

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar

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.; Cof-
fee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

Monday, Jan. 9

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, car-
rots, frosted brownie, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes.

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

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.

HAPPINESS RESIDES NOT IN
POSSESSIONS. AND NOT IN GOLD.
HAPPINESS DWELLS IN THE SOUL.
-DEMOCRITUS



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

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

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

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

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

Tuesday, Jan. 10

Senior Menu: Lemon baked fish, au gratin pota-
toes, California blend vegetables, honey fruit salad,
whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Sausage, egg and cheese wraps.

School Lunch: Old school BBQ sandwiches, tri
taters.

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

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 7 p.m.

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Nelson takes oath of office to begin third term as South Dakota Public Utilities Commissioner

PIERRE, S.D. - South Dakota Public Utilities Commissioner Chris Nelson was sworn into office on Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023, to officially begin his new term. Nelson's oath was administered by South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen in the State Capitol in Pierre as part of the 2023 inaugural ceremony.

Nelson began serving on the Public Utilities Commission in January 2011 when Gov. Dennis Daugaard appointed him to fill a vacancy on the commission. South Dakota voters elected him to complete the remaining four years of that term in November 2012. He was re-elected to a full, six-year term in November 2016, garnering the highest electoral percentage ever for a contested statewide race and was again re-elected by voters in 2022.

The PUC is a three-member panel that is charged with regulating investor-owned electric, natural gas and telephone utilities and administering the state's natural gas pipeline safety program and the grain warehouse program, among other responsibilities.

"I thank the people of South Dakota for giving me the honor of serving them for the next six years," said Nelson. "Taking the oath today is a solemn reminder of the trust they have placed in me."

Nelson has a long history of public service. Prior to joining the commission, he was elected to serve two terms as South Dakota secretary of state. Prior to holding that position, he spent 13 years working as the state election supervisor within the secretary of state's office and was the uniform commercial code supervisor in the same office for two years.

Nelson served as the PUC's chairman in 2012, 2015, 2016, 2021 and 2022 and as vice chairman in 2011, 2013, 2014, 2019 and 2020. He also represents South Dakota's interests as a member of several national and regional organizations including the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, where he serves on the association's Board of Directors and is co-chair of the Washington Action Program. He has also been appointed by the Federal Communications Commission to the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service.



South Dakota Public Utilities Commissioner Chris Nelson takes the oath of office administered by South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen, with his wife, Penny, by his side at a ceremony in the State Capitol in Pierre on Jan. 7, 2023. Photo credit: Campea Photography.

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Ehresmann, Zoellner place at Garretson Wrestling Tournament

Christian Ehresmann took first place at 138 pounds and Walker Zoellner placed fourth at 120 pounds at the Jesse James Invitational Tournament held Saturday in Garretson. As a team, Groton Area tied for seventh in a field of 12 teams.

106: John Bisbee (0-6)

Champ. Round 1 - Brody VanRoekel (Elk Point-Jefferson) 13-10 won by fall over John Bisbee (Groton Area) 0-6 (Fall 1:42)

Cons. Round 1 - Talon Miller (Garretson) 1-2 won by decision over John Bisbee (Groton Area) 0-6 (Dec 5-3)

120: Walker Zoellner (10-6) placed 4th and scored 15.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 10-6 won by fall over Kasen Voss (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 1-5 (Fall 1:52)

Quarterfinal - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 10-6 won by fall over Cody Lofswold (Tri-Valley) 4-5 (Fall 3:20)

Semifinal - Owen Effling (Tri-Valley) 10-7 won by decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 10-6 (Dec 7-0)

Cons. Semi - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 10-6 won by fall over Tate Lyle (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 4-10 (Fall 4:27)

3rd Place Match - Matthew Gangestad (Luverne) 13-5 won in sudden victory - 1 over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 10-6 (SV-1 12-3)

132: Tristan McGannon (2-4) scored 5.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Keaton Prehiem (Marion/Freeman/Freeman Academy/Canistota/Menno) 12-4 won by fall over Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 2-4 (Fall 1:09)

Cons. Round 1 - Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 2-4 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 2-4 won by decision over Josh Christensen (Lennox) 1-6 (Dec 4-3)

Cons. Round 3 - Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 2-4 won by fall over Bracken Sharpe (Tri-Valley) 1-2 (Fall 2:54)

Cons. Semi - Jack Aashiem (Lennox) 8-13 won by fall over Tristan McGannon (Groton Area) 2-4 (Fall 3:31)

138: Christian Ehresmann (8-1) placed 1st and scored 28.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 8-1 won by forfeit over Forfeit Forfeit (Tri-Valley) 4-5 (For.)

Quarterfinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 8-1 won by fall over Ty VanHolland (Garretson) 0-2 (Fall 0:22)

Semifinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 8-1 won by fall over Ashton Bach (Lennox) 7-9 (Fall 0:50)

1st Place Match - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 8-1 won by fall over Preston Bohl (Garretson) 2-3 (Fall 5:25)

145: Isaiah Scepaniak (1-6) scored 3.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-6 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Justin Klein (Flandreau) 13-9 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-6 (Fall 0:55)

Cons. Round 2 - Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-6 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Levi Simonsen (Viborg-Hurley) 6-3 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-6 (Fall 1:31)

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152: Easten Ekern (3-6) scored 7.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Lucas Hueser (Elk Point-Jefferson) 16-5 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 3-6 (Fall 0:00)

Cons. Round 1 - Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 3-6 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 3-6 won by fall over Cian Smith (Lennox) 2-11 (Fall 2:31)

Cons. Round 3 - Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 3-6 won by fall over Mason Marx (Elk Point-Jefferson) 2-8 (Fall 2:52)

Cons. Semi - Robert Watkins (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 12-9 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 3-6 (Fall 0:28)

170: Cole Bisbee (4-4) scored 8.0 team points.

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

Quarterfinal - Karter Headrick (Flandreau) 18-7 won by decision over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 4-4 (Dec 3-1)

Cons. Round 2 - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 4-4 won by fall over Jaksen Olson (Viborg-Hurley) 5-7 (Fall 2:48)

Cons. Round 3 - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 4-4 won by fall over Cash Bonnett (Luverne) 2-3 (Fall 2:50)

Cons. Semi - Mason Hendrickson (Tri-Valley) 9-5 won by decision over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 4-4 (Dec 6-3)

220: Gavin Englund (2-6) scored 4.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 2-6 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Kane Akkerman (Luverne) 7-7 won by fall over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 2-6 (Fall 2:12)

Cons. Round 2 - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 2-6 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 2-6 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Semi - Drew Pederson (Garretson) 4-4 won by fall over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 2-6 (Fall 0:36)

Drop the last year
into the silent
limbo of the past.
Let it go, for it
was imperfect,
and thank God
that it can go.

- Unknown

HAPPY NEW YEAR

W WEISMANTEL AGENCY

Weismantel Agency
Marty Weismantel ~ 605/396-7341 ~ weisag@nvc.net

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Governor Kristi Noem's 2nd Inaugural Address

January 7, 2023
Remarks as Prepared

Four years ago, I stood in front of you with my left hand on my dad's Bible and my right hand raised, swearing an oath to uphold the Constitution of both the state of South Dakota and the United States of America. I had won a competitive campaign on election day and was honored to be chosen to be the 33rd governor and the first female governor of our state. We had spent the previous months planning for the day I would take office – learning from previous administration officials and former Governors. We had hired cabinet and staff – worked on a budget plan – and considered legislation to implement the vision I had committed to following through on for the people of South Dakota.

That day, I spoke about the fact that when I was done being Governor, I wanted to be remembered as a Governor who worked for the next generation. I wanted to create opportunities for our kids and grandkids to stay here in our state, live their dreams, and be happy. I talked about the fact that we would no doubt face hardships and challenges, but that I believed our best days were still ahead of us.

I thought I was prepared to be Governor. Done my homework. Asked for advice and taken it. And was ready to go. Standing here today... it is clear there have been a few surprises along the way. A few unpredictable events, storms, policy fights, and even a pandemic. I'm not sure I saw all of those coming, and who could have? But we took on these challenges together and came through them stronger than before. Today, we have the strongest economy and financial foundation that we have had in decades. We have created new careers and jobs here at home. We have made historic gains in economic development and growth. Through our difficulties, we never lost sight of the fact that our power is in our people, and here in South Dakota, "Under God the People Rule."

The book of Daniel in the Bible talks of how God puts leaders into place, and it is He who removes them. The responsibility of leadership weighs heavy at times on those who are tasked with it, especially during conflict or difficulty. But it is an honor and a trust that I am so incredibly humbled by. There is serious work to be done the next four years. Work that includes protecting our freedoms, investing wisely, and creating opportunity for families to thrive. But there should be some fun, too. We should celebrate all that is good that is happening around us – cheer up and encourage those in our communities and laugh together.

That is why I have chosen to title this speech "The top ten things that surprised me about being Governor."

Those of us of a certain age will remember David Letterman, a late-night talk show host. Every night, he would unveil his top 10 list of whatever topic was in the news that day, or the latest gossip, or whatever it was that would make people laugh. It was the most popular part of his show each night. Even if we were tired from a long day, we would wait up to see what the top 10 list was before heading off to bed each night. So, I decided a top 10 list here today just might make me popular with all of you! Here we go.

Top 10 list of things that surprised me about being Governor:

Number 10: People care where I am. Now this may sound funny to you, but remember the job I had before I became your Governor – I was a member of Congress. Disposable – forgettable – and easily replaced. I never unpacked my carry-on suitcase for 8 years, slept on my couch in my office in DC, and got stranded in airports hundreds of times, at the mercy of the airline industry. Many times, I would have a flight canceled and miss a prom, play, or ball game of one of my kids. Instead, I would spend the night

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trying to find the cleanest and quietest spot in an airport to scour the available flight options and try to get where I was supposed to be. Or I'd rent a car and drive all night to get home – many times my staff or family wouldn't even know there had been issues until everyone woke up the next morning and thought, "I wonder where she is?"

Not as Governor, though. Now I have Highway Patrol officers who track my every move. And yes, I know some of you think they probably should have done that before I was Governor, too! A staff who insists on having every moment of every day planned and scheduled – and a Lt. Governor who seems to care where I am as well. Hmmmm... I used to wonder why Larry called me every morning after we were sworn into office. Then someone reminded me what the Constitution says the duties of the Lt. Governor are: to preside over the state Senate and take over as Governor should something happen to me. When I answered the phone each morning, after he heard my voice and that I was hard at work, Larry went back to bed. Today was not the day...

So number 10 on the list of things that surprised me about being Governor – people care where I am.

Number 9 – Number 9 on the list of top 10 things that surprised me about being Governor: I can wear jeans if I want to. Listen, those who know me best know I'm not a fan of dressing up. Life is hard enough without having to be uncomfortable, cold, or stumbling around in silly shoes every day. Because we work in a professional environment – of course I dress accordingly for each day in front of me. But it took almost a year of me asking the folks I work with, "Can I wear jeans?" and them saying "of course you can, you're the Governor," before I really believed it. Then, I found out that I rarely get questioned on my attire... unless I have holes in those jeans – THEN I get lots of questions. People ask, "do you need me to take up a collection to buy you some new jeans, Governor?" Yes Larry, yes – always take up a collection.

Number 8 – Number 8 on the list of top 10 things that surprised me about being Governor: The diversity of our high school mascot names throughout history. Now, most of you know the First Gentleman is passionate about the smallest communities in our state. He has spent many days traveling to meet folks from Lemmon to Winner, from Centerville to Ipswich. He hears about their challenges and also what problems they may need the state to help them solve. He shoots a basket in every town and enjoys the local food or ice cream. Every night when he comes home, I hear about the fantastic people he met and the exciting things that are going on in these communities. And I can guarantee you the one thing he is always going to say to me is "do you know what their school mascot used to be?" We have the Edgemont Moguls, Newell Irrigators, Monroe Wooden-Shoed Canaries, Centerville Tornados, Vale Beetdiggers, Keystone Dynamiters, Gregory Gorillas, and Claremont Honkers. How fantastic are those?

Number 7 – Number 7 on the list of top 10 things that surprised me about being Governor: How quickly decisions can be implemented. Remember now, I'm a farmer and a rancher. I ran several small businesses before – I was used to making decisions and getting work done. Then, I went to Congress. In Congress, we could make decisions or pass bills, but rarely did we see significant change quickly. In fact, it was incredibly frustrating how hard it was to enact real reforms to help people here at home. It could take months or years to fix something that seems just commonsense and easy to do. As Governor, I get the chance every day to be the CEO of the state. We set an agenda and make decisions. I can activate the National Guard, ban TikTok for national security reasons, and order the flags to be lowered to remember important leaders. And while we always look at the consequences of everything we do for the next generation, it surprised me the amount of good we can accomplish just by making the right decision.

Number 6 – Number 6 on the top 10 list of things that surprised me about being Governor: I was more inspired than I thought by the hard work and dedication of our state employees. Now, I always knew that they were committed to South Dakota. But I used to think of state employees as having 9 to 5 jobs with

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lots of holidays – that’s just not true. In fact, very few of them get to go home at 5 pm each day and forget about their responsibilities. There are roads to plow, communities to keep safe, programs to run, health information and resources to deploy, projects to complete, infrastructure to fix – and most of the challenges we have faced over the past four years dramatically increased their workload. Federal funds and programs, accountability and audits, bomb cyclones, flooding, tornados, a derecho, inflation, supply chain issues, COVID – every one of these have meant much more workload on the people who work for the state of South Dakota without a promise of more money or time off. They are dedicated and work extremely hard around the clock to keep our state thriving.

Number 5 – Number 5 on the list of top 10 things that surprised me about being Governor: No naps – I was promised some naps. I still haven’t gotten one. And I admit, I’m a little ticked about it. And more fishing – I was promised more fishing, too.

Number 4 – Number 4 on the list of top 10 things that surprised me about being Governor: I was shocked by all the items people mail to me at the Governor’s office or at home every week. I love to receive the thoughtful notes, encouraging cards, and see pictures of your families. It is amazing that people take the time to sit down and handwrite a letter of encouragement and wisdom to me. Thank you – I save so many of them. It is incredible how often that note of encouragement comes at just the right time to bless me. Now I’ll admit, I’ve also received some interesting things as well. Such as: a life size cutout of Wonder Woman with my face on it; someone’s birth certificate who wanted to prove to me that they were a real person, but I just keep wondering if they have an extra copy at home for themselves; a real live lobster from Maine; and a whip made from bull testicles. I also have been gifted many garden gnomes: gnomes riding horses, gnomes riding motorcycles, gnomes shooting pheasants, even a gnome riding a rocket named Liberty and carrying an American flag. No matter what the note is or the item that is sent – thank you. Thank you for thinking of me and taking the time to reach out.

Number 3 – Number 3 on the list of top 10 things that surprised me about being Governor: I haven’t had time to go elk hunting – I plan on fixing that in 2023.

Number 2 – Number 2 on the list of top 10 things that surprised me about being Governor: No one cares if you are Governor when you are tubing at the lake. I made the mistake of going tubing this summer. Yes, most of you here today are thinking right now, “Hey wait...I thought she couldn’t swim?” That is correct – I cannot swim. People have tried to teach me for years, but I just sink right to the bottom. In fact, my sister tried to teach me just a few years ago. And after attempting to swim across a pool to her, I sputtered to the surface to see how much progress I had made. I was surprised to only see I was even further away from my goal. My sister was laughing uncontrollably and described my swimming as “it looks like you are having a seizure.”

Well, despite my lack of natural ability to keep myself afloat, I still love to be on the water. This summer, I was talked into getting onto a tube with a couple of friends to enjoy what was described to me as a “tour around the lake to see the beautiful homes.” Then the driver of the boat proceeded to try to kill us. We asked to slow down, to no avail. He spun the boat in circles to create huge waves, only to reverse direction and launch us over them and into the air. I screamed, and yelled, and laughed, and admittedly almost cried in desperation. It seemed as though this particular driver may have been a Democrat, and he was out to settle a score or two. At one point I even yelled “ I AM A GOVERNOR!” There was no mercy. He didn’t care. Number 2 is: no one cares if you are Governor when tubing at the lake.

And number one... The number one thing that surprised me about being Governor is how much I love the job. When I first ran for this office, I knew it would be a great experience and a big opportunity to

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have a significant impact on South Dakota. I also thought maybe it might be a little boring, predictable, and uneventful from some of the advice that I had been given. For example, I had one person say to me when I told them I was going to run for Governor, "Well, if that's what you want to do... deal with state aid to education, local issues, and taxes. But national issues are much more exciting and where the focus is." I wondered if I would enjoy being Governor.

I do – I love the challenge of serving in this role. The opportunity to get up each day with a purpose. Every day is different. The people I work with – and I have the best boss: the beautiful people of the greatest state in this country. And I get to be here at home with my family. I am so grateful to all of you for trusting me to lead this state for another four years. May we always find joy in our work to protect our way of life and chart a path for the future of the next generation.

Today, we are here in this Rotunda where we are surrounded by four statues. They are named Courage, Integrity, Wisdom, and Vision. They represent the virtues and principles necessary to best serve the people of South Dakota. May we reflect those virtues as we work in this building each day for our people. God knows this world needs one place that can give the country hope – and that can do so with dignity and grace. Thank you for the honor of serving.

God bless you, and may God continue to bless the great state of South Dakota.

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Tietz powers in 32 points in hoop win over Sioux Falls Lutheran

Lane Tietz scored 32 points to lead the Groton Area boys basketball team to a 66-14 win over Sioux Falls Lutheran. The game was played Saturday in Groton.

Groton led at the quarter stops at 13-6, 41-8 and 57-14. At one point, the Tigers scored 25 unanswered points.

Tietz also one rebound, one assist and six steals. Cole Simon had 10 points, one rebound, two assists and seven steals. Jacob Zak had four points, four rebounds, four assists and four steals. Tate Larson had four points, two rebounds and one assist. Ryder Johnson had four points, two rebounds, one steal and one block. Keegan Tracy had four points, three rebounds, one assist and one steal. Logan Ringgenberg had three points, three rebounds, one steal and one block. Cade Larson had two points, two rebounds and one assist. Taylor Diegel had two points, three assists and three steals. Colby Dunker had one point. Dillon Abeln had one rebound.

Groton Area made 24 of 32 two-pointers for 75 percent, one of 17 three-pointers for 6 percent, 15 of 19 free throws for 79 percent, had 19 rebounds, six turnovers, 13 assists, 23 steals, 12 fouls and two blocks.

Ethan Olson led Sioux Falls Lutheran with six points followed by Grant Prouty with four and Kaden Roben and Muoch Jud each had two points. The Eagles made six of 16 total field goals for 38 percent, two of seven free throws, had 19 team fouls with Roben and Prouty fouling out, and had 29 turnovers.

The boys won the junior varsity game, 57-4, leading at the quarters tops at 21-0, 37-1 and 45-4. Colby Dunker led Groton Area with 16 points followed by Ryder Johnson with 13, Braxton Imrie, Keegan Tracy and Gage Sippel each had four points, and adding two points apiece were Dillon Abeln, Jayden Schwan, Caden McInerney, Blake Pauli, Holden Sippel, Turner Thompson, Logan Ringgenberg, Taylor Diegel and Logan Pearson.

Kaiden Fjelstad had three points for Sioux Falls Lutheran and Jonathan Jeseritz had one point.

The girls junior varsity team won its game, 40-11, leading at the quarters tops at 14-3, 20-3 and 28-3. Jaedyn Penning led the Tigers with 12 points, Laila Roberts, Brooklyn Hansen and Jerica Locke each had six points, Rylee Dunker had four and Faith Traphagen, Elizabeth Flihs and Emily Clark each had two points.

Elyse Prouty and Anesha Bright each had three points for the Eagles, Julia Crotty and Anika Bjordahl each had two points and Kiersten Bjordahl added a free throw.

All three games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. Mr. Anonymous sponsored the girls junior varsity game, Craig and Tasha Dunker sponsored the boys junior varsity game, and the varsity game sponsors were 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.

- Paul Kosel

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NSU Women's Basketball

Oliverson and Rogers Lead Wolves to Victory Over Wayne State

Aberdeen, S.D. – After trailing by one at the halftime break Northern State took the lead for good at the 5:39 mark in the third quarter, leading to a 66-60 win over Wayne State. The come from behind victory marks the second consecutive game the Wolves have trailed at the break and won.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 66, WSC 60

Records: NSU 9-6 (4-5 NSIC), WSC 9-5 (5-5 NSIC)

Attendance: 2,387

HOW IT HAPPENED

Six early points by Kailee Oliverson powered Northern State to 12-4 lead with 3:21 remaining in the opening quarter and a Rianna Fillipi 3-pointer extended the Wolves lead to 11 points (17-6)

A pair of 3-pointers by Jordyn Hilgemann and Laurie Rogers maintained a 9-point Northern lead four minutes into the second quarter, however a 14-4 Wildcat scoring run gave Wayne State a 1-point halftime lead (32-31)

The teams traded the lead multiple times in the opening minutes of the second half, but a Fillipi jumper in the paint gave NSU the lead for good with 5:39 remaining in the third quarter

Northern State's lead would remain no larger than six points in the fourth quarter, with Wayne State getting as close as one point with 3:43 remaining in the game

The Northern State defense shut down the Wayne State offense in the second half, out-scoring the Wildcats 35-28; NSU also shot 12-25 (48.0%) from the field compared to 11-40 (27.5%) for WSC in the second half

Rogers (18 points, 14 rebounds) recorded her fifth double-double of the season, while Oliverson (20 points, 12 rebounds) recorded her first of the season

Tonight marked the first time this season that multiple players have recorded a double-double in the same game and first time since last season's first round NSIC Tournament game at Augustana (also by Rogers and Oliverson)

Rogers and Oliverson each set season-high marks in rebounds with 14 and 12 respectively, while Rogers tied a season-high 18 points and Fillipi tied a season-high seven assists

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Kailee Oliverson: 20 points, 12 rebounds, 2 blocks

Laurie Rogers: 18 points, 14 rebounds, 3 blocks

Rianna Fillipi: 11 points, 3 rebounds, 7 assists, 3 steals, 2 blocks

UP NEXT

Northern State will travel to MSU Moorhead on Tuesday evening, making up a previously rescheduled contest. The Wolves and Dragons are scheduled for a 5:30 p.m. tip-off in Nemzek Fieldhouse.

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NSU Men's Basketball

Sharp Shooting Leads Northern State Men Past Wayne State

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men's basketball team shot over 50.0% from the floor and the 3-point line in their 27-point victory over Wayne State on Saturday evening. The Wolves handed the NSIC South leaders their fourth league loss of the 2022-23 season.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 96, WSC 69

Records: NSU 12-3 (8-1 NSIC), WSC 11-5 (6-4 NSIC)

Attendance: 2614

HOW IT HAPPENED

- The palindrome score saw the Wolves tally 47 points in the first and 49 in the second
- NSU shot 56.9% from the floor, 53.3% from the 3-point line and 73.7% from the foul line
- They tallied a game high 20 assists, 16 made 3-pointers, 12 steals, and four blocks, adding 31 rebounds
- In addition, the Wolves tallied 30 points in the paint, 33 points off the bench, 20 points off turnovers, and ten second chance points
- Five Wolves scored in double figures in the win, led by Sam Masten with 25
- Josh Dilling notched a scoring high for his Northern State career with 21 points off the bench for NSU

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Sam Masten: 25 points, 69.2 field goal%, 10 assists, 4 steals, 4 rebounds
- Josh Dilling: 21 points, 77.8 field goal%, 4 rebounds, 3 assists
- Jordan Belka: 16 points, 66.7 field goal%, 5 rebounds, 2 steals
- Augustin Reede: 12 points, 2 assists
- Jacksen Moni: 10 points, 5 rebounds, 2 assists, 2 steals, 2 blocks

UP NEXT

Northern State will have a quick turnaround, traveling to MSU Moorhead on Tuesday. Tip-off is set for 7:30 p.m. versus the Dragons. The Wolves remain on the road next Friday and Saturday at Sioux Falls and Southwest Minnesota State.



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



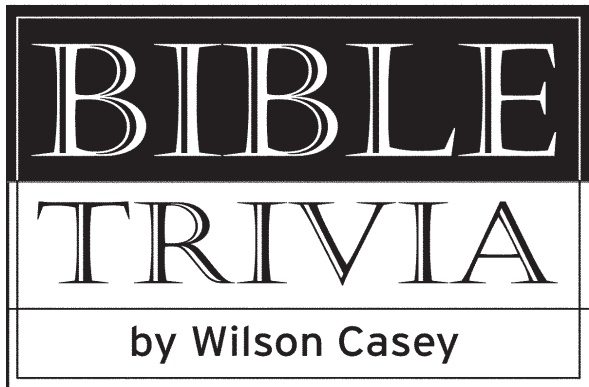
Detail of "Hand of God" by Clare Leighton (1952)

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

HEBREWS 4: 13, 14

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

2. From Exodus 10, who made a false confession to Aaron and Moses?
Herod, Malachi, Satan, Pharaoh

3. Who was bespoken by an angel to save Israel from the Midianites?
Ish-mael, Job, Gideon, Philip

4. From 1 Samuel 9 and 10, who was the first king of Israel?
David, Saul, Solomon, Jehu

5. Who laughed on hearing she would have a child in her old age?
Sarah, Ruth, Lydia, Esther

6. From John 8:44, what is Satan the father of?
Sin, Lust, Scepters, Lies

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Pharaoh, 3) Gideon, 4) Saul, 5) Sarah, 6) Lies

Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com.

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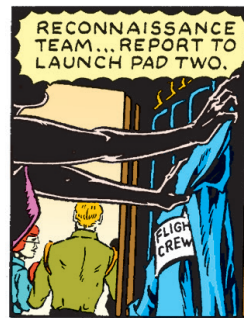
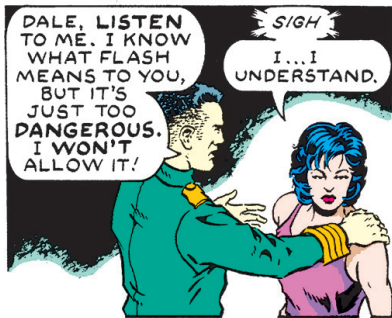
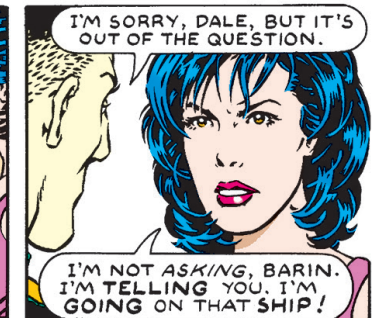
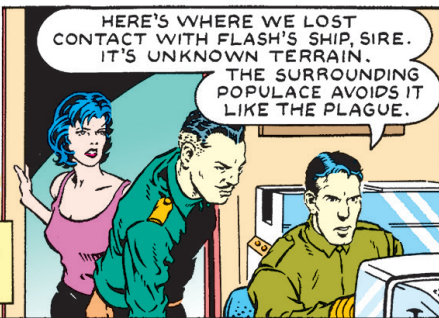
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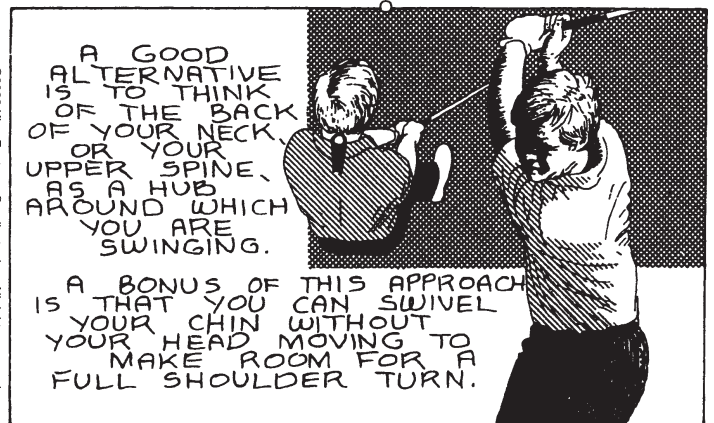
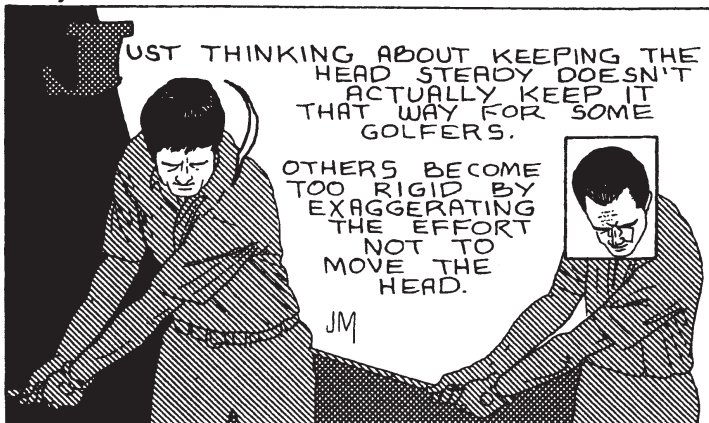
FLASH GORDON

1-8 BY JIM KEEFE

HEARING WORD OF FLASH'S DISTRESS CALL, DALE HURRIES TO THE CONTROL ROOM IN KING BARIN'S CASTLE.



Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS





Immunological Therapy Reasonable for Case of Lymphoma

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am an 86-year-old woman who was recently diagnosed with stage 3A follicular lymphoma. It was discovered on a CAT scan when I went to the ER for diverticulitis. I have no symptoms. The doctor did a biopsy to confirm, and I had a PET scan as well. I feel good otherwise. I am only on blood pressure and cholesterol medications. My oncologist is recommending low-dose chemotherapy. I am conflicted. At my age, what should I do? — *L.H.*

ANSWER: There are many types of lymphomas (which are a type of cancer of blood cells), but lymphomas are predominantly in the lymph nodes. Follicular lymphoma is an “indolent” type of lymphoma, meaning it is very slow-growing, but unfortunately often incurable. People with no symptoms from follicular lymphoma and who are stage 1, 2 or 3A tend to have a long time before they have progression of the disease to the point of having symptoms. Depending on other characteristics, that time ranges from three to seven years. Choosing to hold off on treatment is definitely a reasonable option for a person in your situation.

However, your oncologist knows much more about your disease than I do, such as the extent of tumor in the abdomen, the molecular markers of the tumor, and additional blood results. When an oncologist suggests treatment, I would listen carefully.

One treatment that your oncologist might be considering is immunological therapy such as rituximab. Unlike traditional chemotherapy, rituximab

the progression of the disease. A large study suggested improvement in the quality of life with rituximab. Usually, rituximab is given once a week for four doses, but some oncologists repeat the four doses every two months.

If I had a patient in your situation, I would say holding off on treatment would be reasonable given your age and lack of symptoms, but a trial of the rituximab (if that is what the oncologist is contemplating) would also be a reasonable choice. If you had serious side effects to the treatment, I would recommend against further doses.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I recently read your column on astaxanthin. The article contained a statement that flabbergasted me. Can you explain the details behind it? You state, “Most astaxanthin sold commercially is synthesized from petroleum products.” What gives? — *K.O.K.*

ANSWER: Any drug, supplement or chemical you buy is either extracted and purified from a natural source or synthesized in chemical reactions (or some combination of the two).

For example, if you buy curcumin from the health food store, the supplement might start off as the roots of the shrub *Curcuma longa* in the ginger family. These are then boiled in water and baking soda and also powdered, making turmeric. Curcumin is purified from turmeric through the use of a solvent like acetone and becomes crystallized to make pure curcumin.

However, curcumin from the health food store might also be synthesized directly from vanillin, which, in turn, is derived from wood pulp or from crude oil. No matter whether the curcumin starts — as turmeric roots from India, as wood pulp, or as oil — the chemical you take is exactly the same, and your body doesn’t know where it’s coming from.

Keep in mind that the manufacturer chooses the least expensive way of getting you what you want.

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

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"Dog Gone" (TV-PG) -- Rob Lowe stars in this tear-jerking film based on a true story. Lowe portrays a father named John, whose son, Fielding (Johnny Berchtold), loses his dog, Gonker. Fielding is crushed to lose his best friend, knowing Gonker won't be able to survive longer than two weeks without his medication. John refuses to sit idly by and convinces Fielding to go on a hike on the Appalachian Trail to go find Gonker. Embarking on this journey side by side, John and Fielding work together to find their beloved pet before his two weeks are up -- not knowing that the moments they'll experience during this trip will become memories for a lifetime. Premieres Jan. 13. (Netflix)



Rob Lowe, left, and Johnny Berchtold star in "Dog Gone."

Courtesy of Netflix

"Velma" (TV-MA) -- A new series based off the "Scooby-Doo" universe hits streaming on Jan. 12! This animated mystery comedy series is focused mainly on Velma Dinkley, the brainy four-eyed girl with the signature catchphrase "jinkies." Taking place before Mystery Inc. was officially created, the 10-episode first season gives intriguing background about the friendship dynamics between Velma, Fred, Daphne and Shaggy before Scooby-Doo ever entered the gang. Familiar voices viewers might recognize include Mindy Kaling (who plays Velma), Constance Wu, Wanda Sykes, Jane Lynch and even "Weird Al" Yankovic. (HBO Max)

"The 80th Golden Globe Awards" (NR) -- Hosted by Jerrod Carmichael, the 80th Golden Globe Awards taking place, of course, at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California, will be available to stream Jan. 10, as it also airs live on NBC. Martin McDonagh's "The Banshees of Inisherin" leads in the film categories with eight nominations, while "Abbott Elementary" leads the TV categories with five nominations. As expected, Austin Butler received his first Golden Globe nomination for his portrayal of Elvis Presley in Baz Luhrmann's "Elvis," and Cate Blanchett received her 12th Golden Globe nomination for her performance in "Tar." (Peacock)

"Echo 3" (TV-MA) -- American scientist Amber Chesborough is in Colombia researching psychedelics for addiction when she gets kidnapped by militant forces along the Colombia-Venezuela border. Amber's husband, Prince, and her brother, Bambi, are both in special forces, however, and when news of her kidnapping reaches them, both men are desperate to save her. They aren't afraid to take matters into their own hands, whether the government approves or not. So, as Amber attempts to stay alive, Prince and Bambi make their way down to Colombia to find the remote place where she's being held hostage. Luke Evans, Michiel Huisman and Jessica Ann Collins star in this gritty 10-episode series, with the final episode of the season premiering Jan. 13. The previous nine episodes are out now. (AppleTV+)

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1. Shep and the Limelites are best remembered for which song?
2. Which group started as Billy Lee & the Rivas?
3. Name the group that wrote and released "Shout."
4. Rolling Stone magazine named a Beatle as Man of the Year. Which Beatle was it and when?
5. Name the song that contains these lyrics: "And so you're back from outer space, I just walked in to find you here with that sad look upon your face."

Answers

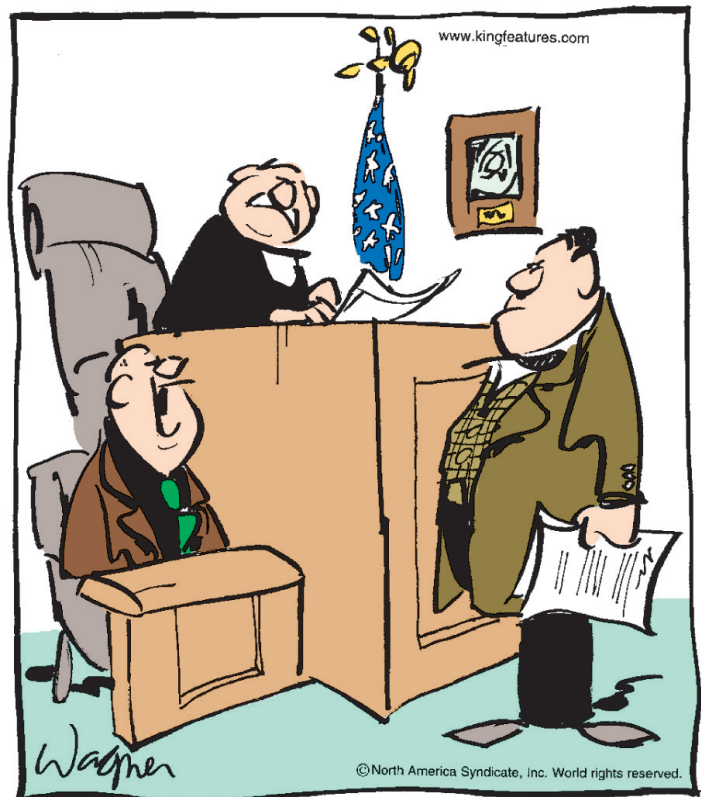
1. "Daddy's Home," in 1961. The song was kept one spot from the top of Billboard's chart by Ricky Nelson's "Travelin' Man."
2. Mitch Ryder & the Detroit Wheels. Their first hit was "Jenny Take a Ride," in 1965.
3. The Isley Brothers, in 1959. It only went to No. 47 on the charts, but eventually went gold from all of the years being played.
4. John Lennon, in 1970.
5. "I Will Survive," by Gloria Gaynor, in 1978. The song was the mostly ignored b-side on the single (they only took 35 minutes to record it) ... until a DJ listened to a demo copy that he'd been given and launched the song out into the world. It took the Grammy Award for Best Disco Recording in 1980.

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GRIN and BEAR IT Wagner

Just Like Cats & Dogs

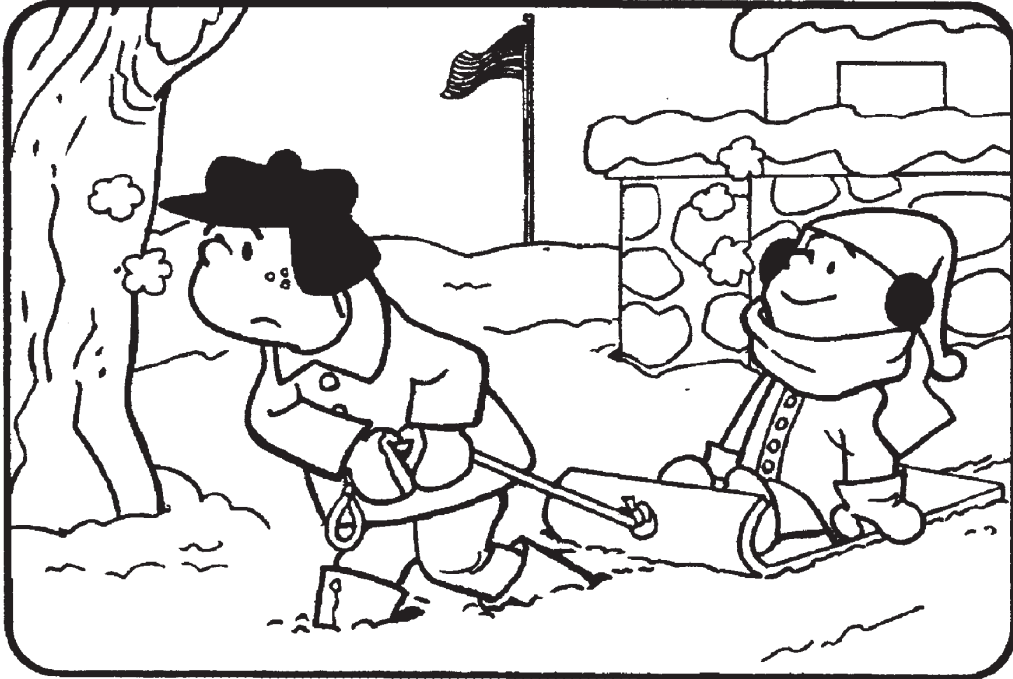
by Dave T. Phipps



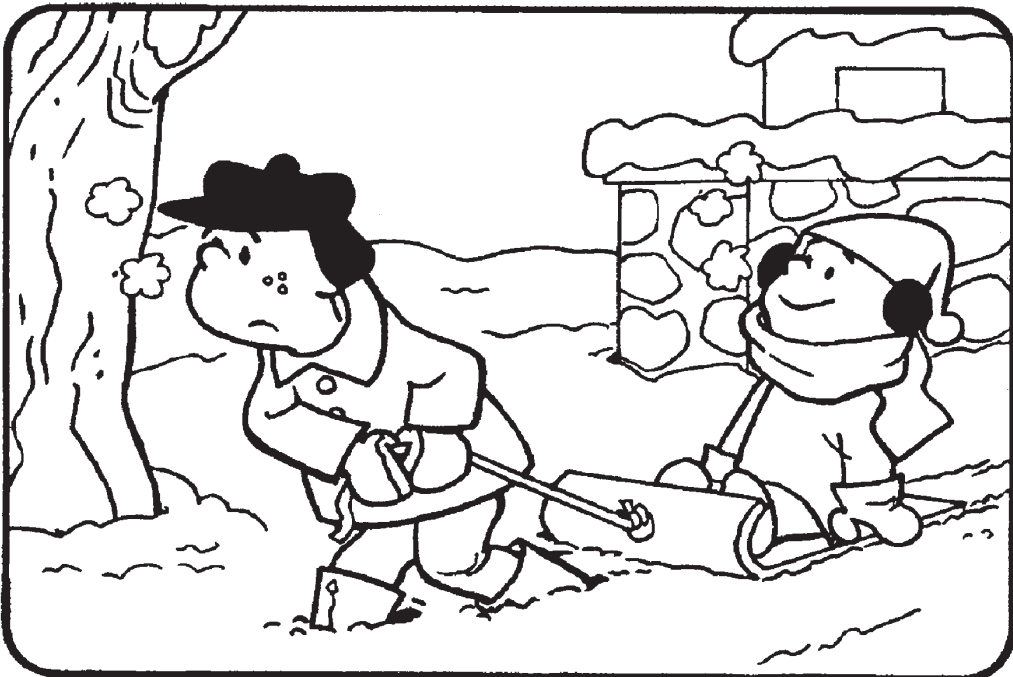
"My code of honor sometimes requires me to lie through my teeth!"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Earlap is smaller. 2. Rope loop is missing. 3. Flag is missing. 4. Buttons are missing. 5. Tassel is shorter. 6. Sled is shorter.

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* If your straw broom isn't working as well as it did when new, try giving it a spruce-up. Beat any dust out of the ends, then trim off any bent straws. Trim a section from a leg of stretched out pantyhose or tights and wrap it around the bristles, about two inches up from the bottom. This keeps the bristles nice and tight, and it will collect dirt better.

* When you replace old brushes -- hairbrushes or toothbrushes -- wrap a length of masking tape around the handle. That way you can use them for cleaning purposes, and they will never be mistakenly used for the wrong purpose.

* "When cooking rice, add a little bit of lemon juice to the water. It does not really flavor it, but it will keep it nice and white, plus it seems to be a bit fluffier when I

do this." -- R.E. in Mississippi

* "When my child was mostly finished potty training, I put her baby potty in the car with some wet wipes and plastic baggies. Seems like she had emergencies when we were driving, and it wasn't always convenient to find a business with a bathroom in time. But it was easy to pull into a parking lot and let her take care of business." -- E.E. in Maine

* Store extra plastic grocery bags in empty tissue boxes. They are easy to store this way, and you can keep them under the sink or in the car for easy access.

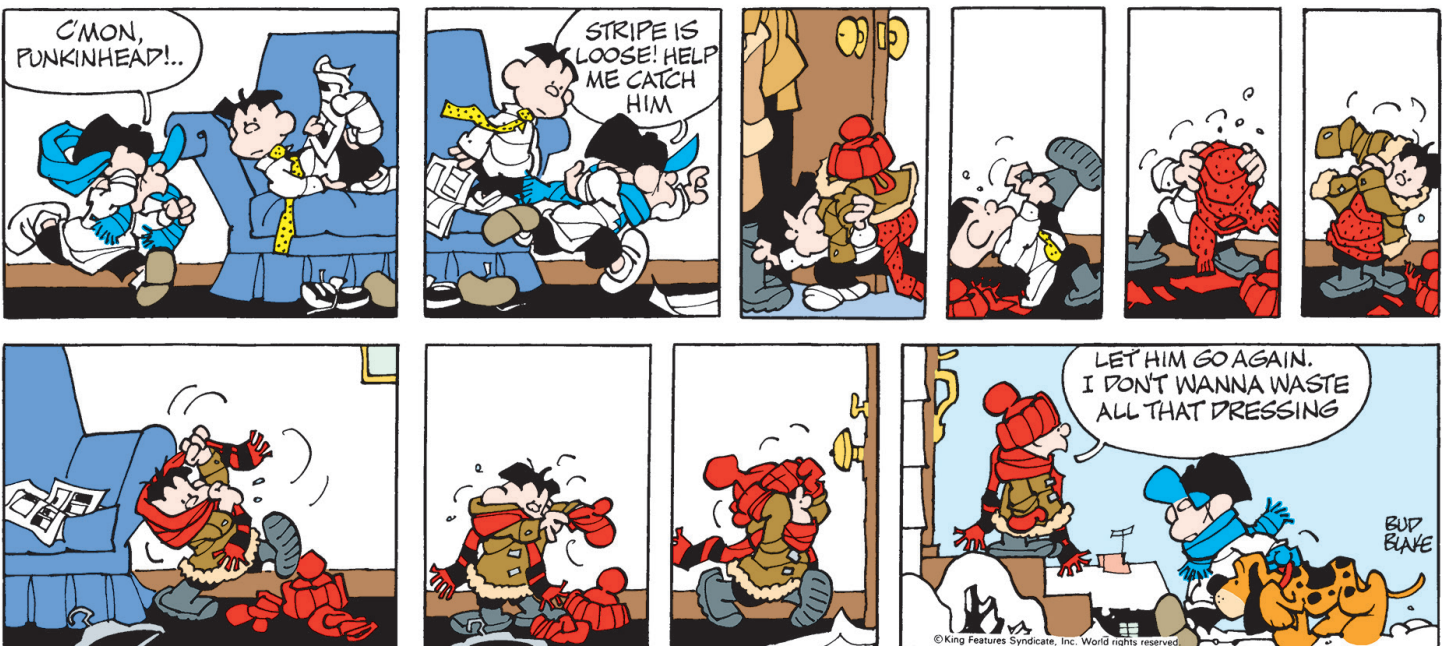
* "Keep your garage floor nice by lining the area where you park with carpet remnants. Road salt and other nasty business that your tires pick up will not corrode the floor. You can shake out the rugs outside." -- C.Y. in New York

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

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Discoverer's call
- 4 Island near Java
- 8 "Cheers" order
- 12 Brooch
- 13 Oodles
- 14 Plotting
- 15 Swelled head
- 16 Reed and Rawls
- 17 "Hud" actress Patricia
- 18 Star of "NCIS: Los Angeles"
- 21 Klutz
- 22 Singer Starr
- 23 Photo book
- 26 Witty one
- 27 Crater part
- 30 Corp. kingpins
- 31 24 hours
- 32 Cab cost
- 33 Sauce source
- 34 Novelist Rand
- 35 Avid
- 36 Anderson Cooper's channel
- 37 Calendar abbr.
- 38 Official flower of Chicago
- 45 Cash advance
- 46 Manhattan area
- 47 Lennon's love

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15				16					17			
18			19					20				
			21			22						
23	24	25			26				27	28	29	
30				31				32				
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			36			37						
38	39	40				41			42	43	44	
45					46				47			
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

- 48 During
- 49 Nest setting
- 50 Pep
- 51 Sandwich shop
- 52 Play area
- 53 Greek vowel
- DOWN**
- 1 Oil cartel
- 2 Lofty
- 3 — about (roughly)
- 4 Fragrant wood
- 5 Unfriendly
- 6 Noisy
- 7 "Not a problem!"
- 8 Energizer mascot
- 9 Fencing sword
- 10 List-ending abbr.
- 11 Bakery buy
- 19 Debtors' notes
- 20 Pester
- 23 Rm. coolers
- 24 Sign before Virgo
- 25 Lad
- 26 Pallid
- 27 Joplin tune
- 28 Anger
- 29 Debussy's "La —"
- 31 Ming, for one
- 32 Kismet
- 34 Reply (Abbr.)
- 35 Seconded
- 36 "True Colors" singer Lauper
- 37 Different
- 38 Not naked
- 39 Abode
- 40 Banister
- 41 Asta's feeder
- 42 Relocate
- 43 Squad
- 44 NYC gallery

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

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

Out on a Limb

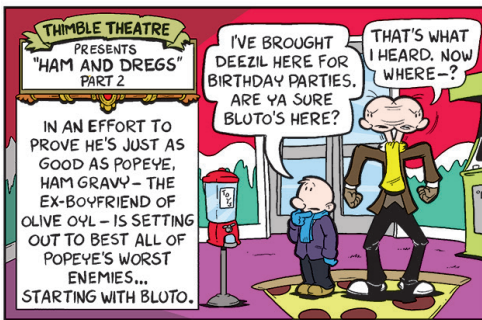
by Gary Kopervas



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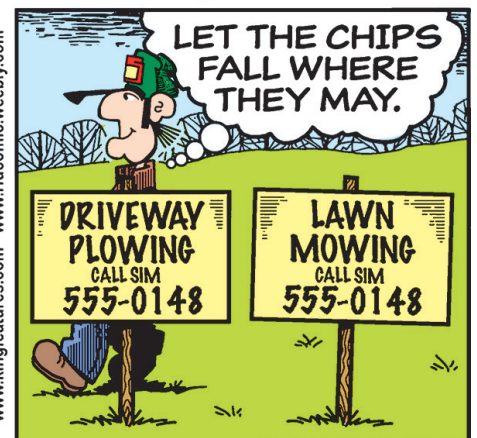
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

VAL IS TAKEN ABACK -
ALETA SEEMS
FAMILIAR WITH
THE WILY
STRANGER:

"HOW IS
IT THAT...?"



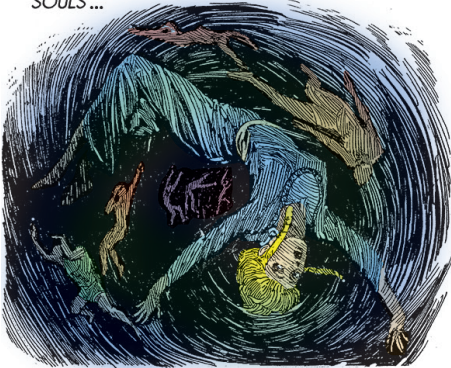
ALETA IS EQUALLY CONFUSED:
"IT'S ALL VERY FOGGY, BUT THE
SIGHT OF THIS MAN BRINGS
VAGUE, FRIGHTENING
THOUGHTS..."

"... I REMEMBER PREPARING TO CAST A COUNTER-
SPELL AT MALDUBH, WHO SOUGHT TO DESTROY
OUR FAMILY, BUT IT SEEMS THE WITCH STRUCK
FIRST..."

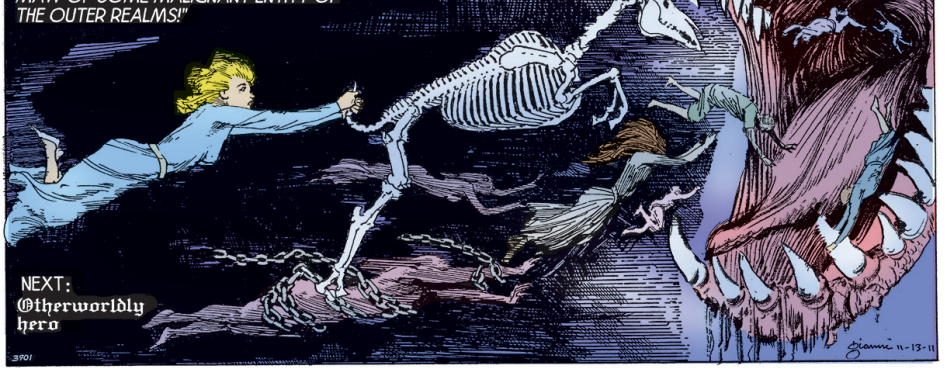


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"... AND WHILE MY BODY LAY IN OUR CHAMBERS,
INSENTIENT, MY CONSCIOUSNESS WAS CAST
ELSEWHERE - SOME NETHERWORLD OF LOST
SOULS..."



"... FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKE DAYS, I WAS DRAWN
HELPLESSLY FORWARD, UNTIL AT LAST I SAW
MY DOOM - THE HORRIBLE, BOTTOMLESS
MAW OF SOME MALIGNANT ENTITY OF
THE OUTER REALMS!"

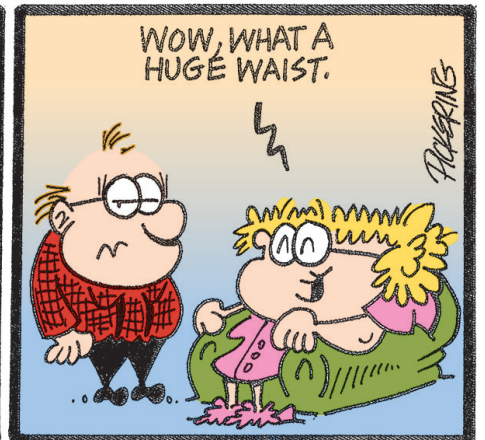


NEXT:
@therworldly
hero

3/97

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Goals for 2023

I didn't rush to create my goals for 2023, but the time has come ...

One year ago I made two goals: to buy weekly food donation cards at the grocery store to give to the food bank and to continue to pick up weekly groceries for three elderly neighbors. I made it three-quarters of the year on both of those.

Food prices just got too high for me to continue to buy a donation card each week. And picking up groceries for the three elderly ladies was no longer necessary once I introduced them to the food bank. Now I have new goals for 2023.

I'm going to continue with "Growing Stronger," the free 126-page strength-training book for seniors on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)). I've reprinted new, blank pages for the charts, such as Long-Term Personal Goals and How Fit and Strong Are You Now? I'm just about ready to buy a pair of slightly heavier hand weights. If you decide to start the "Growing Stronger" strength program, ask your doctor first if it's appropriate for you. And remember: Start slowly, with low weights.

In the tech category, my goal is to successfully set up a personal Wi-Fi hotspot. (A hotspot is letting your phone's cellular service serve as Wi-Fi.) This desire comes after a day with no power during a storm. No power meant no computer, but I did have cellphone service. Had I been able to set up a hotspot, I would have been able to access the internet on my tablet. If you decide to try this, be mindful of security.

As a final goal for the year, I'm going to have a banana each and every day. Whether it's sliced over cereal or put in a smoothie, I'll get my fiber, magnesium, potassium and vitamins B6 and C ... like it or not.

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1. Who won the women's gold medal at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships eight consecutive times from 1998-2005?

2. What player, nicknamed the "Latvian Laser," made his NBA debut with the San Antonio Spurs in 2016?

3. Name the actor who starred as diminutive golf instructor Derk Dorf in the 1987 comedy short "Dorf on Golf."

4. What wide receiver, the New England Patriots' first-round NFL Draft pick in 1989, had his career cut short by a twice-broken kneecap from football and an eye injury from a bar fight?

