spread in Latin America in the 1970s and against dissenting theologians and nuns who didn't toe the Vatican's hard line on matters like sexual morals.

His legacy was marred by the clergy sexual abuse crisis, even though he recognized earlier than most the "filth" of priests who raped children, and actually laid the groundwork for the Holy See to punish them.

As cardinal and pope, he passed sweeping church legislation that resulted in 848 priests being defrocked from 2004 to 2014, roughly his pontificate with a year on either end. But abuse survivors still held him responsible, for failing to sanction any bishop who moved abusers around, refusing to mandate the reporting of sex crimes to police and identifying him as embodying the clerical system that long protected the institution over victims.

Mike McDonnell of the U.S. abuse survivor group SNAP said while Benedict passed new canon laws, he could have done far more to influence John Paul to take firm action. Referring to Benedict's nickname as "God's Rottweiler," he said: "In our in our view, it was a dog bark without a bite. Certainly he could have done more."

A group representing German clergy abuse survivors called on German officials attending Benedict's funeral to demand more action from the Vatican on sexual abuse. Eckiger Tisch asked leaders to demand that Francis issue a "universal church law" stipulating zero tolerance in dealing with abuse by clergy.

The funeral ritual itself is modeled on the code used for dead popes but with some modifications given Benedict was not a reigning pontiff when he died.

While Thursday's Mass was unusual, it does have some precedent: In 1802, Pope Pius VII presided over the funeral in St. Peter's of his predecessor, Pius VI, who had died in exile in France in 1799 as a prisoner of Napoleon.

Best of CES 2023: Wireless TV, delivery robots and in-car VR

By JAMES BROOKS, ADRIANA MORGA and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Tech companies of all sizes are showing off their latest products at CES, formerly known as the Consumer Electronics show.

The show is getting back to normal after going completely virtual in 2021 and seeing a significant drop in 2022 attendance because of the pandemic.

On Wednesday, big names like LG and Samsung and smaller startups showcased their latest products

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for the media in Las Vegas. The show officially opens Thursday.

Here are some highlights:

NO MESSY WIRES

LG Electronics unveiled a 97-inch OLED TV with what it calls a Zero Connect Box that streams content wirelessly. The box, which still needs to be plugged in, just needs to be within 30 feet (nine meters) of the display.

But why would anyone want a wireless 4K television?

David M. Park, senior marketing manager at the South Korean tech company, says it means owners can place a TV in the center of the room without all the messy wires, or maybe mount it above a fireplace or perhaps on a hard-to-drill concrete wall.

LG says the 97-inch LG Signature OLED M (model M3) will be available in the second half of 2023. Pricing has not yet been announced.

ROBOT DELIVERIES

Picture yourself weaving through crowds at the airport on a busy holiday weekend, ignoring the rumble in your stomach as you speed past restaurants to make it to your gate on time.

Brooklyn-based Ottonomy.io is looking to ease that all-too-familiar travel anxiety with its fully autonomous delivery robots.

If you're traveling through airports in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh or Rome, for example, you might cross paths with one of these robots as they bring food directly to travelers at their gates.

Ottonomy unveiled its newest robot, the Yeti, on Wednesday at CES. It showed off its new self-dispensing feature, which eliminates the need for a human to be present to collect deliveries.

The company also provides outdoor curbside delivery services up to 4 miles (6.4 kilometers).

Ottonomy co-founder and CEO Ritukar Vijay said the price tag on its services varies depending on the number of robots a company wants to deploy and how many restaurants or retailers are included in the delivery footprint.

AUDIO GLASSES FROM PAULA ABDUL

Singer and dancer Paula Abdul came to CES to launch Idol Eyes, a line of audio sunglasses.

"I've wanted to get into the tech world for the longest time," Abdul told The Associated Press, "but I wanted to do it in a way that was authentic to who I am."

Starting at \$199, the sunglasses feature a five-hour battery life and play audio from the arms of the frames via Bluetooth connectivity. You can listen to music or answer calls.

The Grammy- and Emmy-award winning artist's first collection of eyewear is available in seven colors, with polarized and blue light filter lenses.

"I'm just marrying fashion, movement and technology," Abdul said. "That's where my heart is."