5. Poland's Anita Wlodarczyk is a three-time Olympic gold medalist in what track and field event?

6. Heisman Trophy winners Larry Kelley (1936) and Clint Frank (1937) both played for what college football team?

7. What two NHL teams combined for 11 ejections and 252 penalty minutes in a fight-filled 1984 playoff game known as "The Good Friday Massacre"?



by Ryan A. Berenz

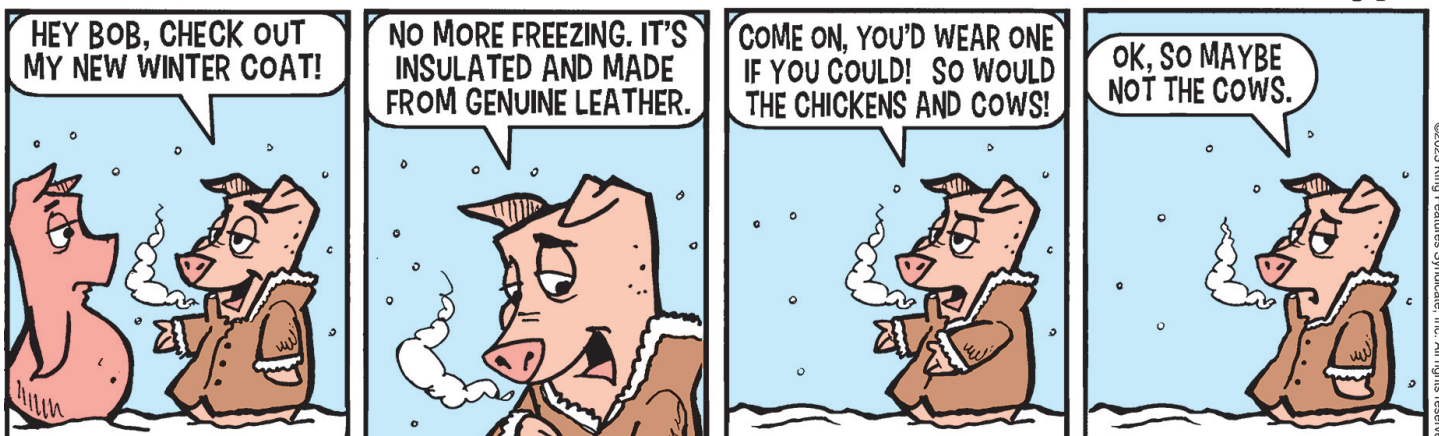
Answers

1. Michelle Kwan.
2. Davis Bertans.
3. Tim Conway.
4. Hart Lee Dykes.
5. The hammer throw.
6. The Yale Bulldogs.
7. The Quebec Nordiques and Montreal Canadiens.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Do Cats Really Need Potty Training?

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I read with interest your recent column about cats using shop towels rather than kitty litter to do their business. How did their owner manage to train the cats to use the towels and switch from litter? And why not just let a cat do its business outside? -- Caroline D., Winchester, Virginia

DEAR CAROLINE: Compared with dogs, cats are usually easy to potty train (or litter train) because they have very specific potty behaviors. Cats instinctively bury their poop to hide their scent from potential predators -- hence the use of cat litter, which also

absorbs urine well and masks the scent for a few days.

I'm not sure how the reader did it, but one way to switch a cat from litter box to a pad is to place the new pad and tray next to the old litter box so that a cat can sniff around it, check it out and become familiar with it. After a day or two, remove the litter box and put the pad in its place. Many cats will get the message right away. Others might hunt around for their box; if you notice this, place them gently on the pad to help them make the connection.

I'm not a big fan of letting indoor cats go outside to do their business. They'll often head straight for the nearest flower bed, leaving a surprise that I'm personally not thrilled about. They also are at risk in the outdoors, from coyotes, turkeys (yes, turkeys in the Northeast), cars and other cats. It's better to provide a safe spot indoors with a clean litter box.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* Michael Buffer has made over \$400 million from his trademark catchphrase, "Let's get ready to rumble!"

* Martin Van Buren was the first U.S. president to be born an American.

* After the terrorist attacks that destroyed New York City's Twin Towers, thousands of radio stations across the country received memos from media companies with a list of songs they considered "lyrically questionable" for a grieving nation. The list included The Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" and

(perhaps unsurprisingly) "Jump," by Van Halen.

* Bacteria can live longer than four weeks in carpets, as well as other types of flooring, and can instantly transfer those germs to any food that touches them. In other words, forget that famous "five-second rule," folks!

* Fingers prune in water to give you a better grip.

* In 2017, 70 students drank so much alcohol at a fraternity house party in Maryland that the air inside the house registered .01 on a breathalyzer.

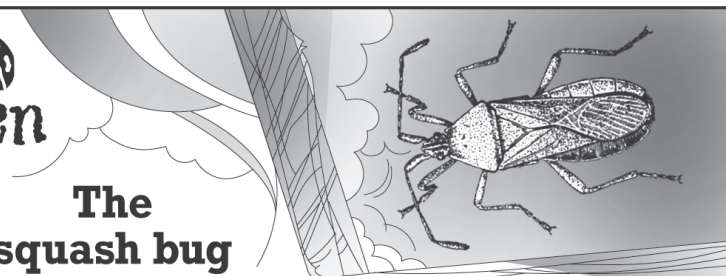
* Woodpeckers are the only animals to make sounds with something other than a part of their bodies. They will drum on a variety of objects to mark their territory, attract mates, locate food, or maybe just exercise or play.

* There's a town named Hospital, in County Limerick, Ireland, that has no hospital.

* Not that most of us will ever get a chance to consume polar bear liver, but in case someone does offer it, you're best off refusing. The meal might, and quite unpleasantly so, cost you your life. It contains too much vitamin A for humans to handle.

* During a 1976 strike by Los Angeles medical doctors, the death rate decreased by 18%.

Thought for the Day: "A bad attitude is like a flat tire; if you don't change it, you won't go anywhere."
-- Joyce Meyer



The Garden Bug
The squash bug

Adult squash bugs spend the winter hiding in sheltered places. Emerging in spring, they seek squash and pumpkin plants, to feed on the leaves and stems and also to lay eggs. Plants can be destroyed from extensive feeding by these pests. To trap them, leave boards or newspaper out near infested plants; squash bugs will congregate under them at night. In the morning, collect the bugs and destroy them. - Brenda Weaver

Sources: www.extension.umn.edu/garden/insects www.maine.gov/dacf/php/gotpests/bugs



by Freddy Groves

VA needs More Employees for the PACT Act

PACT is officially up and running as of the first of the year. PACT, aka Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, extends health care and benefits to veterans who were exposed to toxins around the globe and who subsequently became ill with an expanded number of presumptives. The key feature of PACT is that veterans no longer have to fight to prove where their illness came from. It's "presumed" the illness was the result of the toxins in the environment where

they served.

Meanwhile, the Department of Veterans Affairs has been on a massive hiring blitz to fill positions in support of the new PACT Act. These positions will be all across the U.S. and Puerto Rico at all 56 regional offices. Not only do they need people to process the 175,000 claims that have been submitted since August (when the PACT Act was signed into law), but they need the people who give the actual support care.

If you, a spouse, a caregiver, a survivor or family member are interested in signing on for a position, check usajobs.gov and search for "veterans service representative" or "rating veterans service representative."

The first step as part of the big push at the VA is to process the claims for veterans who are terminally ill, something the VA actually started weeks before the official Jan. 1 date. Additionally they will prioritize claims by homeless veterans, those over 85 years of age, those with cancer, those experiencing financial hardship and those who are recipients of a Purple Heart or Medal of Honor.

If you need to learn how to file a claim, go to VA.gov/PACT or call them at 800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411). A caregiver, survivor or family member can also make the call for the veteran.

To learn more about PACT, go to VA.gov/PACT and read "The PACT Act and your VA benefits."

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Wishing Well®

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

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

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1. TELEVISION: Which TV game show features a "Daily Double" to increase potential winnings?
2. FOOD & DRINK: What kind of poisoned fruit does the fairy-tale character Snow White eat and fall into a deep sleep?
3. ADVERTISING: Which cereal features a character named Seadog?
4. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which president officially named the executive mansion the White House?
5. MOVIES: What is the name of the most famous Wookiee in the "Star Wars" movies?
6. MONEY: What is the official currency of Nigeria?
7. ANIMAL KINGDOM: How many legs do shrimp have?
8. HISTORY: How many states did Alabama Gov. George Wallace win as a third-party candidate in the 1968 presidential primary?
9. MEDICAL: What is the common name for the human trachea?
10. GAMES: How many suspects are in the board game "Clue"?

Answers

1. "Jeopardy."
2. Apple.
3. Cap'n Crunch.
4. Theodore Roosevelt.
5. Chewbacca.
6. The naira.
7. Ten.
8. Five.
9. Windpipe.
10. Six.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

New Year, New Growth

In a radio address to the nation on January 1st, 1983, President Reagan said that "New Year's Day was an especially American tradition, full of the optimism and hope we're famous for in our daily lives-an energy and confidence we call the American spirit." Now, as we ring in 2023, I reflect not only on Reagan's words, but also on South Dakota's growth over the past year.

South Dakota is thriving. We have the strongest economy in America. We are the best state in the nation for personal income growth. We are the best state in the nation for veterans. And we are the best state in the nation for freedom.

In short, we are the best state in the nation to build the American Dream.

Our population continues to grow four times faster than the nation. This is because we kept South Dakota "Open for Business." We allowed South Dakotans to exercise their freedom and personal responsibility to create their own economic growth; to achieve the American Dream.

Thanks to the state's booming economy, the state government has generated record surpluses multiple years in a row. We keep breaking records for state revenues, and with the number of individuals and businesses moving to South Dakota, we know that this growth is sustainable. That is why 2023 will be the year of putting money back in the pockets of South Dakota families.

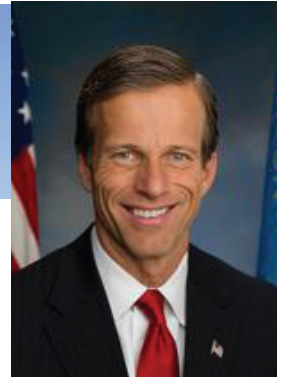
Last month, I unveiled my budget for this fiscal year. It is critical that this budget be executed in order to return our record revenues to the people. Taxpayer dollars belong to the taxpayers. This year, we will eliminate the state sales tax on groceries, support South Dakota schools, combat inflation, and strengthen our families, businesses, and infrastructure.

In 2022, I took a stand against China. While President Biden took no action against the Communist nation, South Dakota took the lead in protecting our people. I banned TikTok for state government employees. Now, many other states are following our lead. I also announced my plan to prohibit nations that hate America from purchasing our agricultural land, and I will work with legislators this year to make it happen. It is critical to keep South Dakotans' rural way of life protected, and that starts with preventing intervention from foreign nations like China. In 2023, we will continue to secure the people of South Dakota.

President Reagan said, "let us renew our faith that as free men and women we still have the power to better our lives. And let us resolve to face the challenges of the new year holding that conviction firmly in our hearts. That, after all, is our greatest strength and our greatest gift as Americans."

We can all appreciate Reagan's words as we face this new year with hope and optimism. My administration is dedication to protecting our small-town values and trusting South Dakotans to make the best decisions for themselves. Our state has had great success, and 2023 will show us that the best is yet to come. Happy New Year!

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Helping Farmers and Ranchers Weather the Storm

South Dakota farmers and ranchers work hard every day to feed America and the world. When severe weather is added to the mix, they work even harder. In the last few weeks alone, snowstorms and severe cold weather have affected communities across the state. While schools have closed and many South Dakotans have worked from home during winter storms, there are no snow days for producers who must feed and care for their livestock day in and day out regardless of the weather. As a longtime member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I've worked to ensure that there is a strong safety net for producers to help them overcome whatever challenges may come their way.

With that in mind, one of the most important things Congress will do this year is consider the 2023 farm bill, which will be the fifth farm bill I've helped craft. As always, I wouldn't be able to do this without invaluable input from the real experts: South Dakota farmers and ranchers. In roundtable discussions across the state and countless informal conversations, our agriculture producers have provided insights into the challenges they face and improvements that can be made to make things easier in this demanding way of life.

In previous farm bills, I have helped author and strengthen Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs that assist livestock producers affected by severe weather. The Livestock Indemnity Program helps producers cover a portion of the costs they incur for livestock losses due to severe weather, including snowstorms or droughts. And the Emergency Assistance for Livestock Program helps cover additional costs of feeding and grazing livestock that may be incurred due to adverse weather or disease. I've worked to maintain and strengthen these programs based on the needs I hear from South Dakota producers. I encourage producers affected by the recent storms to contact their local FSA office to learn more about the assistance that may be available to them.

In preparation for farm bill reauthorization, I've already held multiple roundtables across South Dakota – with more to come – to receive input on the various farm bill titles and programs that support our state's top industry. A common theme from my discussions was the importance of the producer safety net. Crop insurance is a critical risk management tool for producers that I will continue to support in the 2023 farm bill. Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage help producers when commodity prices drop, and I will continue working to strengthen these programs, particularly given the current high rate of inflation that has sent the price of inputs like fertilizer and fuel soaring.

In addition to strengthening the farm safety net, I am also working on other measures to support farmers and ranchers. I have consistently advocated for reforming our beef labeling system so consumers know when they're buying American beef. I am proud to have introduced bipartisan legislation to require mandatory country of origin labeling for beef. Improving the Conservation Reserve Program to ensure it remains an effective option for producers and landowners is also a top priority for me.

I also recognize that farmers and ranchers are facing additional burdens from heavy-handed regulations. I was disappointed that the Biden administration has moved to finalize its misguided retreat of the Obama-era Waters of the United States rule. Opening nearly every body of water to federal jurisdiction would be a nightmare for our agriculture industry in South Dakota and across the country. I will continue to urge the administration to abandon this rule, and if it does not, I will push for the Senate to overturn this over-reaching regulation.

When it comes to farm policy, the real experts are those in the field, literally. As Congress prepares for the 2023 farm bill, I'll be bringing the perspective of South Dakota's farmers and ranchers to Washington to ensure farm policy continues to support producers as they do the important work of feeding America.

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



What is going on in the House of Representatives?

"Groundhog Day." "Stalemate." "Deadlocked." "Messy." What is going on in the House of Representatives?

For the past 100 years, electing a Speaker of the House has only taken one vote, and then it's off to the races. There's a lot to do at the beginning of the Congress. Swearing-in of all Members, old and new; assigning Committees; and voting on legislation. But this year, electing a Speaker has taken multiple votes. This isn't unprecedented. Over the course of our history – fourteen times – a Speaker election has taken multiple votes. In 1856, there were 133 ballots until a Speaker was elected.

Essentially, electing a Speaker is a math problem. To become Speaker, a candidate, in this case Representative Kevin McCarthy, needs 218 votes, which is a majority of the 435 Members of the House. Here's a breakdown of the numbers:

Democrats have 212 Representatives in the House, so they are unable to get to the magic 218 on their own.

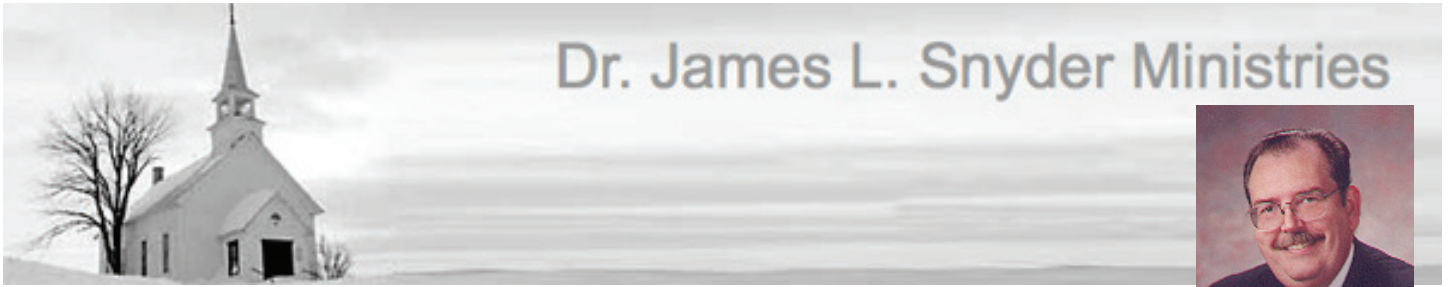
Republicans have 222 Representatives. Republicans could elect a Speaker on their own, we have the Majority. McCarthy has the support of more than 95% of the conference, which is 215 Members. Seven Members are holding out their support for McCarthy and voting for several other candidates, many who have repeatedly stated they do not want the job of Speaker.

The only Member of the House that can get relatively close to 218 votes is Rep. Kevin McCarthy. As the week has gone on, we have seen progress and movement on both sides, inching McCarthy to 218.

Without a Speaker, nothing can happen in Congress. No Members sworn-in. No Committees or investigations assigned. No legislation passed. No oversight of federal agencies. No opportunity to secure the border.

We need to put our heads together, overcome this obstacle, and get to work for the American people. There is real work to do, and we must elect a Speaker to do the people's business.

Thankfully there is a silver lining. I believe out of all of this we will be able to govern more effectively as a Republican conference, knowing each other much better than we did last year.



Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Where Is The Gracious Mistress Of The Parsonage?

Our family's Christmas this year was the best one yet. But, of course, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage says that every year. I completely agree with her this year.

Our great-granddaughter served as the focal point of our Christmas this year. She assumed that position because she was born two weeks before Christmas. What a gift.

This is our second great-grandchild. The first one is in Ohio, and we don't get to see him very often. But this new great-granddaughter is only seven minutes from our house. I was to realize what a difference that would be.

My granddaughter's mother and grandmother are now there to support this precious little great-granddaughter.

The time our granddaughter's mother can spend with her granddaughter is limited because of her work schedule.

The great-grandmother, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, is free to visit the great-granddaughter whenever she pleases. Her "free" does have a cost, and I would soon find out that cost.

Every time we visit, I have to pull the great-grandmother away. I'm not entirely sure how this great-granddaughter will affect her when she's a few months old and then a few years old because she's only a few weeks old now. So I need to get ready for that.

The previous week was an interesting one.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came to my office on Monday morning as I was working and said, "I'm going to visit my great-granddaughter, and I prepared lunch in the refrigerator for you in case I don't get back in time."

She sped off and drove to the great-granddaughter's house without waiting for any response from me.

It was a relatively quiet morning. I stopped to check the time and realized it was time to eat. When I entered the kitchen, it was completely dark and quiet. I then recalled her mentioning going to the great-granddaughter's house.

My lunch was in the refrigerator, just as she had predicted. So I took the lunch plate out of the fridge and sat in my chair to eat my meal. I then returned to the kitchen with my empty plate and entered my office to continue working on my day's project.

Because I had not heard any sounds coming from the other rooms of the house. I decided to check on the infamous great-grandmother. She wasn't anywhere in sight.

I hoped she didn't have an accident because I didn't know where she could be. That started to worry me. She's never been known to leave the house for an extended period without sending me a text or making a phone call. Did she have a problem of some sort?

I was ready to text her on my cell phone when I heard her pull into the driveway. Then, as she entered the door, she said, "I forgot what time it was. I was having so much fun...." Then she began story after story of time with her great-granddaughter that day.

When I woke up the following morning, her side of the bed was vacant. I assumed she awoke early to prepare breakfast. There was no one in the kitchen when I went there.

Looking around, I noticed a note on the refrigerator, "My great-granddaughter needed me this morning, so I dropped everything to go and help her. Make your own breakfast."

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Making a meal was simple because I'm not much of a breakfast hound dog. So the coffee was the main component of my breakfast, and there was plenty of it.

When I stopped midway through the morning while working in my office, I heard no noise coming from the other parts of the house. Unless there was an emergency involving the great-granddaughter, I assumed my wife should have returned home by this point.

I started to worry about the welfare of that tiny infant. Why would The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage be so preoccupied with her if nothing was wrong?

When lunchtime arrived, I made my lunch. There's nothing better than a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for lunch and a hot cup of coffee. So I returned to my desk after lunch to pick up on my work.

I paused and listened for a while after lunch, but there was only silence. I was starting to worry a little bit. Was the great-granddaughter ill, or did the great-grandmother get into some accident returning home?

Where is The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage?

Then I heard her drive into the driveway, exit the car, and enter the house. Then, I asked, "Is the great-granddaughter having any problems?"

"Oh, the great-granddaughter is doing great," she said, beaming one of those smiles in my direction. "I spent the entire day with her and had a great time."

She then began a series of stories about herself and her great-granddaughter, giggling while she told me various details about that young baby.

After a few weeks, whenever I ask myself, "Where is The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage?" I only have to think about that great-granddaughter. That's where she is.

I believe Solomon in the Old Testament had it right when he said, "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers." (Proverbs 17:6).

Children are truly a blessing from God. But grandchildren and great-grandchildren are beyond blessing. It is God's reward He gives to those faithful parents.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Why haven't the governments of the world come together to ban or limit the production of plastics globally like they've done to reduce ozone depleting chemicals in the 1980s and greenhouse gasses more recently?
-- Peter B., Wallingford, CT

Plastic, originally hailed for its longevity and hygienic single-use properties, is one of the newest battlegrounds for environmentalists and world governments. Though bans of some forms of plastic exist in more than 60 countries around the world, a global ban has proven to be elusive. In 2019, 170 countries voted to "significantly reduce" their use of plastic by 2030 at the United Nations' Environmental Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya. This agreement, though, was non-binding, and mostly targeted 'throw-aways' such as plastic bags, ignoring other forms of plastic pollution so as to serve more as a band-aid than a cure to this prolific problem.

The global scale of plastic pollution is mind-boggling, but necessary to understanding the importance of a world-wide ban. Microplastics can give a sense of how entrenched plastic has become in the interwoven web that is our global food system. According to the United Nations' Environment Programme (UNEP), microplastics—pieces of plastic smaller than 5mm—can easily be ingested by animals such as fish, and end up on people's dinner plates because of the prevalence of pollution in the world's oceans. Plastic can take 1,000 years to decompose, meaning that every piece of plastic that has ever been created still exists, and only continually gets smaller and smaller. National Geographic reports that even the Mariana Trench, the deepest spot in the world's oceans, has not been spared. A plastic bag found down there, far removed from any human activity, shows just how widespread plastic pollution is globally.

The sheer ubiquity of plastic has meant that even well-meaning and well-executed previous bans on plastics on a regional scale have hardly made a dent. The World Economic Forum notes that Canada's ban on single-use plastic, for example, promises zero plastic waste there by 2030, echoing the non-binding agreement of the United Nations in 2019. However, environmental advocates worry that 2030 is too far away a goal, and that may be part of the reason why, on March 2, 2022, the United Nations Environmental Assembly passed the world's first international and legally-binding agreement to end plastic pollution fully by 2024. Inger Anderson, Executive Director of UNEP, lauded the deal as "the most significant environmental multilateral deal since the Paris Accord."

This treaty calls for regulation on the "full life-cycle" of plastic, from production to decomposition, and is the first of its kind to unite 173 nations in combating plastic pollution. "Against the backdrop of geopolitical turmoil, the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) shows multilateral cooperation at its best...pollution has grown into an epidemic," says Espen Barth Eide, Norway's minister for climate and environment, and president of UNEA. "With today's resolution we are officially on track for a cure."

Coming to a consensus around this agreement represents a unifying moment in world history for stepping towards a greener and healthier Earth. Of course, the treaty will take some time to be adopted widely, so proactive steps like using reusable bags and phasing out single-use plastics are still important when looking at decreasing our global use of plastics.

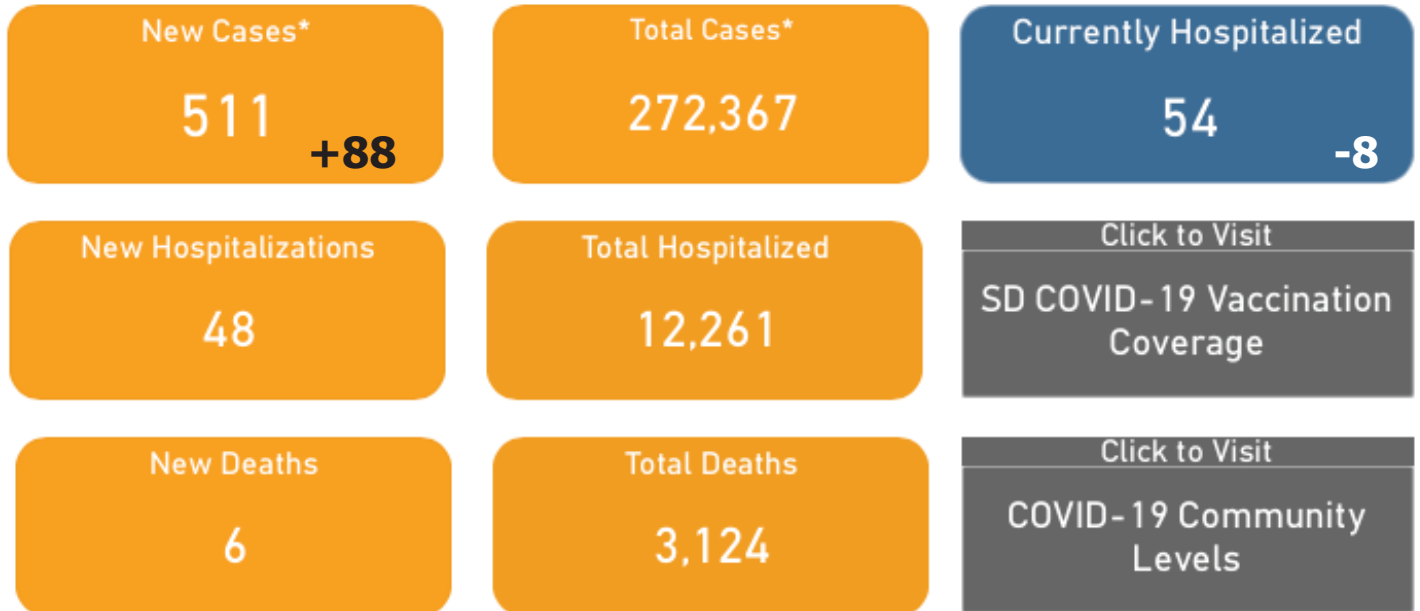


Only time will tell if a 2019 agreement signed by 170 countries to "significantly reduce" their use of plastic by 2030 will hold water. Credit: mali maeder, pexels.com.

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South Dakota COVID-19 Report



SD 2022/2023 Influenza Weekly Summary Week Ending December 31, 2022 (Week 52)

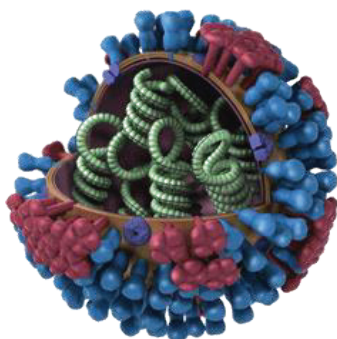
Provisional numbers, * Lab confirmed: PCR, Culture or DFA. The number of laboratories using rapid confirmatory tests has increased, which may account for some of the increase in confirmed cases observed this influenza season



Lab Confirmed Cases	Dec 25-31	Season to Date
Type A, H1	476	3,467
Type A, H3	9	207
Type A, Unspecified	656	9,033
Type B Unspecified	6	54
B Yamagata	0	0
B Victoria	0	0
Total*	1,147	12,761

Rapid Antigen Tests (41) sites reporting	Dec 25-31	Season to Date
Total Tested	659	12,905
Total Positive	141 (137A/4B)	2,589 (2,221A/368B)
% Rapid Antigen Tests Positive	21.40%	20.06%

	Dec 25-31	Season to Date
Hospitalizations	60	534
Deaths	2	18



3D Influenza Virus

SD Influenza Geographic: **REGIONAL**

SD Influenza Activity: **LOW**

US Influenza Activity: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivitysurv.htm>

International Flu Activity: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/international/index.htm>

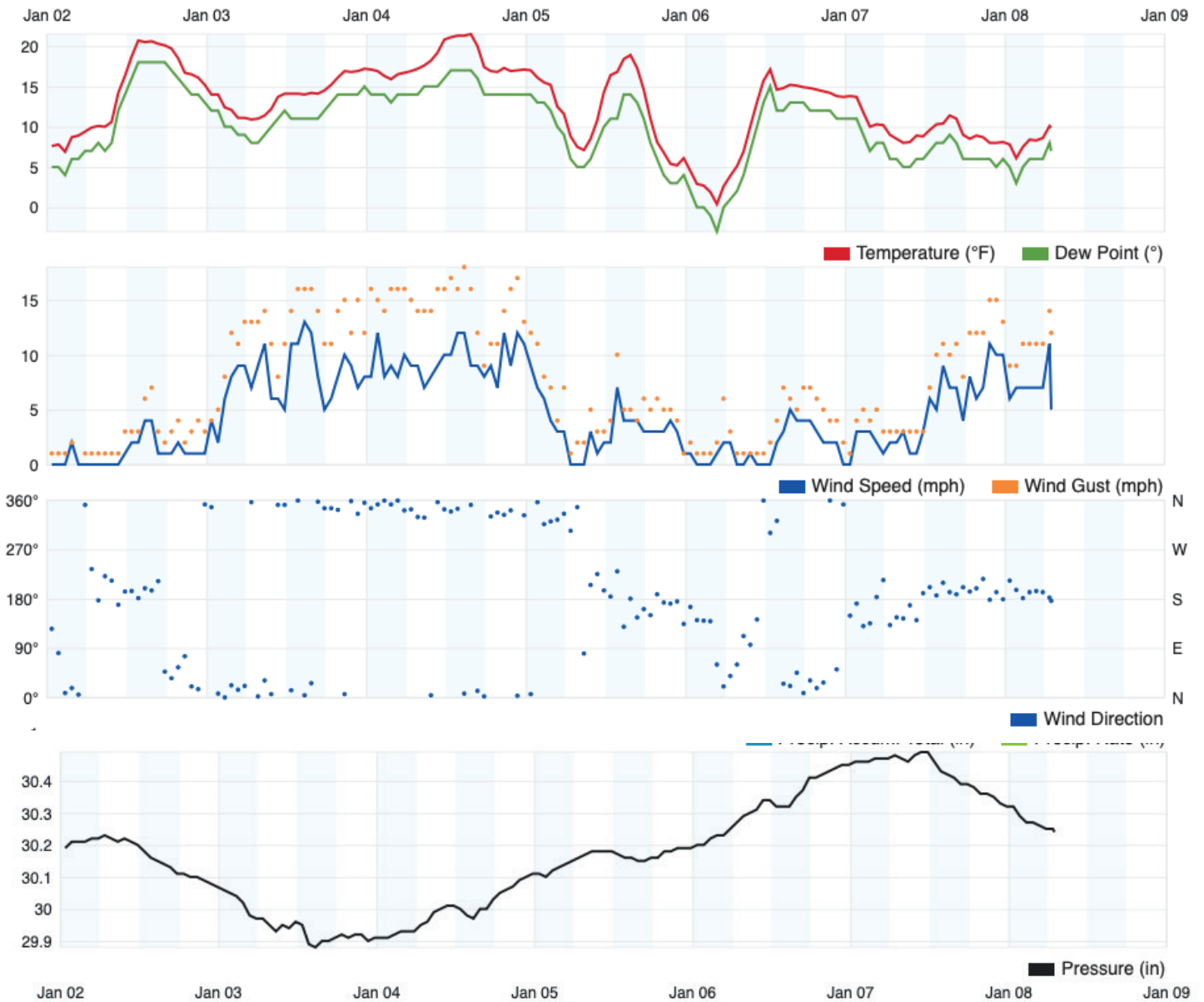
South Dakota Influenza information:
<http://doh.sd.gov/diseases/infectious/flu/>

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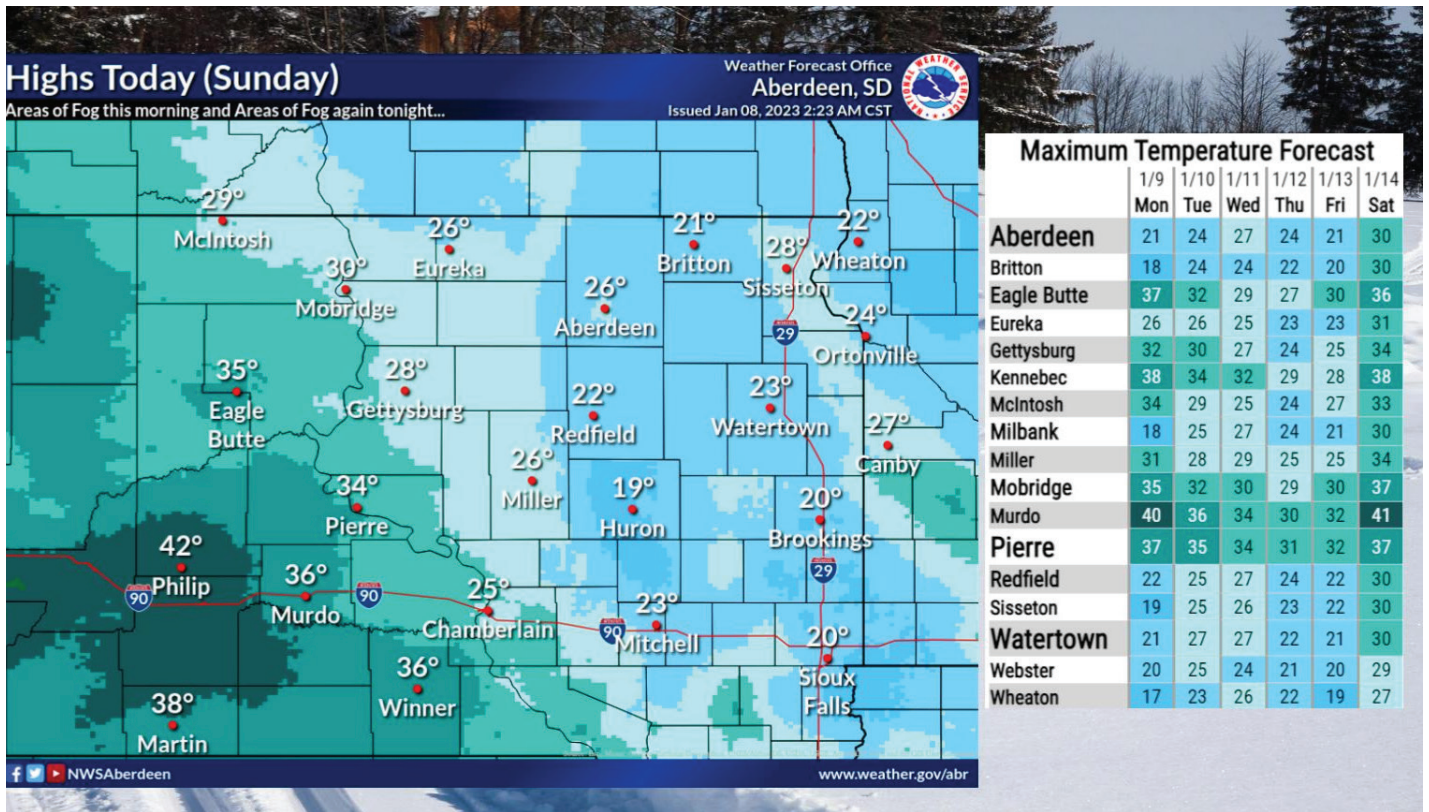
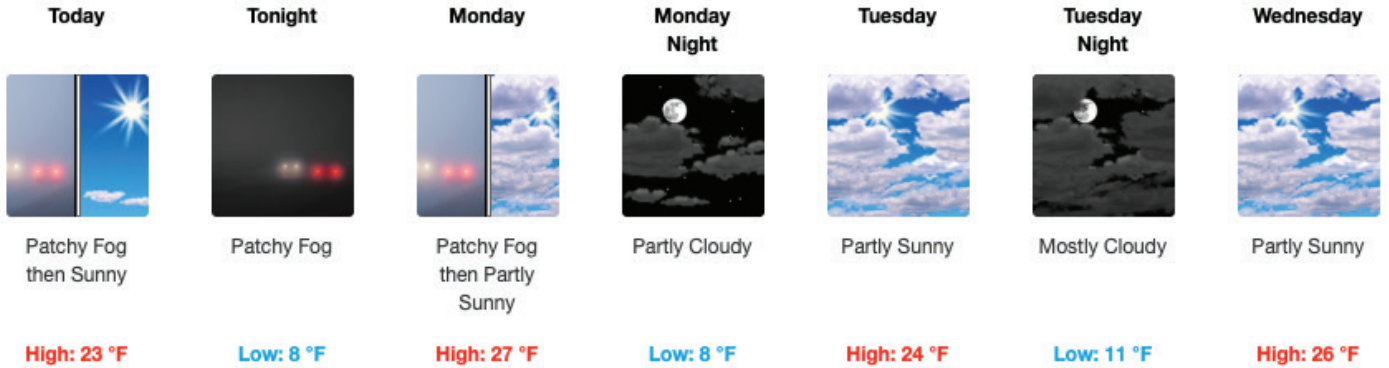
Past Week's Groton Weather Graphs

January 2, 2023 - January 8, 2023



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The region could see areas of fog this morning and again tonight, but otherwise expect sunny skies today with readings a little above average. Seasonally mild conditions are expected through the upcoming work week.

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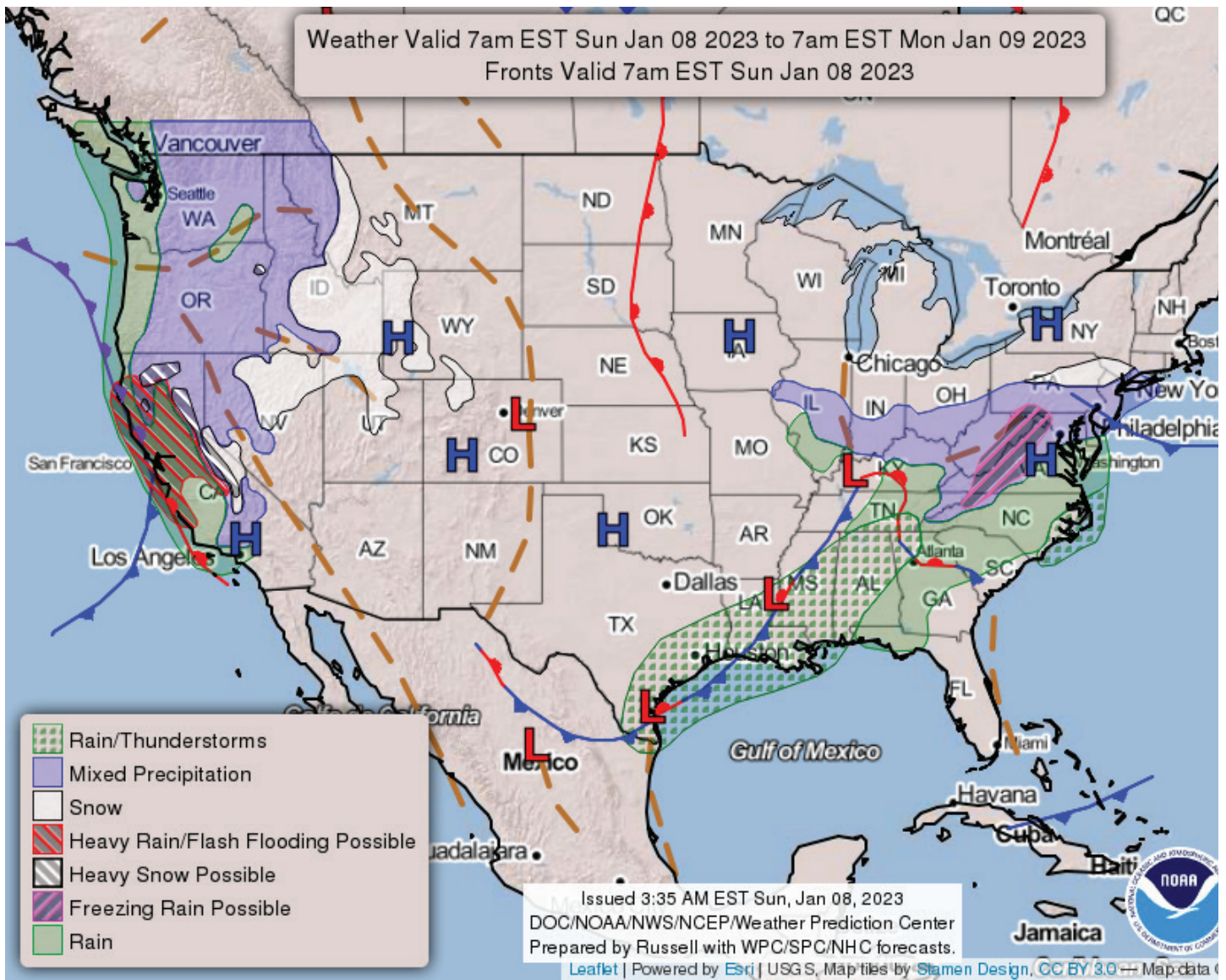
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 14 °F at 12:12 AM
Low Temp: 7 °F at 8:28 PM
Wind: 15 mph at 9:40 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 58 minutes (gain of 7 minutes last week)

Today's Info

Record High: 55 in 1963
Record Low: --33 in 1912
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 2°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.17
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.17
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:08:34 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:09:19 AM



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Today in Weather History

January 8, 2010: Arctic high pressure combined with strong northwest winds resulted in extreme wind chills from -35 to nearly 50 degrees below zero across central and northeast South Dakota. Some of the lowest wind chills included -40 in Aberdeen; -41 in Watertown; -42 in Highmore; -43 in Leola and Faulkton; -44 in Eagle Butte, Herreid, and Gettysburg; and -47 in Bowdle. Several record lows were also tied or broken during the morning hours of the 8th, including -22 degrees NW of Gann Valley and Victor; -23 degrees at Pierre and Sisseton; -24 degrees at Roscoe; and -34 degrees at Pollock.

1973: Georgia's worst ice storm since 1935 occurred from the 7th through the 8th. Freezing rain and sleet began during the early morning hours on Sunday the 7th and ended in most areas on Monday. Total damage was estimated at well over \$25 million. The electric power companies suffered losses estimated at \$5 million, and telephone companies had another \$2 million in damages. Some schools were closed for more than a week.

1953 - A severe icestorm in the northeastern U.S. produced up to four inches of ice in Pennsylvania, and two to three inches in southeastern New York State. In southern New England the ice coated a layer of snow up to 20 inches deep. The storm resulted in 31 deaths and 2.5 million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1973 - A severe icestorm struck Atlanta GA. The storm paralyzed the city closing schools and businesses, and damage from the storm was estimated at 25 million dollars. One to four inches of ice coated northern Georgia leaving 300,000 persons without electricity for up to a week. Between 7 PM and 9 PM on the 7th, 2.27 inches (liquid content) of freezing rain, sleet and snow coated Atlanta, as the temperature hovered at 32 degrees. (7th-8th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm moving out of the Southern Rockies into the Central Plains Region produced 14 inches of snow at Red River NM, and 17 inches in the Wolf Creek ski area of Colorado. Wichita KS was blanketed with seven inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A winter storm spread heavy snow across the northeastern U.S., with up to ten inches reported in southern New Jersey. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong northwesterly winds and bitterly cold temperatures prevailed in the north central U.S. Winds in the Great Lakes Region gusted to 58 mph at Chicago IL, and reached 63 mph at Niagara Falls NY. Squalls in western New York State produced 20 inches of snow at Barnes Corners and Lowville. Snow squalls in Upper Michigan produced 26 inches around Keweenaw. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - High winds plagued the northwestern U.S., with the state of Oregon hardest hit. Two persons were killed in Oregon, and nine others were injured, and the high winds downed fifty-five million board feet of timber, valued at more than twenty million dollars. Winds gusted to 90 mph near Pinehurst ID, and wind gusts reached 96 mph at Stevenson WA. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2019: An unusual January tornado impacted Cortland, Ohio, during the mid-morning hours. The EF-1 tornado developed northeast of Champion Township in Trumbull County and moved east. The tornado brought down numerous trees and wires along the 4.5-mile path

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WANT THE BEST IN LIFE?

Is it possible to actually measure the results of being righteous and showing love? Are there rewards for being like and doing the things that Jesus did? Apparently so.

"Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity, and honor," promised Solomon. Notice, if you will, this proverb begins with the word "whoever" - an all-inclusive, unlimited invitation to everyone.

The rewards promised are tangible: "life" is a personal gift; "prosperity" is the physical gifts God gives us, and "honor" is social recognition for what we do for others in honor of God. We must realize, however, that these gifts are byproducts from the "pursuit" of being righteous and loving.

Only God is righteous and loving. We will never "be" completely righteous and loving in this life. So, we are confronted with the importance of "pursuing" righteousness and being "completely" loving. Can we know if we are living a righteous and loving life?

Righteous living has two dimensions: a horizontal and vertical dimension. Horizontal begins with my being in a "right" relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. It begins with faith in Him and our faith in Him results in our being faithful to Him. Others will recognize a difference in the way we live because we are applying His teachings in and through and with our lives.

It is the application of His teachings that leads to righteous living by showing His love, mercy, and grace to others. This is what is meant by the vertical dimension. While never easy, we must, to the best of our ability, commit ourselves to do His work through His strength and power.

Thank God that He understands the difference between attaining and pursuing. If we submit our lives to Him, read His Word, pray earnestly and "give" His love to others, we'll be rewarded.

Prayer: Lord, after all You've done for us, give us no rest until we pursue Your righteousness and love, and share it with others. May we worship You with all our hearts. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity, and honor. Proverbs 21:21



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:
01.06.23

3 20 46 59 63 13

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$1,100,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.07.23

26 28 32 36 49 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,020,000

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.07.23

4 5 13 22 44 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 8 Mins 33 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.07.23

2 23 24 28 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.07.23

10 17 23 29 49 20

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.07.23

35 36 44 45 67 14

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$340,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[GAME DETAILS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 52, Oakes, N.D. 49
Belle Fourche 60, Douglas 49
Beresford 56, Chester 34
Beresford 59, McCook Central/Montrose 51
Bison 56, Wakpala 55
Castlewood 48, Deuel 45
Chamberlain 67, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 59
Crazy Horse 71, Sunshine Bible Academy 26
Dakota Valley 68, Sergeant Bluff-Luton, Iowa 38
Faith 61, Harding County 54
Faulkton 59, North Central Co-Op 46
Flandreau 43, Garretson 31
Groton Area 66, Sioux Falls Lutheran 14
Huron 73, Harrisburg 71
Kadoka Area 55, Colome 39
Lead-Deadwood 64, New Underwood 59
Leola/Frederick 58, Waverly-South Shore 44
McCook Central/Montrose 52, Baltic 49
North Border 82, North Prairie, N.D. 51
Philip 62, Oelrichs 26
Rapid City Christian 84, Shiloh, N.D. 81
Sioux County, Neb. 50, Edgemont 41
Sioux Falls Christian 69, Unity Christian, Iowa 38
Sioux Falls Jefferson 65, Rapid City Stevens 54
Sioux Falls Lincoln 78, Aberdeen Central 58
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 55, Rapid City Central 50
Sioux Falls Washington 63, Pierre 57
St. Thomas More 43, Sturgis Brown 24
Strasburg-Zeeland, N.D. 51, Potter County 50
Tea Area 62, Crofton, Neb. 27
Wagner 59, Corsica/Stickney 31
Wall 74, Bennett County 43
Waubay/Summit 65, Great Plains Lutheran 40

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Avon 37, Alcester-Hudson 28
Belle Fourche 54, Douglas 26
Castlewood 54, Deuel 35
Chamberlain 45, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 14
Clark/Willow Lake 50, Webster 41
Dakota Valley 56, Sergeant Bluff-Luton, Iowa 53
Deubrook 82, Chester 51
Faulkton 58, North Central Co-Op 48

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Harding County 40, Faith 38
Harrisburg 39, Huron 34
Henry 61, DeSmet 32
Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 63, Sunshine Bible Academy 20
Jones County 59, Bison 16
Kadoka Area 57, Colome 23
Leola/Frederick 53, Waverly-South Shore 14
Little Wound 53, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 41
Mobridge-Pollock 66, Tiospa Zina Tribal 61
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 67, Tri-Valley 49
New Underwood 48, Lead-Deadwood 24
Newell 40, McIntosh 10
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 66, Canistota 62
Philip 66, Oelrichs 25
Rapid City Central 54, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 41
Sioux Falls Christian 50, Unity Christian, Iowa 46
Sioux Falls Jefferson 52, Rapid City Stevens 43
Sioux Falls Lincoln 68, Aberdeen Central 51
Sioux Falls Washington 57, Pierre 49
Sully Buttes 52, Northwestern 39
Wagner 67, Corsica/Stickney 33
Wall 59, Bennett County 23
Waubay/Summit 61, Great Plains Lutheran 59
Winner 68, Gregory 43
Wolsey-Wessington 53, Estelline/Hendricks 23
Shiloh Christian New Year's Shootout=
Shiloh, N.D. 85, Rapid City Christian 79

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

North Dakota State defeats South Dakota 73-61

By The Associated Press undefined

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Jacari White's 18 points helped North Dakota State defeat South Dakota 73-61 on Saturday.

White was 6-of-13 shooting, including 5 for 9 from distance, and went 1 for 4 from the line for the Bison (6-11, 3-2 Summit League). Damari Wheeler-Thomas scored 17 points and added six rebounds. Grant Nelson shot 6 for 10, including 2 for 4 from beyond the arc to finish with 15 points.

Kruz Perrott-Hunt finished with 26 points for the Coyotes (8-9, 3-2). South Dakota also got 16 points and seven rebounds from Tasos Kamateros. A.J. Plitzuweit also had six points and three steals.

NEXT UP

North Dakota State's next game is Thursday against Denver on the road. South Dakota hosts South Dakota State on Saturday.

Bigger than Dakota Marker: SD State-ND State for FCS title

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

FRISCO, Texas (AP) — North Dakota State and South Dakota State are used to playing each other in a rivalry that dates back 120 years. On Sunday, nearly 1,000 miles from the border between their states, they face off in the Football Championship Subdivision national title game for the first time.

"It's not the rivalry game. It's not the Dakota Marker game, which has a life of its own," said South

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Dakota State coach John Stiegelmeier, who is in his 26th season at his alma mater. "Obviously in Frisco, Texas, you're playing for the prize,"

The Dakota Marker he speaks of is a 75-pound trophy for the regular-season meetings between the Missouri Valley Football Conference rivals, an award established in 2004 when both teams moved to the Division I level together. South Dakota State won the last three of those.

North Dakota State (12-2), the reigning national champion, has won a record nine FCS title trophies — winning all nine times the Bison made the trip from Fargo to Frisco the last 11 seasons. Standout fullback Hunter Luepke, going into his final game for the Bison, ran for three touchdowns last January in their 38-10 win over Montana State.

Top-seeded South Dakota State (13-1) made its only title game appearance in an unusual spring finale two seasons ago, one of the rare misses by the Bison. Isaiah Davis, who has 1,348 yards rushing with eight 100-yard games this season, ran for three TDs for the Jackrabbits in that game, which Sam Houston State won with a last-minute touchdown.

The Jackrabbits beat their conference border-state rival 23-21 in mid-October, after overcoming a 21-7 halftime deficit. Their three consecutive wins in the series account for half of NDSU coach Matt Entz's six losses in the four seasons since his promotion from defensive coordinator when Chris Klieman left the Bison for Kansas State.

"We definitely owe them one," Bison junior defensive tackle Javier Derritt said, calling Frisco a perfect stage for payback.

"It's between us and them. You could play in a gravel yard, and I think it's going to be a really, really good game and everyone's going to be doing everything they need to be, playing hard and finishing everything," NDSU tight end Joe Stoffel said. "The national championship is a step-up, it's a bigger stage."

WINNING STREAKS

North Dakota State has a seven-game winning streak since that loss to South Dakota State. The Jackrabbits have won 13 in a row since losing their season opener 7-3 at Iowa, which marked quarterback Mark Gronowski's first game since tearing his ACL on the opening series of the FCS title game two springs ago.

DAKOTA PLAYOFFS

The 114th meeting between the rivals will be only the fifth in the playoffs. All four previous postseason games were in Fargo, with North Dakota State winning all of them — in 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018. The last one was a national semifinal.

NDSU leads the series overall 63-45-5, but South Dakota State has five wins over the Bison since 2011. No other team has multiple wins over North Dakota State in that span.

QB BREAKDOWN

North Dakota State quarterback Cam Miller has completed 66.4% of his passes (142 of 215) for 1,715 yards with 11 touchdowns and only three interceptions. He has run 109 times for 497 yards and 15 touchdowns. He was an efficient 9 of 13 passing for 126 yards and a touchdown in last year's title game, when he also ran nine times for 41 yards.

Gronowski has progressively gotten more involved in the run game in his comeback from the torn ACL. He has 351 yards and 11 TDs rushing, with seven of those scores in the last seven games — and one in each of the Jackrabbits' three playoff games. He has completed 65.1% of his passes (218 of 335) for 2,744 yards with 23 TDs and five interceptions.

SPRING FOOTBALL

South Dakota State's previous appearance in Frisco came during the pandemic-affected 2020 season that was played the following spring. That game began in a pouring rain, had a 75-minute lightning delay before halftime and ended soon after the sun popped through the clouds.

The forecast for Sunday calls for sunny conditions all day, with temperatures reaching the low 60s.

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Shiffrin matches Vonn's World Cup record with win No. 82

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

KRANJSKA GORA, Slovenia (AP) — Mikaela Shiffrin matched Lindsey Vonn's women's World Cup skiing record with her 82nd win Sunday.

Shiffrin led from start to finish to win a giant slalom by a large margin and can now break Vonn's mark in a night slalom scheduled for Flachau, Austria, on Tuesday.

"I was so nervous this run. I have a rash on my face I was so nervous," Shiffrin said. "I don't know why, maybe a little bit was because of 82. I just really wanted to ski well, and I did."

Shiffrin celebrated with a scream then bent over and rested her hands on her poles before kissing her skis in the awards ceremony.

"It was a fight. But it was pretty amazing conditions and I got a report from the coaches and they were like, 'It's really attackable, so just go for it,'" she said. "I've been in this position before and I've given it away and today I wanted to fight for it."

Already with eight wins this season, Shiffrin is also quickly approaching Ingemar Stenmark's overall record — between men and women — of 86 victories.

Vonn retired four years ago when injuries ended her pursuit of Stenmark's record.

Shiffrin and Vonn now each have 20 more wins than the next woman on the all-time list, Annemarie Moser-Pröll of Austria at 62.

While the often-injured Vonn required 395 races for her 82 wins, Shiffrin has done it in just 233 races. And at age 27, Shiffrin could compete for several more years and win many more races.

Shiffrin's achievement comes almost a year after a disappointing performance at the Beijing Olympics, when she competed in six events without winning a medal.

Winning this race, though, never really seemed in doubt.

On an overcast morning, Shiffrin was the first starter and laid down a much more aggressive opening run than either of her two trips down the steep Podkoren course on Saturday, when she finished in a tie for sixth.