VR FOR YOUR CAR

Holoride, based in Munich, Germany, wants to make car rides more fun and less dizzy. The company's VR headset allows passengers to play video games, watch Netflix or scroll through Instagram while they ride.

If the car is moving, you move in the virtual world, helping to prevent car sickness, according to co-founder Daniel Profendiner. Rather than seeing the road, you might be flying and fighting robots or swimming under the sea.

"The car industry is super-focused on the driver but with more autonomous driving on the horizon, the passenger gets more into the focus as well," he said.

Previously, holoride was only available for Audis with an in-system retrofit so the headset could recognize when the car was moving. On Wednesday at CES, the company announced a new product that can be used in any car.

The retrofit pack, which includes the VR headset, holoride retrofit, a safety strap and a one-year subscription to holoride, is \$799.

ROKU GETS ITS OWN TVS

Roku is expanding its line-up of video streaming devices to include internet-connected TVs bearing its brand for the first time.

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It's Roku's latest attempt to cement its position as a video streaming hub during the ongoing shift from TV provided through internet connections instead of cable and satellite systems.

When the sets roll out later this spring, it will mark the first time that Roku has made its own TVs. The San Jose, California, company will continue to team up with a variety of other manufacturers to include its steaming software in internet-connected TVs — an approach that Roku began in 2014.

The decision to make its own TVs while continuing to make its software available to competing manufacturers is similar to what Google has been doing with its Pixel smartphones since 2016. Google has continued to provide its Android operating system to Samsung and other smartphone manufacturers while using its Pixel line-up as a way to demonstrate how the software works best and to elevate awareness of its brand in the mobile market.

Roku's 11 television models, with display screens ranging from 24 inches to 75 inches, are expected to sell for about \$120 to \$1,000 once they arrive in stores.

Roku got an early edge in the now-booming industry nearly 15 years ago when it released its first streaming box after working on the device as a secret project within Netflix, which was in the early stages of building what is now the world's largest video streaming service.

As tech giants such as Amazon and Apple released their own streaming devices, Roku began to expand into internet-connected TVs made by other companies, sound bars and last year even got into original programming with a movie about satirical song maker Weird Al Yankovic.

Back to work not business as usual for Damar Hamlin's peers

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

For Damar Hamlin's teammates, peers and everyone in the NFL community, going back to work is not business as usual.

Players returned to practice with heavy hearts on Wednesday, two days after Hamlin went into cardiac arrest and needed to be resuscitated on the field during Buffalo's game at Cincinnati.

Hamlin, the 24-year-old Bills safety, remains hospitalized in critical condition, but his teammates are set to play the Patriots on Sunday, and all games for Week 18 remain on schedule.

Some players across the league have expressed concern about playing this weekend because they're still processing what happened to Hamlin. Many were in tears watching him receive medical attention on the field. They're praying for his recovery and are dealing with emotions they've never experienced playing a sport.

"I'm sure if you polled the locker room there would be mixed votes on that," Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow said about playing against the Baltimore Ravens on Sunday. "Personally, I think playing is going to be tough. But there's people that want to play, and there's people that don't. Personally, I probably want to play. I think getting back to as normal as you can as fast as you can is how I deal with these kind of things. But like I said, everybody has a different way of dealing with it."

The league and the NFL Players Association have shared with teams, players and coaches the mental health-related resources available to them. Each team has a licensed behavioral health clinician on staff, as well as a pain management specialist.

The players' union makes a directory available to all players to help them locate a clinician near them, be it a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker or counselor.

"I think it is certainly key that we acknowledge how great a strain this places on everyone involved," said the NFL's chief medical officer, Dr. Allen Sills. "Certainly, the teams, the medical care providers, the staffs — and this is not just for Buffalo and Cincinnati — but across all our teams. ... We have resources at each of our clubs, and we've emphasized preparation in this way. Our clubs have deployed those resources with their counselors and their mental health professionals. And that support extends throughout the entire NFL family, and it will be an ongoing need. This is something that will continue and it's something we will continue to emphasize."

The Bills held team meetings and a walkthrough practice without any media availability on Wednesday.