"I couldn't ski faster," Shiffrin said after her first run. "I felt much, much better this first run than yesterday. I had to try to change my feeling from yesterday. It was very good skiing and I'm happy with that."

Shiffrin was the last skier to start the second run and increased her advantage at every checkpoint to finish a whopping 0.77 seconds ahead of Italy's Federica Brignone and 0.97 ahead of Switzerland's Lara Gut-Behrami.

With few American fans at the race near the Italian border, supporters of Slovakian rival Petra Vlhova cheered Shiffrin loudly. A few kids were waving American flags and family members of Paula Moltzan, another American skier, were on hand wearing USA hockey jerseys.

Shiffrin also moved ahead of Moser-Pröll and Tessa Worley of France with her 17th giant slalom win for second on the women's career list behind only Vreni Schneider, the Swiss skier who won 20.

New Zealand skier Alice Robinson was the victim of an ugly fall during her second run, crashing face first into the snow, but she quickly got up and skied to the bottom.

Biden to get a firsthand look at US-Mexico border situation

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is heading to the U.S.-Mexico border on Sunday, his first trip there as president after two years of hounding by Republicans who have hammered him as soft on border security while the number of migrants crossing spirals.

Biden is due to spend a few hours in El Paso, Texas, currently the biggest corridor for illegal crossings, due in large part to Nicaraguans fleeing repression, crime and poverty in their country. They are among migrants from four countries who are now subject to quick expulsion under new rules enacted by the Biden administration in the past week.

The president is expected to meet with border officials to discuss migration as well as the increased

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trafficking of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids, which are driving skyrocketing numbers of overdoses in the U.S.

Biden will visit the El Paso County Migrant Services Center and meet with nonprofits and religious groups that support migrants arriving to the U.S. It is not clear whether Biden will talk to any migrants.

"The president's very much looking forward to seeing for himself firsthand what the border security situation looks like," said John Kirby, White House national security spokesman. "This is something that he wanted to see for himself."

Biden's announcement on border security and his visit to the border are aimed in part at quelling the political noise and blunting the impact of upcoming investigations into immigration promised by House Republicans. But any enduring solution will require action by the sharply divided Congress, where multiple efforts to enact sweeping changes have failed in recent years.

Republican Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and John Cornyn of Texas offered faint praise for Biden's decision to visit the border, and even that was notable in the current political climate.

"He must take the time to learn from some of the experts I rely on the most, including local officials and law enforcement, landowners, nonprofits, U.S. Customs and Border Protection's officers and agents, and folks who make their livelihoods in border communities on the front lines of his crisis," Cornyn said.

From El Paso, Biden will continue south to Mexico City, where he and the leaders of Mexico and Canada will gather on Monday and Tuesday for a North American leaders summit. Immigration is among the items on the agenda.

In El Paso, where migrants congregate at bus stops and in parks before traveling on, border patrol agents have stepped up security before Biden's visit.

"I think they're trying to send a message that they're going to more consistently check people's documented status, and if you have not been processed they are going to pick you up," said Ruben Garcia of the Annunciation House aid group in El Paso.

Migrants and asylum-seekers fleeing violence and persecution have increasingly found that protections in the United States are available primarily to those with money or the savvy to find someone to vouch for them financially.

Jose Natera, a Venezuelan migrant in El Paso who hopes to seek asylum in Canada, said he has no prospects for finding a U.S. sponsor and that he's now reluctant to seek asylum in the U.S. because he's afraid of being sent to Mexico.

Mexico "is a terrible country where there is crime, corruption, cartels and even the police persecute you," he said. "They say that people who think about entering illegally won't have a chance, but at the same time I don't have a sponsor. ... I came to this country to work. I didn't come here to play."

The numbers of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border has risen dramatically during Biden's first two years in office. There were more than 2.38 million stops during the 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.

The policy changes announced this past week are Biden's biggest move yet to contain illegal border crossings and will turn away tens of thousands of migrants arriving at the border. At the same time, 30,000 migrants per month from Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela will get the chance to come to the U.S. legally as long as they travel by plane, get a sponsor and pass background checks.

The U.S. will also turn away migrants who do not seek asylum first in a country they traveled through en route to the U.S.

The changes were welcomed by some, particularly leaders in cities where migrants have been massing. But Biden was excoriated by immigrant advocate groups, which accused him of taking measures modeled after those of the former president.

"I do take issue with comparing us to Donald Trump," said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, pointing to some of his most maligned policies, including the separation of migrant children from their parents.

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"This is not that president," she said.

For all of his international travel over his 50 years in public service, Biden has not spent much time at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The only visit that the White House could point to was Biden's drive by the border while he was campaigning for president in 2008. He sent Vice President Kamala Harris to El Paso in 2021, but she was criticized for largely bypassing the action, because El Paso wasn't the center of crossings that it is now.

President Barack Obama made a 2011 trip to El Paso, where he toured border operations and the Paso Del Norte international bridge, but he was later criticized for not going back as tens of thousands of unaccompanied minors crossed into the U.S. from Mexico.

Trump, who made hardening immigration a signature issue, traveled to the border several times. During one visit, he crammed into a small border station to inspect cash and drugs confiscated by agents. During a trip to McAllen, Texas, then the center of a growing crisis, he made one of his most-often repeated claims, that Mexico would pay to build a border wall.

American taxpayers ended up footing the bill after Mexican leaders flatly rejected the idea.

"NO," Enrique Peña Nieto, then Mexico's president, tweeted in May 2018. "Mexico will NEVER pay for a wall. Not now, not ever. Sincerely, Mexico (all of us)."

Climate activists dig in to defend village from coal mine

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Climate activists pledged Sunday to defend a tiny village in western Germany from being bulldozed for the expansion of a nearby coal mine that has become a battleground between the government and environmental campaigners.

Hundreds of people from across Germany gathered for protest training and a subsequent demonstration in the hamlet of Luetzerath, which lies west of Cologne next to the vast Garzweiler coal mine.

The open-cast mine, which provides a large share of the lignite — a soft, brownish coal — burned at nearby power plants, is scheduled to close by 2030 under a deal agreed last year between the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia and utility company RWE.

The company says it needs the coal to ensure Germany's energy security, which has come under strain following the cut in gas supplies from Russia since the invasion of Ukraine.

But environmental groups have blasted the agreement, saying it will still result in hundreds of millions of tons of coal being extracted and burned. They argue that this would release vast amounts of greenhouse gas and make it impossible for Germany to meet its commitments under the 2015 Paris climate accord.

"(We) will fight for every tree, for every house, for every meter in this village," said Luka Scott, a spokesperson for the alliance of groups organizing protests. "Because whoever attacks Luetzerath, attacks our future."

Prominent campaigners have rallied support to defend the village from destruction, citing the impact that climate change is already having on Germany and beyond.

German news agency dpa reported that some activists have erected barricades and other defensive measures to prevent Luetzerath being razed. Last week, protesters briefly clashed with police at the site.

The village and surrounding areas belong to RWE and the last farmer residing there sold his property to the company in 2022 after losing a court case against his eviction. Since then, only a handful of activists have remained, some living in self-built tree houses or caravans.

Police have said no clearance will take place before Jan. 10.

Israel revokes Palestinian FM's travel permit over UN move

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel on Sunday revoked the Palestinian foreign minister's travel permit, part of a series of punitive steps against the Palestinians that Israel's new hard-line government announced days ago.

Riad Malki said in a statement that he was returning from the Brazilian president's inauguration when he

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was informed that Israel rescinded his travel permit, which allows top Palestinian officials to travel easily in and out of the occupied West Bank, unlike ordinary Palestinians. It was not clear whether the permits of other officials had been revoked as well.

Israel's government on Friday approved the steps to penalize the Palestinians in retaliation for them pushing the U.N.'s highest judicial body to give its opinion on the Israeli occupation. Rulings by the International Court of Justice are not binding, but they can be influential on world opinion.

The decision highlights the tough line the current government is already taking toward the Palestinians just days into its tenure. It comes at a time of spiking violence in the occupied West Bank and as peace talks are a distant memory.

In east Jerusalem, a flashpoint of Israeli-Palestinian tensions, Israeli police said they broke up a meeting by Palestinian parents about their children's education, claiming it was unlawfully funded by the Palestinian Authority. Police said the operation came at the behest of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, an ultranationalist with a long record of anti-Arab rhetoric and stunts who now oversees the police.

The Palestinians condemned the revoking of Malki's permit, saying Israel should be the one being "punished for its violations against international law."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a meeting of his Cabinet on Sunday the measures against the Palestinians were aimed at what he called "an extreme anti-Israel" step at the U.N. Israel's Defense Ministry confirmed that Malki's permit had been revoked.

On Friday, the government's Security Cabinet decided Israel would withhold \$39 million from the Palestinian Authority and transfer the funds instead to a compensation program for the families of Israeli victims of Palestinian militant attacks.

It also said Israel would further deduct revenue it typically transfers to the cash-strapped PA — a sum equal to the amount the authority paid last year to families of Palestinian prisoners and those killed in the conflict, including militants implicated in attacks against Israelis. The Palestinian leadership describes the payments as necessary social welfare, while Israel says the so-called Martyrs' Fund incentivizes violence. Israel's withheld funds threaten to exacerbate the PA's fiscal woes.

The Security Cabinet also targeted Palestinian officials directly, saying it would deny benefits to "VIPs who are leading the political and legal war against Israel."

Meanwhile, Israel's new defense minister, Yoav Gallant, said he was stripping three senior Palestinian officials of VIP privileges allowing them to enter Israel. The move came after they visited an Arab citizen of Israel who was released from prison last week after serving 40 years for the murder of an Israeli soldier.

The police operation Saturday came days after Ben-Gvir took office. Police alleged the parents' meeting was funded by the Palestinian Authority and attended by PA activists, which it said was in violation of Israeli law. Police said they prevented the meeting from taking place and that they were operating under an order by Ben-Gvir to shut it down. Police declined to provide evidence backing up their claim and a spokesman for Ben-Gvir referred questions to the police.

Ziad Shamali, head of the Students' Parents' Committees Union in Jerusalem, which was holding the meeting, denied there was any PA involvement, saying it was being held to discuss a shortage of teachers in east Jerusalem schools. He said he viewed the claim of PA ties as "a political pretext to ban" the meeting.

The Palestinian Authority was created to administer Gaza and parts of the occupied West Bank. Israel opposes any official business being carried out by the PA in east Jerusalem, and police have in the past broken up events they alleged were linked to the PA.

Israel captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed it, a move unrecognized by most of the international community. Israel considers the city its undivided, eternal capital. The Palestinians seek the city's eastern sector as the capital of their hoped-for state.

About a third of the city's population is Palestinian and they have long faced neglect and discrimination at the hands of Israeli authorities, including in education, housing and public services.

Public now can see Benedict's tomb at St. Peter's Basilica

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The public can now visit the tomb of Pope Benedict XVI in the grottoes under St. Peter's Basilica.

The pontiff was buried on Jan. 5 immediately following a funeral in St. Peter's Square. Benedict's tomb lies in the grottoes under the basilica's main floor.

The Vatican announced on Saturday that the public could visit the tomb starting Sunday morning.

Benedict had lived since 2013 as pope emeritus, following his retirement from the papacy, the first pontiff to do so in 600 years. He died on Dec. 31 at the age of 95, in the Vatican monastery where he spent his last years.

On Thursday, his longtime secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, imparted a final blessing after Benedict's body, contained inside three coffins — the cypress one displayed in the square during the funeral presided over by Pope Francis, a zinc one and an outer one hewn from oak — were lowered into a space in the floor.

The remains were placed in the former tomb of Benedict's predecessor, St. John Paul II. John Paul's remains were moved up to a chapel on the main floor of the basilica following his 2011 beatification.

Some 50,000 people attended Benedict's funeral, following three days of the body's lying in state in the basilica, an event which drew nearly 200,000 viewers.

The name of Benedict, the Catholic church's 265th pontiff, was engraved on a white marble slab, the Vatican said.

The Vatican didn't say whether Pope Francis had privately visited the completed tomb of Benedict before public viewing was permitted, or might do so at some other time.

On Sunday morning, Francis was leading a ceremony for the baptism of 13 babies in the Sistine Chapel. The chapel, frescoed by Michelangelo, is the traditional setting for the baptisms, an event which closes out the Vatican's year-end ceremonies.

Later, greeting pilgrims and tourists gathered in St. Peter's Square for his Sunday noon blessing, Francis quoted from a 2008 homily by Benedict, in which the late pontiff spoke about salvation.

Drawing inspiration from his predecessor's words, Francis said that the faithful when judging others, including in the Catholic church, should apply not harshness but mercy, "sharing the wounds and the fragilities" and avoiding divisions.

Francis has been criticized in some quarters by those who favored Benedict's more conservative stances because his funeral homily made only a mere mention of the late pontiff. While Benedict and Francis had openly spoken of each other with respect, tensions festered for years between loyalists of both men.

Germany: Iranian detained, suspected of chemical attack plot

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — A 32-year-old Iranian man has been detained in Germany on suspicion of planning an attack with deadly chemicals, officials said Sunday.

Police and prosecutors said the man and another person were detained overnight in the town of Castrop-Rauxel, northwest of Dortmund.

In a joint statement they said the man is suspected to have planned a serious attack motivated by Islamic extremism, for which he had allegedly sought to obtain the potent toxins cyanide and ricin.

Specialists wearing anti-contamination suits were seen carrying evidence out of the man's home.

A spokesman for Duesseldorf prosecutors later said an initial search of the premises turned up no toxic substances, German news agency dpa reported.

It wasn't immediately clear how far advanced the plans for an attack were and whether the suspect had picked a specific target.

Dpa quoted the top security official for North Rhine-Westphalia state, Herbert Reul, as saying authorities had received "a serious tip that led police to intervene the same night."

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Tabloid newspaper Bild reported that the tip about the alleged plot came from an allied intelligence agency. Dpa cited an unidentified German security official as saying there was no indication the suspect had acted on behalf of the Iranian state, but rather that he allegedly supported a Sunni extremist group. Sunnis are a religious minority in Iran.

Germany's top security official thanked police and specialists from the country's disease control agency who had taken part in the raid.

"Our security services take any information about Islamist terror threats very seriously, and act," Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said in a statement, adding that 21 Islamist attacks had been prevented in Germany since the start of the century.

Faeser noted the importance of international cooperation in fighting extremist threats and said further investigations by Duesseldorf prosecutors would show whether the suspicions that triggered the police operation were warranted.

Five years ago, German police arrested a Tunisian man and his wife on suspicion of planning to carry out a ricin attack in the name of the Islamic State group. They were later found guilty and sentenced to 10 and eight years' imprisonment, respectively.

Even small amounts of ricin, which is produced from the seeds of castor oil plants, can kill an adult if eaten, injected or inhaled.

19 dead in China crash as holiday travel rush gets underway

BEIJING (AP) — A traffic accident in southern China killed 19 people and injured 20 others early Sunday as the annual Lunar New Year holiday travel rush got underway, authorities said.

The accident occurred outside the city of Nanchang in Jiangxi province, according to the local traffic management brigade. The cause was under investigation, the brigade said.

Heavy fog was also reported at the time of the accident, just after midnight, according to reports.

Website Jimu News quoted a resident as saying the victims were mourners from the village of Taoling who had set up a funeral tent on the side of the road, as is common in rural China, and were hit by a passing truck as they were preparing to proceed to the local crematorium in the morning.

Several of the victims were her neighbors, the woman — identified only by her surname, Deng — told the site, which is published by the Hubei Daily newspaper based in a neighboring province.

Jimu quoted another unidentified villager as confirming that version of events, adding that the scene had already been cleaned up. The condition of the injured was not known.

Major traffic accidents, often caused by fatigued drivers and poorly maintained or overloaded vehicles, used to be common, but tighter regulations have reduced their frequency in recent years.

Enforcement efforts on the condition of vehicles and drivers and passenger numbers are redoubled around the time of the holiday, China's most important for family gatherings when tens of millions of migrant workers return to their hometowns.

With the end of most COVID-19 restrictions, the number of such trips is expected to double this year to more than 2 billion on and around the weeklong festival season that starts this year on Jan. 22.

Travelers rush to take advantage of China reopening

BEIJING (AP) — After years of separation from his wife in mainland China, Hong Kong resident Cheung Seng-bun made sure to be among the first in line following the reopening Sunday of border crossing points.

The ability of residents of the semi-autonomous southern Chinese city to cross over is one of the most visible signs of China's easing of border restrictions imposed almost three years ago, with travelers arriving from abroad no longer required to undergo expensive and time-consuming quarantines.

That comes even as the virus continues to spread in China amid what critics say is a lack of transparency from Beijing.

"I'm hurrying to get back to her," Cheung, lugging a heavy suitcase, told The Associated Press as he

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prepared to cross at Lok Ma Chau station, which was steadily filling with eager travelers.

Those crossing between Hong Kong and mainland China, however, are still required to show a negative COVID-19 test taken within the last 48 hours — a measure China has protested when imposed by other countries.

Hong Kong has been hit hard by the virus, and its land and sea border checkpoints with the mainland have been largely closed for almost three years. Despite the risk of new infections, the reopening that will allow tens of thousands of people who have made prior online bookings to cross each day is expected to provide a much-needed boost to Hong Kong's tourism and retail sectors.

On a visit to the station Sunday morning, Hong Kong's Chief Executive John Lee said the sides would continue to expand the number of crossing points from the current seven to the full 14.

"The goal is to get back as quickly as possible to the pre-epidemic normal life," Lee told reporters. "We want to get cooperation between the two sides back on track."

Communist Party newspaper Global Times quoted Tan Luming, a port official in Shenzhen on the border with Hong Kong, saying about 200 passengers were expected to take the ferry to Hong Kong, while another 700 were due to travel in the other direction, on the first day of reopening. Tan said a steady increase in passenger numbers is expected over coming days.

"I stayed up all night and got up at 4 a.m. as I'm so excited to return to the mainland to see my 80-year-old mother," a Hong Kong woman identified only by her surname, Cheung, said on arrival at Shenzhen, where she was presented with "roses and health kits," the paper said.

Hong Kong media reports said around 300,000 travel bookings from the city to mainland China have already been made, with a daily quota of 60,000.

Limited ferry service also was restored from China's Fujian province to the Taiwanese-controlled island of Kinmen just off the Chinese coast.

The border crossing with Russia at Suifenhe in the far northern province of Heilongjiang also resumed normal operations, just in time for the opening of the ice festival in the capital of Harbin, a major tourism draw.

And at Ruili, on the border with Myanmar, normal operations were resumed after 1,012 days of full or partial closure in response to repeated outbreaks blamed partly on visitors from China's neighbor.

So far, only a fraction of the previous number of international flights are arriving at major Chinese airports.

Beijing's main Capital International Airport was expecting eight flights from overseas on Sunday. Shanghai, China's largest city, received its first international flight under the new policy at 6:30 a.m. with only a trickle of others to follow.

Since March 2020, all international passenger flights bound for Beijing have been diverted to designated first points of entry into China. Passengers were required to quarantine up to three weeks.

"I've been under isolated quarantine for six times in different cities (in mainland China)," said Ivan Tang, a Hong Kong business traveler. "They were not easy experiences."

Ming Guanghe, a Chinese living in Singapore, said it had been difficult both to book a ticket and find somewhere to take a PCR test. Quarantine measures and uncertainty about outbreaks had kept him away from home, Ming said.

Shanghai announced it would again start issuing regular passports to Chinese for foreign travel and family visits, as well as renewing and extending visas for foreigners. Those restrictions have had a particularly devastating effect on foreign businesspeople and students in the key Asian financial center.

China is now facing a surge in cases and hospitalizations in major cities and is bracing for a further spread into less developed areas with the start of its most important holiday, the Lunar New Year, in coming days.

Authorities say they expect domestic rail and air journeys will double over the same period last year, bringing overall numbers close to those of the 2019 holiday period before the pandemic hit.

Meanwhile, more foreign governments are imposing testing requirements on travelers from China — most recently Germany, Sweden and Portugal. On Saturday, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock urged citizens to avoid "unnecessary" travel to China, noting the rise in coronavirus cases and China's "overburdened" health system.

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The German regulation also allows for spot checks on arrival. Germany, like other European nations, will test wastewater from aircrafts for possible new virus variants. The measures come into force at midnight Monday and are due to last until April 7.

Apparently concerned about its reputation, China says the testing requirements aren't science-based and has threatened unspecified countermeasures.

Chinese health authorities publish a daily count of new infections, severe cases and fatalities, but those numbers include only officially confirmed cases and use a very narrow definition of COVID-19-related deaths.

The National Health Commission on Sunday reported 7,072 new confirmed cases of local transmission and two new deaths — even as individual provinces were reporting as many as 1 million cases per day.

Authorities say that since the government ended compulsory testing and permitted people with mild symptoms to test themselves and convalesce at home, it can no longer provide a full picture of the outbreak. China's vulnerabilities are increased by the population's general lack of exposure to the virus and a relatively low vaccination rate among the elderly.

Government spokespeople insist the situation is under control and reject accusations from the World Health Organization and others that they're not being transparent about the outbreak that could lead to the emergence of new variants.

The Health Commission on Saturday rolled out regulations for strengthened monitoring of viral mutations, including testing of urban wastewater. The rules called for increased data gathering from hospitals and local government health departments and stepped-up checks on "pneumonia of unknown causes."

Criticism has largely focused on heavy-handed enforcement of regulations, including open-ended travel restrictions that saw people confined to their homes for weeks, sometimes sealed inside without adequate food or medical care.

Anger was also vented over the requirement that anyone who potentially tested positive or had been in contact with such a person be confined for observation in a field hospital, where overcrowding, poor food and hygiene were commonly cited.

The social and economic costs eventually prompted rare street protests in Beijing and other cities, possibly influencing the Communist Party's decision to swiftly ease the strictest measures.

Jags return fumble for TD, beat Titans for AFC South title

By MARK LONG AP Pro Football Writer

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — With a scoop and score that will go down in franchise lore, Josh Allen may have put an end to the chaos and disappointment that has defined the Jacksonville Jaguars for the better part of the past decade.

Allen's 37-yard fumble return with 2:51 remaining helped the Jaguars beat rival Tennessee 20-16 on Saturday night and secure their first AFC South championship since 2017.

"I'm speechless," Jaguars owner Shad Khan said before crediting coach Doug Pederson, general manager Trent Baalke and players. "I've always had confidence that we would be getting to where we needed to go."

Khan easily could have singled out Allen and safety Rayshawn Jenkins, who forced Josh Dobbs' fumble. Allen picked up the loose ball on a perfect bounce and ran, untouched, the other way for a lead that held up.

Dobbs fumbled again on the ensuing possession, and the Jaguars (9-8) started to celebrate their most significant regular-season victory in history.

"This was one of those games where our defense had to win it for us," Jaguars quarterback Trevor Lawrence said. "Us guys on offense, we're a little frustrated because we left a lot out there. But in these games, just win. Our defense picked us up today. They played great."

Jacksonville earned the No. 4 seed in the conference playoffs and will host either the Los Angeles Chargers or Baltimore in the wild-card round next weekend.

It's the 18th time in the last 20 seasons that at least one NFL team won its division after finishing last or tied for last the previous year.

Jacksonville closed the regular season with its fifth consecutive victory and became the fifth team in

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NFL history to make the playoffs with a five-game losing streak and a five-game winning streak in the same season.

"We just kept believing," Lawrence said. "Nobody ever lost faith. Everybody believed in one another. We never started pointing the finger. We lost five games straight and we just got tighter."

Tennessee (7-10) lost its final seven games, a skid that had just about everyone writing them off before Saturday's finale.

"Nobody wants to finish how we did," Titans running back Derrick Henry said. "That's never the plan, never the goal. Like I said, stuff happens, adversity happens.

"We wanted to win the division and have a great record, yeah, but it didn't happen this year. All you can do is go back to work and be thankful for the journey and everybody in their efforts and look forward."

The Titans rested several starters last week and essentially created a 10-day break to get healthy. They returned to their bruising brand of football and looked like they would pull an improbable turnaround — until Dobbs' turnover changed the game.

"We just got on a (crappy) streak and couldn't get off it," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said. "Couldn't make the plays when we needed to. We couldn't be consistent enough when we needed to and it showed up again."

The Jaguars were 6 1/2-point favorites, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, and a near-sellout crowd was on hand to witness what many thought would be more of a coronation than a scratch-and-claw nail-biter.

The Titans didn't do anything spectacular. With quarterback Ryan Tannehill (ankle) out for the season, they leaned on Dobbs — an aerospace engineer who has bounced around the league — to be smart with the ball and Henry to grind out tough yards. And they relied on a defense that's been stout against the run all year.

It worked for 57 minutes — and then it unraveled.

Henry finished with 109 yards on 30 carries. Dobbs completed 20 of 29 passes for 179 yards, with a touchdown, an interception and the fumble.

Lawrence completed 20 of 32 passes for 212 yards, with a touchdown and a fumble. Lawrence had two would-be touchdowns in the second half fall incomplete. He overthrew Zay Jones in the end zone and underthrew Christian Kirk.

Nearly all of the 70,000-plus on hand were waiting for Lawrence to do something down the stretch. Instead, the Jags became the first team since Carolina in 2000 to pull off a fourth-quarter comeback without gaining a first down in the quarter, according to ESPN Stats & Info.

STIFF ARM

Henry added another impressive stiff-arm to his highlight reel filled with them. He tossed Jenkins to the ground in the second quarter to cap a 14-yard gain, setting off a flurry of social media posts about the move.

Henry, who grew up outside Jacksonville in Yulee, finished the first half with 71 yards on the ground, but added just 38 after intermission.

MEMORABLE MOMENT

Both teams gathered at midfield together before the game to pray, some of them still wearing shirts to honor Buffalo's Demar Hamlin. Tennessee linebacker Rashad Weaver, college teammates with Hamlin at Pitt, wore Hamlin's No. 3 on his eye black.

Weaver later recovered Lawrence's fumble on a misguided trick play in the first half.

Seattle schools sue tech giants over social media harm

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — The public school district in Seattle has filed a novel lawsuit against the tech giants behind TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Snapchat, seeking to hold them accountable for the mental health crisis among youth.

Seattle Public Schools filed the lawsuit Friday in U.S. District Court. The 91-page complaint says the social

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media companies have created a public nuisance by targeting their products to children.

It blames them for worsening mental health and behavioral disorders including anxiety, depression, disordered eating and cyberbullying; making it more difficult to educate students; and forcing schools to take steps such as hiring additional mental health professionals, developing lesson plans about the effects of social media, and providing additional training to teachers.

"Defendants have successfully exploited the vulnerable brains of youth, hooking tens of millions of students across the country into positive feedback loops of excessive use and abuse of Defendants' social media platforms," the complaint said. "Worse, the content Defendants curate and direct to youth is too often harmful and exploitive"

Meta, Google, Snap and TikTok did not immediately respond to requests for comment Saturday.

While federal law — Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act — helps protect online companies from liability arising from what third-party users post on their platforms, the lawsuit argues that provision does not protect the tech giants' behavior in this case.

"Plaintiff is not alleging Defendants are liable for what third-parties have said on Defendants' platforms but, rather, for Defendants' own conduct," the lawsuit said. "Defendants affirmatively recommend and promote harmful content to youth, such as pro-anorexia and eating disorder content."

The lawsuit says that from 2009 to 2019, there was on average a 30% increase in the number of Seattle Public Schools students who reported feeling "so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row" that they stopped doing some typical activities.

The school district is asking the court to order the companies to stop creating the public nuisance, to award damages, and to pay for prevention education and treatment for excessive and problematic use of social media.