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They are scheduled to resume practice on Thursday, with coach Sean McDermott and some players expected to speak to reporters.

Philadelphia Eagles defensive tackle Fletcher Cox said he couldn't play this weekend if Hamlin was his teammate.

"That's too hard, man," Cox said. "You think about this game, you think about all the guys that were right there when it happened. You always think about those guys. What's going through their mind. You know that those guys are going through it. Everybody that was right there seeing what was going on, they're going through it."

Cleveland Browns cornerback Greg Newsome II said it will be challenging to play the season finale in Pittsburgh — Hamlin grew up in the area — given the extraordinary circumstances.

"It's definitely going to be tough to finish out this last game and just go on the field knowing that there's somebody out there that is in a life-or-death situation," Newsome said before practice Wednesday. "It's definitely going to be very tough and hopefully that's why we got our guys around us and we can all talk through it and things like that, but it'll for sure be tough."

The New Orleans Saints had the team psychologist present when they gathered for a meeting Wednesday.

"It's OK to admit if you need a little help," coach Dennis Allen said.

Allen experienced firsthand the death of a teammate. He was a safety at Texas A&M in 1991 when kicker James Glenn died of heart failure on the field while warming up for practice.

"It still sticks with you to this day. Any time you have somebody that's, especially a young guy, that in every other sense, you expect is fully healthy, and to see something like that happen, it's hard to deal with," Allen said. "I know what kind of effect it had on our team. So, I can only imagine the guys that were on the field at that point in time, how that emotionally affects them."

Ready or not, the Bills, Bengals and 30 other NFL teams are returning to the field this week. Players must be mentally prepared for action in a sport that requires full attention.

"You can't compartmentalize it," Green Bay Packers wide receiver Randall Cobb said. "That was really tough to watch. It was really difficult to see. ... You always prepare your mind for how physical and how violent of a game it is. It's a tough sport we play, but I never thought I would see or witness anything like that. I can't help but just think about him and his family and hope that they are holding up well and pray that he comes out on the other side of it and comes back and is in full health."

US jobless claim applications fall to lowest in 14 weeks

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans applying for jobless benefits fell to the lowest level in more than three months last week, reflecting a still-robust job market despite the Federal Reserve's efforts to cool the economy and bring down decades-high inflation.

Applications for unemployment aid for the week ending Dec. 31 fell by 19,000 to 204,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The labor market is closely monitored by Fed policymakers, who raised interest rates seven times last year in a bid to slow job growth and bring down stubbornly high inflation. So far, there have been little indication that it has weakened the job market enough to for the Fed to alter its course in 2023.

Also Thursday morning, the payroll processing firm ADP reported that the U.S. economy gained 235,000 jobs, well above expectations.

U.S. futures dropped sharply on worries that a hot jobs market will mean the Fed will continue with aggressive rate hikes well into the new year.

The four-week moving average of claims, which evens out some of the week-to-week volatility, fell by 6,750 to 213,750.

Jobless claims are generally viewed as a proxy for layoffs, which have been relatively low since the pandemic wiped out roughly 20 million jobs in the spring of 2020.

About 1.69 million people were receiving jobless aid the week that ended Dec. 24, about 24,000 fewer

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than the week before.

On Wednesday, the government reported that job openings slipped slightly in November, but remained strong. There were 10.46 million job vacancies on the last day of November, down slightly from 10.51 million in October. But there are still nearly 1.8 jobs for every unemployed person, whereas before the pandemic, there were usually more unemployed people than jobs.

The government issues its December jobs report on Friday, with economists surveyed by data firm FactSet expecting the U.S. economy to have gained another 200,000 jobs, a healthy number. Employers added 263,000 jobs in November and the unemployment rate stayed at a low 3.7%.

In its updated forecasts, the Fed's policymakers predicted slower growth and higher unemployment for next year and 2024. The unemployment rate is projected to jump to 4.6% by the end of 2023. That would mark a significant increase in joblessness and typically would reflect a recession, which many economists have predicted.

The Fed's rate hikes last year have made it more expensive for consumers to take out mortgage and auto loans, and raised borrowing rates for credit cards.

Mortgage rates are above 6%, essentially double what they were before the Fed began tightening credit. Higher mortgage rates have hammered the housing market, with sales of existing homes falling for 10 straight months.

Though the U.S. labor market remains robust, layoffs have been mounting in the technology sector, which is dealing with falling demand as inflation squeezes both businesses and homes. On Wednesday, Amazon announced that it is laying off 18,000 workers, while the software company Salesforce, owner of Slack, said it was cutting around 8,000 jobs. Facebook parent Meta, Twitter, Doordash and others have announced cuts in recent months as well.

In the coming weeks, thousands of workers with temporary jobs during the winter holidays will lose work and apply for jobless aid. The government seeks to seasonally adjust the data to account for those job losses, but the adjustments are not always perfect and the layoff of temporary workers could distort the data.

Justice Jackson working on a memoir, titled 'Lovely One'

BY HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson is working on a memoir. Jackson, the first Black woman appointed to the court, is calling the book "Lovely One."

"Mine has been an unlikely journey," Jackson said in a statement released Thursday by Random House.

"But the path was paved by courageous women and men in whose footsteps I placed my own, road warriors like my own parents, and also luminaries in the law, whose brilliance and fortitude lit my way. This memoir marries the public record of my life with what is less known. It will be a transparent accounting of what it takes to rise through the ranks of the legal profession, especially as a woman of color with an unusual name and as a mother and a wife striving to reconcile the demands of a high-profile career with the private needs of my loved ones."

No release date has been set for "Lovely One." Jackson, 52, was born Ketanji Onyika Brown. The book's title comes from the English translation of Ketanji Onyika, the name suggested by an aunt who at the time was a Peace Corps worker in West Africa.

Jackson joined the court last year after President Joe Biden named her to succeed the retiring Stephen Breyer. She had previously been a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

"My hope is that the fullness of my journey as a daughter, sister, wife, mother, litigator, and friend will stand as a testament for young women, people of color, and dreamers everywhere," Jackson added, "especially those who nourish outsized ambitions and believe in the possibility of achieving them."

"Lovely One" is Jackson's first book, but not the first by a current member of the Supreme Court. Justices Neil Gorsuch and Sonia Sotomayor are among those who have released books in recent years. Justice Amy Coney Barrett has a deal with the Penguin Random House imprint Sentinel.

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Financial terms for “Lovely One” were not disclosed, although interest in her makes it likely her advance is at least comparable to the 7-figure deals negotiated in the past for memoirs by Sotomayor and Justice Clarence Thomas.

In announcing Jackson’s book, Random House called it a story she tells with “refreshing honesty, lively wit, and warmth.”

“Justice Jackson invites readers into her life and world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her,” the announcement reads in part, “from growing up in Miami with educator parents who broke barriers during the 1960s to honing her voice as an oratory champion to performing improv and participating in pivotal student movements at Harvard to balancing the joys and demands of marriage and motherhood while advancing in Big Law — and, finally, to making history upon joining the nation’s highest court.”

Today in History FRI JAN 06

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 6, the sixth day of 2023. There are 359 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Jan. 6, 2021, supporters of President Donald Trump, fueled by his false claims of a stolen election, assaulted police and smashed their way into the Capitol to interrupt the certification of Democrat Joe Biden’s victory, forcing lawmakers into hiding; most of the rioters had come from a nearby rally where Trump urged them to “fight like hell.” A Trump supporter, Ashli Babbitt, was shot and killed by a police officer as she tried to breach a barricaded doorway inside the Capitol. Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, injured while confronting the rioters, suffered a stroke the next day and died from natural causes, the Washington, D.C., medical examiner’s office said. (In the weeks that followed, four of the officers who responded to the riot took their own lives.) Congress reconvened hours later to finish certifying the election result.

On this date:

In 1412, tradition holds that Joan of Arc was born this day in Domremy.

In 1838, Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail gave the first successful public demonstration of their telegraph in Morristown, New Jersey.

In 1912, New Mexico became the 47th state.

In 1919, the 26th president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, died in Oyster Bay, New York, at age 60.

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his State of the Union address, outlined a goal of “Four Freedoms”: Freedom of speech and expression; the freedom of people to worship God in their own way; freedom from want; freedom from fear.