While hundreds of families are pursuing lawsuits against the companies over harms they allege their children have suffered from social media, it's not clear if any other school districts have filed a complaint like Seattle's.

Internal studies revealed by Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen in 2021 showed that the company knew that Instagram negatively affected teenagers by harming their body image and making eating disorders and thoughts of suicide worse. She alleged that the platform prioritized profits over safety and hid its own research from investors and the public.

Mahomes sets record, Chiefs beat Raiders for AFC's top seed

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The Kansas City Chiefs don't believe in simply wrapping up the AFC's top seed. They want to have fun doing it.

Late in the first half Saturday against the Las Vegas Raiders, the Chiefs huddled and spun in a circle, broke out into the shotgun with running back Jerick McKinnon taking a direct snap. He faked a handoff to Kadarius Toney and pitched to quarterback Patrick Mahomes, who then threw to Toney for a 9-yard touchdown.

But, it didn't count. A holding penalty brought back the play. The Chiefs then scored anyway to take full control of what became a 31-13 victory.

The play is called the Snow Globe or Arctic Circle, depending on who is asked. But, even if it didn't count, it underscored the Chiefs' creativity and willingness to have fun, even while playing for playoff positioning and a week off.

"We talked about it on the side, 'Let's see if we can get some confusion going and throw something back.'" Mahomes said. "It worked. We just had the holding penalty. We got some good things going for the playoffs, and whatever we run has to work."

That, Chiefs coach Andy Reid said, was the bottom line.

"You do (want to make it fun), but you want to score, too," Reid said. "It's not fun when you're not doing that."

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Almost lost was the NFL record for total yards in a season that Mahomes set. He passed for 202 yards and rushed for 29 against the Raiders, giving him 5,608 total yards this season. That surpassed the record of 5,562 yards set by Drew Brees in 2011 with the New Orleans Saints.

"Pat was on fire," Reid said. "He's throwing these (statistics) out there like they're nothing."

More than setting the mark, Mahomes helped ensure the top seed for the Chiefs (14-3) and a bye in the first round of the playoffs, which begin next weekend. Kansas City, however, is not assured of home-field advantage throughout the postseason.

Because Monday night's Buffalo-Cincinnati game was canceled, the Chiefs could wind up playing the Bills or Bengals in the AFC championship on a neutral field. The Buffalo-Cincinnati game initially was postponed after Bills safety Damar Hamlin went into cardiac arrest. Hamlin remains in critical condition, but is improving.

This was the first NFL game played since Hamlin was hospitalized. Both teams wore black shirts in warmups that read "LOVE FOR DAMAR" with his No. 3 in the middle. Mahomes also wore a hoodie that had a drawing of the player with "HAMLIN STRONG" below it.

Instead of a moment of silence before the game, the Allegiant Stadium public-address announcer asked fans to cheer on Hamlin's recovery.

"It was definitely weird," Mahomes said of returning to the field. "It's a game that you love, you play your entire life. It's brought so many great things to you. But, obviously, with the situation that happened Monday night with Damar, you still have that in the back of your mind. You want to be there for him, and there is so much stuff bigger than football."

The Chiefs matched their franchise record for regular-season victories, set in 2020, and they set a team mark with their 17th consecutive game of at least 300 yards of offense.

The Raiders (6-11) ended their first season under coach Josh McDaniels with three consecutive losses and four defeats in five games. They made the playoffs a year ago, but now face serious questions at quarterback, offensive line and throughout the defense.

Jarrett Stidham started his second game in a row in place of the sidelined Derek Carr, and this performance didn't go nearly as well as the first one. Stidham completed 22 of 36 passes for 219 yards with a touchdown and interception. He was sacked six times.

A week ago, he threw for 365 yards and three touchdowns in a 37-34 overtime loss to the San Francisco 49ers.

Stidham said he hasn't thought much about trying to retain the starting job next season with the Raiders.

"Do I feel like I'm that caliber player in this league?" he said. "Absolutely. I just tried to be ready for my opportunity these last two weeks and try to take full advantage of it."

Raiders running back Josh Jacobs, who was dealing with hip and oblique injuries as well as a reported family emergency, was a game-day decision but played. He rushed for 45 yards and could possibly win the NFL rushing title with 1,653 yards.

But Jacobs fell short of the franchise rushing record of 1,759 yards set by Marcus Allen in 1985. This was potentially Jacobs' final game as a member of the Raiders because his fifth-year option was not picked up. His performance this season has given Las Vegas officials plenty to consider.

NOTES

Chiefs linebacker Nick Bolton made 16 tackles, giving him 180 for the season and breaking the team record of 179 set by Derrick Johnson in 2011. ... Kansas City running back Jerick McKinnon has caught a touchdown pass in six consecutive games. He has nine TDs total over that span. ... Chiefs rookie defensive end George Karlaftis has 5½ sacks in seven games. ... Kansas City tight end Travis Kelce caught six passes for 38 yards, giving him 110 receptions this season, just one off the Chiefs' mark set by Tyreek Hill last season.

INJURIES

Chiefs: DE Frank Clark (groin) went out in the second quarter.

Raiders: CB Nate Hobbs (hand) and LB Harvey Langi (concussion) went out and didn't return.

UP NEXT

Chiefs: Regular season is over. Kansas City waits to see its opening playoff opponent.

Raiders: Las Vegas has some major decisions to make with its roster now that its season is over.

Mexican capo's arrest a gesture to US, not signal of change

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN, MARK STEVENSON and FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's capture of a son of former Sinaloa cartel boss Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán this week was an isolated nod to a drug war strategy that Mexico's current administration has abandoned rather than a sign that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's thinking has changed, experts say.

Ovidio Guzmán's arrest in the Sinaloa cartel stronghold of Culiacan on Thursday came at the cost of at least 30 lives — 11 from the military and law enforcement and 19 suspected cartel gunmen. But analysts predict it won't have any impact on the flow of drugs to the United States.

It was a display of muscle — helicopter gunships, hundreds of troops and armored vehicles — at the initiation of a possible extradition process rather than a significant step in a homegrown Mexican effort to dismantle one of the country's most powerful criminal organizations. Perhaps coincidentally, it came just days before U.S. President Joe Biden makes the first visit by a U.S. leader in almost a decade.

López Obrador has made clear throughout the first four years of his six-year term that pursuing drug capos is not his priority. When military forces cornered the younger Guzmán in Culiacan in 2019, the president ordered him freed to avoid loss of life after gunmen started shooting up the city.

The only other big capture under his administration was the grabbing of a geriatric Rafael Caro Quintero last July — just days after López Obrador met with Biden in the White House. At that point, Caro Quintero carried more symbolic significance for ordering a DEA agent's murder decades ago than real weight in today's drug world.

"Mexico wants to do at least the bare minimum in terms of counter-drug efforts," said Mike Vigil, the DEA's former chief of international operations who spent 13 years of his career in Mexico. "I don't think that this is a sign that there's going to be closer cooperation, bilateral collaboration, if you will, between the United States and Mexico."

While capturing a criminal is a win for justice and rule of law, Vigil said, the impact on what he sees as a "permanent campaign against drugs" is nil. "Really what we need to do here in the United States is we need to do a better job in terms of reducing demand."

That was a key talking point when the U.S. and Mexican governments announced late in 2021 a new Bicentennial Framework for Security, Public Health and Safe Communities, replacing the outdated Merida Initiative.

The pact was supposed to take a more holistic approach to the scourge of drugs and the deaths they cause on both sides of the border. But underlining the frequent disconnect between diplomatic speech and reality, just two months later the U.S. government announced a \$5 million reward for information leading to the capture of any of four of El Chapo's sons, including Ovidio, signaling the U.S. kingpin strategy was alive and well.

"The Bicentennial understanding was a change on paper with respect to attacking drug trafficking and violence with a more important focus on what were supposedly public health programs — (but) without any budget," said Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, an associate professor at George Mason University. In reality, "Mexico is bending to the United States' interests."

For decades, the U.S. has nabbed drug kingpins from Mexico, Colombia and points between, but drugs are as available and more deadly in the United States as ever, she said. "The kingpin strategy is a failed strategy."

The U.S. Department of Justice declined to comment on Ovidio Guzmán's arrest.

López Obrador took office in December 2018 after campaigning with a motto of "hugs, not bullets." He shifted resources to social programs to address what he sees as violence's root causes, a medium- to long-term approach that did little for a country suffering more than 35,000 homicides per year.

"Something that has characterized, in my opinion, Mexico's security policy in recent years is that it isn't very clear. It has been a bit contradictory," said Angelica Durán-Martínez, associate professor at the Uni-

versity of Massachusetts Lowell. That ambiguity makes it difficult to determine if there has really been a change, she said.

López Obrador's government benefits from the detention of Guzmán in several ways. The arrest eases the armed forces' humiliation after being forced by cartel gunmen to release him in 2019. It may soothe ill-feelings after his administration strictly limited U.S. anti-drug cooperation two years ago. And it may help diminish perceptions that López Obrador -- who has frequently visited Sinaloa and praised its people -- has gone easier on the Sinaloa cartel than on other gangs.

For four years López Obrador has continued to shred his predecessors' prosecution of the drug war at every opportunity. Experts say the respite allowed the cartels to get stronger, both in terms of organization and armament.

Guzmán during that time took a growing role after his father was sentenced to life in prison in the U.S. The younger Guzmán was indicted in Washington on drug trafficking charges along with another brother in 2018. He allegedly controlled a number of methamphetamine labs and was involved as the Sinaloa cartel expanded strongly into fentanyl production.

Synthetic drugs have been impervious to government eradication efforts, are easier to produce and smuggle, and are much more profitable.

The Sinaloa cartel hardly missed a beat when Guzmán's father was sent to the U.S., so the capture of one of the so-called "Chapitos," as the brothers are known, is never going to shake the operation.

Mexican security analyst Alejandro Hope said the detention of Ovidio Guzman probably came as the result of pressure or information from the U.S. government, and marks the tacit abandonment of López Obrador's rhetoric about ditching the kingpin strategy.

For Hope, the detention is depressing, not only because it won't fundamentally change the Sinaloa cartel's booming export trade in meth and fentanyl, but because it reveals how little investigation Mexican authorities had done on Guzmán and the cartel since 2019.

"How great that they got Ovidio, applause, perfect," Hope said. "What depresses me is that we've been at this (drug war) for 16 years, or 40 counting from the (murder of DEA agent Enrique) Camarena, and we still don't have the ability to investigate."

After Guzmán's capture, Mexican officials said he was arrested on an existing U.S. extradition request, as well as for illegal weapons possession and attempted murder at the time they found him. On Friday, Interior Secretary Adán López Hernández said there were other Mexican investigations underway that they couldn't talk about.

"We keep betting on the muscle, the military capabilities and not on the ability to investigate," Hope said.

Subway train collision in Mexico City kills 1, injures 57

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Two subway trains collided between two stations Saturday in Mexico City, killing at least one person and injuring 41, authorities said.

Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said on her Twitter account that the accident happened on Line 3 of the capital's Metro system, without specifying the cause of the crash between the Potrero and La Raza stations.

Sheinbaum said one woman was killed and 57 people injured, who were taken to seven hospitals. Four people were trapped in the wreckage for a time, including one train driver, who was reported in serious condition. Late in the afternoon, the mayor said 26 of the injured had been released.

Dozens of police and soldiers swarmed into the nearby subway stations, while ambulances and rescue teams arrived to treat the injured.

Edgar Montiel, an electrician who was on one of the trains, said he felt lucky because he had decided at the last minute to enter the next-to-last car rather than the rearmost car, which was smashed up in the crash.

"It sounded very strong. I just closed my eyes when I felt the sheets of the car bend and throw me," Montiel told The Associated Press.

He said he remained on the floor of the car with several passengers amid screams and cries asked for

help.

"The power went out to the subway and a lot of smoke began to come out that was suffocating us. We could not breathe well," he said.

Montiel, who had his left arm and shoulder bandaged, said the occupants of his car had to wait about 30 minutes until paramedics arrived to tend to the injured and help everyone exit the car.

In lamenting the accident, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said on his Twitter account that the federal government was supporting the city officials dealing with accident.

In May 2021, an elevated section of the subway system collapsed, causing 26 deaths and injuring nearly 100 people. An investigation blamed the structural failure on deficiencies in the construction process, and 10 former officials have been charged with homicide, injury and damage to property.

The Mexico City subway system has 226.5 kilometers (141 miles) of track and 195 stations. It serves an average of 4.6 million passengers every day.

On eve of Biden's border visit, migrants fear new rules

By ANDRES LEIGHTON and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Several hundred people marched through the streets of El Paso Saturday afternoon, and when they arrived at a group of migrants huddling outside a church, they sang to them "no estan solos" — "you are not alone."

Around 300 migrants have taken refuge on sidewalks outside Sacred Heart Church, some of them afraid to seek more formal shelters, advocates say, amid new restrictions meant to crack down on illegal border crossings.

This is the scene that will greet President Joe Biden on his first, politically thorny visit to the southern border Sunday.

The president announced last week that Cubans, Nicaraguans, Haitians and Venezuelans will be expelled to Mexico if they enter the U.S. illegally — an expansion of a pandemic-era immigration policy called Title 42. The new rules will also include offering humanitarian parole for up to 30,000 people a month from those four countries if they apply online and find a financial sponsor.

Biden is scheduled to arrive in El Paso Sunday afternoon before traveling on to Mexico City to meet with North American leaders on Monday and Tuesday.

Dylan Corbett, who runs the nonprofit Hope Border Institute, said the city is experiencing an increasing "climate of fear."

He said immigration enforcement agencies have already started ratcheting up deportations to Mexico, and he senses a rising level of tension and confusion.

The president's new policy expands on an existing effort to stop Venezuelans attempting to enter the U.S., which began in October.

Corbett said many Venezuelans have since been left in limbo, putting a strain on local resources. He said expanding those policies to other migrants will only worsen the circumstances for them on the ground.

"It's a very difficult situation because they can't go forward and they can't go back," he said. People who aren't processed can't leave El Paso because of U.S. law enforcement checkpoints; most have traveled thousands of miles from their homelands and refuse to give up and turn around.

"There will be people in need of protection who will be left behind," Corbett said.

The new restrictions represent a major change to immigration rules that will stand even if the U.S. Supreme Court ends a Trump-era public health law that allows U.S. authorities to turn away asylum-seekers.

El Paso has swiftly become the busiest of the Border Patrol's nine sectors along the U.S. border with Mexico, occupying the top slots in October and November. Large numbers of Venezuelans began showing up in September, drawn to the relative ease of crossing, robust shelter networks and bus service on both sides of the border, and a major airport to destinations across the United States.

Venezuelans ceased to be a major presence almost overnight after Mexico, under Title 42 authority, agreed on Oct. 12 to accept those who crossed the border illegally into the United States. Nicaraguans

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have since filled that void. Title 42 restrictions have been applied 2.5 million times to deny migrants a right to seek asylum under U.S. and international law on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

U.S. authorities stopped migrants 53,247 times in November in the El Paso sector, which stretches across 264 miles of desert in West Texas and New Mexico but sees much of its activity in the city of El Paso and suburban Sunland Park, New Mexico. The most recent monthly tally for the sector was more than triple the same period of 2021, with Nicaraguans the top nationality by far, followed by Mexicans, Ecuadoreans, Guatemalans and Cubans.

Many gathered under blankets outside Sacred Heart Church. The church opens its doors at night to families and women, so not all of the hundreds caught in this limbo must sleep outside in the dropping temperatures. Two buses were available for people to warm up and charge their phones. Volunteers come with food and other supplies.

Juan Tovar held a Bible in his hands, his 7-year-old daughter hoisted onto his shoulders. The 32-year-old was a bus driver in Venezuela before he fled with his wife and two daughters because of the political and financial chaos that has consumed their home country.

He has friends in San Antonio prepared to take them in, he said. He's here to work and provide an education for his daughters, but he's stuck in El Paso without a permit.

"Everything is in the hands of God," he said. "We are all humans and we want to stay."

Another Venezuelan, 22-year-old Jeremy Mejia, overheard and said he had a message he'd like to send to the president.

"President Biden, I ask God to touch your heart so we can stay in this country," Mejia said. "I ask you to please touch your heart and help us migrants have a better future in the U.S."

Ex-Pentagon intelligence analyst who spied for Cuba freed

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — A former U.S. defense intelligence analyst who was convicted of spying for Cuba more than 20 years ago has been released from a federal prison in Fort Worth, Texas.

Ana Belen Montes, 65, was released Friday, Federal Bureau of Prisons spokesman Scott Taylor said Saturday.

Montes, an analyst for the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, was arrested in September 2001 and charged with spying for Cuba.

Montes pleaded guilty in 2002 to conspiring to commit espionage as part of a plea deal with federal prosecutors and was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

She acknowledged revealing the identities of four undercover agents for the U.S. to Cuban authorities and had faced a possible death sentence if convicted.

Federal prosecutors at the time said the four agents whose identities she revealed were not harmed.

U.S. prosecutors also accused Montes of disclosing to Cuba secrets so sensitive they could not be described publicly. Court records said she provided documents that revealed details about U.S. surveillance of Cuban weapons.

Officials at the time said Montes was believed to have been recruited by Cuban intelligence when she worked in the Freedom of Information office at the Justice Department between 1979 and 1985, and was asked to seek work at an agency that would provide more useful information to Cuba.

She began working for the Defense Intelligence Agency starting in 1985, and was considered a top analyst on the Cuban military.

Mayor: Teacher shot by 6-year-old 'red flag for the country'

By DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A Virginia teacher who was critically injured when she was shot by a 6-year-old student in Newport News is showing signs of improvement as authorities struggle to understand how a child so young could be involved in a school shooting, the city's mayor said Saturday.

Newport News Mayor Phillip Jones said the condition of the teacher, a woman in her 30s, is "trending

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in a positive direction" as she remains hospitalized. Police Chief Steve Drew met with the teacher and her family Saturday morning. "She has improved and is currently listed in stable condition," police said in a news release.

The boy shot and wounded the teacher with a handgun in a first-grade classroom on Friday at Richneck Elementary School, according to authorities. Drew said the shooting was not accidental and was part of an altercation. No students were injured.

Police on Saturday declined to describe what led to the altercation or any other details about what happened in the classroom, citing the ongoing investigation.

Jones also declined to reveal details of the shooting, or say how the boy got access to the gun or who owns the weapon.

"This is a red flag for the country," Jones said.

"I do think that after this event, there is going to be a nationwide discussion on how these sorts of things can be prevented."

Virginia law does not allow 6-year-olds to be tried as adults. In addition, a 6-year-old is too young to be committed to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice if found guilty.

A juvenile judge would have authority, though, to revoke a parent's custody and place a child under the purview of the Department of Social Services.

Jones would not say where the boy is being held.

"We are ensuring he has all the services that he currently needs right now," Jones said.

Experts who study gun violence said the shooting represents an extremely rare occurrence of a young child bringing a gun into school and wounding a teacher.

"It's very rare and it's not something the legal system is really designed or positioned to deal with," said researcher David Riedman, founder of a database that tracks U.S. school shootings dating back to 1970.

He said Saturday that he's only aware of three other shootings caused by 6-year-old students in the time period he's studied. Those include the fatal shooting of a fellow student in 2000 in Michigan and shootings that injured other students in 2011 in Texas and 2021 in Mississippi.

Riedman said he only knows of one other instance of a student younger than that causing gunfire at a school, in which a 5-year-old student brought a gun to a Tennessee school in 2013 and accidentally discharged it. No one was injured in that case.

Daniel W. Webster, a professor at Johns Hopkins University who studies gun violence, agreed that a 6-year-old shooting a teacher at school is extremely unusual. But he said his research shows that instances of young children accessing loaded guns and shooting themselves or others unintentionally in homes or other settings are rising.

"A 6 year old gaining access to a loaded gun and shooting him/herself or someone else, sadly, is not so rare," he said in an email.

In the Newport News case, Drew said Friday that the shooting didn't appear to be an accident and that it was isolated to the single victim. He said the student and teacher had known each other in a classroom setting.

"We did not have a situation where someone was going around the school shooting," Drew told reporters. Investigators were trying to figure out where he obtained the handgun.

Parents and students were reunited at a gymnasium, Newport News Public Schools said via Facebook.

The police chief declined to discuss what contact investigators have had with the boy's parents.

"We have been in contact with our commonwealth's attorney (local prosecutor) and some other entities to help us best get services to this young man," Drew said.

Newport News is a city of about 185,000 people in southeastern Virginia known for its shipyard, which builds the nation's aircraft carriers and other U.S. Navy vessels.

Richneck has about 550 students who are in kindergarten through fifth grade, according to the Virginia Department of Education's website. Jones said there will be no classes at the school Monday and Tuesday.

"Today our students got a lesson in gun violence," said George Parker III, Newport News schools su-

perintendent, "and what guns can do to disrupt, not only an educational environment, but also a family, a community."

Ukraine hails US military aid as cease-fire said to falter

By HANNA ARHIROVA and ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's president praised the United States for including tank-killing armored vehicles in its latest multibillion-dollar package of military aid, saying they are "exactly what is needed" for Ukrainian troops locked in combat against Russian forces, even as both sides celebrated Orthodox Christmas on Saturday.

The White House announcement Friday of \$3.75 billion in weapons and other aid for Ukraine and its European backers came as Moscow said its troops are observing a short Orthodox Christmas cease-fire.

Ukrainian officials denounced the unilateral 36-hour pause as a ploy and said it appeared to have been ignored by some of Moscow's forces pressing ahead with the nearly 11-month invasion. Ukrainian officials reported Russian shelling attacks in the Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions on Saturday.

Russia's Defense Ministry insisted Saturday that its forces along the 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) front line were observing the Kremlin-ordered truce, but returned fire when attacked.

The latest package of U.S. military assistance was the biggest to date for Ukraine. For the first time, it included 50 Bradley armored vehicles and 500 of the anti-tank missiles they can fire. Germany also announced it would supply around 40 Marder armored personnel carriers and France promised wheeled AMX-10 RC tank destroyers.

Together, this week's pledges were powerful signals that Ukraine can count on continued long-term Western aid against Russian President Vladimir Putin's drive to dismember the country.

In his nightly televised address on Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed the U.S. aid package as "very powerful."

"For the first time, we will get Bradley armored vehicles — this is exactly what is needed. New guns and rounds, including high-precision ones, new rockets, new drones. It is timely and strong," he said.

He thanked U.S. President Joe Biden, U.S. lawmakers and "all the Americans who appreciate freedom, and who know that freedom is worth protecting."

Celebrated by both Ukrainians and Russians, the Orthodox Christmas holiday also underscored the enmity that Russia's invasion is precipitating between them.

In a revered cathedral in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, the Christmas service Saturday was delivered in the Ukrainian language — instead of Russian — for the first time in decades, highlighting how Ukraine is seeking to jettison Moscow's remaining influences over religious, cultural and economic life in the country.

Ukraine's government on Thursday took over administration of the Kyiv-Pechersk monastery's Dormition Cathedral from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which had been loyal to the Russian Orthodox Church, and allowed the Ukrainian church to use it for the Christmas service.

The monastery complex is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The cathedral was built about 1,000 years ago, then reconstructed in the 1990s after being ruined in World War II.

"It's an amazing moment," said Alex Fesiak, among hundreds of worshippers who attended. "Previously this place — on Ukrainian territory, within Kyiv — has been linked to Moscow. Now we feel this is ours, this is Ukrainian. This is part of the Ukrainian nation."

The Putin-ordered Christmas cease-fire that started Friday was first proposed by the Russian Orthodox Church's Kremlin-aligned head, Patriarch Kirill. The Orthodox Church uses the Julian calendar and celebrates Christmas on Jan. 7. Putin's order said a cease-fire would allow worshippers in combat zones to attend Christmas services.

But Ukrainian officials didn't commit to following it and dismissed the move as a Russian ploy to buy time for its struggling invasion forces to regroup. Ukrainian and Western officials portrayed the announcement as a Russian attempt to grab the moral high ground and possibly snatch battlefield initiative and momentum from Ukrainian forces amid their counteroffensive of recent months.

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The pause was due to end Saturday night — at midnight Moscow time, which is 11 p.m. in Kyiv.

The Ministry of Defense in Britain, a leading supplier of military aid to Ukraine, said Saturday in its daily readout on the invasion that “fighting has continued at a routine level into the Orthodox Christmas period.”

In the fiercely contested Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine, regional Gov. Serhiy Haidai reported continued Russian shelling and assaults. Posting Friday on Telegram, Haidai said that in the first three hours of the cease-fire, Russian forces shelled Ukrainian positions 14 times and stormed one settlement three times. The claim couldn't be independently verified.

Ukrainian authorities on Saturday also reported attacks elsewhere in the previous 24 hours although it wasn't clear whether the fighting was before or after the cease-fire's start.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said Russian forces carried out a missile strike and 20 salvos with rockets, and targeted settlements in the east, northeast and south.

The head of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region on Saturday reported two civilian deaths the previous day from Russian strikes in the fiercely contested city of Bakhmut and to its north, in Krasna Hora.

In the southern Kherson region, Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevych said Saturday that Russian forces shelled 39 times on Friday, hitting houses and apartment buildings, as well as a fire station. One person was killed and seven others were wounded.

A first for reclaimed Kyiv cathedral: Christmas in Ukrainian

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Packing a cathedral for Orthodox Christmas, hundreds of worshippers heard the service in that church in the Ukrainian language for the first time in decades, a demonstration of independence from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Richly decorated with golden icons and panels, the cathedral — part of the complex known as the Monastery of the Caves and a UNESCO World Heritage Site — put up a video screen outside for the overflow of worshipers, despite the frigid temperatures of -10 Celsius (14 F).

Overlooking the right bank of the Dnieper River, the cathedral and monastery complex has been a pilgrimage site for centuries. And for the first time in the 31 years of Ukraine's independence, the service there was held in the Ukrainian language. Ukrainian army troops in uniform were among those singing well-known Ukrainian carols.

Ukraine's government on Thursday took over the administration of the Dormition Cathedral at the Kyiv-Pechersk monastery and allowed the Orthodox Church of Ukraine to use it for the Orthodox Christmas service. The move highlights the long-running tensions between the two churches exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine.

The cathedral, built about 1,000 years ago then rebuilt in the 1990s after being ruined in World War II, had been under control of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which formerly had ties with the Russian Orthodox Church.

“It's a first victory” for Ukraine, said Oksana Abu-Akel who hailed it as a significant step for Orthodox believers to cut ties with Russia after it started the war more than 10 months ago. “This is the first time in 300 years that there is really our own service here. Every person feels this joy. It is a victory for all Ukrainians.”

Ukrainian Culture Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko said Thursday that the cathedral had been taken over by the state after the lease of the Moscow-affiliated church expired on Dec. 31. Tkachenko attended the service Saturday.

“It's an amazing moment. Previously this place — on Ukrainian territory, within Kyiv — has been linked to Moscow. Now we feel this is ours, this is Ukrainian. This is part of the Ukrainian nation,” said Alex Fesiak, who attended the service.

In 2019, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine received recognition from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Moscow's and most other Orthodox patriarchs refused to accept that designation that formalized a split with the Russian church.

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The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), which remained loyal to the Moscow patriarch since the 17th century, declared independence from Moscow's Patriarchate after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The UOC gave Moscow a liturgical cold shoulder by dropping the commemoration of Moscow Patriarch Kirill as its leader in public worship and blessing its own sacramental oil rather than use Moscow's supply.

Metropolitan Epiphanius, the primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, spoke not just about Christmas but delivered a political message about the war.

"As a nation, we sought to live peacefully, having a good understanding with all our neighbors. But the enemy meanly and treacherously broke the peace and invaded our land, shedding blood, sowing death and wanting to destroy our statehood and our very Ukrainian identity," he said during the service.