In 1974, year-round daylight saving time began in the United States on a trial basis as a fuel-saving measure in response to the OPEC oil embargo.

In 1982, truck driver William G. Bonin was convicted in Los Angeles of 10 of the “Freeway Killer” slayings of young men and boys. (Bonin was later convicted of four other killings; he was executed in 1996.)

In 1994, figure skater Nancy Kerrigan was clubbed on the leg by an assailant at Detroit’s Cobo Arena; four men, including the ex-husband of Kerrigan’s rival, Tonya Harding, went to prison for their roles in the attack. (Harding pleaded guilty to conspiracy to hinder prosecution, but denied any advance knowledge about the assault.)

In 2001, with Vice President Al Gore presiding in his capacity as president of the Senate, Congress formally certified George W. Bush the winner of the bitterly contested 2000 presidential election.

In 2005, former Ku Klux Klan leader Edgar Ray Killen was arrested on murder charges 41 years after three civil rights workers were slain in Mississippi. (Killen was later convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 60 years in prison; he died in prison in 2018.)

In 2006, velvet-voiced singer Lou Rawls died in Los Angeles at age 72.

In 2020, throngs of Iranians attended the funeral of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who’d been killed in a U.S.

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airstrike in Iraq; Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei wept while praying over the casket. Former White House national security adviser John Bolton said he was "prepared to testify" if subpoenaed by the Senate in its impeachment trial of President Donald Trump. (The Senate voted against calling witnesses.)

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama returned to Washington after a winter vacation in Hawaii that was interrupted by the "fiscal cliff" crisis. In his first public speech in six months, a defiant Syrian President Bashar Assad rallied a cheering crowd to fight the uprising against his authoritarian rule, dismissing any chance of dialogue with what he called "murderous criminals." The NHL and the players' association agreed on a tentative pact to end a 113-day lockout.

Five years ago: Pushing back against a new book that said his own aides questioned his competence, President Donald Trump defended his mental fitness in a series of tweets, saying that he is "like, really smart" and "a very stable genius." Japanese air bag maker Takata said it was recalling an additional 3.3 million faulty air bag inflators, expanding the largest automotive recall in U.S. history. About 100 million Americans were faced with a gusty deep freeze that followed a whopping East Coast snowstorm; the wind chill was close to minus 100 on New Hampshire's Mount Washington.

One year ago: On the anniversary of the deadly assault on the U.S. Capitol, President Joe Biden forcefully blamed Donald Trump and his supporters for holding a "dagger at the throat of democracy" with election lies that sparked the attack; Biden spoke in the Capitol's ornate Statuary Hall, where rioters had laid siege, and called on Americans to remember what they saw on Jan. 6 with their own eyes, amid what he said were efforts of Trump supporters to "rewrite history." Actor Sidney Poitier (PWAH'-tee-ay) died at his Los Angeles home at 94; he was the first Black actor to win an Oscar for best lead performance and the first to be a top box-office draw. Peter Bogdanovich, director of 1970s black-and-white classics including "The Last Picture Show" and "Paper Moon," died in Los Angeles at 82.

Today's Birthdays: Country musician Joey Miskulin (Riders in the Sky) is 74. Former FBI director Louis Freeh is 73. Rock singer-musician Kim Wilson (The Fabulous Thunderbirds) is 72. Singer Jett Williams is 70. Actor-comedian Rowan Atkinson is 68. World Golf Hall of Famer Nancy Lopez is 66. Actor Scott Bryce is 65. R&B singer Kathy Sledge is 64. TV chef Nigella Lawson is 63. R&B singer Eric Williams (BLACKstreet) is 63. Actor Norman Reedus is 54. Food writer and blogger Ree Drummond is 54. TV personality Julie Chen is 53. Actor Danny Pintauro (TV: "Who's the Boss?") is 47. Actor Cristela Alonzo is 44. Actor Rinko Kikuchi (RINK'-oh kih-KOO'-chee) is 42. Actor Eddie Redmayne is 41. Retired NBA All-Star Gilbert Arenas is 41. Actor-comedian Kate McKinnon is 39. Actor Diona Reasonover is 39. Rock singer Alex Turner (Arctic Monkeys) is 37.