"Those who held us in captivity could not endure our achievements and our success," he said. "The devil's malice and envy prompted them to make war, but they are sure to be defeated. After all, the truth is on our side."

Natalia Levshyna said her husband couldn't come to the Christmas service as he is fighting on the front line, but she will send him photos of the service as it's very important to him. Originally from Donbas, she said she stopped attending the church of the Moscow Patriarchate in 2014, when Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula and supported the conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine.

"Our emotions are running high," she said, barely holding back tears, describing her conviction that the Ukrainian church on Ukrainian soil should be independent from the Russian Orthodox Church.

"Our church must be synchronized with state policy. They must be one," Levshyna said.

Others in Ukraine have decided to distance themselves from the Russian Orthodox Church by celebrating Christmas on Dec. 25.

On Friday, the Church of Moscow Patriarchate condemned the Ukrainian plans to hold a service in the Kyiv cathedral as "an attempt to forcefully seize ... the cathedral by means of blackmail and misinformation of society."

In 2019, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine received recognition from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, but the Moscow's patriarch refused to accept that.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church declared independence from Moscow's Patriarchate after Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, ending the Ukrainian church's loyalty to the Moscow patriarch which dated back to the 17th century. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church removed Moscow Patriarch Kirill as its leader in public worship and now uses its own sacramental oil for blessings rather than oil supplied by Moscow.

But Ukrainian security agencies have claimed that some in the Ukrainian church have maintained close ties with Moscow. They've raided numerous holy sites of the church and later posted photos of rubles, Russian passports and leaflets with messages from the Moscow patriarch as proof that some church officials have been loyal to Moscow.

Prominent Ukrainian Orthodox Church leaders have rejected the allegations of ties with Moscow, insisting that they have loyally supported Ukraine from the start of the war and that a government crackdown will only hand a propaganda coup to Russia.

W.Va. journalist let go after reporting on abuse allegations

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — A West Virginia journalist lost her job last month after she reported about alleged abuse of people with disabilities within the state agency that runs West Virginia's foster care and psychiatric facilities.

Amelia Ferrell Knisely, a reporter at West Virginia Public Broadcasting, said she was told to stop reporting on the Department of Health and Human Resources after leaders of the embattled agency "threatened to discredit" the publicly funded television and radio network. She later learned her part-time position was being eliminated.

In a statement, Knisely said her news director told her the order came from WVPB Executive Director Butch Antolini, former communications director for Republican Gov. Jim Justice. Antolini has served as

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executive director since 2021, when his predecessor was ousted after Justice overhauled the agency's governing board.

Justice has tried unsuccessfully to eliminate state funding for WVPB in the past and was accused of appointing partisan operatives to the board. WVPB receives around \$4 million a year in state funding.

Antolini declined to comment, but other officials denied any effort to influence coverage. West Virginia Educational Broadcasting Authority chairman William H. File III said Antolini told the board "he was not coerced or pressured by anyone."

File said in a statement that Knisely was never fired and remains on the WVPB payroll, though she said her door key and email were deactivated.

Knisely's departure comes during a tumultuous time for West Virginia media. Days before she left WVPB, three reporters for the Pulitzer Prize-winning Charleston Gazette-Mail said they were fired after publicly criticizing an editorial decision by their company president Doug Skaff, who is minority leader in the state House of Delegates. Skaff approved and led a video interview with Don Blankenship, a coal company executive convicted of safety violations connected to one of the worst coal mining disasters in recent U.S. history.

The departures leave a diminished capitol press corps to cover the upcoming legislative session, which begins Jan. 11.

Knisely's stories detailed alleged mistreatment of people with disabilities under state care. The department cares for some of the most vulnerable residents in one of the poorest U.S. states.

After Knisely's departure from WVPB was first reported by The Parkersburg News and Sentinel last week, both Republican Senate President Craig Blair and Democratic Party Chair Mike Pushkin called the circumstances around her departure "disturbing."

Pushkin said Knisely's coverage of "the glaring issues at DHHR" was "detailed, in depth, and most importantly true."

"There's a very clear difference between not liking what the media reports and actively working to silence them," Blair wrote on Twitter Dec. 29.

Knisely was hired as a part-time reporter at WVPB in September. In November, she was copied on an email from then-DHHR Secretary Bill Crouch alleging inaccuracies in a story and asking for a "complete retraction."

That never happened, but in early December, Knisely said she was told by WVPB news director Eric Douglas that she could no longer cover DHHR because of threats by state officials to discredit WVPB.

A week later, amid mounting criticism, Crouch announced he was resigning.

Douglas confirmed to The Associated Press that he was instructed to tell Knisely she would no longer be reporting on DHHR, and that Antolini directed him to do so.

As for threats from DHHR officials about discrediting WVPB, he said: "I'd rather not comment on that."

On Dec. 15, Knisely filed a human resources complaint about interference with her reporting.

Things came to a head later that same day over Knisely's press credentials for the 2023 legislative session, according to emails obtained by the AP and first reported by The Parkersburg News and Sentinel.

Douglas initially informed legislative staffers that Knisely would "serve a vital role" in WVPB's 2023 legislative coverage. But then the station's chief operating officer left him off an email saying she wouldn't need credentials after all.

That troubled Senate spokesperson Jacquie Bland, who emailed Douglas to ask about it.

"It feels kind of gross and shady to me that someone else would dip in and say that one of your reporters won't have any assignments related to the session," she wrote.

She added: "I definitely wanted you to be aware that Butch and Pals were trying to stick their fingers in the pie."

Responding the next day, Douglas said he had been pulled into Antolini's office and told "things had changed with Amelia." He said he didn't appreciate WVPB leadership going behind his back, "but for now it is out of my hands."

"And you're right, it does feel gross and shady," he wrote.

Knisely said she was informed Dec. 20 that part-time positions were being eliminated. Her email and key card were deactivated around that time.

This week, Knisely announced on Twitter she was hired by the Beckley-based newspaper The Register-Herald to report on West Virginia's upcoming legislative session. Her coverage will include developments with the state Department of Health and Human Resources, she said.

Bills' Hamlin breathing on his own, joins team via video

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — It was uplifting enough for the Buffalo Bills staff and players to see Damar Hamlin appear on the video screen in the team's meeting room Friday — "larger than life," as coach Sean McDermott put it — for the first time since the safety collapsed and had to be resuscitated on the field.

What sent everyone's emotions over the top was hearing Hamlin, his mouth and throat still raw shortly after having a breathing tube removed, softly say: "Love you, boys."

"Amazing. Touching. To see Damar, number one, through my own eyes, I know it's something I've been looking forward to, kind of needing to see," McDermott said. "And to see the players' reaction. They stood up right away and clapped for him and yelled some things at him. It was a pretty cool exchange."

Four days since his heart stopped after making what appeared to be a routine tackle in a game, the 24-year-old Hamlin from his hospital room in Cincinnati and the Bills enjoyed a moment of jubilation in celebrating the next step in what his doctors have termed a remarkable recovery.

"We got our boy, man. It's all that matters," left tackle Dion Dawkins said.

"To see the boy's face, to see him smile and to see him go like this in the camera," Dawkins said, flexing his muscles to mimic Hamlin, "it was everything. And then to hear him talk, it was literally everything. That's what we needed."

Hamlin is now breathing and talking on his own, and traded in the writing pad he had been using to communicate. Though there is no timetable for his release, Hamlin's doctors said Thursday that both breathing on his own and showing continued signs of improvement are the final steps for him to be discharged from the University of Cincinnati Medical Center.

Hamlin spent his first two days in the hospital under sedation. Upon being awakened on Wednesday evening, Hamlin was able to follow commands and grip people's hands. The breathing tube was removed, the team said Friday, and Hamlin's "neurologic function remains intact."

The team did not say whether Hamlin's status remains critical or whether he's been moved from intensive care.

In what was an expected formality, the Bills placed Hamlin on the season-ending injured reserve list and activated rookie cornerback Christian Benford from IR. Benford has been sidelined since sustaining an oblique injury on Thanksgiving Day.

"The hair on the back of my neck stood up when he said, 'I love you boys,'" said general manager Brandon Beane, who returned to Buffalo on Thursday after spending the three days at Hamlin's bedside along with the player's family.

The turning point in Hamlin's recovery, for Beane, anyway, came Thursday morning when the two exchanged hugs.

"Just to be able to hug him and the grip strength that he had," Beane said, before recalling what he told Hamlin's father, Mario. "I told him, I'm not a crier, but man it was emotional and a lot of grown men in there crying yesterday. Something I'll never forget."

The reaction from around the NFL on Friday was just as heart-warming.

"Awesome. It's probably uplifting for the entire league," said New York Giants coach Brian Daboll, who spent the previous four seasons as the Bills offensive coordinator. "It gives you a boost because you're praying so hard for the young man."

The NFL announced plans to show support for Hamlin during all Week 18 games, including a pregame moment of support, painting Hamlin's No. 3 on the 30-yard line and pregame shirts with "Love for Damar

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3." The Bills will also wear "3" jersey patches.

New York Jets rookie cornerback Sauce Gardner was already planning to wear Hamlin's No. 3 jersey during warmups before the team's game at Miami on Sunday.

"What a warrior. He's so strong, a fighter for sure," Gardner said. "I was just so happy he was able to come back to the world."

Interacting with Hamlin gave the Bills (12-3) some encouragement and allowed them to turn their attention to the season-ending home game against the New England Patriots (8-8) on Sunday.

"It's going to be a celebration of life and an ongoing life," Beane said, looking ahead.

"It's not only going to be a celebration of Buffalo, but the whole country, and I'm sure people internationally that have watched this situation," he added. "It's going to be a cool deal, and the only thing better is if Damar was out there by then. I don't know if that would happen, but anyway, we're excited for Sunday."

The sight of Hamlin collapsing, which was broadcast to a North American TV audience on ESPN's "Monday Night Football," has led to an outpouring of support from fans and players from across the league. Fans, team owners and players — including Tom Brady and Russell Wilson — have made donations to Hamlin's Chasing M's Foundation, which had raised just short of \$8 million by Friday afternoon.

Speaker McCarthy: A weakened leader or emboldened survivor?

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Kevin McCarthy is the new House speaker, but as bruising as it was for him to seize the gavel in a history-making election, it may be even more difficult for the embattled leader to do much with the powerful position — or to even keep it.

Like the two most recent Republican speakers, John Boehner and Paul Ryan, McCarthy takes the helm of a restive, rebellious majority split in much the same way as the party itself, between what's left of the Grand Old Party conservatives and a new generation of tea party-to-Donald Trump hard-liners preferring almost no big government at all.

The chaos that erupted in four days of House voting, halting start of the new Congress, is a prelude to the highly uncertain path ahead as McCarthy tries to lead an unruly Republican majority to achieve its priorities and confront President Joe Biden's agenda — and maybe even keep the government from shutting down.

"This is the great part: Because it took this long, now we learned how to govern," McCarthy, who was first elected in 2006, suggested as he rounded toward victory.

McCarthy endured a grueling weeklong fight to get here, a speaker's election like no other since the eve of the Civil War. A coalition of 20 holdouts refused to support his speakership unless he yielded to their demands to give away some power. He was forced to roll through 14 ballots before he finally won a majority vote on the 15th vote, but not before the final chaotic scene of shouting between allies and holdouts pushed balloting into early Saturday.

In the end, McCarthy emerges as a weakened speaker, one with less authority on paper than those before him. That's particularly true because he agreed to give the hard-right holdouts a key concession: restoring a rule that allows any single lawmaker to make a "motion to vacate the chair," essentially a vote to oust the speaker from that leadership post.

But in some ways, the son of gritty Bakersfield, an oil-and-agricultural heartland in central California, also becomes emboldened as a survivor who withstood one of history's most brutal brawls for power and who prides himself on being an underestimated political fighter.

"Apparently, I like to make history," McCarthy quipped at one point during the raucous week.

McCarthy staked his political career on early backing of Trump, and it was the former president who delivered when needed, making late phone calls to holdouts and "helping get those final votes." When it was finally over, when McCarthy walked into the speaker's office at the Capitol, the sign bearing his name already was hanging.

Plenty of tests await.

Congress faces an agenda of must-pass bills to fund the government, restock a military whose supplies

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have been depleted by decades of war and aid to Ukraine, authorize farming programs and raise the nation's borrowing limit to avert an unprecedented federal default.

For the first time as president, Biden will face a divided government, with the House in Republican hands and the Senate still controlled, though narrowly, by Democrats.

Divided government can be a time of bipartisan deal-making as the parties come together to accomplish big priorities. But more often it results in brinkmanship that has led to stalemates, standoffs and shutdowns.

House Republicans are eager to confront Biden with oversight of the White House's handling of the U.S.-Mexico border, the COVID-19 crisis and other issues, along with investigations of Biden, his family and his administration.

"I came to Washington to challenge the status quo," wrote Republican Bob Good of Virginia in an op-ed before his many votes against McCarthy. "I intend to keep that promise." Good was one of six Republican who voted "present" in the final roll call.

McCarthy has been here before.

In 2011, tea party Republicans took control of the House, confronting the agenda of President Barack Obama and his vice president, Biden. The movement opposed the Washington political establishment and espoused a conservative and libertarian philosophy, advocating for less spending, lower taxes and reducing the national debt and budget deficit.

McCarthy helped recruit the tea party class, and he went on to become the third-ranking Republican, part of the "Young Guns" with Ryan of Wisconsin and then-Rep. Eric Cantor of Virginia.

Fueled by the tea party, they went on to lead House Republicans into crisis after crisis with efforts to cut federal spending during the "fiscal cliff" of 2012 and federal shutdowns in 2013 as they tried to repeal Obama's health care program.

In 2015, when then-Rep. Mark Meadows, the North Carolina Republican who led the Freedom Caucus and later served as Trump's last chief of staff, threatened a "motion to vacate the chair" — a vote to oust the speaker — Boehner chose early retirement.

McCarthy tried to take Boehner's place, but he dropped out of the race when it was clear he would not have support from conservatives. Ryan ended up with the job. But he, too, retired in the Trump era.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., did away with the "vacate the chair" rule when Democrats regained the majority in 2019. A seasoned legislator who had made history as the first woman to be speaker, Pelosi ran the House with the strength of experience.

McCarthy has been in office for 15 years, half as long as Pelosi when she first took the helm, and with far fewer legislative victories to speak of. In talks over the past week with the hard-liners, he was forced to reinstate the "motion to vacate the chair" to win over the holdouts. They can now hold it over him every single day.

"If a CEO is not doing the job, you can fire him — same thing in politics," said Republican Ralph Norman of South Carolina, one of the holdouts McCarthy won over with the rules changes.

The chaos that erupted on the House floor this past week may end up as a prelude to the Congress to come.

"What you saw over the last week," Norman said, "is how democracy works."

McCarthy elected House speaker in rowdy post-midnight vote

By LISA MASCARO and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Kevin McCarthy was elected House speaker on a historic post-midnight 15th ballot early Saturday, overcoming holdouts from his own ranks and floor tensions that boiled over after a chaotic week that tested the new GOP majority's ability to govern.

"My father always told me, it's not how you start, it's how you finish," McCarthy told cheering fellow Republicans.

Eager to confront President Joe Biden and the Democrats, he promised subpoenas and investigations. "Now the hard work begins," the California Republican declared. He credited former President Donald

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Trump for standing with him and for making late calls "helping get those final votes."

Republicans roared in celebration when his victory was announced, chanting "USA! USA!"

Finally elected, McCarthy took the oath of office, and the House was finally able to swear in newly elected lawmakers who had been waiting all week for the chamber to formally open and the 2023-24 session to begin.

After four days of grueling ballots, McCarthy flipped more than a dozen conservative holdouts to become supporters, including the chairman of the chamber's Freedom Caucus.

He fell one vote short on the 14th ballot, and the chamber became raucous, unruly.

McCarthy strode to the back of the chamber to confront Republican Matt Gaetz, sitting with Lauren Boebert and other holdouts. Fingers were pointed, words exchanged and violence apparently just averted.

At one point, Republican Mike Rogers of Alabama, shouting, approached Gaetz before another Republican, Richard Hudson of North Carolina, physically pulled him back.

"Stay civil!" someone shouted.

Order restored, the Republicans fell in line to give McCarthy the post he had fought so hard to gain, House speaker, second in the line of succession to the presidency.

The few remaining Republican holdouts began voting present, dropping the tally he needed. It was the end of a bitter standoff that had shown the strengths and fragility of American democracy.

The tally was 216-212 with Democrats voting for leader Hakeem Jeffries, and six Republican holdouts to McCarthy simply voting present.

The night's stunning turn of events came after McCarthy agreed to many of the detractors' demands — including the reinstatement of a longstanding House rule that would allow any single member to call a vote to oust him from office.

Even as McCarthy secured the votes he needs, he will emerge as a weakened speaker, having given away some powers and constantly under the threat of being booted by his detractors.

But he could also be emboldened as a survivor of one of the more brutal fights for the gavel in U.S. history. Not since the Civil War era has a speaker's vote dragged through so many rounds of voting.

The showdown that has stymied the new Congress came against the backdrop of the second anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, which shook the country when a mob of Trump's supporters tried to stop Congress from certifying the Republican's 2020 election defeat to Biden.

At a Capitol event Friday, some lawmakers, all but one of them Democrats, observed a moment of silence and praised officers who helped protect Congress on that day. And at the White House, Biden handed out medals to officers and others who fought the attackers.

"America is a land of laws, not chaos," he said.

At the afternoon speaker's vote, a number of Republicans tiring of the spectacle temporarily walked out when one of McCarthy's most ardent challengers, Gaetz, railed against the GOP leader.

Contours of a deal with conservative holdouts who had been blocking McCarthy's rise had emerged the night before, and took hold after four dismal days and 14 failed votes in an intraparty standoff unseen in modern times.

One significant former holdout — Republican Scott Perry, chairman of the conservative Freedom Caucus, who had been a leader of Trump's efforts to challenge the 2020 election — tweeted after his switched vote for McCarthy, "We're at a turning point."

Trump may have played a role in swaying some holdouts — calling into a meeting of Republican freshmen the night before, and calling other members ahead of voting. He had urged Republicans to wrap up their public dispute.

As Republican Mike Garcia of California nominated McCarthy on an earlier ballot Friday, he also thanked the U.S. Capitol Police, who were given a standing ovation for protecting lawmakers and the legislative seat of democracy on Jan. 6, 2021.

But in nominating the Democratic leader Jeffries, Democrat Jim Clyburn of South Carolina recalled the horror of that day. "The eyes of the country are on us today," he told his colleagues.

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Electing a speaker is normally an easy, joyous task for a party that has just won majority control. But not this time: About 200 Republicans were stymied by 20 far-right colleagues who said McCarthy was not conservative enough. Only the 12th ballot on Friday afternoon did McCarthy start making gains, flipping their votes to support.

The House adjourned Friday until late in the night, giving time for last-minute negotiations and allowing two absent Republican colleagues to return to Washington.

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 John Boehner, had trouble leading a rebellious right flank. The result: government shutdowns, standoffs and Boehner's early retirement when conservatives threatened to oust him.

The agreement McCarthy presented to the holdouts from the Freedom Caucus and others centers 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.

At the core of the emerging deal was 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 a return to the longstanding rule that former Speaker Nancy Pelosi had done away with, because it had been held over the head of Boehner. But it appears McCarthy had no other choice.

Other wins for the holdouts are more obscure and 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.

Golden Globes are back on TV, but are reform efforts enough?

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Without a TV show, starry red carpet, host, press or even a livestream, the Golden Globe Awards were in chaos last year after scandal broke over lack of diversity, accusations of sexism, and ethical and financial lapses among members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

Once known as Hollywood's biggest, booziest party that regularly drew 18 million television viewers, the doling out of statues was reduced to a 90-minute private event with no celebrities present at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

Winners were announced on Twitter, often without specifying what project a person had actually won for. What a difference a year can make.

After dumping the telecast in the aftermath of a damaging expose by the Los Angeles Times, NBC will put the battered 80-year-old Globes back on the air Tuesday under a one-year deal, as opposed to multi-year contracts of the past worth tens of millions of dollars.

A wave of celebrities plan to attend, along with star presenters and funnyman host Jerrod Carmichael after the embattled controllers of the Globes dug deep into the work of implementing top-down reforms.

There's now a strict code of conduct, refreshed bylaws, a ban on gifts and new rules on accepting travel and other perks from the industry. Contentious news conferences were dumped, and the pool of awards voters was expanded beyond the 87 Los Angeles-based foreign journalists who once ruled the organization.

But are the powerful publicists, studios and other stakeholders who boycotted in protest satisfied with the changes? And are those changes the beginning — or closer to the end?

"It's, by far, not over," said German journalist Helen Hoehne, who took over as president of the HFPA a year and a half ago. "We always said when we started this journey that it would be ongoing and that it would take some time."

Kelly Bush Novak, CEO and founder of the A-list public relations firm ID, said more must be done, but she supports steps taken so far.

"We came together ... to ensure the future of the Globes, in step with our culture and our shared values as an industry, and we see commendable and seismic progress," she said. "I'm optimistic that the work

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will continue.”

Still, Novak acknowledged not all stakeholders are on board ahead of Tuesday’s broadcast, despite sweeping changes aimed at restoring the luster of the Globes.

Last year, publicists like Novak banded together to battle the HFPA, and studios that included Netflix and WarnerMedia cut ties with the organization after the LA Times raised questions about corruption and a range of bias issues over race and sexual orientation.

None of the 87 Hollywood Foreign Press Association members was Black and the group had not had a Black member since at least 2002.

Now, after an effort to increase and diversify its ranks, 199 people decide who gets a Globe, a mix of 96 HFPA members and outsiders from other countries brought in to dilute the power of the old guard. Membership eligibility was expanded from Los Angeles to anywhere in the United States.

Heading into the telecast, Globes voters stand at 52% female, and 51.8% racially and ethnically diverse, including 19.6% Latino, 12.1% Asian, 10.1% Black and 10.1% Middle Eastern. Voters also include those who are LGBTQIA+. In all, 62 countries are represented.

The governing board was expanded from nine to 15 and includes three Black members, two of whom vote on rules and other matters but not awards. Overall, the organization now has six Black HFPA members and 14 Black international Globes voters who aren’t members.

Perhaps the most significant change: The Globes were purchased by billionaire Todd Boehly, who also owns the Beverly Hilton, Globes producer Dick Clark Productions and the Chelsea soccer team. He’s shifting the voting body from its founding nonprofit status to a for-profit model, pending approval by the California attorney general. He plans to preserve the HFPA’s charitable work with a separate nonprofit entity.

A hotline managed by two independent law firms was opened, with complaints investigated by outsiders. A chief diversity officer was hired, and mandatory racial, sexual harassment and sexual orientation sensitivity training was put in place, required for any HFPA member casting Globe votes.

Michelle Williams, nominated for her turn in “The Fabelmans,” is among dozens of stars panning to attend Tuesday.

“It feels to me like the community as a whole has decided that this organization has really done a lot of work to reform themselves and that we can support change, like we can hold people accountable and then we can support them as they continue to journey in their path towards being a better organization,” she said.

Added Judd Hirsch, nominated for the same film: “We’ll be there. We’ll give them another chance.”

Dumping news conferences at the center of insensitive questions posed to talent who felt obligated to show up helped cool off some critics, but not all.

“I can’t speak for everyone. There may be some reluctance to participate,” Novak said. “We must acknowledge the past and will never forget the damage done. Manifesting a new future requires it.”

Brendan Fraser, nominated for his performance in “The Whale,” will not be there Tuesday. In 2018, Fraser said he was groped by Philip Berk, a former HFPA president who is from South Africa.

Berk was expelled in 2021 after calling Black Lives Matter “a racist hate movement.”

“I just hope that we can regain his trust over time,” Hoehne said of Fraser.

The same, Hoehne said, goes for Tom Cruise. Last year, he returned his three Golden Globes in protest. With a best picture nod for his long-awaited sequel “Top Gun: Maverick,” he was snubbed for best actor this year.

Under Boehly’s leadership, HFPA members will earn \$75,000 a year as his employees, as opposed to current stipends closer to \$5,000. They’ll vote on nominations and winners among films and television series submitted for awards consideration. They’ll write for the organization’s website, and organize other projects, the LA Times said, citing a confidential employee memo it reviewed.

The 103 new voting non-members recruited with the help of the National Association of Black Journalists, Asian-American Journalists Association and LGBTQIA+ organizations will not be paid, setting up a two-tier structure aimed at eliminating the taint of financial compensation as more new recruits come on board.

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Outraged industry stakeholders had called for the overall Globes voting body to be closer to 300. Other reforms are aimed at battling the perception of influence peddling.

As eventual paid employees, members will be subject to firing without cause. They're now required to sign a code of conduct every year covering job performance, decorum and ethical behavior.

The 80-year-old group had been stuck in its ways, Hoehne acknowledged.

"We needed to question a lot of things. We needed to look at these bylaws and say, OK, how can we make them better? How can we modernize the association? We had never really done it and not addressed it," she said.

Although the new pay structure has not yet been implemented, over the past year the HFPA has pushed out several members it accused of violating its standards.

One was accused of forging signatures on Internal Revenue Service documents, another case related to sexual harassment and a third involved fabricating interviews that never occurred, according to an HFPA spokesperson.

Boehly himself acknowledged the future is uncertain.

"I have nightmares where it doesn't work too, you know? I get it, you can't convince all of the people all of the time of anything," he told the LA Times. "We know we have to add value and we know that we have to be part of the solution."

Drugstores make slow headway on staffing problems

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

Joan Cohrs missed her chance to grab a prescription at her usual drugstore by about 30 seconds.

Cohrs walked up to the counter of an Indianapolis CVS pharmacy shortly after a metal curtain descended, closing it for lunch. She didn't mind. The 60-year-old said she feels compassion for people in health care.

"They definitely need a break," said Cohrs, who was working at an assisted living facility when COVID-19 hit.

A rush of vaccines, virus tests and a busy flu season started overwhelming pharmacies more than a year ago, forcing many to temporarily close when workers weren't available.

Major drugstore chains have raised pay and dangled signing bonuses to add employees. They're also emphasizing the lunch breaks and sending routine prescription work to other locations to improve conditions in their pandemic-battered pharmacies.

Still, temporary closures persist, and experts say bigger changes are needed.

"There isn't a shortage of pharmacists. There's just a shortage of pharmacists who want to work in those high-stress environments that aren't adequately resourced," said Richard Dang, an assistant professor of clinical pharmacy at the University of Southern California.

Drugstores rely on pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to fill prescriptions, answer phones, work the drive-thru window, administer vaccines and give tests.

They also ask them to manage a growing amount of patient health. Pharmacists in many stores now help people quit smoking and monitor their blood sugar. And companies like Walgreens are pushing them to work more with primary care doctors.

Pharmacists also can now test for COVID-19 and then prescribe medicine, a process that might take 20 minutes or more.

Giving pharmacists a chance to have a bigger impact on public health is "awesome," said Stefanie Ferreri, a University of North Carolina pharmacy professor. But she added that "the workforce wasn't quite ready."

Pharmacies, like other businesses, were hurt earlier in the pandemic because employees who got COVID-19 — or those in close contact with someone who did — had to miss work for a few days. Stress also left many pharmacists and technicians feeling burned out and looking for other jobs, industry observers say.

The number of job postings for retail pharmacists rose 63% from 2020 to 2021, according to the Pharmacy Workforce Center, a non-profit that tracks openings.

Walgreens leaders said Thursday that they added a net total of 600 pharmacists in the recently com-

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pleted fiscal first quarter. But staff shortages still force the chain to reduce hours at some pharmacies.

A company representative decline to elaborate, calling it a fluid situation.

In addition to employee shortages, drugstores also are dealing with thin prescription reimbursement. That makes it hard to raise pay to compete for employees, said Douglas Hoey, CEO of the National Community Pharmacists Association.

"When just about everything goes up in price, pharmacies are still getting paid as if it was 2019 or 2018," he said.

Walgreens is opening processing centers to help fill some of the routine prescriptions that stores get from patients with chronic conditions. Company leaders expect these centers to eventually take over about half the prescription volume from their stores.

The company also said in October it would eliminate all "task-based" measurements that are part of performance reviews for pharmacy employees.

CVS Health is trying to spread data entry and prescription verification work to different locations to ease the load at busy stores.

The company also started emphasizing the half-hour lunch breaks in February.

Those have limited value, according to Bled Tanoe, a former Walgreens pharmacist in Oklahoma City. She said customers often arrive just before the pharmacy closes, eating into the break time.

And store employees frequently catch up on work during that break.

Tanoe, 35, said she left drugstores in 2021 to work at a hospital because the demands were getting "impossible." She and others say bolder steps are needed to improve the pharmacies. Pharmacists should have the ability to temporarily close counters or cancel some vaccination appointments when workloads get overwhelming, Tanoe said.

"A pharmacist whose license is on the line has to be the one to navigate and to dictate what is happening in the pharmacy on a daily function," she said.

Dang noted that a relatively new California law prevents chain drugstores from establishing quotas for how many prescriptions a pharmacist must fill during a shift.

He also said drugstores simply need more employees behind the counter if they add services. He noted that the bigger chains are more prone to running drugstores with only one pharmacist.

At least one has to be on duty for a pharmacy to operate.

Ferreri would like to see more drugstores set appointments for regulars. That gives pharmacists predictable workloads and more time to fill and check prescriptions. It also reduces trips for customers and can help them keep track of refills.

These appointments ease stress, said Jessi Stout, owner of Table Rock Pharmacy in Morganton, North Carolina.

"It's not like the patient's in, waiting for you to fill 15 prescriptions at once," she said.

One of Stout's regulars, Debra Bowles, calls the free program "priceless."

She refills about six prescriptions every month and has her mom enrolled in a similar program at another pharmacy.

"It makes taking care of people who cannot take care of themselves much easier," the 65-year-old said.

While some pharmacies are changing how they operate, customers also can help. Ferreri recommends giving drugstores a few days to refill a prescription instead of waiting until the last pill.

Patience also is needed, said Brigid Groves, an executive with the American Pharmacists Association. She said they hear more about customers taking out their frustrations on pharmacy employees over delays or medicine shortages.

"I think on both sides of the counter, we need to all have grace and realize this is a very challenging and stressful time for everyone," she said.

UK palace allies push back against Prince Harry's claims

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Allies of Britain's royal family pushed back Saturday against claims made by Prince Harry in his new memoir, which paints the monarchy as a cold and callous institution that failed to nurture or support him.

Buckingham Palace hasn't officially commented on the book. But British newspapers and websites brimmed with quotes from unnamed "royal insiders," rebutting Harry's accusations. One said his public attacks on the royal family took a "toll" on the health of Queen Elizabeth II, who died in September.

Veteran journalist Jonathan Dimbleby, a biographer and friend of King Charles III, said Harry's revelations were the type "that you'd expect ... from a sort of B-list celebrity," and that the king would be pained and frustrated by them.

"His concern ... is to act as head of state for a nation which we all know is in pretty troubled condition," Dimbleby told the BBC. "I think he will think this gets in the way."

Harry's book, "Spare," is the latest in a string of very public pronouncements by the prince and his wife Meghan since they quit royal life and moved to California in 2020, citing what they saw as the media's racist treatment of Meghan, who is biracial, and a lack of support from the palace. It follows an interview with Oprah Winfrey and a six-part Netflix documentary released last month.

Harry is not the first British royal to air family secrets — both his parents used the media as their marriage fell apart. Charles cooperated on Dimbleby's 1994 book and accompanying television documentary, which revealed that the then heir to the throne had had an affair during his marriage to Princess Diana.

Diana gave her side of the story in a BBC interview the following year, famously saying "there were three of us in this marriage" in reference to Charles' relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles.

But "Spare" goes into far more detail about private conversations and personal grievances than any previous royal revelation.

In the ghostwritten memoir, Harry discusses his grief at the death of his mother in 1997 and his long-simmering resentment at the role of royal "spare," overshadowed by the "heir" — older brother Prince William. He recounts arguments and a physical altercation with William, reveals how he lost his virginity (in a field) and describes using cocaine and cannabis.

He also says he killed 25 Taliban fighters while serving as an Apache helicopter pilot in Afghanistan — a claim criticized by both the Taliban and British military veterans.

"Spare" is due to be published around the world on Tuesday. The Associated Press obtained an early Spanish-language copy.

Harry has said he expects counterattacks from the palace. He has long complained of "leaks" and "plants" of stories to the media by members of the royal household.

In an interview due to be broadcast on ITV on Sunday — one of several he has recorded to promote the book — Harry says people who accuse him of invading his family's privacy "don't understand or don't want to believe that my family have been briefing the press."

"I don't know how staying silent is ever going to make things better," he said.

Chaos in the House: McCarthy's plea, and begging for votes

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was the extraordinary moment that brought House Republicans to the brink — and ultimately the moment they found their way back.

Just one vote short of becoming speaker of the House, California Republican Kevin McCarthy stood from his chair and walked down the center aisle to the back of the chamber. It was nearing midnight, and he had already lost 13 votes for speaker over four long days. The room fell almost silent as it became apparent that the GOP leader was now asking — begging, really — the bombastic, blustering, defiant Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz to change his vote from "present" to "McCarthy."

Gaetz, who had hurled personal insults at McCarthy just hours earlier on the House floor, said no.

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McCarthy slowly walked back down the aisle, alone, head tilted to the ground. But he turned back around when he heard a scuffle behind him. Alabama Rep. Mike Rogers, a Republican ally of McCarthy, had angrily confronted Gaetz, telling him he would regret his decision. Lawmakers on the floor yelled in disbelief as Rogers was held back by a colleague.

McCarthy walked back to make sure the argument was over and then returned to his chair, defeated. He lost the 14th vote. Allies moved to abruptly adjourn the House, their hoped-for unity seemingly coming apart.

Then tempers cooled. And within the hour, McCarthy and his allies had persuaded his other remaining opponents to vote "present" as well, lowering the vote total necessary for McCarthy to win and handing him the speakership by early Saturday morning — after a historic, remarkable and somewhat astonishing week of repeated votes.

"I hope one thing is clear," McCarthy said when he finally took the gavel after 1 a.m. "I never give up."

The chaos on the House floor came exactly two years after the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection. During a late-night session after that attack, McCarthy called it the "saddest day I've ever had" as a member of Congress. In the days afterward, McCarthy blamed then-President Donald Trump for encouraging his supporters who attacked the building and interrupted the certification of President Joe Biden. But just a few weeks later McCarthy traveled to see Trump in Florida and made amends.

The scene Friday was a different kind of chaos — but it was a full-circle moment for Republicans, who had ceded both chambers of Congress and the presidency to Democrats after the violent insurrection. While many of them denounced Trump at the time, McCarthy's Florida visit brought him back into the fold, and the former president was working the phones Friday evening, calling Gaetz and the other holdouts.

"He was with me from the beginning," McCarthy said after the final vote, noting Trump's phone calls as well.

While the U.S. House is often raucous, the week's events were almost surreal: vote after vote, defeat after defeat, and eventual success after picking off seemingly intransigent opponents.

McCarthy needed two more votes going into the Friday evening tally, which didn't start until 10 p.m., late enough to provide two of his supporters — one whose wife had given birth that week and another who was ill — time to return to Washington. McCarthy and his allies seemed confident walking in, but as the votes ticked off, it became clear he would be one short.

Two of McCarthy's closest lieutenants, North Carolina Rep. Patrick McHenry and Louisiana Rep. Garrett Graves, sat on either side of Gaetz during the vote, with Graves at one point on his knees. But Gaetz could only be partially swayed, and stood to say "present" when the roll call reached his name. It wasn't enough, and McCarthy approached him just before the vote was called, C-SPAN cameras tracking his short journey.

Gaetz was angrily pointing at McCarthy during the conversation. But Colorado Rep. Ken Buck, a McCarthy supporter who was standing nearby, said the exchange between the two men was pleasant, and that McCarthy just asked him to change his vote. Gaetz said his "present" vote was as far as he was going, Buck said.

McCarthy said afterward that Gaetz eventually "got everybody there to the point that nobody voted against me," persuading some of his fellow colleagues to vote "present" as well. In the end, no Republican voted against McCarthy.

They wanted to "make this conference united and work together," McCarthy said.

Big week for US-Mexico ties going into North American summit

By COLLEEN LONG and MARIA VERZA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's been a big week for U.S.-Mexico relations, and that was even before President Joe Biden becomes the first U.S. leader to visit Mexico in nearly a decade.

In the lead-up to that trip, Biden announced a major border policy shift, with Mexico's blessing, that will result in the United States sending 30,000 migrants from four other countries per month back across the border. In Mexico, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's security forces nabbed one of the sons of

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imprisoned former Sinaloa cartel boss Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, touching off violence that left 30 dead and dozens injured. The son, Ovidio Guzmán, is a reputed drug trafficker wanted by the United States.

The two presidents, along with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, will gather in Mexico City on Monday and Tuesday for a North American leaders summit. Even with progress on the migration issue, there is much to discuss: climate change, manufacturing, trade, the economy and the potential global clout of a more collaborative North America.

Biden arrives at the Palacio Nacional in Mexico City on Monday afternoon and the presidents will meet before Trudeau joins them for dinner. Biden and Trudeau will hold talks Tuesday and then the three will gather for discussions. It will be the first time since 2014 that Mexico has hosted a U.S. president.

Biden hopes to use the summit “to keep driving North America’s economic competitiveness and help promote inclusive growth and prosperity,” said National Security Council spokesman John Kirby.

For the U.S., the major talking points are migration, drug trafficking and building on Biden’s push on electric vehicles and manufacturing.

Lopez Obrador is focused on economic integration for North America, supporting the poor in the Americas and regional relationships that put all governments on equal footing.

The U.S. and Mexico are expected to continue discussions about ending a dispute over U.S. corn after Mexico announced it would ban imports of genetically modified corn. In addition, Mexico is seeking money to boost solar energy projects.

As for Canada, the goal is simply “to carve some attention and space in this summit,” said Louise Blais, a longtime Canadian diplomat.

Mexico sees the event as a chance to advance its economic interests.

It stands to benefit as U.S. companies reconsider their relationships with China after supply chain disruptions, coronavirus outbreaks and changes in federal policy. Both Mexico’s proximity to the U.S. and existing trade agreements would be incentives for American factories to relocate south of the border. The U.S. imported more than \$380 billion worth of goods from Mexico through the first 10 months of 2022 — the third-largest source of imports after China and the European Union, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Canada is the fourth-largest U.S. partner by imports, with the State Department calling it “the world’s most comprehensive trading relationship.” The U.S. and Canada are each other’s largest market for exports, and Canada is the largest foreign supplier of energy products to the U.S.

The U.S., Mexico and Canada are already in a long-standing trade agreement that was updated in 2020. When U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai met last month with Mexico’s secretary of the economy, Raquel Buenrostro, they discussed further economic integration as well as energy, fisheries and the trade agreement’s ban on importing goods made by forced labor — a subject that is among the tensions with China.

Analysts at Bank of America estimated in October that Mexico could increase its trade by as much as 30% if more supply chains returned to North America. Their report notes there had already been a bump in Mexican manufacturing as U.S. policymakers and businesses increasingly focus on bringing more trade to allied countries that are near American consumers.

“Every country is arriving with different priorities, but there is common ground,” said Enrique Perret, managing director of the U.S.-Mexico Foundation, a think tank focused on cooperation between the two nations. “It’s competitiveness, it’s economy, it’s education, it’s labor mobility.”

But it’s not all rosy.

The leaders of Canada and Mexico have voiced concerns over Biden’s “Buy America” plan. And while Biden’s push toward electric vehicles is a boon to both nations because of the tax credits for North American batteries, there’s concern the U.S. allies will be left behind.

Meantime, the U.S. and Canada accuse López Obrador of trying to favor Mexico’s state-owned utility over power plants built by foreign and private investors, something that is forbidden under the three countries’ free trade pact.

The leaders did meet in Washington last November, but until then, there hadn’t been a summit in five

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years and many of the current disputes have festered despite constant discussion. They include fentanyl trafficking, corn production, automobile rules of origin and Mexican energy laws.

"These topics are really complicated issues and they will not be solved in a two-day summit," said Carin Zissis of the Americas Society, a nonprofit dedicated to education, debate and dialogue in the Americas.

The chemistry between Biden and Lopez Obrador is tricky, too. Their relationship is highly transactional and absent any of the warmth and camaraderie Biden has with other world leaders.

Lopez Obrador has made no secret of his admiration of Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump. Lopez Obrador did not recognize Biden's election victory from November 2020 until after the formal Electoral College vote a month later.

Biden has raised concerns over security and drug trafficking in Mexico and the deaths of journalists there. The U.S. took issue with Lopez Obrador for boycotting the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles last year over Biden's decision not to invite the leaders of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua.

Biden plans to stop in El Paso, Texas, on Sunday for his first visit as president to the U.S.-Mexico border, just days after announcing that the U.S. will immediately begin turning away Cubans, Haitians and Nicaraguans who illegally cross into the U.S. from Mexico. The new policy is an effort to manage the spiraling numbers of migrants arriving at the border.

Mexico agreed each month to take 30,000 Cubans, Nicaraguans, Venezuelans and Haitians who walk or swim to the U.S. and are turned back, and the U.S. each month will offer 30,000 people from those four nations work permits for two years and a legal path if they come to the U.S. by plane, have eligible sponsors and pass background checks. People from those four countries now make up the most migrants crossing the border.

Biden's attempt to tackle border security issues has drawn considerable criticism from immigrant advocates and refugee rights groups, who say the changes are inhumane and reminiscent of Trump's hard-line approach.

EXPLAINER: New drug slows Alzheimer's but comes with caveats

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new Alzheimer's drug is hitting the market — the first with clear-cut evidence that it can slow, by several months, the mind-robbing disease.

It's a long-needed new treatment, but experts also are voicing a lot of caution: The drug isn't a cure, it's only intended for early-stage patients, requires IV doses every two weeks, and comes with some safety concerns.

It's not even clear just how noticeable that modest benefit will be in people's everyday lives.

Still, "it's a landmark," said Dr. Richard Hodes, director of the National Institute on Aging. "It's not enough, but it's encouraging that there's something we can do."

Here are some things to know about the Food and Drug Administration's approval of lecanemab, to be sold under the brand name Leqembi:

HOW DOES THE NEW DRUG WORK?

The drug, made by Japan's Eisai and its U.S. partner Biogen, is designed to target and clear away a sticky protein called beta-amyloid that builds up into brain-clogging plaques -- one key hallmark of Alzheimer's disease.

It targets a slightly different form of that amyloid, possibly explaining why it proved successful in a rigorous study while a long list of prior amyloid-targeting drugs have failed, said Dr. Sam Gandy, an Alzheimer's expert at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital.

The FDA cleared a similar drug named Aduhelm in 2021 even though studies never proved it really helped patients, a move that triggered scathing criticism from a congressional investigation.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?

In Eisai's 18-month study of nearly 1,800 people, Leqembi appeared to delay early-stage patients from getting worse by about five months.

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That was measured on an 18-point scale that tracks cognitive and functional abilities. People who got the drug still worsened but not as rapidly as those given dummy versions — a difference of nearly half a point on that scale by the study's end.

Experts are divided over how meaningful a benefit that is. It may be hard for families to tell if a loved one's decline has slowed, Gandy said.

Other experts say slowing the disease early on, when people still function well, is important even if it's not that easy to spot.

"Several months with better cognition, what's that worth to you?" Hodes asked. "I think there you can get a strong argument: If I can interact with my family, be independent for months ... that's a very meaningful outcome."

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Like other amyloid-targeting medications, Leqembi can cause brain swelling or small brain bleeds. In Eisai's study, 13% of drug recipients had swelling and 17% has small brain bleeds.

The likely reason: Amyloid plaques usually form around nerve cells in the brain but sometimes the gunk gets inside blood vessels, too. Pulling amyloid out of those blood vessels can weaken them, making them leaky, Gandy explained.

While the brain swelling and bleeds may cause only minimal symptoms such as dizziness and vision problems, they occasionally can be severe — and several Leqembi users have died while taking the drug, including two who were on blood-thinning medications.

Eisai has said the deaths can't be attributed to its Alzheimer's drug. But Gandy said the greatest risk of serious bleeding would be among Leqembi users who also take blood thinners, which are commonly used by older adults to prevent or treat strokes.

Patients also may experience temporary reactions after the infusions that can include fever, flu-like chills, nausea and blood pressure fluctuations.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

The drug is only intended for people in the very early stages of Alzheimer's who also have that tell-tale amyloid buildup.

The FDA warned doctors to use caution if they prescribe Leqembi to people who use blood thinners. Patients also will be urged to get brain scans several times over the course of treatment.

As patients gradually worsen, it's not clear how long they should continue getting the twice-a-month IV infusions. Study participants are being tracked for longer periods, and other research is exploring even earlier use — before people with amyloid buildup show symptoms.

WHEN WILL IT BE AVAILABLE?

Eisai says the drug should be available by Jan. 23, but most patients will likely have to wait months to get it.

That's because health insurers are expected to scrutinize the drug's effectiveness before deciding whether to cover it, for which patients, and what testing they may require to confirm they are good candidates.

And Medicare, which covers most people with Alzheimer's, is not expected to pay for the drug until later this year. That's because the plan for seniors only pays for Alzheimer's drugs that have received full approval from the FDA — while the agency granted Leqembi's approval using a shortcut based on preliminary study results. The FDA is set to review that larger 18-month study soon, in anticipation of full approval later this year.

HOW MUCH WILL THE DRUG COST?

The IV drug will cost about \$26,500 for a typical year's worth of treatment. If insurers cover it, most people won't pay anywhere near that much — although people with insurance that requires them to shoulder a larger portion of their drug costs could pay thousands a year.

States target transgender health care in first bills of 2023

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press/Report for America

After a midterm election and record flow of anti-transgender legislation last year, Republican state lawmakers this year are zeroing in on questions of bodily autonomy with new proposals to limit gender-affirming health care and abortion access.

More than two dozen bills seeking to restrict transgender health care access have been introduced across 11 states — Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Virginia — for the legislative sessions beginning in early 2023.

Bills targeting other facets of trans livelihood have been filed in many of the same states and are expected in several others with GOP majorities.

Gender-affirming health care providers and parents of trans youths are the primary targets of these bills, many of which seek to criminalize helping a trans child obtain what doctors and psychologists widely consider “medically necessary care.”

Erin Reed, a researcher who tracks transgender legislation, said statehouses where Republicans expanded their margins in the midterms will likely double down on anti-trans legislation this year and reintroduce some of the more drastic measures that didn’t pass in previous sessions.

Of the 35 anti-LGBTQ bills already introduced in Texas, three would classify providing gender-affirming care to minors as a form of child abuse, following a directive last year from Republican Gov. Greg Abbott that ordered child welfare agents to open abuse investigations into parents who let their children receive gender-affirming care.

In Tennessee, the GOP-controlled legislature announced after Election Day that its first priority would be to ban medical providers from altering a child’s hormones or performing surgeries that enable them to present as a gender different from their sex. The pre-filed bill would replace present law with more stringent restrictions.

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health said last year that teens experiencing gender dysphoria can start taking hormones at age 14 and can have certain surgeries at ages 15 or 17. The group acknowledged potential risks but said it was unethical to withhold early treatments, which can improve psychological well-being and reduce suicide risk.

Legislation pre-filed this week in Republican-controlled Oklahoma, which passed restrictions last year on trans participation in sports and school bathroom usage, seeks to ban gender-affirming care for patients under age 26 and block it from being covered under the state’s Medicaid program.

“This is the worst anti-trans bill I have ever seen filed in any state,” Reed said, noting that adult medical transition bans were a “hypothetical escalation” until recently.

Another Oklahoma proposal would prohibit distribution of public funds to organizations that provide gender-affirming procedures to patients younger than 21.

“It’s irresponsible for anybody in health care to provide or recommend life-altering surgeries that may later be regretted,” said the bill’s sponsor, Republican state Rep. Jim Olsen. “Performing irreversible procedures on young people can do irreparable harm to them mentally and physically later in life.”

A similar bill pre-filed in South Carolina, where Republicans control both chambers, also requires that trans adults older than 21 obtain referrals from their doctor and a licensed psychiatrist before they can begin treatment.

Cathy Renna, spokesperson for the National LGBTQ Task Force, said she views these bills as the product of “a permissible climate of hate,” driven by disinformation and fearmongering, that made anti-LGBTQ rhetoric more palatable in the years since former President Donald Trump’s election in 2016.

“We have politicians, celebrities and just folks in our communities who were given permission under Trump to kind of pick that scab and do and say harmful things without consequence,” Renna said. “It unleashed a nightmare Pandora’s box of sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, antisemitism.”

“When you look at the last few years,” she said of the LGBTQ community, “we feel like we’re under attack in a way that we have not for decades.”

Meanwhile, Democrats in some states are taking a more aggressive approach to transgender health protections.

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A new California law, effective as of Jan. 1, shields families of transgender youth from criminal prosecution if they travel to California for gender-affirming health procedures, such as surgeries or hormone therapy, from states that ban such treatments for minors. Making California a refuge for trans youth and their parents, the law blocks out-of-state subpoenas and prohibits medical providers from sharing information on gender-affirming care with out-of-state entities.

Another California bill, filed in December, would expand those protections by prohibiting a magistrate from issuing an arrest warrant for violating another state's law that criminalizes helping someone obtain an abortion or gender-affirming care.

An Illinois lawmaker introduced a similar sanctuary bill late last year. The state House passed another bill Friday to increase protections for patients and providers of abortions and gender-affirming treatments.

And in Minnesota, where Democrats gained a trifecta of state government control in the midterm elections, a new bill would give the state jurisdiction in child custody cases involving parents who bring their children to Minnesota for gender-affirming health care.

Reed, a trans woman, is monitoring a growing list of other proposals across statehouses, including drag performance bans, bathroom usage restrictions, limits on LGBTQ discussions in schools and obstacles to changing the gender marker on a driver's license or birth certificate. But the rising age minimums proposed to access gender-affirming care are among her chief concerns.

"Adult transition bans are coming into play, and I'm already hearing some talk of, 'Well, the brain doesn't finish developing until 25, so why not restrict it until then,'" she said. "Any further loss of autonomy is incredibly concerning."

Today in History: January 08, Elvis Presley is born

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Jan. 8, the eighth day of 2023. There are 357 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 8, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson, in his State of the Union address, declared an "unconditional war on poverty in America."

On this date:

In 1815, the last major engagement of the War of 1812 came to an end as U.S. forces defeated the British in the Battle of New Orleans, not having received word of the signing of a peace treaty.

In 1867, the U.S. House of Representatives joined the Senate in overriding President Andrew Johnson's veto of the District of Columbia Suffrage Bill, giving Black men in the nation's capital the right to vote.

In 1912, the African National Congress was founded in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson outlined his Fourteen Points for lasting peace after World War I. Mississippi became the first state to ratify the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which established Prohibition.

In 1923, actor-comedian Larry Storch was born.

In 1935, rock-and-roll legend Elvis Presley was born in Tupelo, Mississippi.

In 1982, American Telephone and Telegraph settled the Justice Department's antitrust lawsuit against it by agreeing to divest itself of the 22 Bell System companies.

In 1994, Tonya Harding won the ladies' U.S. Figure Skating Championship in Detroit, a day after Nancy Kerrigan dropped out because of the clubbing attack that had injured her right knee. (The U.S. Figure Skating Association later stripped Harding of the title.)

In 1998, Ramzi Yousef (RAHM'-zee YOO'-sef), the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, was sentenced in New York to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

In 2008, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton powered to victory in New Hampshire's 2008 Democratic primary in a startling upset, defeating Sen. Barack Obama and resurrecting her bid for the White House; Sen. John McCain defeated his Republican rivals to move back into contention for the GOP nomination.

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In 2011, U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., was shot and critically wounded when a gunman opened fire as the congresswoman met with constituents in Tucson; six people were killed, 12 others also injured. (Gunman Jared Lee Loughner (LAWF'-nur) was sentenced in Nov. 2012 to seven consecutive life sentences, plus 140 years.)

In 2016, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, the world's most-wanted drug lord, was captured for a third time in a daring raid by Mexican marines, six months after walking through a tunnel to freedom from a maximum security prison.

In 2020, Iran struck back at the United States for killing Iran's top military commander, firing missiles at two Iraqi military bases housing American troops; more than 100 U.S. service members were diagnosed with traumatic brain injuries after the attack. As Iran braced for a counterattack, the country's Revolutionary Guard shot down a Ukrainian jetliner after apparently mistaking it for a missile; all 176 people on board were killed, including 82 Iranians and more than 50 Canadians.

Ten years ago: Former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and her husband, Mark Kelly, launched a political action committee aimed at curbing gun violence as her Arizona hometown paused to mark the second anniversary of the deadly shooting rampage.

Five years ago: Alabama beat Georgia in overtime, 26-23, to claim the College Football Playoff national championship after freshman quarterback Tua Tagovailoa (tag-oh-vay-LOH'-ah) came off the bench to spark a comeback. A judge in Las Vegas dismissed criminal charges against Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy and his sons, who were accused of leading an armed uprising against federal authorities.

One year ago: NASA's new James Webb Space Telescope opened its huge, gold-plated, flower-shaped mirror, the final step in the unfurling of the observatory, which had already traveled more than 660,000 miles since its Christmas Day launch. Negotiations resumed in an effort to resolve a standoff between Chicago school officials and the city's teachers union over COVID-19 precautions. (An agreement the following week would end the dispute after five days of canceled classes.) Oscar-winning lyricist Marilyn Bergman, who teamed with her husband Alan on songs including "The Way We Were," died at her Los Angeles home; she was 93.

Today's birthdays: Former CBS newsman Charles Osgood is 90. Singer Shirley Bassey is 86. Game show host Bob Eubanks is 85. Country-gospel singer Cristy Lane is 83. R&B singer Jerome Anthony Gourdine (Little Anthony and the Imperials) is 82. Singer Juanita Cowart Motley (The Marvelettes) is 79. Actor Kathleen Noone is 78. Rock musician Robby Krieger (The Doors) is 77. Movie director John McTiernan is 72. Actor Harriet Sansom Harris is 68. Actor Ron Cephas Jones is 66. Former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is 65. Singer-songwriter Ron Sexsmith is 59. Actor Michelle Forbes is 58. Actor Maria Pitillo (pih-TIHL'-loh) is 57. Singer R. Kelly is 56. Actor/producer Ami Dolenz is 54. Reggae singer Sean Paul is 50. Actor Donnell Turner ("General Hospital") is 50. Country singer Tift Merritt is 48. Actor-rock singer Jenny Lewis is 47. Actor Amber Benson is 46. Actor Scott Whyte is 45. Singer-songwriter Erin McCarley is 44. Actor Sarah Polley is 44. Actor Gaby (GAB'-ee) Hoffman is 41. Rock musician Disashi Lumumba-Kasongo (dih-SAH'-shee LUHM'-uhm-boh kuh-SAHN'-goh) (Gym Class Heroes) is 40. Actor Cynthia Erivo is 36. Actor Freddie Stroma is 36.